

On Nietzsche and Self-Determined Learning

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Abstract

This article delves into the potential alignment between Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical insights and the contemporary critical educational paradigm of heutagogy, which advocates for self-determined learning. Heutagogy represents a significant shift in educational ideology, empowering learners with the autonomy to choose their learning paths and methodologies. The paper commences by elucidating the fundamental principles of heutagogy, emphasizing student autonomy in selecting learning objectives and methods. Subsequently, it scrutinizes Nietzsche's philosophical framework through an analysis of Zarathustra's allegory of "The three transformations of the spirit," revealing both conflicting and complementary elements with heutagogy. Drawing upon Nietzsche's oeuvre, the article extrapolates potential interpretations of how he might perceive and endorse heutagogical principles. Ultimately, it advocates for integrating Nietzschean insights into educational practices to offer concrete and effective strategies for implementing heutagogy in diverse educational settings. Through this interdisciplinary exploration, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of self-determined learning in contemporary education.

Keywords: Nietzsche; heutagogy; self-determined learning

Preface

This article undertakes an examination of Friedrich Nietzsche's potential stance towards the educational paradigm of self-determined learning, known as heutagogy, which represents a transformative shift in educational philosophy with far-reaching implications for policy formulation. However, prior to delving into this exploration, it is imperative to preface with a critical elucidation concerning the interpretative challenges inherent in appropriating Nietzschean philosophy to address contemporary educational concerns that were not directly addressed by Nietzsche himself.

Firstly, Nietzsche's philosophical corpus is characterized by its multi-faceted nature, rendering it susceptible to varied and sometimes contradictory interpretations by scholars. He has been depicted as supporting democracy (Sassone, 1996) and as its rival (Taureck, 2008); as opposing Marxism and socialism (Tutt, 2024), while others see a "complementarity of Nietzsche's philosophy with Marxism" (Love, 1986, p. 169); as the herald of Nazism or as holding the opposite stance (Aschheim, 1994).

Hence, the interpretations presented herein should be viewed as one among many plausible readings.

Secondly, the vast temporal and contextual gulf separating Nietzsche's era from the present necessitates caution when extrapolating his ideas to modern educational contexts. Such contextual dissonance underscores the need for judicious interpretation that acknowledges the disparity in historical and linguistic contexts. Thirdly, this analysis operates under the principle of charity, wherein Nietzsche's ideas are construed in a manner that aligns with a positive and constructive educational trajectory. It is acknowledged that alternative

interpretations, not necessarily grounded in the principle of charity, exist within Nietzsche scholarship, as exemplified by Janaway (2018). Nevertheless, this charitable reading finds precedent in Anglo-American educational discourses that have portrayed Nietzsche as a proponent of liberal education, as illustrated by Allen (2017).

By foregrounding these methodological considerations, this article seeks to navigate the complexities inherent in interpreting Nietzsche's educational philosophy vis-à-vis contemporary educational paradigms. Through a nuanced engagement with Nietzschean thought, it endeavors to enrich our understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of self-determined learning in the educational landscape.

Commencing with an explication of the concept of heutagogy, this article proceeds to advance the argument that Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical orientation would have initially opposed the inception of this pedagogical approach within the nascent stages of education. However, a nuanced examination suggests a subsequent evolution in Nietzsche's stance, wherein he begins to advocate for the integration of heutagogy from the inception of educational endeavors. Central to this argument are textual analyses drawn from Nietzsche's seminal works, including "Schopenhauer as Educator" (Nietzsche, 1997b), "On the Future of Our Educational Institutions" (Nietzsche, 2016), and "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (Nietzsche, 1978), alongside supplementary texts addressing pedagogical themes within Nietzsche's oeuvre.

It is pertinent to underscore that Nietzsche's familiarity with the heutagogical paradigm, coined a century subsequent to his demise (Hase & Kenyon, 2000), remains speculative. Nevertheless, the ensuing discourse endeavors to forge a conceptual linkage between Nietzschean tenets and the principles undergirding

heutagogy, thereby engendering a dialectical exploration poised to offer novel insights into contemporary educational inquiries. Specifically, this interpretative framework serves as a reflective voyage, synthesizing Nietzsche's philosophical tenets with the emergent principles of heutagogy, and thereby furnishing a distinctive perspective on the contemporary educational landscape. At its core, this scholarly endeavor grapples with the pertinent query: does the Nietzschean corpus harbor receptivity towards the incorporation of heutagogical precepts within the educational milieu? Through a rigorous engagement with Nietzschean texts and a discerning examination of pedagogical themes therein, this inquiry seeks to furnish cogent responses to the exigencies of present-day educational discourse.

The rapid advancements in technology, globalization, the evolving global economy, and shifting perceptions of knowledge and the workplace have sparked a need for new approaches to education. Traditional methods, such as pedagogy, are increasingly insufficient for preparing learners to navigate the complexities of contemporary life and to lifelong learning (Blaschke, 2023; Glassner & Back, 2020). As a result, new educational frameworks are emerging that reimagine learning to better equip students for lifelong development (see some examples in <https://www.progressiveeducation.org/approaches/why-do-we-need-alternatives/15-ways-to-reimagine-education/>). Central to these approaches are the autonomy of the learner and a focus on placing the learner at the center of the educational process (Cunningham, 2021). Heutagogy, which is the focus of this article, can be viewed as the pinnacle of an educational continuum that begins with pedagogy, where the teacher is central to the learning process, progresses to andragogy (self-directed learning for adults) where learners gain some independence (Gray, 2023; Knowles, 2013), and culminates in heutagogy, self-determined learning which will be explored here.

It is imperative to underscore that within the realm of educational theory and practice, a prevailing consensus regarding the efficacy of self-determined learning has yet to emerge. Despite widespread discourse on the topic, scholars and practitioners continue to diverge in their assessments of its pedagogical value (see, for example, Servant-Miklos & Noordegraaf-Eelens, 2021).

The Characteristics of Heutagogy – a Paradigmatic Change in Educational Thought

Heutagogy is a way of learning and investigation in which it is the learners who determine what they will learn and investigate, and the questions that they wish to answer connected to a given content field. Learners stray in human spaces of knowledge and internet knowledge; the purpose of this straying is to satisfy their curiosity and to reach understanding concerning the object of their research. These learners-researchers are the ones who determine how to undertake their investigation, the informational sources upon which they will base their understandings, what the products of their research will be and how to present these products to others. Moreover, the learners are also central partners in evaluating the research that they themselves undertook and it is they who decide the degree to which they achieved their learning objectives (Glassner & Back, 2020; Hase & Kenyon, 2000).

This strayed-research journey of the heutagogical learners is accompanied by independent thought and reflexive and critical writing, concerning the progress made on their study, the way they relate to their research and the group work in which the questions that interest the learners are approached (Blaschke & Hase, 2021).

In this approach, teachers or lecturers are not a main or active source of knowledge in learning and research. Moreover, they do not share with the students what they consider to be necessary or relevant knowledge. They change their traditional role and become mentors, who give their students space and offer counsel. They mentor them only when asked for guidance. They add their knowledge when the students initiate the request and they see themselves as educators who support the independent research of the students.

Moreover, the heutagogical student is not bound to the linear or uniform curriculum “sent down from above,” to the customary and set work arrangements. Heutagogy represents a significant shift in educational ideology, empowering learners with the autonomy to choose their own learning paths and methodologies, and fostering their ability to think and reflect critically. This agency aligns with Kant's notion of autonomy, where individuals take responsibility for their practical decisions (Hase & Blaschke, 2021).

Furthermore, they do not need to base their learning solely on academic sources. This approach clarifies that there are many diverse ways of learning and that there is no one way that is suitable for all students. The learning, and the reflection about the learning, leads the learners to understand which style of learning is best for them, an understanding that will help them continue to learn throughout their lifetime (Moore, 2020). This reflective practice fosters the development of lifelong learners (Blaschke, 2012) and equips them with essential skills for lifelong learning associated with heutagogy, including flexibility, self-regulation, collaboration, communication, learning-to-learn, and learning management (Blaschke, 2021).

Heutagogy also enhances student motivation by allowing learners to engage with topics that are personally relevant and interesting, as they have the

autonomy to make their own choices. When learners can select their learning paths, they are more motivated and committed to their studies, a principle that is especially effective in a heutagogical learning environment (Blaschke, 2014). This approach not only leads to high levels of student satisfaction but also promotes lifelong learning, encouraging students to learn, develop, and function independently (Gumiran, 2024).

Therefore, heutagogy is a transformation of accepted and customary educational order. Notably: the idea of self-determined learning.

Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy

The exploration of Nietzsche's potential understanding of heutagogy unfolds in a structured manner, delineated into three distinct phases. Initially, the analysis delves into Nietzsche's allegory, "On the Three Metamorphoses," providing an overarching perspective on his conceptualization of heutagogy. Subsequently, a textual examination of Nietzsche's works is conducted to elucidate his evolving stance on heutagogy across different stages of the educational trajectory. This entails an initial portrayal of skepticism towards the concept, particularly in the nascent phases of education, followed by a discernible shift towards endorsement and support in later stages. Culminating the discourse, the investigation offers nuanced insights into the applicability of Nietzschean educational ideals within the framework of heutagogy. Additionally, avenues for further inquiry are proposed to delve deeper into unresolved questions pertaining to this discourse. Through this methodical approach, the study seeks to unravel Nietzsche's potential resonance with heutagogical principles while advocating for the integration of Nietzschean insights into contemporary educational discourse.

The Allegory – On the Three Metamorphoses – and its Affinity with Heutagogy

The exposition commences with a contention that the allegory, *On the three metamorphoses* (Nietzsche, 1978), succinctly summarizes Nietzsche's possible position on heutagogy. In this allegory, in which he appointed Zarathustra - Nietzsche's literary hero - as a ruler, the individual's educational course that Nietzsche envisioned as worthy is outlined. Moreover, the transformations and the developments that the learner is obligated to undergo, in order to reach the highest rung of education, is laid out. The allegory describes three transformations, or three stages in which the human spirit of the learner changes and develops from a state of complete dependence on teachers, and on values and prior knowledge, in order to reach a free spirit and autonomy.

The First Transformation – the Transformation of the Camel

This is the first and necessary stage in education that collides head on with the heutagogy spirit. During this stage, the learner is passive and is not an initiator. S/he is directed and not directing: s/he learns from teachers and does not learn by her/himself or from her/himself. We can relate it to the "old education," in which people load themselves with the existing culture – "wanting to be well loaded" (Nietzsche, 1978, p. 27). In effect, the education, found in the transformation of the camel, mainly acts according to the educational ideology of acculturation and even according to the ideological spirit of socialization (to use Lamm's [2000] term). In this approach, known educational content is determined by the culture or by the society in which the student is rooted. This is a stage of admiration and observance of good examples, such as Zarathustra's students' adoration for their teacher or Nietzsche's admiration of a number of large figures.

For Nietzsche, the camel's hump symbolizes a place for acknowledging the person who collects ideas, ideologies, beliefs, ideals and creative products of the human culture. The different ideas, some of which contradict one another, are loaded upon the learners: they collect them and they constitute a heavy burden for them. At this stage, the student accepts the educational authority of others, since s/he has the obligation to do so. It appears as if this is the educational path that is characteristic of most of the schools in Israel and in the world today.

The Second Transformation – the Lion's Transformation

Afterwards, in the most desolate desert that symbolizes for Nietzsche a situation of loneliness of the students, and without the burden or pressure from society, is where the second transformation occurs. This is the stage that is symbolized by the figure of the lion – a stage of shaking off of everything that served as the person's world up until now. Here, the learners overcome their previous adoration for the same "idols" – that is the big ideas and the god substitutes that burdened them during the first stage of the camel's hump. The lion transformation moves the learners toward freedom via the discovery of resistance to all obligations and unrestrictedly giving freedom to self-will. In this stage, the learners need to free themselves from everything that oppresses their nature, and from everything that opposes their freedom (Lambier & Smeyers, 2003). In this way, Zarathustra's disciples must forsake their teacher and deny him: "Now I go alone, my disciples. You too go now, alone. [...] Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (Nietzsche, 1978, p. 78).

This is the stage in which the adoration of the student toward her/his teacher is broken, and this is also how Nietzsche stopped venerating the philosophy of his teachers, Schopenhauer and Wagner, even though he did not cease admiring

their personalities (Golomb, 1985). It appears as if people are in need of some kind of dramatic ritual (for example, seclusion of the one-the lion in the desert) in order to clearly separate themselves from the thought and feeling, from the moral judgement and from the meta-narrative that were planted in them and that burdened them during their previous stage of education. In this way, the learners will become more open to absorbing and creating new impressions and perspectives in the next transformation, which is the child transformation.

The Third Transformation – the Child

After the learner-the lion becomes freed of the burden put upon him/her, the third stage arrives. This is the child transformation in which the learner finds her/his own way and creates and legislates her/his own values: “A sacred ‘Yes’” (Nietzsche, 1978, p. 27). This is redemption, the way that leads to the same human ideal that Nietzsche terms overman. Here, we reach the pinnacle of self-authority of the learner over her/his education.

Overcoming the nihilism, as it were, of the lion transformation, when the learner transforms into the child and creates the values, according to which s/he will live, is not simply a process of exchanging old values for new ones. In essence, these are two separate requirements that Nietzsche has of learners. The first requirement is taking some kind of responsibility over one’s life and over the way in which one sees the world. The second one is the understanding that the learners no longer have on whom to rely when it comes to values – not on nature, not on eternal reason and not on godly revelation – rather only upon themselves. There are no objective values, because all values are the fruit of subjective creation, human-made, and they serve the needs of their creators (Lambier & Smeyers, 2003). This creation is not arbitrary and its creation is influenced not only by the stream of phenomena in nature that occurs during the

process, but rather also from the camel transformation that the person underwent – that is, from the culture from which s/he grew and from the teachers s/he met. This demonstrates that the transformation of the child is the realization of the whole of the heutagogical idea and that the learners are the ones who determine what they will study and investigate and how to do that.

The Implications of the Allegory

The educational course that was outlined here of the three transformations, which ends with the free-spirited person legislating moral laws by her/himself, might meet with resistance from all “fettered spirits,” members of the dominant group, as well as hostility from society’s educational systems:

Because the fettered spirits harbour their principles on account of their utility, they suppose that the views of the free spirit are likewise held for utilitarian ends and that he regards as true only that which profits him. [...] They say, or sense: he must not be right, for he is harmful to us (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 109).

As a result, Nietzsche attributed the expected resistance to the group’s fear of independent thought of free-spirited people, who, in the eyes of Nietzsche, were worthy graduates of the educational system, who could erode society’s foundations. “They have time, they take their time, they don’t think at all about getting 'done'—at the age of thirty, when it comes to high culture, one is a beginner, a child” (Nietzsche, 1997a, p. 47). With these words, Nietzsche expressed his doubt about defining education merely as the attainment of a profession, as is often emphasized in today’s mainstream neoliberal framework (Ward, 2012). He emphasized that education is a lifelong task, a perspective that aligns closely with the heutagogical spirit (Blaschke, 2021; Moor, 2020).

Nietzsche's Negation of Heutagogy in the Beginning of the Educational Process

Overall, the principles that Nietzsche presented in the first stage of education negate the spirit of heutagogy.

Educational Institutions and Formal Education

Nietzsche averred that during the first learning stage – during the first transformation – the educational system is required to place important values and knowledge on the learners. One example that Nietzsche provides concerning this requirement is the way he relates to the German language.

In his opinion, the formal educator had to teach his students the sub-standard words that they should not use, and that by repeatedly teaching this, these unwanted words would be eradicated from the lexicon. He wanted the formal teacher to train his/her students: “to rigorous self-improvement through a strict cultivation of language” (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 32). In other words, the teacher would take upon her/himself the task of teaching students standard (German) language actions, without having to discover a wide understanding of its rules. It appears as if Nietzsche wanted formal education to teach the practical side of what was needed in life, which was first and foremost the mother tongue.

From this example, it is clear that Nietzsche perceived education in its first stage as alienating itself from heutagogy. Here, in the transformation of the camel, the role of education is to plant society's values in its students with the help of authoritative, demanding teachers.

This perspective is not unique to Nietzsche's concept of the camel's stage but also resonates with later conservative educational theories, such as those advanced by Hannah Arendt (1961). Arendt criticizes the ideal of the autonomous child, rejecting the notion of non-authoritarian teachers who lack the ability to rely on their own authority and are incapable of employing disciplinary methods. She also opposes the shift in schools from an emphasis on genuine learning to the pragmatically-driven focus on doing, arguing that this trend undermines the true purpose of education.

Education as Training for Life

Possible formal educational systems do not educate for culture, which is the essence and the final objectives of education, according to Nietzsche. Instead, they can only offer a kind of professional training for life: "No course of instruction that ends in a career, in breadwinning, leads to culture or true education in our sense" (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 52).

The only job that can be given to the educators is the responsibility for professional education, that is, the job of training students to acquire a profession. Nietzsche criticized the high schools and the universities, since he saw them as concealing the fact that they were, in effect, technical-professional schools, while believing, or acting as if they believe, that they served as temples for learning culture. As a result, during that same first stage of education, school has a limited role. The school is not able to teach the content of the classics since its students are: "young people who are in no way whatever ripe for it" (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 126). Nietzsche postponed the learning of classic culture until a later stage.

Despite the criticism, and even though the educational institutions did not engage in education for culture, the way that Nietzsche perceived it, he did respect them to a certain degree. He was aware of their importance in the general “herd” society which he used as a metaphor for a collective mindset where individuals conform to societal norms and values, suppressing personal autonomy and authentic self-expression. Instead of calling them educational institutions, he called them institutions for life’s needs. “The school has no more important task than to teach rigorous thinking, cautious judgement and consistent reasoning” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 125).

Didactics and Pedagogy in the Transformation of the Camel

Nietzsche’s criticism of the education that was customary in the first stage in schools, during his lifetime, is often reminiscent of the heutagogical criticism of the situation that exists in present-day schools. For example, Nietzsche rejected the pedagogical method of the “old education,” according to which, the school’s authority is clearly reflected in the regime of exams and the giving of grades. As a result, he anticipated the present-day heutagogical criticism that attacks the centrality of external motivation, reflected in school exams. According to the heutagogical approach: “When one learns or acts solely in order to score high on a test, get a reward, earn more money, become a celebrity, or win a game, then he/she is motivated by extrinsic motivation” (Glassner & Back, 2020, p. 49).

In a similar manner, Nietzsche complained that there is no philosophy education, but rather: “it is a training in passing philosophical examinations” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 187). In other words, the exam became what was important and schools forgot the goal of education. Nietzsche also wrote a kind of heutagogical passage, stating that educators should not teach one required

method – “I distrust all systematizers and stay out of their way. The will to a system is a lack of integrity” (Nietzsche, 1997a, p. 7). This opinion was directed at the schools of his time; however, it is also possible to direct it toward the schools of our time that teach “correct” methods in each subject taught. For example, schools usually methodologically teach one way to solve math problems that ignores solving the problem in an intuitive, creative, flexible, heuristic, non-routine manner of trial and error, etc. In contrast, in the heutagogical classroom, the teaching is suited to certain students instead of adopting a one-size-fits-all (Moore, 2020). The methodology was not important to Nietzsche at all: for him, the source of all creation is the degree of authenticity of the creator and neither the method nor the arrangement according to which s/he worked.

However, in stark contrast to the heutagogical ethos, which advocates for personal autonomy and creative exploration, Nietzsche vehemently opposed the educational methodologies prevalent in high schools of his era. These pedagogical practices, aimed at fostering creativity, individual work and originality in the students. He believed that these students were not yet capable or mature enough to be creative and independent.

[...] true education will strive with all its might precisely to suppress this ridiculous claim to independence of judgment on the part of the young person, imposing instead strict obedience to the scepter of the genius” (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 34).

In his opinion, formal-general education should teach habits, acknowledgement of limitations, concrete discipline and not search for the unlimited (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 184). In the same anti-heutagogical spirit that focuses and closes off thought, and does not open it up to a variety of possibilities and directions, Nietzsche averred that educators should teach students to listen to important

thinkers. This is since: “these teachers speak the abstract language of higher culture, ponderous and hard to understand but nonetheless a higher gymnastics for the head” (Nietzsche, 1996, p.126). The listening to teachers, according to Nietzsche, is the opening of the soul of the students to receive inspiration from their eminent teacher.

Discipline

Another major difference between Nietzsche’s path and the path of heutagogy centers on the question of discipline in early education. In heutagogical education, whose principles were presented above, there can be no external discipline that is forced upon the learners. In contrast, Nietzsche asserted that the schools should employ harsh discipline:

The most desirable thing is still under all circumstances a hard discipline at the proper time [...] For this is what distinguishes the hard school as a good school from all others: that much is demanded; and sternly demanded; that the good, even the exceptional, is demanded as the norm; that praise is rare, that indulgence is nonexistent; that blame is apportioned sharply, objectively, without regard for talent or antecedents (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 482).

In other words, Nietzsche averred that educators needed to be demanding of students and to be strict about implementing their demands. Nietzsche asked and answered: “What does one learn in a hard school? Obeying and commanding” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 483). As a result, Nietzschean education in today’s schools (what he termed “gymnasiums”) will first stress the acquisition of habits, obedience and discipline.

The Student’s Independence and Academic Freedom

The style of teaching in universities of Nietzsche's time reflected the evaluation that the professor-lecturer holds the knowledge and that her/his control over knowledge is the source of her/his authority. The students could choose between listening to the same professor and to internalize what was said, or not to listen and not to internalize. However, their over-independence here was perceived by Nietzsche as being an obstacle:

But since the listening, even the choice of what is to be listened to, is a matter of the independent-minded student's personal judgment, and since this student can refuse to believe anything he hears, can deny it all authority, the educational process is strictly speaking left in the student's own hands. (Nietzsche, 2016, pp. 65-66)

From Nietzsche's perspective, the undesirable independence of students in the universities was a direct continuation of the gymnasiums' erroneous actions that fostered independence, instead of nurturing: "dependence, discipline, subordination, and obedience" (Nietzsche, 2016, p.66). For him, early independence contradicts human nature, since at this stage in life, it is natural that learners need a leader and it is harmful to encourage independence before its time – both on the psychological level and on the practical-realistic level. This is because the learner lacks the ability to provide good enough answers to the question of where s/he should lead her/himself. S/he, therefore, is tossed: "from one way of life into another. Doubt, elation, affliction, hope, despair" (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 68).

Nietzsche saw culture, as he defined it, as a matter that must be taught during the first stage of formal education, and that included a philosophical aspect of art and of Greek culture. In other words, in contrast to the heutagogical perspective, Nietzsche averred that there was a cultural canon that learners must be taught. In his opinion, all forms of serious discipline would help imbue

students with the worthy emotion toward the cultural classics: in this way, it would open up in them the ability to differentiate between the great thinkers and the great poets, and the others who trailed behind.

Nietzsche's Approach – The Need to Adopt Heutagogy in Advanced Stages of Education

By addressing five main heutagogical principles, the ensuing discourse concisely proposes how Nietzsche might have related to the educational process as a heutagogical process.

The First Heutagogical Principle

Learners have self-efficacy and the ability to learn and they are capable of demonstrating their abilities in new and unique environments. Self-efficacy, and the ability to learn, lead to the reshaping of learning and to its transformations (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). Self-efficacy is the person's perception of her/his ability to undertake needed actions, in order to cope well with situations which one might face in the future. Self-efficacy is what defines for people their ability to make an effort and to withstand barriers they face. Whoever doubts her/his ability to resist and face these obstacles will quickly give up the fight. However, people with self-efficacy will make great efforts to deal with them and to overcome challenges (Bandura, 1982).

Dries (2015) averred that Nietzsche's understanding of the urge to achieve self-efficacy was the "will to power." According to Nietzsche, people with the will to power are people who are able to engage in independent action without receiving external dictates and who create for themselves the emotional states that motivate them to action (either consciously or unconsciously). We should

not perceive the will to power as only being a matter of aggression –will that is turned outward to control others – but rather as a will to control oneself. In other words, it is a “will to power as self-exaltation and reinforcement” (Nietzsche, 2021, p. 45). Nietzsche argued that the will is not a mysterious thing. For him, the will was, in essence, a mechanism that, on the one hand, works on the emotional level and, on the other hand, via an act of interpretation, based on thinking and analysis (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 122).

According to Nietzsche, self-efficacy, or the will to power, brings with it the feeling of freedom:

When we encounter a resistance and have to give in, we feel *unfree*, when we do not give in but compel it to give in to us, free. I.e., it is this *feeling of our more of force*, which we name ‘freedom of the will’: the conscious awareness of our force *compelling*, in relation to a force that is compelled (cited in Dries, 2015, p. 147. Emphasis in Nietzsche's original).

Golomb (1999) discussed how Nietzsche connected the idea of the will to power to self-exaltation and, in effect, to the will for independence – that is, authenticity. As a result, this process frees the individual from belonging to the herd. This authenticity is not a biological, inborn trait, but rather a creative personality trait, viewed by Nietzsche as a creation of art. This self-exaltation of the students can help them overcome the vulgarity within them.

The Second Principle

Heutagogy emphasizes independent, reflective and critical thinking about things that were learned and about the process of learning (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). Undertaking reflective and critical actions, and delving into inner reflection,

which are encouraged in this educational approach, are not easily attained:

“How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 129). Moreover, honest exposure to one’s self can even be painful:

[...] it is a painful and dangerous undertaking thus to tunnel into oneself and to force one's way down into the shaft of one's being by the nearest path. A man who does it can easily so hurt himself that no physician can cure him (Nietzsche, 1997b, p.129).

Despite the difficulty, reflection is a required condition for the heutagogical learner-researcher, as well as for Nietzschean learner:

Let the youthful soul look back on life with the question: what have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, [...] Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 129).

In Nietzsche’s own writings, when examining living up to one’s principles, he engages in reflective observation of his past. For example he reflects upon his thoughts during childhood that led him, in the end, to choose Schopenhauer as the philosopher who would be his mentor (1997b).

For Nietzsche, who sees the world as an image (Zupancić, 2003) every perspective is a personal choice, a creative choice of an artist (Eilon, 2015).

Self-reflective thinking is necessary for such a personal interpretation since:

“we must constantly give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and maternally endow them with all that we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and disaster” (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 6). Reflective thought is close to self-critical thought. For Nietzsche, thought that is not critical is dogmatic thought. Critical thought retains vitality and freedom of thought when

it is able to raise and position different perspectives for investigating the reality and when it is not afraid of criticizing accepted philosophical thought, religious principles and, as we shall see below, science.

In order to summarize the second heutagogical characteristic, Nietzsche (who, at the time, was a young professor) is quoted here – a quote that completely reflects the heutagogical spirit:

The aim that lies before me is to become a really practical teacher and to be able to awaken the necessary reflection and self-examination in young people which will enable them always to keep the why, the what, and the how (in Jonas & Yacek, 2019, p. 2).

The Third Principle

The way in which the students advance is directed by the students. This is not another dictate and it does not obligate further methodological, organized and planned progress (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). The heutagogical students research their topics of interest in a way that appears good to them and in a way they see as helping them understand. They are not required to research them in one way. They are not subject to uniform, methodological rules. The students, who direct themselves, are neither obligated to work according to the rules of the scientific method nor to follow the rules of scientific truth that lead researchers in their work.

As a result, different heutagogical students may arrive at a variety of research results that differ from how accepted science practice perceives reality, as it appears, for example, in the curriculum. Furthermore, it is clear that heutagogy does not require reaching a certain result, which is already known. Given this,

the heutagogical study allows for and encourages a multiplicity of viewpoints concerning research topics. It reflects one of Nietzsche's important innovations concerning science.

Nietzsche rejected the possibility that science was the sole authoritative and superior source for understanding life, in general, and the educational process, in specific. In this context, he opposed scientism, which is the excessive reverence for science, characterized by the uncritical acceptance of its premises and conclusions, and the belief that science is the sole means of discovering truth (Cristy, 2023).

However, he did not doubt the usefulness of science and its products and he even saw scientific experiments as an important tool that could facilitate the crystallization of our perception of the world. Nietzsche did not oppose science itself, but rather the scientific pretension that refuses to acknowledge the fact that science is only one way of interpreting the world. He averred that science ignores the fact that it provides a description that may turn out to be erroneous or incomplete concerning some part of the world. In other words, it is a pretense that forgets that science is not more real than any other interpretation (Nehamas, 1985, p. 65). In this spirit, Nietzsche termed science, "gay science." He argued that science is not objective, and that the correspondence theory of truth that traditionally stands at its basis, is impossible. He further argued that there are no axioms upon which it is imperative to construct the picture of the world and that there are no facts in the world, only interpretations and perspectives (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 267).

Nietzsche did not only mean to reject the "awkward," "gloomy" and "serious" nature of science (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 182). When he used the adjective, "gay," he also wanted to illuminate the artistic aspect of science. As a result, he did not

perceive science as engaging in reductionism and reducing understandings to one correct formula, but rather as an opening to an unlimited number of perspectives on life's abundance: "[T]hat existence and the world appear justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon" (Nietzsche, 2009, p. 82). The meaning of this is that life should be approached as a creation of art and, thus, should not apply epistemological, moral or scientific criteria to it.

Nietzsche thought it impossible to overcome the gap between the subject and the object via scientific criteria, such as truth and falsehoods, or causal relations. The only way a subject can know the object external to her/him is through the aesthetic-artistic perception that is neither definitive nor real. Knowledge of the world is only possible in a specific, limited way – in the perception of life as a creation of art and the interpretation of it as such.

Moreover, he thought that due to the artistic characteristic of the perspectives, there is only the illusion of truth. In his opinion, it is impossible to avoid the mistake in perception of reality since “the conditions of life might include error” (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 117). For him There is no such a thing as objective knowledge (Zupancić, 2003). There is no set reality that waits for its veracity to be discovered. The reality that he saw was dynamic and frequently changing.

In consideration of space constraints, it is pertinent to briefly highlight two of Nietzsche's additional critiques of science. Both of them, in effect, reflect the heutagogical idea that encourages students to research their topics in their own ways. The first criticism was his rejection of the widespread argument that scientific explanation, which is based on causality that supposedly exists in nature, is real. Instead of the world “explanation,” he wrote “description” (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 113).

The second criticism was his attack on the Law of Identity. Nietzsche (2001, p. 110) denied “that there are identical things.” Without a Law of Identity, the permanent object does not exist. Therefore, according to the philosopher, science’s attempts to identify and discover universal and constant laws of nature cannot succeed in correctly describing the dynamic, constantly changing reality.

In light of all of this, it can be asserted that, according to Nietzsche, there is no necessity to add science in the school curriculum.

Nietzsche altered the meaning of the concept "truth" and, in doing so, offered an ontological understanding of the world: the truth, in its traditional and accepted meaning, no longer exists (Nietzsche, 1979, p. 84).

As a result, truth and reason are perspectives that became conventions:

This is the greatest error that has ever been committed [...] one believed one possessed a criterion of reality in the forms of reason, while in fact one possessed them in order to become master of reality, in order to misunderstand reality in a shrewd manner (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 315).

However, he added: “We simply have no organ for knowing, for 'truth': we 'know' (or believe or imagine) exactly as much as is useful to the human herd” (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 214).

Nietzsche was also critical of the perspective that sanctifies reason, since he saw it as an instrument that served as self-deception and lies: therefore, it is, in effect, nihilism in disguise. This is because that, according to this perspective, anything that lacks justification and rests solely on total logic has no value. As a result, more and more things are discovered as lacking justification; they lose their

power and the world, which is lacking worthy things, is advancing toward nihilism (Schacht, 199, pp. 25-34). However, after the demystification of reason, and admission that it is human and not derived from an absolute authoritative, high body, this perspective can serve as a useful practical instrument when the individual is in contact and in negotiations with the world.

In light of these conceptual underpinnings, it is conceivable and cogent to surmise that Nietzsche would have praised studies undertaken by heutagogy students, since they produce diverse perspectives through which the students interpret the topics of their research.

The Fourth Principle

The students are the actors and the acted upon of the learning process (Blaschke & Hase, 2021): “because he speaks and writes to himself and for himself” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 136). Indeed, borrowing Paulo Freire's (1972) concept of "banking education," where teachers "deposit" information into students' minds, there is no Nietzschean equivalent of this model, in which learners passively internalize knowledge from external sources. For Nietzsche, the essence of learning lies in the authentic, independent creation of knowledge by the students themselves.

Nietzsche perceived authenticity as complete freedom that also liberates the learners from the chains of rationality. It is only a free person, who works without limits, who can know her/himself and creates her/his authentic power. A person such as this will have their own will to power: s/he will internally activate her/himself and will overcome inhibitions and shortcomings found within. This is a “free spirit” who desires responsibility and is prepared to take responsibility for her/his life (Sigad, 1990). “The term 'free spirit' here is not to be understood

in any other sense: it means a spirit that has become free, that has again taken possession of itself" (Nietzsche, 1983, p. 283). In other words, the learner is a significant actor in his/her educational process and her/his actions are directed inside, toward her/himself. According to Nietzsche's approach, the person in the learning process, who alone chooses the path and creates the laws, may prefer to choose the approach of rationality as her/his way in the world. This is one perspective and it is a legitimate choice, like all other choices made in life, even if it is not choosing "the truth" and even if it turns out to be a false path: "[...] a renunciation of false judgments would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life" (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 7). Nietzsche added that there is no objective truth revealed to the person; s/he must discover his/her subjective truth that s/he experienced as authentic. In this spirit, Nietzsche instructed learners, which, of course, include the heutagogical learner:

No one can construct for you the bridge upon which precisely you must cross the stream of life, no one but you yourself alone. There are, to be sure, countless paths and bridges and demi-gods which would bear you through this stream; but only at the cost of yourself: you would put yourself in pawn and lose yourself. There exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you: whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 129).

Nietzsche removed the responsibility of education from the teachers and parents and placed it on the active-acted upon learners themselves: "As a thinker one should speak only of self-education" (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 374). The learners are responsible for their learning and they have the responsibility of persevering with their self-study, even if it turns out that they erred and taught themselves false content.

Critical questions may be raised here about the heutagogical-Nietzschean approach to education. Anything goes? – in Feyerabend's (1993) terminology.

Are there no external criteria for the examination of what the student found and learned? Is there a complete lack of criteria – as wide and open as they might be – for the evaluation of the perspective according to the heutagogical and Nietzschean researchers?

The heutagogical answer and, in essence, also the Nietzschean answer to these questions, and similar questions, are clear: they were discussed above, in the presentation of the heutagogical idea. The students are the authentic actors of their educational process. In the end of the learning process, it is not the teachers or the parents, the friends or any others who can evaluate their work. It is the students alone who evaluate what they did: “It is not only the spectators of an act who usually assess its morality or immorality according to whether or not it is successful: no, the performer himself does so” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 44).

According to Nietzsche, in all of these steps, the learners are not required to meet any external criteria. This is because the person with positive power does not need the approval of the environment in order to feel that s/he possesses a true, authentic and vital powerful spirit. Indeed, Nietzsche demands authenticity from the learner. “Be yourself! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 127). This is exactly what the heutagogical idea demands and hopes for.

The Fifth Principle

The learners learn how to learn (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). During their heutagogical investigation, the learners, like the Nietzschean learners, train themselves in a way of learning that is appropriate for them. This is not one type of learning that suits everybody. This is the unique way for each person to learn and each one finds the way by engaging in inner reflection: the students look at

themselves, at what they love, at what excites them and at what they want. They even learn what learning environment is suited to them and their research.

For example, Nietzsche researched himself and the world via hikes and contemplations in the Alps, as opposed to in a closed room, in an auditorium or at the library (Nietzsche, 2016).

Heutagogical learning, like Nietzschean learning, requires learners to remain authentic throughout their learning. They must remain loyal to themselves.

only the truly educated person is granted the priceless treasure of being allowed to remain faithful to the contemplative instincts of his childhood, and so he attains a peace, unity, communion, and harmony” (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 53). The students learn by themselves how to learn, but they are aided by educators who facilitate them, help them and direct their learning direction: “Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 129). For the student who wishes to learn by following her/his teacher’s-educator’s footsteps, Nietzsche proposes independent learning, which is, in essence, the way that the worthy educator works: “Be a man and do not follow me - but yourself! Yourself (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 98).

Nietzsche pointed out that educators are required to teach their students “to see, think, speak and write” (Nietzsche, 1997a, p. 48). He thought that these actions, which are the most basic components of education, the tools with which one can learn how to learn, could not be acquired without the aid of educators. There is no interest in content of a specific kind, but rather only in the learning itself. The students need to learn how to learn and the educators are the ones who provide them with guidance and help in acquiring this knowledge (Small, 2016

This is also true for the heutagogical educator: for the students, this approach is a wonderful educational model. It serves as inspiration for their personal elevation, even if this elevation does not lead them to intellectual or spiritual heights of the model educator (Jonas, 2016). It provides them with the same basis of how to learn. As much as possible, it is important to give students opportunities to choose the educator they want. This model educator is neither obligated to work according to any closed curriculum nor to use any given written sources that s/he gives the students to read: "But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books" (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 137).

An educator such as this, like Schopenhauer was for Nietzsche, serves as an example of investigation that focuses on the "how," not on the "what" (Schacht, 1995). The content of the learning is not what is important, but rather the way one learns.

The heutagogical educator, like the Nietzschean educator, is no longer a teacher or a lecturer. From this point on, s/he is a facilitator, mentor, enabler, advisor or someone who provides security to the students. S/he may even be a friend and there are those who think that when we read Nietzsche, as if he was our educator, we read him as a friend and not as a teacher (Babich, 2019). Of course, the traditional and customary role of the teacher-educator undergoes a transformation. When the learners, during their education, discover themselves: "here begins the task of the thinker; now the time has come to call on him for assistance - not as an educator but as one who has educated himself and who thus knows how it is done" (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 174).

As we saw, Nietzschean learning has no system. There is not just one path on which to progress in learning and research. Therefore, in Nietzsche's opinion, any result of study that was chosen by the learners is legitimate, even if

they made mistakes and got lost. Wandering in the spaces of the researched problem and its solutions is the essence of heutagogy, and this is also what Nietzsche stated: “a man never rises higher than when he does not know whither his path can still lead him” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 129).

Epilogue

Indeed, heutagogy is underpinned by a philosophy of education that carries significant implications for policy development, challenging traditional views of knowledge, its meaning, value, and legitimate sources. It redefines our understanding of teaching and learning, transforming the roles of both teachers and students. Furthermore, heutagogy questions the conventional belief that education should have a single, universal aim for all learners, and rejects the notion that learning must be confined to the rigid structure of a school setting or a fixed timetable.

This article presents a perspective that posits Nietzsche's approach to the heutagogical concept as a developing diachronic process. Initially, students receive knowledge from teachers in a non-heutagogical manner. Gradually, students evolve and become more autonomous, eventually becoming heutagogical learners who continue learning throughout their lives, according to their chosen methods, contingent upon the success of the educational process. In conclusion, and in transitioning to the practical-educational aspect, it is proposed to augment the Nietzschean developmental axis by introducing a synchronic dimension, while retaining the principles of Nietzschean educational philosophy and maintaining allegiance to the heutagogical concept.

At the inception of the educational process, the predominant emphasis lies with the instructors, who possess the knowledge disseminated to their youthful charges.

At the same time, the educational work of the teachers, as early as in the young elementary school years, and in the following process, increases and widens to include training the students in independent and self-learning, alongside the learning of knowledge, which comes from “the knowledge holders.” In this ongoing educational process, which lasts for a person’s lifetime, the learners will gradually become free and they will engage in autonomous investigation of the topics that interest them. Together with this, in the content areas that demand uniform canonical knowledge, the heutagogical students will learn synchronically, parallel to their independent research, this required canonical knowledge. This knowledge will come from teachers or books that have been designated as canonical by canonical teachers or books.

The description of these things and the Nietzschean-heutagogical process that was proposed here leaves three important questions open that are waiting for Nietzschean answers and that will need to be addressed in the future.

The first question that needs to be addressed relates to the way that learning occurs: does each student study by her/himself or in a group? The heutagogical thinkers recommend learning in groups and this is because, in this way, the communication skills of the learners improve and the knowledge that the group’s research produces is richer than when undertaken alone (Glassner & Back, 2020). Nietzsche’s answer to this question is not as clear. On the one hand, he rejected group work when he wrote about independent, individual work: “And this is how Schopenhauer's philosophy should also always be interpreted at first: individually, by the individual only for himself, so as to gain

insight into his own want and misery, into his own limitedness” (Nietzsche, 1997b, p. 142). On the other hand, however, there are places where Nietzsche actually recommends learning together (Small, 2016) and even calls for relinquishing traditional teachers and schools:

Now that self-education and fraternal education are becoming more general, the teacher must, in the form he now normally assumes, become almost redundant. *Friends anxious to learn who want to acquire knowledge of something together* can find in our age of books a shorter and more natural way than 'school' and 'teacher' are (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 353, my emphasis).

Eilon (2015) also extracted the idea from Nietzsche’s thought that creative, independent work leads to real cooperation between different people in a group, even if each person develops independent creative work and they retain their uniqueness as part of or within the group. These two opposing positions concerning the issue provide an opening to a complex discussion and require examining the possibility of bridging them within the framework of Nietzsche’s thought.

The second question is: did Nietzsche really believe that all learners are armed with the needed energy to venture into the loneliness and the difficulty of the desert, in the lion stage, and to continue on from there, to the child stage and to independent, heutagogical learning, in which they determine for themselves what path to take?

The third question to ask of Nietzschean thought concerns the truthfulness of the picture of worthy education that he described and which later matched heutagogy to some extent. Does this picture provide only one non-obligatory perspective? Is it the "correct" perspective?

The potential Nietzschean responses to these overarching, critical inquiries reiterate the cautionary approach espoused at the outset of this discourse: one needs to be cautious when reading Nietzsche. It is important to remember that his thought is multi-faceted. It is also important to pay attention to the context in which he wrote and to understand that any writing that attempts to interpret his ideas, like the one that appears in this essay, offers just one of the many possible perspectives that have attempted to deeply understand his ideas.

Declaration of interest statement

I declare I have no known conflict of interests that are directly or indirectly related to this work.

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