The Didactics of Emotion Education

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According to the reigning *cognitive theories* of emotion, human emotions are, in principle, answerable to reason and amenable to cultivation and coaching, as well as being crucial ingredients in a well-rounded, moral life (e.g. de Sousa, 1987). These theories have obvious educational implications. If their assumptions about the essential rationality and morality of the emotions are correct, educationalists must ask how precisely we can aid the young in the construction and regulation of their emotions. Unfortunately, philosophers and psychologists, even those highly interested in the morality of emotions, are generally loath to descend to such particularities and practicalities. Some feign ignorance of techniques and teaching methods; others positively take pride in not producing a formal program of study. For instance, David Carr, in his otherwise enlightening book about moral development and education, chooses to «remain obstinately unrepentant» about not engaging in any discussion of moral didactics, the role of which he consigns to that of «the largely vacuous or the downright fatuous.»

Carr is probably right in that most of the «major mistakes about the moral educational role of the teacher» (1991, p. 8) can be traced to misconceptions about the nature of moral knowledge and moral development rather than to faults in curriculum theory or pedagogical techniques (Kristjansson, 2000c). Nevertheless, it would be a matter for grave concern if all moral philosophers were as eager as Carr to weasel themselves out of responsibility for the implementation of their ideas about moral and emotional excellence in educational contexts, by shunning entirely the form of such education while claiming (with good reasons) to have a lot to say about its *contents.* A stringent form-content dichotomy would, at any rate, be completely at odds here with the Aristotelian hands-on approach to moral education; an approach on which Carr for one draws considerably when exploring the nature of a moral life. Being myself employed as a professor of philosophy in a department of education, aiming to educate professional teachers rather than professional philosophers, I would - unlike Carr - feel repentant if I did not make some effort to clarify and examine, if not prescribe, the pedagogical options available to a teacher concerned with the moral and emotional upbringing of his pupils. Such examination is the purpose of the present essay. It is, after all, as Aristotle says, actual practice that improves the states of people's souls rather than merely taking «refuge in arguments, thinking that they are doing philosophy» (1985, 1105b).

While academic discourse on moral education tends to be primarily school-oriented, I cannot resist the temptation to preface my discussion of moral didactics with a brief reminder about the role of the home. Everyone knows that «parents are patterns,» and one risks being platitudinous by adding anything to the concise veracity of that proverb. Nevertheless, the common relegation of the family context for moral and emotional development to academic sidelines might indicate that the positive role of parents in fostering such development is at least under-researched, if not under-appreciated. For instance, Lawrence Walker points out that relatively little research has been carried out on the early socialization of emotions (1999, p. 264)[1]. Yet, as far as I know, no eminent psychologist or philosopher has ever seriously questioned Aristotle's view that parents' early reciprocation and interaction with their children is crucial for character formation, in particular for the development of normal emotional reactions; the basis for which may be laid in intimate moments of parent-child attunement at the infant stage. More research has been done on the effects of negative and positive parenting on the self-image and moral behavior of older children and teenagers, research which predominantly seems to take its cue from Diana Baumrind's helpful distinction between four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejective-neglecting (1991, and numerous subsequent papers). Her findings, which have been confirmed in various contexts and places, strongly suggest that an *authoritative* parenting style, which combines consistent rules and strict limits with loving acceptance, is more conducive to self-understanding, self-discipline, and social responsibilities (for example, avoidance of smoking, drinking, and drug abuse) than other styles. Indeed, one can conclude that (overly) authoritarian, permissive, or neglecting parenting is a likely, if not a certain, recipe for emotional imbalance and moral/social maladjustment.

Even though Aristotle was famously skeptical of the prospects of other forms of moral teaching for the young than habituation, he emphasized that such habituation should not only take place in the home but also come within the province of communal education and «legislative science». He thus deemed it vitally important that «the community attends to upbringing, and attends correctly» (1985, 1180a). While one may infer from his writings that the school had better enlist the help of parents to cater for individual needs, since they know their children better than the teacher (1985, 1180b), there is no doubt that any consistent Aristotelian must acknowledge the school's crucial role in moral education. Moreover, contemporary Aristotelianism, refurbished so as to be more sanguine of subsequent moral influence to correct rather than merely polish the effects of early habituation (e.g. Sherman, 1993; 1997) - will accept that even when a child's home environment has in some ways been hostile and denigrating, the school may act as an important «value preserve» (Nisan, 1996), advocating moral ideals and stabilizing unbalanced emotions. It is to the school, then, and its role in cultivating proper emotions that we must now turn.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Any overview of «tools and techniques» of emotional regulation must start with the simplest one: *behavior control.* However unsympathetic we may be to the Aristotelian fixation on habituation, there is no denying the fact that a pupil rewarded in class for compassionate behavior is not only likely to *display* such behavior again but also truly to experience compassion in similar contexts. One need not be an out-and-out behaviorist to appreciate the power of the stimulus-response mechanism. Nor is there nec-

essarily anything unsophisticated about keeping children away from objects which can evoke harmful emotions; not letting children go to night clubs or watch sex and violence on the movie screen is, after all as Aaron Ben-Ze'ev correctly notes, a simple but effective (or so we think) form of emotion regulation (2000, p. 240). Further, old-fashioned instruction and drill do no doubt work up to a point in instilling moral attitudes. The old saying about spoon-feeding not teaching us much else than the shape of the spoon may be correct, but that is fine as long as the shape of the spoon is itself a useful thing to know. However, even when relying on mere orders and exhortations, or formal codes of conduct, it is vital that the teacher, as well as the parent, supplement the do's and don'ts from the very beginning with the how's and why's. For though the children may still be too young to grasp the significance of the explanations, they will at least learn that arguments matter: that any injunction to feel this or that emotion or to exhibit this or that behavior is mindless and void unless backed up by a moral rationale.

Another powerful tool of behavior control is «bootstrapping.» Being forced to act out an emotion, that is engage in actions associated with the relevant emotion, can in the end lead to its internalization (e.g. de Sousa, 1987, p. 11). (It is no coincidence that the male opera lead so often truly falls in love with the female lead!) Similarly, we can to a certain extent defuse an emotion by inhibiting the behavioral responses that typically accompany it. The truth that earnest pretense may, in some cases, be the royal road to sincere beliefs could perhaps be exploited in the classroom through role-games where moral emotions are displayed and learnt, as well as in community-service projects where the pupils get into the habit of being compassionate through repeated compassionate actions.

The effects of direct behavior control notwithstanding, the old truth remains that he teaches best who lives best himself. The teacher cannot avoid being a *role* model for his pupils, be it a positive or a negative one, and he cannot prevent them from modeling their emotional responses on his in many ways: adopting his patterns of believing, desiring, and doing. This is precisely why there is really no alternative to emotion education in the classroom. William Damon suggests that the school should bring more positive role models (moral achievers from public life) into the classroom for pupils to observe, identify with, and emulate (1988, p. 152). Such deployment, as well as careful attention to the general ethos of the school itself as an institution, is laudable; yet nothing can replace the direct precedent set by the teacher himself. Not to put too fine a point on it, a good teacher must be a good person, a person who can, in David Carr's words, demonstrate «to children through his own conduct what decent and principled attitudes and behaviour towards others are like and how they enrich a human life» (1991, p. 12).

I would strongly recommend here, as a mandatory reading for all prospective teachers, Nietzches's essay on «Schopenlfauer as Educator» (1983). There, Nietzsche - drawing on an example from his own life - argues how a teacher can and must be a *moral exemplar,* presenting excellences to which his students can attain. Such exemplification does not consist in the instillation of a desire to imitate the exemplar, to be exactly like him, but rather in the capacity to be provoked by his example and to see it just like that, namely as an example of how a fulfilling life can be lived and what it involves, morally and emotionally. The important prerequisite here is that of first gaining the pupils' trust and, subsequently, being worthy of that trust. Instead of a simple copycat-effect, the trust in the moral exemplar can, then, enhance the pupils' self-understanding and critical honing of their own characters.

Self-understanding is a key word in this context. On a cognitive view of emotions, the most powerful techniques to regulate emotions will be those which prompt the student to examine critically his emotion-beliefs and to reorient them if necessary. The problem with many unjustifiable emotions is not primarily that they are morally unfitting (although they are probably that as well), but rather that they are irrationally formed (Kristjansson, 1999)[2]. For instance, irrational self-deceptions undoubtedly play a big part in such common emotions as disgust of other races, fear of ghosts and spiders, and so forth. The most profound and enduring effects on the emotions, particularly in young people whose belief-systems are still more flexible than those of their elders, are effects that change the heart by changing belief. In order to change one's beliefs, however, one must know what those beliefs are. So what is needed at the outset is precisely self-understanding in the most transparent and untechnical sense of the term[3]. Although Freud's «talking cure» contained much theoretical baggage that I do not want to carry, it at least highlighted this simple truth about the necessity of self-knowledge. Sometimes, after we have realized what we really believe, belief-change is not even required but merely a re-ordering of beliefs and a change of perspective. For instance, flight attendants reportedly learn to defuse their anger towards an obnoxious passenger not by changing their beliefs about the obnoxiousness of his behavior, but rather by focusing on another distinct belief, namely that this is probably a person suffering deep down from serious fear of flying (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, p. 230).

In the course of our exploration of emotion regulation at school the basic question, then, is: Which technique serves best the cognitive-theory ideal of reorienting (by dint of actual belief-change or the refocusing of beliefs) emotions through the critical work of reason? Carr maintains that no fundamental moral virtues can be learnt in any context of socialization or education apart from the example of parents, teachers, and peers (1991, p. 9). While I agree with the importance of the moral exemplar, described above, for this purpose, I think that another method may be at least equally effective; a method that can be summed up in two words as stories and *discussions.* These two normally go together; however, before talking about the discussion of stories in the classroom, let me say something about the stories themselves.

Stories of various kinds - myths, legends, fairy-tales, tragedies - have always served as a powerful tool of self-definition, self-clarification, and socialization, especially for young people. Such stories acquaint the young with the way in which human beings react, well or badly, to life's vicissitudes, and more generally speaking, with what it means to be human[4]. However educationally untrendy, there is surely nothing wrong with giving a child a book to read that we think will reinforce morally fitting emotions and kind deeds; nor is there anything blameworthy about the time-honored technique of reading a story to young children and driving home its «moral» (Sommers, 1993). Any experienced librarian will be able to suggest various books and stories that can serve this purpose[5]. So even in default of time and opportunity to do anything more with the stories (for instance owing to the infamous «lack of space in the curriculum»), simply reading them or having them read can have positive moral value.

However, ideally, we should do something more with the stories. Various research findings show that peer discussion, led by an enthusiastic and experienced teacher, can heighten pupils' awareness of moral issues. Their moral vision becomes enlarged by the generation of alternative possibilities as they listen to and reflect on a story and exchange views on how and why the characters felt and acted in this

way or that. How should they have felt? How should they have acted? Through grappling with questions of that kind, in the relaxed atmosphere of a «sharing circle» (Schilling, 1996) or a «community of inquiry» (see below), children's conclusions and choices, tempered by critical evaluation of those of their peers, will hopefully strengthen their self-respect, and issue, step by step, in a genuine foundation for moral and emotional excellence (Guin, 1993). The teacher plays a key role here: He has to find space for group discussions of this kind within the already-packed curriculum, choose the appropriate stories, and guide the discussion along the right path. People such as Matthew Lipman and Gareth Matthews have made the teacher's job here all the easier; Lipman with his specially constructed philosophical novels for children, and Matthews with his suggestions of how already-existing children's literature can be used as a source for philosophical inquiry in the classroom.

The mentioning of Lipman and Matthews is very much to the point, for the philosophy-for-children (P4C) movement, that they represent, has probably developed the most advanced technique of classroom discussion abroad in the field. Lipman suggests that the classroom be converted into a community of *inquiry* in which pupils learn to «listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions» (1991, p. 15). What is more, Lipman and his followers have devised various tools and tips for practical implementation on how to establish and run such a community.

It is no coincidence that the best thought-out blueprint for the teaching of emotional virtue in the classroom that I have yet seen comes from Lipman (1995). In his article on how to use philosophy to educate emotions, Lipman first highlights the typical cognitive-theory insights on how we can learn to distinguish reasonable from unreasonable modes of feeling, much as we can learn to distinguish reasonable from unreasonable forms of inference. Since children are reasonable creatures - sometimes even more reasonable than their elders - they can also learn to value appropriately what has value, in the realm of the emotions, providing they are given a chance to do so: the right method, the right time, and the right setting. Within the friendly but intellectually challenging atmosphere of a community of inquiry, children will thus gradually be able to realize that «Harry has no good reason to be ashamed for providing an incorrect answer to the teacher's question» or that «Harry's resentment of Lisa is inappropriate,» to give two of examples from stories that Lipman discusses:

> *Our little, surreptitious community of inquiry (. .. J whispers together about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of what happened and of the emotions manifested, and we struggle shakily towards a verdict. It is a verdict we do not forget, when it comes to be our turn to select the emotion that will alter the face we turn towards the world* (1995, p. 4).

Having made myself somewhat familiar with the P4C-movement, for instance by attending one of its biannual world conferences, I believe there is a lot to admire in the way it attacks the venerable problem of a philosophical teaching method for the young. I take the P4C-methodology to be particularly useful in handling - clarifying and critically reordering - moral and emotional attitudes, as well as revealing common logical truths and blunders. However, a motley group of people, representing various distinct philosophical assumptions and agendas, has gathered together under the rubric of P4C. That

diversity, on the one hand, and on the other hand a certain tendency within the movement to view itself as an isolated philosophical sect, both give reasons for concern. P4C can never be the only word or the last word on moral education; as we have already seen in this section there are various other ways, apart from the strict procedure of a community of inquiry, to stimulate moral and emotional growth. Of dubious value is also the claim of some P4C-enthusiasts that the community of inquiry is *the* teaching method for *all* subjects at school. Peer discussion in the classroom does not get off the ground unless the pupils have some preconceptions - prejudices, if you will - on which to work. In the case of emotions and moral attitudes, there is fortunately no shortage of those. However, I am at a loss to understand what could be the starting points of discussion for pupils at the beginning of their first algebra class, to take one example.

Most disconcerting is, however, the idea emanating from some P4C-writings (I exclude Lipman and Matthews here) that a conclusion, moral or otherwise, arrived at in a community of inquiry is true simply in virtue of having been arrived at in a certain formally correct way. A Platonic *Euthypro-type* of question crops up: Is the conclusion not (hopefully) arrived at in such a community because it is true, rather than being true because it is arrived at there? I must admit, on a personal note, that sometimes when listening to P4C-enthusiasts I am reminded of an old Chinese fable about a man from the state of Chu who wanted to sell a precious pearl in the state of Zheng. He made a casket for the pearl out of the wood of a magnolia tree, which he fumigated with fragrant osmanthus and spices. He then ornamented the casket with pearls and jade. A man from the state of Zheng bought the casket, but gave him back the pearl. The upshot was that the man from Chu certainly knew how to sell a casket but was no good at selling pearls. However enamoured we are of the methods of P4C, we must never forget that what we want our pupils to buy in the end is the pearl, not the casket. P4C must thus be kept uninfected of moral formalism, and of liberalist (not to mention postmodernist) relativism (Kristjansson, 2000a) about *the good,* which is the pearl inside the casket, if it is to retain its credibility as a handy teaching method. In spite of these caveats, I believe that teachers interested in helping pupils enhance their morally-inspired emotional intelligence have a lot to learn from the P4C-movement in general, and from Lipman in particular.

I have yet to mention one subject which I think can help pupils considerably in understanding and mastering their own emotional geography, namely *art.* Unfortunately, modern times have seen art being sidelined in the school curriculum: relegated from its ancient role of a fundamental school subject to that of a happy diversion, or an embellishment of the things which really matter at school. How far removed that is, for instance, from Aristotle's notion of the role of music which he thought could shape character and moral attitudes, with melodies conveying imitations and reflections of moral behavior and emotions. More specifically, Aristotle believed that music could habituate pupils to «true pleasures,» by balancing their emotions and purifying those of the extremes of excess and deficiency (1941, 1339a-1342b; see also Sherman, 1997, pp. 90-91). I could also have chosen Plato as an example here, as he tendered similar arguments about the edificatory role of music; so did in fact most educational theorists in ancient to medieval times.

Artistic activities at school, such as music, painting, imaginative play, and drama, can I think make at least a threefold contribution to emotional cultivation: They help pupils express and come to grips

with emotions which are too painful or hidden to surface in open discussion (for example grief over parental loss); they enable them to put themselves into other people's shoes (assuming in imagination the others' emotions), and they have a general balancing and organizing effect on pupils' emotional life. My ideal school would emphasize the five is (reading, writing, arithmetic, right, and wrong) and it would do so, to a considerable extent, not only through Socratic (P4C) dialogues, but also through the wholesome workings of art.

To bring this overview to a close, I would like to mention a particular school where many of the techniques mentioned above have been put into practice, reportedly with considerable success. This happens to be the world's largest school: The City Montessory School (CMS), a non-profit, non-sectarian establishment for children from kindergarten age to 12th grade, in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, with almost 20,000 pupils and 15 local branches. Notably, the four theoretical «building blocks» of the school are all of a moral nature: *Universal values* (belief in the capacities of all children to learn moral virtues, daily reflections on universal virtues, use of moral ideals and exemplars, value education of parents, teacher training in value-based education, etc.); *Excellence* (moral and emotional excellence as the foundation of academic excellence); *Global Understanding* (exchange programs, early exposure to different cultures and religions with emphasis on the interhuman, promotion of activities for building world peace); and Service (extensive community service projects in collaboration with parents and teachers). The CMS has aroused attention both nationally and internationally for the outstanding academic results of its pupils (outscoring all other Indian schools on national exams, pupils winning an unmatched number of statewide merit scholarships, etc.) - which seems to indicate that the ideology «morally good makes academically good» really works (Cottom, 1996).

Being, as many, disillusioned with repeated «eureka»-cries from educationalists, I found myself skeptical of all the wonder stories coming from Lucknow. However, after having had a chance to converse with Mrs Bharti Gandhi, who with her husband founded the CMS forty years ago with only five students, and listen to reports by colleagues who have visited the school, I believe that it may well be more than yet another nine days' wonder. Of even more significance than the school's emphasis on moral education as such is the assumption that mere knowledge of moral ideals and principles is not enough: that children must learn to translate ideals into practice. The CMS's moral education program thus goes beyond critical analysis and intellectual appreciation, by trying to connect knowledge of the good to volition and desire and, generally speaking, to the children's character formation (Cottom, 1996, p. 55). Good moral deeds flow from a good moral character, and such character requires - perhaps more than anything else - balanced and cultivated emotions.

As far as tools and techniques are concerned, the CMS does not provide any new, original solutions: It simply makes eclectic use - good use, or so it seems - of the methods already sketched: behavior control, bootstrapping, moral exemplars, reflections, discussions, and art. Evidently, the main pedagogical lessons to learn from this Indian school are, *first,* that all these laudable methods only work, or at least work best, if value education has already been incorporated into the teacher-training program (the CMS tellingly runs such a program itself), and teachers and parents work together on modeling the values and supporting the child; and *second,* that to cultivate virtues in children, teachers need to integrate moral education into the larger fabric of learning. The correct way to teach emotional virtue is

thus not to create one more new class but to blend lessons on emotions with the subjects already taught (see also Goleman, 1995, p. 312). Emotions are, after all, an integral part of human pursuits, and to study life is, in many ways, to study people's emotions, including one's own.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, there may well be a grain of truth in John Deigh's bleak message about some emotions being «ineducable,» essentially unresponsive to reason, as one's susceptibility to them in certain contexts is fixed and cannot change (1994, p. 851). However, the younger the child is, the less likely it is for its emotional reactions to have got into a rut. At any rate, we should, with the help of the didactic repertoire that I have outlined, try our best at school to work on the educable part of children's emotional terrain; for without rationally formed and morally fitting emotions they can never - whatever their academic credentials are - lead a good human life.

Before turning these suggestions into practical account in the classroom, we must, however, reconsider the background, role, and responsibilities of the teacher. A good teacher must be his pupils' keeper: act (as we have already seen) as a moral exemplar himself, shepherd to the best of his abilities their moral and emotional development, and make reflective use of the didactics of emotion education. Initiation into the practice of teaching should mean that teachers had acquired the appropriate set of virtues and skills to be capable moral educators. Nevertheless, the sad fact is that most teacher-training programs fail to prepare teachers for work on moral and interpersonal issues; as a consequence of which teachers frequently express insecurity about how to address such issues in the classroom (Aoalbjarnardottir, 1999, p. 62). Carr even talks about a «conspiracy of silence» among teacher educators on this topic (1991, p. 10). Teacher trainees need to work on their own discursive skills in philosophical dialogues with their own peers before they can reproduce and conduct such dialogues in the classroom (Daniel, 1996). The prospective teacher must be taught to make himself an intelligent judge of character, and to realize that if he does not exercise his judgment on the developing character of his pupils, they will be the sole judges of each other. Most importantly of all, he must learn to forget any nonsense he might have swallowed earlier about being morally neutral, endlessly tolerant, and non-judgmental (Pincoffs, 1986, pp. 172-174). Instead, he should ideally develop a keen sense of moral appropriateness, to distinguish between morally fitting and unfitting actions and emotions, and to convey this sense to his pupils through the methods outlined above.

Unfortunately, without the appreciation and implementation of these truths in teacher-training programs, any suggestions to the effect that teachers should help students promote morally valuable emotions will continue to fall on deaf ears and be of little avail.

NOTES

1. I particularly recommend Walker's essay here, as indeed the whole Semptember 1999 issue of *Journal of Moral Education* to which Walker's piece serves as an introduction. This issue, devoted to moral education and family life, offers a welcome antidote to the typical scholarly lack of engagement with parental influence on childrenis early character formation.

2. A special problem concerning the moral appropriateness of emotions is created by contrasting emotions which both/all seem to be fitting in the same circumstances, but are also mutually exclusive (Kristjansson, 2000b).

3. The obfuscating role of «self-understanding» in some popular psychological theories and every-day discourse (where all kinds of personal and moral progress tends to be referred to as «self-understanding») is another story.

4. No one has emphasized this point as lucidly and forcefully as Martha Nussbaum in her various well-known writings.

5. Brodie (1996) provides a helpful list of books arranged according to the different emotions highlighted in the respective stories, and she also suggests some clever book extension ideas.

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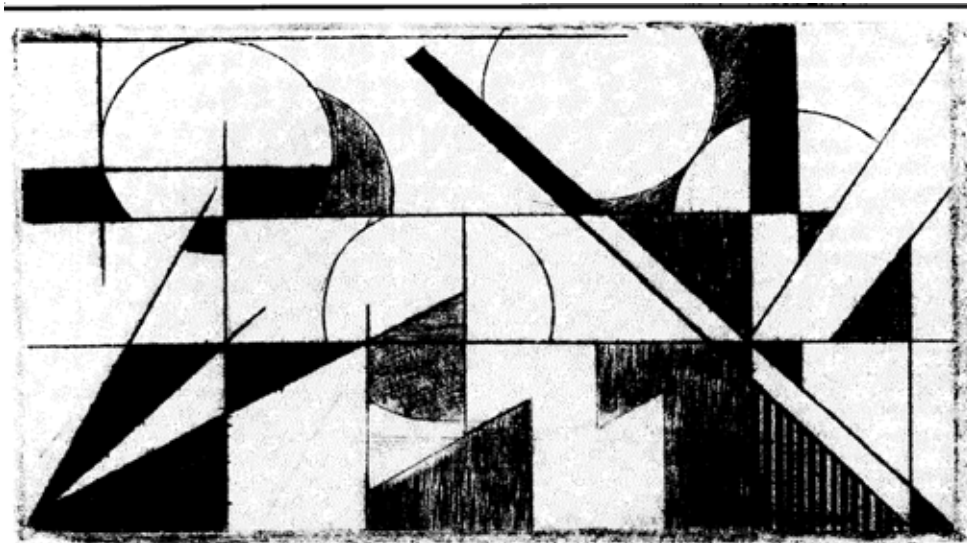**Dept. of Education**

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