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**The Ethics of Vulnerability in Philosophy for  
Children  
PhD Thesis Summary**

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## Summary

The structure of the doctoral thesis consists of five chapters, Appendices and bibliographical list. The first two chapters present theoretical information about the topic and the concepts chosen for discussion, while the third chapter marks the transition to the practical part of the thesis. This five-part structure outlines the importance and necessity of studying the ethics of vulnerability in philosophy for children, the current state of the art in the field, methodological aspects, the applied part with workshops on philosophy for children, final conclusions, personal contributions, limitations of the study and perspectives for further development of the topic.

The title of the thesis is analysed from the very first pages. Concerning the etymological root of the term ethics, it originates from the Greek language: ethos. We started from the dictionary definition, according to which ethics is the science "concerned with the theoretical study of human values and the human condition, from the perspective of moral principles, and with their role in social life."<sup>1</sup> This science also encompasses "the totality of rules of moral conduct" or "a set of rules against which a human group regulates its behaviour in order to distinguish between what is legitimate and acceptable in the pursuit of goals."<sup>2</sup> In the same dictionary ethics is also listed as "the theoretical study of the basic principles and concepts in any field of thought and practical activity."<sup>3</sup> It is important to conceptualise and understand both the terminology and the approaches to creating a basic conceptual architecture. This is done in a variety of fields, such as philosophy, education, and particularly philosophy for children. We have also added several philosophical approaches to the term, analysing some representative concepts from the history of philosophy, in order to have a more complex and nuanced picture of the terminology needed for the research.

One of the most representative philosophers of ancient Greece is Aristotle (384-322 BC). Among other things, Aristotle analyses and speaks about ethics, arguing that, as far as ethics is concerned, all men aspire to one thing - common to all - and that is happiness.<sup>4</sup> For Aristotle, happiness is also the ultimate goal. However, a distinction is made between happiness of the

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\*, Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române, Accesat la 16.05.2020 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/etica/definitii>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Întemeierea metafizicii moravurilor*, Traducere, studiu introductiv, note și indici Nicolae Bagdasar; postfață Nicolae Bellu, Editura științifică, București, 1972, p. 281.

common type (of what it is for most people today) and happiness of the Aristotelian type. The latter (happiness) has nothing to do with human life (breath), for even plants and animals have life and breath, nor with what is meant by sensibility (for even animals possess a certain sensibility), but with reason, the active use of which constitutes the very supreme happiness, which is also found in Aristotle under the name of the Supreme/Sovereign Good. For the Stoics and Epicureans, the Supreme Good occurs when virtue and happiness are combined. However, the Supreme Good is only an ideal to which human beings aspire.

Socrates (470-399 BC) is another important ancient Greek philosopher who, among other topics, develops some ideas on ethics. He argues that ethics is the tool that helps people to live. At the same time, true wisdom and virtue, for Socrates, are part of the knowledge of ethics. Anthony Gottlieb argues that Socrates "is concerned only with ethical reflection, not being able to abandon his mission without the awareness that he has encouraged it in others."<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the way to the good is the practice of virtues and right action, and the end for which it is necessary for people to do good is the self-care that has the highest price, which is the care of the soul. Socrates believes that "happiness cannot be attained by greedily placing one's own interests above the interests of others, but only by placing moral self-perfection above every other motive."<sup>6</sup> This kind of ethics, at times unusual, is not based on some divine reward or fear of punishment, but the effects of virtue will be seen over time, for "living according to the good is one and the same as living beautifully and justly."<sup>7</sup> Thus, it can be said that for Socrates virtue and happiness are closely linked, they are interdependent, because it is in the interest of every man to be moral. Christopher Rowe, in his essay on "Ethics in Ancient Greece"<sup>8</sup> argues that, in general, "Greek ethics in all periods revolves around two terms, eudaimonia and arete; or, as traditionally translated, happiness and virtue."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Gottlieb, *Socrate, filosoful martir*, Traducere din limba engleză de Teodora Pavel, Editura științifică, București, 2000, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Platon, „Criton”, în *Opere*, vol. I, Ediție îngrijită de Petru Creția și Constantin Noica, Traducere în limba română de Marta Guțu, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1975, pp. 51-80, p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Singer, *Tratat de etică*, Traducere coordonată de prof. univ. dr. Vasile Boari și Raluca Mărincean, Cuvânt înainte de Vasile Boari, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2016, p. 151.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 152.

The other fundamental concept of the thesis is vulnerability. In the first instance, vulnerability is closely related to dependency, as the two are universal. From an early age a human or non-human being is dependent on others for care, resources, support.<sup>10</sup>

The human being is arguably the most vulnerable being on the planet, because the human being lacks fur, has poor tolerance to cold or intense heat, has no claws or fangs, is not the longest-lived animal, nor the fastest or strongest.

However, vulnerability does not only have negative values, on the contrary. A contemporary author who has studied the concept in its various meanings, Brené Brown, defines vulnerability and advocates its acceptance in both its positive and negative aspects: "Vulnerability is not just knowing victory or defeat, but understanding that both are necessary; it is committing your whole being to what you do. Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure we face every day are inevitable. Our only option is to truly engage in what we do. Willingness to take on and understand our own vulnerability determines the depth of courage and clarity of purpose we set for ourselves. And the degree to which we shy away from vulnerability is a measure of our fear and alienation."<sup>11</sup>

This is why when a person is born they are deeply vulnerable - in that they depend on another person for their growth, formation and evolution. His or her needs are therefore dependent on other human beings who are larger, more independent than the newborn being, stronger, more mature, with a wider experience of life. From infancy, the child is dependent on parents and the support of others. Also, the main factor for which the human species is dominant is that humans are capable of cooperation - trust being the main element, i.e. the strength or power to be vulnerable. "Trust is a product of vulnerability, which grows over time and requires effort, attention and total commitment. Trust is not earned by big, dramatic gestures - it is built by small gestures - it is a collection of coloured balls that keeps growing."<sup>12</sup> The prerequisite for cooperation of either a group of humans or mammals is based on trust. Openness and vulnerability are

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<sup>10</sup> Martha Albertson Fineman, *Cracking the Foundational Myths: Independence, Autonomy, and Self-Sufficiency*, în revista "The American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law", 8, no 1, 2000, pp. 13-29.

<sup>11</sup> Brené Brown, *Curajul de a fi vulnerabil*, Traducere din limba engleză de Liviu Dascălu și Cristina Rusu, Cuvânt-înainte la ediția în limba română de Gáspár György și Otilia Mantelers, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2016, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

absolutely necessary, especially if you want to organise and create specific things that are not singular, in which many people need to be involved.

Thus, it can be seen that vulnerability is the capacity of a person to be willing to be exposed to others, beyond the need to control or, at the other extreme, beyond overriding or revoking the power and strength that others have over the person considered vulnerable. All of this exchange is based on the trust that the other - whoever this other may be - will not use the power they have against them. We can therefore talk about several kinds of vulnerability - from physical to emotional vulnerability. Emotionally, when a person is put in a position of superiority and uses their vulnerability, this vulnerability helps them by showing others that, although their position is superior, they do not wish them harm, but everything they express (from fear, anxiety, worry) arises from asking for help. In this way, they choose to dominate their team by being a leader, not a boss, demonstrating both their fragile and strong character. Vulnerability can thus be said to be the dimension without which solid relationships cannot be built for long when it comes to groups of people. "Vulnerability is based on reciprocity and involves trust and mutually agreed boundaries. Vulnerability is not about sharing too much, giving free rein to emotions."<sup>13</sup>

The two research concepts are studied and put to work with the help of a current component of applied philosophy, namely philosophy for children. The authors contributing to this emerging field start from the observation of the common, very often encountered fact of children's natural attraction to questioning, curiosity and wonder. If for Socrates philosophy is based on wonder, researchers in philosophy for children note that wonder is not just the prerogative of adults: "There is a consensus here both among parents who have not once been confronted with a 'battery' of questions from children and among specialists who examine the links between wonder, critical thinking development and the practices of philosophy with children."<sup>14</sup> On the same note of the idea that little philosophers ask (often philosophical) questions I would also bring up the idea of Nicholas Nassim Taleb who argued in one of his famous books something that belongs only to philosophers and children, namely that "Some truths only occur to children - adults and non-

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>14</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Lebăda neagră: Impactul foarte puțin probabilului*, Ediția a III-a, revizuită (include eseul post-scriptum *Despre robustețe și fragilitate*), Traducere din engleză de Viorel Zaicu, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2018, p. 229.

philosophers are caught up in the details of practical life and have to worry about serious issues, so they abandon such ideas for seemingly more relevant issues."<sup>15</sup>

The most important and representative thinker who has discussed the topic of philosophy for children is Matthew Lipman. He is considered the founder of the new discipline. In addition to John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky and Herbert Mead, Matthew Lipman was also influenced by Charles Sanders Peirce - known as the father of pragmatism. As early as 1992, Ann Margaret Sharp and Ronald F. Reed's book *Studies in Philosophy for Children, Harry Stottlemeister's Discovery*<sup>16</sup> was published, a work which examines the contribution of one of Matthew Lipman's best-known books to the development of the discipline. Among Lipman's fundamental ideas that I have used in developing philosophy workshops with children, I would mention the following:

1. A first idea relates to the role of the teacher in the education system, namely that the teacher should be a facilitator who stimulates and cultivates children's interest in dialogue, rather than an authoritarian figure who unilaterally transmits knowledge. This idea is in line with M. Lipman's vision of education<sup>17</sup>, which is opposed to the traditional model in which education is reduced to the mechanical transmission of clear knowledge about the world around us and its objective evaluation. For Lipman, as for his close colleagues such as Ann Margaret Sharp, the role of education is to stimulate students' curiosity, to reveal the world as a fascinating and mysterious reality, which will help them to want to learn and develop as autonomous beings.

2. Another idea is that of the most appropriate way in which philosophical learning takes place, namely the community of inquiry. In contrast to the panoptic community of teacher-oriented classrooms, where discussions are initiated by the teacher and the role of the students is most often to find the right answers to the teacher's questions, in the community of inquiry the participants are brought together in equidistant positions and the children take the initiative in formulating questions and seeking answers together.<sup>18</sup> He believes that children's logical skills develop gradually up to the age of 12. After this age, these skills remain at broadly the same level. In this context, Matthew Lipman has proposed a book for 5th and 6th graders called "Harry

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<sup>15</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Lebăda neagră: Impactul foarte puțin probabilului*, p. 229.

<sup>16</sup> Ann Margaret Sharp, Ronald F. Reed (eds.), *Studies in Philosophy for Children, Harry Stottlemeister's Discovery*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, Second edition, University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.



Stottlemeier's Discovery."<sup>19</sup> In this book Lipman has introduced exercises in applied logic, along with a number of philosophical themes - dealing with ethics, epistemology or even metaphysics.

Lipman constructs philosophical novels (such as "Ruxi"<sup>20</sup> or "Sînziana"<sup>21</sup>) for children according to their age or training. It can also be said that in his books Lipman, on the one hand, incorporates his perspective on education and, on the other hand, aims to reinforce habits of thought for different communities. For example, in the book "Thinking in Education"<sup>22</sup> Lipman sets out his ideas on education and proposes new ways of incorporating how combining emotional experience and thinking facilitates and enhances both judgement and reasoning. It also touches on ideas to help educate vulnerable children who are considered to be in an at-risk environment, and to reduce violence that occurs in schools and classrooms.

Philosophy for children contributes to the formation and creation of the ability to think for oneself, to reflect, to ask questions, children develop their critical spirit, lucid, rational thinking and imagination. Also, in the public space, those who consistently choose to participate in children's philosophy workshops can avoid some prejudices or even various indoctrinations.<sup>23</sup>

From 2020-2022 we organised and participated in a series of workshops on philosophy with children.. From these workshops, we have selected a number of 12 workshops conducted on vulnerability related themes that we have analysed.

Regarding the organisation of the workshops, all workshops included in the analysis were conducted on the Zoom platform. The workshops were announced in advance on the presentation pages of the Philosophy Club (Facebook, Instagram and on the website, community-philosophy.org). To register participants, their parents filled in a Google document form. They were informed in advance about the theme of the workshops and the fact that they are audio-video recorded. Parents also gave their consent to the transcription and use of the discussions (anonymously) for teaching and research purposes.

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State College, New Jersey, 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Ruxi*, Ediția a 2-a, Traducerea și adaptarea de Doina-Olga Ștefănescu și Veronica Focșeneanu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Sînziana*, Traducerea și adaptarea de Doina-Olga Ștefănescu și Veronica Focșeneanu, Editura Humanitas, București, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, London, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Laurențiu Staicu, *De ce să-I învățăm filosofie pe copii*, în revista „Școala 9”, 24.07.2018. Accesat la 19.11.2022: <https://www.scoala9.ro/de-ce-sa-i-invataam-filosofie-pe-copii/110/>

After the workshops, they were transcribed and the children's names were anonymized with the random formula Child 1, Child 2, Child 5, Child 6, etc. For their analysis, we used several qualitative methods specific to discourse analysis: identification of central themes, identification of key concepts, construction of concept maps in which the relationships between these concepts are highlighted.

Given the research theme in the workshops we selected for analysis, we started from stimuli that revolved around concepts in the sphere of vulnerability: anger, will, fear, bullying, ethics and the treatment of animals, ideas about freedom, care and empathy. In analysing aspects of vulnerability we considered either hypothetical situations or the presentation of a concrete case from a participant's life. In order to highlight conceptual relationships in the sphere of vulnerability, we used methods of interpreting relevant fragments taken from children's discussions. We also highlighted the impact that facilitators' interventions bring to the clarification of ideas and the development of participants' own views.

The idea that in one way or another we belong to others brings with it a whole host of aspects (emotional, soul, physical, mental, etc.) in which vulnerability plays a fundamental role, because when one opens up to another person, one becomes vulnerable, one belongs to the other, and when the other opens up in turn, one belongs to the other - there is an exchange based on authenticity, openness, reciprocity, which brings with it vulnerability. And regardless of skin colour, race, education, social status, gender, or health, the idea of reciprocity, and automatically vulnerability, places people in a common space.

Workshops on philosophy for children are a non-formal way of learning that helps and enables the personal growth and development of the youngest. It also helps the youngest to grow and develop their skills. If it stimulates the youngest to think critically, by asking appropriate questions, developing tolerance and participating in dialogue, then these workshops encourage and stimulate the children and young participants to put into practice the benefits of learning through the answers they give, the questions they ask, interacting with others, learning tolerance. The workshops are also characterised by a participatory component, which helps to learn and master the components of democratic citizenship.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, by emphasising, educating and

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<sup>24</sup> The p4c community in France insists on how philosophy for children contributes significantly to the shaping of ideas of citizenship in a democratic society. See for example Michel Tozzi's approach, outlined here: Monjo Roger, "Michel Tozzi (2012). Nouvelles pratiques philosophiques, Lyon: Chroniques sociales, 343 p.", in *Recherches & éducations*, 9 | 2013, pp. 163-165.

creating the well-being of workshop participants, in addition to increasing self-esteem, the project facilitates the strengthening of mental health, which has a knock-on effect on society as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

A typical workshop follows the standard steps recommended by children's philosophy practitioners: after setting up the framework of the meeting (placing participants in a formation that allows them all to see each other, introducing new participants, mentioning the ground rules of the conversation), the facilitator provides a stimulus, which is followed by discussion based on questions and a joint search for answers. The stimuli discussed in philosophy workshops can be of various kinds: stories from children's literature, stories specially created by a philosopher, audio-visual material. Questions are either initially formulated by the facilitator or proposed by the participants. The facilitator uses a range of techniques and methods to direct the flow of the dialogue towards the relevant philosophical content.<sup>26</sup>

Heuristic conversation and dialogue have been used since ancient times. Socrates' disciples and Socrates himself were the pioneers of dialogue. This approach is also one of the main means on which the work of philosophy workshops for children is based. The idea of a community of dialogue, as found in children's philosophy workshops, has certain aspects in common with various communities and even schools of philosophical thought. The school of Pythagoras or the school in which Thales of Miletus worked was also based on the idea of community, and for Socrates dialogue was the bridge to knowledge. The establishment of Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum was based mainly, and especially at the beginning, on free discussion - just as in philosophy workshops for children. Another similarity between Plato's Academy and children's philosophy workshops is that children come to both the Academy and the workshops with certain ideas based on their own observations. Also, those who constantly attend the workshops develop an affinity for philosophy.

Doing philosophy and learning philosophy involves first learning how a philosopher thinks, and this takes place in the philosophical discussions that children have in children's philosophy workshops. These workshops create opportunities to practise the so-called 'movements

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<sup>25</sup> An example of a study finding these benefits on the mental well-being of participating children can be found in the article by Chadi Youssef, Marilyn Campbell, and Donna Tangen The effects of participation in a P4C program on Australian elementary school students, in *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis*, 37.1, 2016, pp. 1-19.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas E. Wartenberg, *Big Ideas for Little Kids. Teaching Philosophy Through Children's Literature*, Rowman & Littlefiled Education, Lanham, 2009.

of thought<sup>27</sup>, which are also present in philosophers. For example, children know that there is a difference between 'pain' and 'suffering', but they need practice to be able to distinguish between the terms. Philosophers do these exercises too. The children's imagination is also challenged - again with exercises. Among the main benefits of the philosophy workshops I would mention those derived from participating in the "community of dialogue"<sup>28</sup>. Participating in the dialogue teaches children to listen to what others say, to be tolerant, to focus on a topic or theme without jumping around between ideas, to express ideas as concisely as possible, to argue each idea and to think for themselves. These exercises in children's philosophy are also useful outside the workshops. Conceptual distinctions, reference to principles, reduction to the absurd, real-life examples are used in most of the discussions we have in workshops. That is why these movements of thought applied by generating ideas through dialogue and questioning are beneficial.

In the workshops I present in my PhD thesis I chose to discuss the following meanings of vulnerability: social vulnerability - in the workshops on (inappropriate) behaviour, anger and unrestrained violence, but also the will to change. In this workshop I wanted to bring up the following ideas that will help me to identify and then analyse the type of vulnerability: starting from a story about a violent child who could not control his anger, to ask questions about anger - whether a person who is very angry can refrain from negative behaviours - or what is the role of will when laziness/lack of will intervenes. The social nature of vulnerability proposed by the undersigned looks at how a person who is vulnerable or frail seeks and finds ways to adapt socially, in a community. Social vulnerability in this context also has two poles - one pole is based on the idea that the human being is excluded from a social group (school, neighbourhood, family, media, church, workplace, etc.), the other pole is the target group towards which integration is sought. It should be remembered that this vulnerability is a negative one.

Also, I chose to support the workshop on bullying, because it is a recurrent theme in society (at least in Romania). In this workshop we also looked at a social vulnerability (also negative), this

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<sup>27</sup> The term "movement of thoughts" refers to Lipman's idea that just as a dancer is able to perform because he continually repeats the constituent movements of his dance, so we can improve our cognitive processes by repeating and reinforcing the component parts of them, the thinking moves. Lipman, "Thinking in Education" (please complete the reference with the book's dates)

<sup>28</sup> The term "community of dialogue" is proposed as a variant for the terms in the literature (community of inquiry, philosophical enquiry) as a more appropriate alternative for the approach of the Philosophy Club with children in Cluj. See Mihaela Frunză, Liana Precup, Sandu Frunză, "Stimulating Children's Sense of Wonder via 'Communities of Dialogue': Case Studies from a Local Library", in Andreas Schinkel (ed.) *Wonder, education, and human flourishing*, VU University Press, 2000, pp. 296-317.

time with a specific character - in a social group, in a place where young people interact, at school. As a stimulus, a story was told about a boy who was bullied and terrorised by a classmate. This stimulus, seemingly banal or common, was chosen in order to create a setting in which workshop participants could talk about the topic of bullying in the way they chose - without being constrained by the stimulus from which the discussion started, but with the possibility of being able to return to the stimulus whenever they wanted.

Another important theme - which has (negative) psychological vulnerability at its core - that I chose to present was created in two meetings, the main topic was a broad discussion on the subject of fear. This topic falls under psychological vulnerability, because fear is a component that is related to different mental, psychological states. This can be a vulnerability because through its different mechanisms (with a survival role) it ranges from a state of simple anxiety to phobia or even paranoia. When not controlled by a person, fear comes to control and thus to make a person vulnerable. At the same time, fear is present in children, young people, teenagers, as well as mature adults, and has different degrees of variation - when persistent it is called a phobia. It will also be interesting to observe how children choose to perceive fear, to internalize this interaction with what we call fear, to be able to observe it from other angles, to be able to identify and name it.

Then, I chose to discuss the (also negative) vulnerability of species and law - when I chose to do two workshops on ethics and animal rights. By species vulnerability I have in mind the community of animals (in general) that is different from that of humans and to which most human beings relate superiorly in the way they treat and exploit them for different purposes. In this context, it can be said that animals, a different species from humans, are or can be (more) vulnerable. When I thought about talking to the participants of the two workshops and about vulnerability as a right I wanted to look at how small philosophers position themselves in relation to the language of animals and their rights. For these workshops I started from the curiosity to find out how participants position and perceive the vulnerability or strength of non-living beings (species vulnerability), whether they have rights, whether they should have rights (entitlement vulnerability), how people relate to pets, whether pets are like children, and if so, in what way. Therefore, the two types of vulnerability - species and entitlement - are intertwined.

Also, in the care workshop I will be looking at vulnerabilities (also negative) both psychological and physical. Worry is a state that can be akin to fear, and because it is at the level of the mind, it is classified as a psychological vulnerability. When worry is manifested in a bodily

context, worry can have connotations of physical vulnerability. Questions were chosen for this workshop on defining care, what is the difference between caring for oneself and caring for others/ altruistic care, whether we should care for ourselves, whether we should have the same care for our loved ones as we would for a stranger.

At the same time, I chose to present the theme of freedom from a workshop that I was not the facilitator, but which I found interesting and appropriate for some ideas related to vulnerability (also in a negative sense) geopolitical (referring to the war in Ukraine, started in February, 2022), social (because it manifests itself throughout society) or even legal vulnerability (with reference to freedom of expression that children or even young people feel, at times, constrained).

Last but not least, the workshop focuses on psychological vulnerability (which also appears negative), the theme of the workshop being empathy. At the beginning we wanted to see what empathy entails, how it manifests itself, what it means to be different and how we learn to accept others, what feelings are prevalent when a person is labelled as different.

All these themes related to vulnerability, from species vulnerability to social or psychological vulnerability, have been chosen mainly because workshop participants are in training and often encounter situations where they are vulnerable (in various negative senses) psychologically or socially and, when they become aware of these aspects, they can more easily overcome the various vulnerable aspects - these aspects (social, physical, psychological vulnerability) being negative. At the same time, the above themes have been chosen because they have more important, perhaps even dramatic, consequences later on in adult life (in adulthood). For example, environmental vulnerability can have effects on nature in the sense that it can lead to disasters. Then, social vulnerability can create conditions for an isolated person, and bodily vulnerability can create conditions leading to injury. Psychological vulnerability can have effects in creating mental illness or various behavioural disorders. The positive aspects of vulnerability are found when a person consciously opens up to others, assumes fragility and speaks out about issues that they know can expose them, hurt them. Therefore, being aware of these issues, the person chooses to use vulnerability in a positive way.

Also, the presence of these types of vulnerability - social, psychological - are encountered from a very early age, while digital, IT, economic, etc. vulnerabilities are encountered and learned about later, towards adolescence or even adulthood. So the vulnerabilities I have chosen to discuss are part of a child's formation, education and character in the making, and relate to the way they

understand, perceive and relate to their environment. At the same time, with the help of these workshops, I will follow how the participants learn what vulnerability means, both personal and of others (without using the word vulnerability) with the help of the proposed themes, the discussion will be an open one, the direction of the discussion depending, at times, on the participants and what interests them.

The conclusions of the PhD thesis are as follows:

In workshops on children's philosophy during the three years of my PhD, I have proposed several discussions on ethics and vulnerability, most of them focusing on the nature of the term vulnerability and the different concepts involved in describing, defining or analysing it.

The research for the PhD thesis led to a number of final conclusions, which are mentioned below:

- The umbrella concept of vulnerability contains terms such as fear, dependency, which are associated with the emotional domain.

- Also, the category to which vulnerable people belong is shaped by certain stages of human life, namely childhood, adolescence, old age, etc.

- Children in the workshops on children's Philosophy understand the term vulnerability by associating it with terms such as bullying, fear, dependency, caring, different emotions, empathy.

We have come to the conclusion that philosophy for children is more than just an extracurricular activity and an optional course for philosophy majors or those with concerns in the socio-human field. This educational process aims to strengthen the critical thinking of children and young people and their ability to focus on meaningful issues that are relevant to their activities. We have come to the conclusion that in philosophy workshops for children, they easily realize their own vulnerabilities, are able to identify and understand the vulnerable, i.e. are able to empathize with the other.

I also think that voluntary attendance at Philosophy for Children workshops is different and preferable compared to different school activities involving Philosophy for Children. Children are much more engaged if they choose to participate in these workshops than if they are forced to take part in a school activity.

We have concluded that from an early age (6-7 years), children participating in children's philosophy workshops are familiar with various concepts in ethics, for example the good/evil dichotomy. We have noticed that there are many aspects to bullying (excluding someone, hostile

behaviour, humiliating someone with consequences on dignity or bullying) - a widely discussed (and welcome) topic in a philosophy workshop for children.

We found that fear has multiple connections to the concept of vulnerability, a topic widely discussed by children. When talking about fear, children resort to emotional terms such as fear and insecurity. Fear is a feeling that many children avoid at all costs. For some children, fear is a feeling that arises when they feel inadequate. Other children describe it in a metaphorical way, as evil incarnate.

And some prospects for the development of the doctoral theme and philosophy workshops for children:

Philosophy workshops for children can be improved by completing and refining discussions on both the concept of ethics and vulnerability. As we have shown along the way, the topic of vulnerability can be approached from different perspectives, of which in this research we have included some more significant ones. The inclusion of the other perspectives would complete and deepen the picture related to this theme.

The syllabus and related discussions in children's philosophy workshops can be further adapted to discussions on the ethics of vulnerability and critical thinking in the context of the pandemic, the green certificate controversy and other discussions on general topics on education, the medical act, etc.

Discussions on the ethics of vulnerability in the context of the digitisation of different processes in production and society can also be developed. Thus, a number of possible questions could be: what role do ethics play in the development of digital technologies and their implementation in industrial and social processes? What are the advantages and disadvantages of digitisation from a vulnerability perspective? How can digital technology contribute to reducing vulnerability in different social and economic contexts? What are the possible risks and ethical challenges related to the use of digital technology in different fields of activity? How can the rights of individuals and vulnerable groups be protected in the context of digitisation?

Philosophy for children can be complemented by critical thinking training and exploring themes of vulnerability. This can help children to become aware of their own fragilities and to understand the vulnerability of categories and processes such as activity and exploitation. Critical thinking training can also contribute to the development of skills to analyse and evaluate vulnerability issues.



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