EMOTION, IMAGINATION AND VIRTUE

IN

EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This essay addresses meta-ethical concerns related to educational aims and the teaching of ethics, in part, by examining the effects of societal changes on such teaching from a philosophical point of view, and in part by suggesting that the skills of critical reasoning stipulated in the curriculum are insufficient to the task of promoting civic engagement. A theory of ethical judgment based on the emotions as cognitive judgments of value and the imagination as a productive faculty that structures moral understanding in narrative form is presented. This is then related to virtue epistemology in order to show that emotions structure our knowledge about the world and are always ‘about something’, that is to say they have intentional content and constitute reasons for action. While emotions are generally regarded as belonging to a private realm this essay sees involvement of the emotions as related to participation in the public sphere. Virtues are seen as individual capacities which emerge from appropriately directed emotion. Virtue epistemology is thus agent-based rather than act based. While emotions cannot be taught, through methods of teaching that focus on aesthetics and ethics in combination virtue can be learned. The development of virtuous capacities should therefore be the aim of civic education.
Table of Contents
1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 4
2. THE AIMS OF EDUCATION ............................................................................................................... 8
3. PUBLIC/ PRIVATE AND SOCIAL .................................................................................................... 9
4. POSTMODERNISM AND EDUCATION ............................................................................................ 12
5. THE IMAGINATION AND ETHICS .................................................................................................. 15
6. CARE AND COMPASSION ............................................................................................................. 20
7. THE EMOTIONS AND THE POLITICAL .......................................................................................... 23
8. VIRTUE, EMOTION AND VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY ..................................................................... 29
9. CIVIC VIRTUE, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS ......................................................................... 32
10. CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................................. 35
11. REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................... 36
1. INTRODUCTION

Shifting boundaries of public and private spheres, changing spaces of social interaction and the ethos of postmodernism have contributed to increased complexity and difficulties for teachers in interpreting the aims of education and implementing the requirements of the curriculum as concerns moral and civic education. Currently stipulated as obligatory in almost all subjects, critical reasoning skills are seen as the ‘cure-all’ for the ills of apathy and lack of engagement in political life. Yet, apathy is an emotional response to which reason has no appeal and which in its most extreme form can have dire consequences for the individual and for society as a whole. As explained by Rollo May there is a dialectical relationship between apathy and violence: “Violence is the ultimate destructive substitute which surges in to fill the vacuum where there is no relatedness.” (1969, p. 30) “Relatedness”, or ‘connectedness’, as we might say today, is what motivates engagement in a community of others. It is the contention of this essay that engagement with the world is facilitated by, and indeed guided by, the emotions as judgments of value, aided by the productive faculty of the imagination. In other words, the emotions play a cognitive role in constituting reasons for civic action. This is not to say that emotions should be given priority over reason. As suggested by Martha Nussbaum, we “should (not) give emotions a privileged place of trust, or regard them as immune to rational criticism: for they may be no more reliable than any other set of entrenched beliefs.” (1996, p.2)

Admittedly, the ability to engage in democratic processes and deliberation is dependent on critical reasoning skills. The motivation to act is, however, incumbent upon an emotional response. Fostering a critical disposition thus needs to take into account a motivational impetus that is not based in reason alone. The dichotomy of reason and emotion is however not easily overcome.
The Cartesian division of body and mind as well as Freud’s psycho-analytic theory of repressed emotions places emotions as capricious impulses and drives which reason attempts to tame. Kant also views emotions with suspicion in regard to moral judgment. These are lingering conceptions which have become part of our intellectual heritage. Yet if we delve further, into the philosophy of ancient Greece, we will find that emotions play a far more significant role in reasoning. The familiar vision of Socrates depicts the charioteer holding the reins of his two steeds, one representing reason and the other the passions, steering them forcefully in the same direction. Aristotle, contrarily, sees emotions as intentional states with cognitive content that are constitutive of virtue. (Sherman 1997, p. 55) Nancy Sherman defines virtues as “character states that dispose us to respond well to the conditions of human life through both wisely chosen actions and appropriate emotions.” (1997, p.5)

On an Aristotelian account, as Sherman further explains, virtue is expressed, not merely in fine action, but in fine emotion as well; both action and emotion are morally praiseworthy aspects of character.” (ibid. p.24) Moral virtue is also defined by Aristotle as related to practical wisdom, or our “choice-making capacities” (ibid.), in which emotion plays an instrumental role. The virtue-theoretic stance of this essay is one in which there is a focus on virtuous capacities relevant to education. These capacities are, however, not to be confused with skills. Neither are actions in themselves virtuous or non-virtuous, as in an ethics of duty. Whereas ‘duty ethics’ is primarily concerned with action, virtue ethics focuses on the agent. The virtuous agent is nevertheless conceived of as wanting to do “what morality requires.” (ibid. p. 17) “What morality requires” is subject to the contingency of each particular situation of moral choice. A sense of duty universal in form may in such case not be applicable, or at any rate be a secondary consideration. Moral motivation is in this scenario conceived of as responsiveness to values and this responsiveness is intimately linked with an emotional response.
Sherman views emotions as being of central importance to ethics, but nevertheless concedes that, “the inclusion of emotions as part of what is ethically important faces notorious problems.” (1997, p.28) Modern approaches to moral education are derived from various schools of thought, but have predominantly been inspired by psycho-analytic theory and empirical research within the field of psychology; and more recently by neurobiological research and testing. While the latter is significantly supportive of the cognitive view of emotions espoused in this essay, the perspective of the essay is philosophical as well as didactic and not psychological. The reason for this is that I believe, along with Steutel and Carr (1999, p.3) that any justification of perspective on moral education must make an appeal to philosophical sources, whether epistemological, ethical or political. I intend in this essay to explain the importance of the emotions and the imagination by making an appeal, in part, to a philosophical stance which is both epistemological and ethical, connecting the emotions as judgments of value to Linda Zagzebski’s virtue philosophical discussion in *Virtues of the Mind*. I will also refer to political philosophy as regards the relation between politics and the emotions; an area of research that is pertinent to the context of this essay as well, and to the ideas expressed by Martha Nussbaum in her book, *Upheavals of Thought*, initially the inspiration for my own views. Nussbaum elaborates the philosophy of emotions as judgments of value which is the basis for the cognitive understanding of the emotions in this essay. Prior to sections dealing with these appeals, a discussion of postmodernism and education is intended to illustrate ways in which postmodern philosophy contributes to views of educational aims as regards moral education, as well as an understanding of the social construction of knowledge within a postmodern paradigm. With reference to the prevailing academic mistrust of foundations, we will be remiss if we fail to critically examine the repercussions of this mistrust. The essay will therefore, without seeking a polemical pose, in section three, examine ways in which postmodernism can be seen to undermine confidence in
attentiveness to the imagination and the emotions in teaching. Hopefully this analysis will serve to highlight the importance of developing new methods, or perhaps reviving former methods, in values education.

The essay will preface the above, in section two, with a discussion of the dichotomy of public/private in relation to the emotions (this following the first section of the essay, which constitutes a preliminary discussion of the aims of education). A conceptual placement of schools in a nexus of public and private allows for a problematizing of the concepts of public reason and private emotion and sheds light on the increasing ‘publicity’ of emotional life. The purpose of this is to question to what extent schools as public institutions embody a conception of reason and emotion that is out of step with society as a whole and if this then might contribute to a lack of the proper tools needed to cope adequately with socialization and democratization processes. I suggest that this be left an open question, to some extent, as the scope of the essay is limited.

To re-iterate then, as regards the skills of critical reasoning mentioned above, and as advocated in the curriculum, I have suggested that, while important, these skills are insufficient to the teaching of ethics. The furthering of democratic ideals in values education can only be achieved by appealing to the capacity for an understanding of our common humanity and this requires the engagement of the emotions as well as the imagination. As the title of another book by Martha Nussbaum suggests, the aim of education should be that of *Cultivating Humanity*, a momentous task to be sure.
2. THE AIMS OF EDUCATION

While specific goals of the curriculum are clearly stated the aims of education which ground these aims are not as self-evident. As explained by Kevin Harris, “aims like all matters of policy are contextual, political, normative, dynamic and contested. But the dynamic contest is also continually resolved, or momentarily settled, in that policy does become manifested in definite practices.” (Harris, in Marples 1999, p.3) The manifest practice of education is thus policy related and thereby also all of the above. Practice and aims are inseparable. Practice thus, needless to say, requires an understanding of aims if their fulfillment is to be realized.

The view that educational aims inherently encompass moral aims is, however, not a view shared by all. To argue what the aims of education are is in one sense to argue “what it is to be educated.” (Peters1966 cited by Barrow in Marples p.16) Yet if to be educated is to be moral in a certain sense we are hard pressed to find a set of moral qualities we can all agree on. Are there a set of universal human qualities that can be agreed on similarly to the way we have agreed on the universal values stipulated by the United Nations Convention on Human Rights? And if so are these human qualities prior in some sense? The question of the intrinsic moral task of education aside for the moment, if we ask simply whether or not schools should be involved in the moral education of students, the question invariably results in some form of affirmative response. Tim Sprod’s answer to the question, which he himself poses, is as follows:

“To me this is a deeply mistaken question. Schools cannot avoid influencing the moral development of their students, though they can certainly avoid thinking through what they actually do and the impact that they have. The question……is a different one: how can schools ensure that their (inevitable) influence on their students’ moral development is both positive and effective?” (2001, p.1)
So, here Sprod actually answers both questions, there is, in his view, both some form of intrinsic relation of education to morality, since influence is inevitable, and if this is the case then schools cannot avoid the obligation to be particularly conscious of ways in which morals and values are conveyed. As to what this entails, David Carr has this to say about the moral task:

“The basic aim of moral education, then, is to assist young people to live meaningfully and rightly in the light of a clear recognition of the greater value for positive human development of some principles and qualities over others; that a life lived according to certain dispositions of honesty, self-control, fortitude, fairness, courtesy, tolerance and so on is worthier and more fulfilling that one lived in the vicious grip of dishonesty, intemperance, backsliding, prejudice and spite.” (1998, p.25)

The educational task must then, as Carr suggests, be one in which students are guided to find meaning and understanding; meaning, I suggest, that will help them weather the storms of adversity in life. As Carr further asserts, “It is clear enough that the initiation of individuals into some sort of moral life is of interest to us both by virtue of its potential for assisting people to live more positively and meaningfully and because the influence of morality on inter-personal behavior and other-regarding conduct is of obvious public concern for the proper civic and political functioning of society.”(ibid. p.26) So there is in other words a public purpose in attending also to personal morality and the private realm, particularly as this private realm is increasingly the basis for public reason.

3. PUBLIC/ PRIVATE AND SOCIAL

The separation of emotion and reason can be seen to correspond to the dichotomy of private and public. As such the distinction between public and private is subject to cultural and
historical context much in the same way as the binary of emotion and reason. As suggested by Papacharissi, there is a lack of definitional consistency in the distinction of public and private and “without a set of purposes, values and questions that setting this distinction will serve, employing the private/public binary as an analytical tool bears no merit” (2010, p.25). In the context of education it is evident that public and private are in constant negotiation with one another in a number of ways.

Reason is traditionally associated with a politically orientated public sphere and emotion with the inner world of the self or the private sanctity of family life. This configuration has with the transformation of society shifted in significant ways such that emotion is to a much larger extent today made visible in the public sphere. Private reason is thus often expressed as public emotion in the uncensored emotional responses and opinions conveyed through internet forums. Emotion is also exploited publicly by the media in reality shows and debate programs. As such both the internet and television provide public space for deliberation of predominantly private concerns. The access to these channels of communication that students have thus contributes to the formation of both personal and civic identity and exposes them to the framing of experience by emotional rhetoric.

The contemporary focus on re-instituting faith in reason is perhaps, in part, a reaction to the increasing publicity of emotion. Emotionally based politics also figure in the equation, the conflicting interests of various groups in a plural society who lay claim to the legitimacy of demands based on feelings related to identity. The dichotomy of public and private is in contemporary society inherently tainted with political implications. The public is representative of the state and its institutions in this context and the private is representative of civil society, the market, and private consumption. As Wolfe suggests, “the private sphere to be sure, is colonized by the invasive force of the market just as the public sphere is taken over by the administrative logic of the state.” (in Weintraub 1997, p.185) While a polarized climate
of debate tends towards simplification of issues to these parameters, tension between opposing beliefs and political positions is the hallmark of a healthy democracy. As Wolfe also points out, there may be some merit in a distinction between public and private for “We cannot take care of public business without recognizing that we have private selves, and we cannot appreciate a private self unless we understand ourselves as public creatures.” (ibid. p.188) Recent years have, however, seen a shift in the boundaries of public and private spheres resulting in a ‘morphing’ of the public and private into the ‘social’ (Papacharissi 2010). The public is in the new guise of the social depoliticized to a certain extent, as the mechanisms of the social, being essentially private, are beyond political control. The convergence of public and private poses complex problems for moral and civic education in schools.

How are we to understand the social? Civic responsibility can be interpreted as civic virtue and a sense of duty to society. Can we trust the social to convey this concept of duty? Or is duty an individuated virtue acquired through more complex means, an ideal not reducible to the social? We are as teachers entrusted with the task of conveying social norms to our students. But is an epistemic understanding based on the social sufficient to ground our actions or will students be more prone to regenerate existing beliefs and norms than stand up for democratic ideals? The exercise of civic duty is perhaps dependent on a division of self and world, one which the social serves in a positive sense to bridge, but in a negative sense to set on the path of conformity with a lack of individual autonomy. We are social beings – the social is a given. Yet a generalized reliance on the social may not guide us in each specific moral or civic context. It is nevertheless within the social that discourse appropriation takes place. Identity is formed in this nexus of public and private that the social represents. If we also concede that it is within the social that learning takes place, then schools are places of social interaction, both public and private. The shifting terrain of place and space adds further
complexity to the teacher’s task as other spaces of interaction infiltrate the learning environment through the use of the internet and mobile phones. In fact, the sense in which the public as a space lacks actuality and as suggested by Papacharissi “remains elusive to the human senses” (2010, p.30) perhaps leads us to seek a more tangible reality in the realm of the social. While the social has potential for democratizing effects, the challenge may nevertheless be that of reclaiming the former categories of public and private and redefining them, in so doing helping students to shape their future instead of falling prey to its mechanisms. Rather than a “morphing”, a dissolution of private and public into the social perhaps we should see the social, as suggested by Karen Hansen, as “mediating between the public, private and market domains”, re-introducing the social as “an analytical prism” through which we can recognize the importance of everyday activities, often trivialized or ignored – as central to the creation and sustenance of communities.” (in Weintraub, 1997, p.294) As argued by Hansen, “social isolation, more than simply injuring individual well-being, fundamentally threatens a democratic society.” (ibid. p.298) As regards, education, the curriculum should provide opportunities for students to engage in the social, locally, in the community in which they live, to generate a sense of belonging and social responsibility. The fragmentation of postmodern society, the diversity of communities of the internet, as well as the complexities of ethnic affiliation and integration can only be dealt with adequately in human interaction that engages the emotions.

4. POSTMODERNISM AND EDUCATION

As explained by Usher and Edwards, while postmodernism as a “system of thought” has been related to a wide range of areas in contemporary society the area of education has been, apart from critical and feminist pedagogy, neglected. The reason for this is said not to be that postmodernism is not relevant to the practice of teaching, since educational practices “are in
fact located, if only partially, within the postmodern.” (1994, p.1) The task of seeing education in the light of postmodernism “is rendered particularly difficult if the very notion of a postmodern perspective is itself problematic” (ibid). The problematic complexity of the postmodern expresses itself in various contexts, one of which is the relationship of postmodernist theories to traditional epistemology and the idea of objective truth. The questioning of objective truth is by no means, historically, the prerogative of postmodernity, but its particular extension beyond philosophical inquiry and its instrumental role in shaping the cultural sphere is the hallmark of our times. Postmodernism is in this sense not restricted to a set of theories but is a cultural paradigm within which we find ourselves. The question is can the ethical challenges inherent in education be adequately met within a paradigm in which the subject is de-centered and caught in a web of discursive complexity and social-constructivist determinism? A definition of postmodernism, as Usher and Edwards explicitly suggest, is neither possible nor desirable: “Although it is customary to define what one is writing about, in the case of ‘postmodernism’ that is neither entirely possible nor entirely desirable” (1994, p.6). As suggested by Robert Floden “…recent publications often begin with a claim that educational research has changed in the light of postmodernism.” (in Richardson, 2001, p13) Constas (1998), for example, as quoted by Floden, says in a critique of postmodernism: “Over the past several years it appears that the writing of the educational research community has undergone a consistent series of changes…radical change found in the current discourse of educational inquiry stems from the intellectual movement variously referred to as ‘the postmodern condition’(Lyotard 1984), the ‘condition of postmodernity’ (Harvey 1989) and the ‘unmarked modernity’ (Spivak 1990, Constas 1998)”, (Floden in Richardson, p. 13) And further, in the search for definition despite all: “As a distinctive intellectual approach to comprehending and solving problems, postmodernism abandons the enlightenment ambitions of unity, certainty and predictability…Using the notion of chaos as
the explanatory metaphor, postmodernism doggedly questions the view of the world founded on the aspiration of progressive betterment.” (ibid.) Regardless of determinate definition what is clear is that we cannot in education neglect the intellectual challenge that postmodernism poses to ethics. An interesting point made by Floden is that postmodernism’s dismissal of the possibility of moving beyond the mediation of human observation and understanding by language and context to “establishing processes of adjudicating among competing views of the world” (ibid. p.5) has effects on the ability to discover ‘causally’ relevant associations between teaching and student learning. “ (ibid. p.6) If this is the case then it may serve as an explanation for the diminished importance accorded the role of the teaching as opposed to learning. The question is whether an overemphasis on learning as opposed to teaching has consequences for moral education. This is an open question.

Kearney suggests that there might be some sort of “ethical summons lodged at the very heart of our postmodern culture.” (1988, p.397) What might be the context of such a summons? Is this perhaps a summons to move beyond the impasse that postmodernism inevitably presents and the aporia of our ethical ineptitude, or is there something that postmodernism obliges us to confront? Is postmodernism only philosophical skepticism in a new guise? If postmodernism is a mirror of our times and our selves, there is no turning away, but neither is there reason to surrender the potential of our own universal humanity.

Kearney characterizes the postmodern experience as “a demise of the creative humanist imagination and its replacement by a de-personalized consumer system of pseudo-images.” (1988, p.252) There is no longer a point of origin in the humanist subject, but an endless play of signs, an imagining which does not originate in the imagination of the subject. If then education presupposes a subject who is prey to this endless play of signs and an identity that is fragmented and constructed by the discourses to which it is subjected and constructed by, from which position shall we as teachers approach the task of re-instituting ethics into the
curriculum? Education has in the literature often previously been characterized as a modernist enterprise, excluding the postmodern. But more recently, as pointed to by Usher & Edwards, “Education is itself going through profound changes which are themselves an aspect of the uncertainties of the postmodern moment. Debates over the curriculum, pedagogy and the organization of education resonate with the challenges of the postmodern but often without the reflexive understanding of the postmodern position.” (1994, p.25) The purpose of this section of the essay is however not to espouse or explain postmodern posterity in further depth, but simply to focus attention on its effects as they pertain to the subject at hand. If in the wake of postmodernism there has been a demise of the creative imagination, as Kearney suggests, and if this is partly to blame for the ethical bankruptcy of modern society, is this not a wake-up call to action to stimulate the imagination and re-invigorate moral agency?

5. THE IMAGINATION AND ETHICS

What then is the illusive and much misunderstood imagination? Our culture is full of references to the imagination that suggest that imagination leads us astray, leads us, in other words, to have both illusions and delusions. Someone may be said to have let their ‘imagination run away with them’ or to have no sense of reality and just be ‘imagining things’. On the other hand in order to be creative or come up with innovative solutions we are encouraged to ‘use our imagination’. In the latter sense then imagination is assumed to be a faculty over which we may have some control, and in the former sense one over which we have no control at all. It is no secret that creativity requires the use of the imagination. Being overly imaginative is however viewed with suspicion. So, much like the emotions the imagination has an instrumental function which seems to be either voluntary or involuntary depending on perspective. Perhaps we can see the imagination in a dual sense. Following
Kant the imagination van be seen to mediate between sense impressions and our cognitive understanding. This linking of ‘sensibility’and understanding echoes of Kant’s ‘transcendental synthesis of the imagination’ in determining ‘inner sense’. Kant posits imagination as a necessary cognitive function. Imagination appears then to be distinguished from imagining. Yet in both cases the imagination has a constructive function. As suggested by Rosemary Gordon, as quoted by Nadaene,” .... imagery is the raw material of man’s capacity to imagine and to symbolize.” (in Richardson 2001, p204) In the Metaphysical Deduction Kant characterizes the imagination as that “blind though indispensible function of the soul (or understanding), without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious.” (Allison 2004, p. 186) As an example of this we can take our cognition of time. We are aware of time not just as a present moment or series of moments, but through the constructive power of the imagination we are able to cognize the flow of time from past to future. Kant is of course notoriously difficult to understand and interpretations abound, so let it suffice, within the context of this essay, to accept Allison’s understanding of Kant’s imagination “as a proto-conceptual, interpretive faculty, distinct from a capacity to produce images, on the one hand, and to form judgments on the other.” (ibid., p.189), seeing the imagination as just such a capacity for imagining, a capacity for producing images that is related to forming judgments; both reason and the emotions being dependent on the faculty of the imagination for synthesis.

In the necessary transcendental conception of cognition as stipulated by Kant, the imagination is significantly the province of the individual mind. As suggested by Kearney, the “demise” of the imagination was initiated, in part, in connection with postmodernism’s ‘deconstruction of the subject’; in Kearney’s words “the postmodern conviction that the very concept of creative imagination is a passing illusion of Western humanist culture.” (1988, p.28)
The postmodern shift from imagination to an ‘imaginary’, in which the human subject is prey rather than master, deconstructs the opposition between the imaginary and the real. As Kearney suggests, following Derrida, if we can no longer ask “who imagines?” then “it makes no sense to speak of a transcendental or existential subject who produces or reproduces images.” (1988, p.200) While the title of Kearney’s book, first published in 1988, is *The Wake of the Imagination* we can presently see, perhaps in the ‘wake of postmodernism’, that there has been a resurgence of interest, not only in ethics, but also in the imagination. The pessimism outlined by Kearney has indeed given way to an increased responsiveness to the ethical dimension called for by him and others. Kearney’s recipe for the future was “a postmodern imagination responsive to the ethical dimension” as “critical”, but also “poetical.” (ibid, p.366) The curriculum today hails the critical, but fails to capture the full significance of the poetical as also ethical. While consensus on a meta-ethics of education may neither be possible nor in fact desirable, a focus on the poetical, employing both the imagination and the emotions may greatly enhance our ethical understanding. As suggested by Mark Johnson, “moral understanding is in large measure imaginatively structured. The primary forms of moral imagination are concepts with prototype structure, semantic frames, conceptual metaphors and narratives. To be morally insightful and sensitive thus requires two things (1) we must have knowledge of the imaginative nature of human conceptual systems and reasoning…. (2) we must cultivate moral imagination by sharpening our powers of discrimination exercising our capacity for envisioning new possibilities, and imaginatively tracing out the implications of our metaphors, prototypes and narratives.” (in Sprod 2001, p. 18) This is putting the imagination to use in a critical context showing that a critical stance may go hand in hand with a creatively imaginative stance. As Christopher Winch suggests, the accusation that critical thinking ignores the importance of creative and imaginative thinking is of concern, “We should certainly remind ourselves of the dangers of either-or
thinking and resolve to give both criticism and creativity our attention. We can go still further, however, and recognize an important connection between them. Imagination is needed to come up with a critical judgment since one is going beyond what is given and not merely offering a stock response.” (in Marples, 1999 p.93) So the imagination allows the individual the possibility of freedom of thought. This is the optimistic view of this essay. But the agent must in order to be truly free also be able to detach from the subjectivity of a purely personal point of view. In this sense also it is the imagination that is at work in the agent’s seeking of an objective understanding. As suggested by Per Bauhn the ‘objective self’ is activated in moral reasoning, “making the agent aware of her obligations to other people, and by motivating her to fulfill these obligations, help(ing) her confront the fear of personal transience.” (2003 p.91) There are, however, as Bauhn adds “some aspects of life that cannot be grasped from a completely detached perspective, but can only be comprehended by the subjective self” (ibid. p.93) Again, it is the contention here that in both cases the reasoning will require activation of the imagination as well as an emotional impetus and that both the objectivity and the subjectivity in question will have a narrative structure.

Kearney has suggested that postmodernism has rendered the freedom of the creative imagination obsolete: “Disseminated into the absolute immanence of signplay, the imagination ceases to function as a creative centre of meaning.” (1988, p. 13) The image, he suggests further “has become less and less the expression of an individual subject and more and more the commodity of an anonymous consumerist technology.” (ibid.) This is a pessimistic and defeatist view if applied to the context of education. We owe it to our students to have continued faith in the imagination and foster critical perspectives on the image as commodity. Towards this end postmodernist and poststructuralist theories are useful as analytical tools, particularly in the context of deconstructing the poetics of various discourses. The processes of narrative emplotment whether, literary or historical are those by which we
also structure narratives of the self and moral reasoning. We must find ourselves and our identity among the play of signs in the postmodern culture of which we are a part. We need at the same time to be attentive to the understanding that interpretation takes place within a paradigmatic model of explanation and attempt to help our students see beyond limited frames imaginatively reconstructing the narratives they live by. As Mark Johnson suggests,

“The stories we tell emerge from, and can refigure, the narrative structure of our experience. Consequently, the way we understand, express, and communicate our experiences is derived from, and can also configure our lives in novel ways.” (1993, p.163)

The moral imagination can thus have a morally ‘corrective’ function in the construction or reconstruction of the narrative of the self. Also, in partaking of the fictional lives of others through literature, for example, we can see our own failings and aspirations in another light, or come to understand our role in a community of others. As suggested by John Kekes,

“Narrow-mindedness, fantasy and self-deception all involve the falsification of facts relevant to the evaluation of one’s possibilities. The corrective aspect of moral imagination is to avoid such falsification, and thus to overcome obstacles to a realistic estimate of what people can do to make their lives better.” (in Halstead, McLaughlin, 1999, p.179)

The capacity to live what Socrates called “an examined life” as well as the capacity to see oneself as part of a community of others with genuine concern for their welfare is thus dependent on the imagination. Martha Nussbaum refers to these capacities, as well as the capacity of the narrative imagination as essential to the ‘cultivation of humanity’. A humane society is a compassionate society:

“I have argued that if compassion is there, even in a distorted form, we have an ethical core to work with, a promising imaginative basis for the extension or evening of concern. But now we need to ask how a society of the type we are considering, a
constitutional liberal democracy, might promote appropriate judgments and thence, appropriate emotion.” (2001, p.414-415)

As Nussbaum also argues, a compassionate society is not necessarily a just society. She suggests that, “the relationship between compassion and social institutions is a two-way street: compassionate individuals construct institutions that embody what they imagine; and institutions, in turn, influence the development of compassion in individuals. If Nussbaum is right teachers should both be compassionate human beings and attempt to encourage compassion in their students. A depreciation of compassion, however, is linked by some to a belief in its irrationality. If emotions are to be taken seriously then compassion will at best be the result of a reasoned response combined with an appropriate emotion. Yet conceptions of compassion are fraught with more than accusations of irrationality, as will be explained in the following section.

6. CARE AND COMPASSION

‘Caring’ in its intentional aspect is essential to the willingness to engage in moral deliberation. To ‘care’ in this sense is to attribute meaning to something. As Nel Noddings explains “caring manifests itself in a wide variety of ways” and further that “a major impediment” to caring in teaching is the confusion about the “the nature of caring.” (in Richardson, 2001, p.101) We must therefore be clear about what we mean and realize, as well, that care may be also in some instances be misdirected and lead to negative consequences. Moreover, if caring simply refers to feeling it might seem to conflict with the objective aims of teaching. We must therefore have an intelligible idea of the relationship of moral motivation and caring. Noddings who espouses an “ethics of care” views the “central importance of caring” as a relation, or a way of “being in the world.” (ibid. p.99) The question is how, without unduly exerting influence, can we engender care, hopefully but not necessarily in the sense of
compassion for others, but more cogently in the context of teaching, care about issues and answers in civic education? As suggested by Graham Haydon “caring about justice, though compatible with caring for particular others, is not the same; sometimes doing what is just means making particular others, whom one cares about, worse off than they would otherwise be. The motivation that will bring this about will not be caring about particular others, but caring about justice itself.” (in Halstead, McLaughlin, 1999, p.249) To care about justice is to consider it virtuous to be just. In this conception of care which is linked to virtue both reason and the emotions are involved. As suggested by Clive Hamilton, “Both Compassion and the will to justice are active principles. Justice is not that of the courts –cold, remote, dispassionate. It is affirmative. Nor is compassion intemperate. The two intermingle, justice seasoned by mercy, compassion fortified by reason. At their highest level emotion and judgment unite.” (2008, p. 210) An unreasoned emotional response may on the other hand misdirect care, as David Carr suggests:

(…..) the love a person feels for her family, tribe, or nation, if not governed by some higher principle of charity, may quickly turn to cruelty and hate for those not regarded of a kind; and without the true virtue of justice, the loyalty and honesty someone exhibits in his dealings with friends may not be so apparent in his business dealings with strangers….” (in Halstead, McLaughlin, 1999, p 26)

This then is the down-side of care. To be able to detach from one’s feelings and examine one’s emotions as the value judgments they are, is thus of the essence.

Caring is related to motivation and in thus also related to moral motivation. To care about one’s own education should ideally be to see beyond the instrumental market value of education and consider it virtuous to be educated. Broadening our general conception of what it is to be educated will help to avoid the pitfalls of elitism rather than, as has contrarily been
assumed by some, that a focus on virtue inevitably leads to a ranking of the uneducated as less worthy. Education may take many forms and if the focus is placed on understanding and wisdom, practical wisdom, as well the wisdom of experience will have opportunity to compete for the limelight on equal footing. The acquisition of virtues is not restricted to the domain of formal education. Caring, then, may take many forms but caring about education means striving for intellectual capacities, and placing these capacities within a context of virtue provides education with an inherently ethical thrust. The question remains if caring or virtue can be taught.

The importance of what we care about has been explained by Harry Frankfurt as deeply connected with our sense of our own identity and the force of “volitional necessity”, a necessity which is attributed to our willingness to accede to what we care about when making decisions. The actual involuntary nature of these decisions places the will under the auspices of the “willingness to will”. This is not to say that what we care about will necessarily coincide with a decision that is directed towards ethically commendable behavior. As suggested by Frankfurt, “A person’s discovery that it is volitionally impossible for him to neglect one of his ideals is not to be equated then, with an acknowledgement on his part of an ethical requirement.” (1998. p. 91). So questions of evaluation and justification in regard to caring are important, even though caring may be perceived as a deeply personal matter. We will be reminded here that the discussion is intended to be about young people in the process of moral development. As Frankfurt suggests, “it may still be possible to distinguish between things that are worth caring about to one degree or another and things that are not. Accordingly, it may be useful to inquire into what makes something worth caring about – that is, what conditions must be satisfied if something is to be suitable or worthy as an ideal or as an object of love – and how a person is to decide, from among the various things worth caring about, which to care about.” (ibid. p.91) Such open discussions can be carried out in the
classroom allowing students to express their cares and concerns, not only in democratic deliberation but on a more personal level. As teachers we have ample opportunity to express our own cares, whether purposely or inadvertently. Students should be allowed the same.

7. THE EMOTIONS AND THE POLITICAL

Empirical studies of the emotions present a number of challenges. As described by Schutz and De Cuir, “emotions are quick to occur and quick to change” and in their ‘fluidity’ do not easily lend themselves to traditional research methods. (2010, p.125) The dominant paradigm for a number of years in educational psychology has seen the processes of cognition, motivation and emotion separately, but this is changing. In an empirical study conducted in a real-life classroom situation intended to examine the relation of cognition and motivation unexpected emotional responses were “serendipitously” revealed. The researchers, Meyer and Turner (2002) admitted to having neglected the role of the emotions at the outset but later discovered that emotions were an essential component of their findings. In an inquiry on emotions in education Schutz and De Cuir conclude that current views on emotion are emerging from an “uneasy” relation between reason and the emotions and that this shifting relation “provides the socio-historical backdrop” for such views. (2010, p.127) Theoretical foundations for inquiry related to the “nature of reality” and “the nature of the knower and knowledge” are also said to be increasingly important. (ibid. p.125)

In the field of political science as well, a field relevant to civic education, emotions have emerged as an increasingly important though complex area of research. As regards the role of the emotions in world politics, Bleiker and Hutchison suggest that emotions play a “significant role in world politics”, but that there are few “systematic inquiries and even fewer
related to method” (2008, p.115) They attribute this to the prevalence of the methods of social science in International Relations Scholarship saying that such methods are limited and fail to capture the “ephemeral” nature of the emotions. It is suggested that modes of analysis stemming from the humanities would serve well to supplement those of the social sciences.

Bleiker and Hutchison argue for a “methodological reorientation” suggesting that three components should be part of such an orientation, “(1) The need to accept that research can be insightful and valid even if it engages unobservable phenomena, and even if the results of such inquiries can neither be measured nor validated empirically; (2) The importance of processes of representation, such as visual depictions of emotions and the manner which they shape political perceptions and dynamics; (3) A willingness to consider alternate forms of insight, such as those stemming from aesthetics sources, which we argue, are particularly suited to capture emotions.” (ibid, p.117, 118)

In accord with Nussbaum the authors understand emotions as “forms of knowledge and evaluative thought” that are “always directed at something for specific reasons” and as such provide insights that can potentially address political challenges. (ibid. p.124)

The significance of the emotions to the civic educational task can be seen as two-fold. On the one hand emotions underpin the motivation to learn quite generally and on the other hand, as is increasingly being understood, emotions are instrumental in political reasoning. Rampant untempered emotions can therefore pose a threat to democracy; critically assessed emotions offer the threshold of possibility for the very thriving of a democratic society.

As emotions are increasingly finding expression in the public domain we will as teachers be obliged to address emotionally charged concerns and guide emotional judgment as pertaining to value judgment, just as we attempt to guide the capacity for reasoned argument. We will need not only to ask, “What do you think?”, but “How do you feel?” about various issues. As the political is concerned we know that political action is often spurred by passion, the effects
of which we sometimes condemn and sometimes condone. Passion can be as much the
handmaiden of democratic zeal as a threat to its ideals. As pointed to by Ferry and Kingston,
despite this, in the academic world, “there is little serious regard for the important and varied
roles that emotion plays and should play in the political arena.” (2008, p.3). And yet, as
explained by Leah Bradshaw, “the relationship between the passions and reason is one of the
central concerns of political philosophy.” (In Kingston and Ferry 2008 p.172) Within the field
of moral philosophy there is an increasing interest in the relationship of the emotions to
critical reasoning; and as such to Aristotelian insights:

“In contradistinction with views that characterize the emotions primarily as a
hindrance to practical reasoning, contemporary moral philosophers have become increasingly
impressed with the Aristotelian insight that good practical reasoning systematically relies on
the emotions” (Abizadeh in Kingston and Ferry 2008, p. 60)

Martha Nussbaum views emotions as “intelligent responses to the perception of value”
(2001, p.1). Rather than seeing emotions as either supporting or subverting our choice to act
“according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of
ethical reasoning.” (ibid.) Nussbaum espouses both a cognitive and evaluative theory of the
emotions. This is in contrast to the so called ‘Component Theory’ of emotion. The
Component Theory, as explained by O.H. Green, “takes the intentionality of emotions to be
derived from beliefs, to which they are related, and takes non-intentional (therefore non-
cognitive) phenomena to be constitutive of emotions. As explained by Green, theories of
emotion can be distinguished on the basis of their relation to intentionality. ‘Evaluative’
theorists posit the view that emotions are “evaluative beliefs or judgments and so are
intrinsically intentional; non-intentional phenomena may be caused by emotions but are not
constitutive of them.” (1992, p.xii) Green takes the evaluative stance a step further and
introduces desire as an element of intention along with belief. This allows us to understand
the role played by the emotions in behavior and behavior modification in Green’s view. The rationality of a desire is explained in terms of the likelihood of its being satisfied, but also in terms of “the goodness or the desirability of the desired states of affairs obtaining.” (ibid. p.18) The former is simply about feasibility while the latter presents a condition which requires justification. The purely cognitive character of beliefs is seldom questioned, yet as Linda Zagzebski argues, the independence of beliefs from non-cognitive states is a misconception. So not only are emotions not distinct from cognitive states, beliefs are not distinct from non-cognitive states. The interdependence of emotion and belief is thus evident in this view in which, as Zagzebski claims, “….. processes and habits within us that manage emotions and desires ought not to be examined independently of the processes and habits that manage the processes leading up to belief.” (1996, p.56) Irrationally formed beliefs are of course unacceptable to us, but we should not submit to the notion that beliefs affected by the emotions are as a rule, irrational, for this of course depends on the rationality of the emotions, or as Zagzebski suggests, on whether or not “the cognitive structure intimately connected with and affected by a feeling structure leads toward or away from knowledge.” (ibid. p.57-58) Zagzebski in referring to the “voluntariness of belief” as connected to “wanting, hoping and expecting” places emotion as instrumental to belief. As expressed by Kingston and Ferry, one of the more exciting theses about emotion to (re)emerge in the twentieth century is the insistence that emotions are “purposive”. In their view emotions “do not just happen to us, as the whole language of “passion” and “being struck by” would suggest. They are with some stretching of the term, activities that we “do”, strategems that work for us, both individually and collectively.” (2008, p.193) Whether these strategems have their source in evolutionary psychology, are socially constructed, or are the result of logical reasoning there will be no commitment to purpose without the emotions. As suggested by Tim Sprod, “…even logical argument will not be pursued without the emotions.” (2001, p.23) It is emotion that supplies
the commitment to thinking as we do; as Sprod explains, “we must be committed to rationality to imbue our thinking with its critical aspect; we must be committed to imagination or curiosity to imbue it with the creative aspect.” (ibid.). Sprod cites the empirical backing for this claim as presented by Damasio (1996) in which documented cases show that “specific lesions to the brain (that) have resulted in simultaneous, and seemingly intimately connected strong inhibition of the ability to feel emotions and an ability to plan rationally, or to coordinate and follow particularly social and personal goals” (ibid.) Research in neurobiology thus supports the connection of the emotions with the capacity for making decisions and acting upon these. A capacity that is essential to moral behavior and political reasoning and engagement. The question remains however to which emotions we will be committed, as well as to which values.

Whereas most of us would agree that there are a set of universal human emotions, the expression or priority given to some emotions over others is clearly subject to cultural and social variation. While a theory of the social construction of emotion is not dependent on a cognitive/evaluative conception of the emotions, as suggested by Martha Nussbaum, “taking up a cognitive/evaluative view makes it easy to see how society could affect the emotional repertory of its members. If we hold that beliefs about what is important and valuable play a central role in emotions, we can readily see how those beliefs can be powerfully shaped by social norms as well as by individual history; and we can also see how changing social norms can change emotional life.” (2001, p.142) Our emotional repertoires, as suggested by Ronald de Sousa, also in some ways “resemble our languages. Like languages emotion frames our possibilities of experience.” (1987, p.332) Language, as expressed by Robert Solomon, is not “a facility or faculty quite separate from “having” an emotion, “(But) the truth is our language, our concepts, and our conceptions of emotions pervade, define, and are linked with the emotions themselves.” (in Kingston and Ferry 2008, p.202) Changing social norms are
expressed through language in narrative form, as is emotion. It is therefore to narrative understanding that we must pay particular attention in teaching; just as we are shaped by narrative understanding in the stories around us, we have the possibility to re-invent the stories we live by. Conceptions of romantic love, for example, differ from culture to culture, and shape our emotional response to the partner we chose. As Solomon suggests, “Love in America is an apt illustration. It is a highly mythologized, one might say “hypercognated” emotion, so much so that cynics have often suggested that “love” is only a word, a confusion of fantasies, not a genuine emotion.” (ibid.) Myths, fantasies, and cultural conceptions are narratives and reasons to act, morally, or otherwise, and emerge from a narrative context. The power of myth, however, as suggested by Papacharissi, “lies not in its ability to reflect reality, but in the promise it holds for escaping or reinventing it.” (2010, p.8) In the myths we live by we cast ourselves in a role. If that role is to be of benefit not only to ourselves but to others it must in some sense be virtuous in a civic sense.

The narrative unity experienced by the virtuous person has been explained by Jonathan Darcy, as understood by Susan Stark, Darcy “invokes the notion of a narrative, arguing that the virtuous person’s description of a moral situation is importantly different from a mere list of all its salient features. Such a list, Darcy says, would be meaningless. Rather the virtuous person perceives all the salient features of the situation and then paints a mental picture where all of the salient features of the situation have a proper place: they are highlighted and given their due in just the way that is called for by the situation. The story or narrative that is woven by the virtuous person fully explains how she sees the situation and why she acts and she feels as she does.” (Stark 2001, p.442) A fiction some would say, ought we not to base our judgments on reality, on experience and intuitive understanding alone? As postmodernism would have it all texts are fictions. Yet ‘real life’ poses very real challenges. Can virtue be taught through the study of narrative? Clive Hamilton has suggested that genuine virtue arises
not from abstract knowledge communicable by words. Hamilton also poses the question if this then should lead to moral resignation. A sermon, he says, “has as much chance of producing a virtuous person as a reading of John Rawls *A Theory of Justice.*” (2008, p.247), meaning, of course, none at all. As educationalists what are we to make of this? Genuine virtue says Hamilton “must spring from the intuitive knowledge that recognizes in another’s individuality the same inner nature as in our own.” (ibid. p.253) Virtue, he says “can be learnt but it cannot be taught” (ibid.) As long as this is the case there is still hope.

**8. VIRTUE, EMOTION AND VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY**

Virtue is generally considered a matter of self-control, the fortitude to be master over one’s emotions and ‘do one’s duty’. As exemplified by countless examples throughout history, however, doing one’s duty can result in behavior that is anything but virtuous by any humanitarian standards. There is, however, a difference between virtuous duty and just ‘doing one’s duty’ in the sense of following rules. This is exemplified in cases of civil disobedience which are the result of virtuous intent. The difference as expressed by Sherman is then that “What essentially distinguishes a duty of virtue from a juridicial duty is the fact that external compulsion to juridicial duty is possible, whereas a duty of virtue is based only on free self-constraint.” (1997, p.136) Virtuous duty thus requires “internal governance”. (ibid.)

The moral philosophy of Kant stipulates the authority of reason over the emotions, yet resting her views on Kant’s *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Sherman interprets Kant as suggesting that the cultivation of emotional capacities is instrumental to reason, if only in a “provisional” sense. The emotions provide only preliminary information, information which is then superseded by
reason. So the emotions are in this sense capricious and unreliable and must submit to reason.
(ibid. p.148)

This view differs from that of Aristotle in which the emotions themselves are constituted by thought processes that are evaluative; in Sherman’s words “The path that we find articulated in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is a theory of the emotions in which emotions are object-oriented and constituted by thought contents that are evaluative.” (ibid. p.26) And further, that, “Indeed, Aristotle insists that emotions are not stray features of moral motivation or optional aesthetic trim, but are necessary constituents of virtue and its actualization.” (ibid. p.27)

A virtue is also said to be acquired through habituation, to be the result of time and effort and responsibility as well as some degree of success in bringing about the aim of the motivation:

A virtue, then, is defined by Sherman as “a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that aim.” (ibid. p.137)

There has in recent years been a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics, both in the relation to virtue and the emotions as judgments of value, and also as concerns the relationship of ethics to epistemology. This ‘new’ branch of philosophy is called virtue epistemology. Linda Zagzebski is a leading figure in this field. Virtue epistemology is particularly relevant to the purposes of education.

Zagzebski’s virtue epistemology is an ethics of knowledge which posits intellectual virtue as a responsible seeking of truth on the part of an agent. Truth being a much contested area of philosophical inquiry it needs to be said that the striving for truth need not lay claim to a particular conception of objective truth in Zagzebski’s view. The epistemological vantage point proceeds from the truth claims of first-order knowledge and seeks in the first instance to resolve the more basic philosophical problems of what we can reasonably claim to know and
how. It is then further developed by Zagzebski to show that there is a connection between epistemology and ethics and between emotion and virtue. Intellectual virtues are related to moral reasoning, and emotions motivate moral action.

Zagzebski expresses the value of knowledge in this way: “Knowledge is valuable not only because it involves having a valuable possession – the truth – but because it involves a valuable relation between the knower, and (leaving skeptical worries aside) it is a relation at which we can reasonably aim. This suggests that knowledge is not merely something that happens to us but is something to which we contribute through our own efforts and skills, and this leads us, at least in some moods, to think of ourselves as bearing responsibility for having or not having it.” (ibid. p.261) Zagzebski’s ethics focuses on the character of the agent rather than in a narrow sense on the action itself. This means that the agent is assumed to make moral judgments according to the contingency of the situation, but also on the basis of moral intuition and reason, and this involves the reasoning capacity of the agent’s emotional repertoire. Philosophers are increasingly becoming convinced that morality is not actually rule-based to the extent previously assumed which may, in part, explain the upsurge of interest in virtue ethics in recent years. In instances where emotions motivate behavior the virtue approach assumes that no set of rules may adequately explain what an individual may do in each particular situation of moral decision-making. As Zagzebski suggests: “Although it is not possible for an act-based ethical theory to account for such intuitions, it is much easier on a virtue approach since the perspective of the individual agent can easily be worked into the concept of virtue, whereas the major act-based theories approach morality primarily from an impersonal standpoint and can accommodate the distinctive values of individual persons only with difficulty.” (ibid. p.19) Virtue ethics as conceived by Zagzebski thus lends support to the basic thesis of this essay as regards the importance of the emotions in reasoning. Emotions, while in one sense socially constructed, are nevertheless in experience particular to
each individual. In understanding the emotional embeddedness of the intellectual virtues the significance of the emotions as judgments of value is highlighted. What then are these intellectual virtues and how do they differ from, for example, the skills of critical reasoning referred to initially in this essay (for as suggested above a virtue is differentiated from skills)? And how can we best foster intellectual virtue?

Stan van Hooft suggests that, “…a virtuous person will value knowledge and will respond to that value by being curious and open-minded and by seeking to overcome ignorance and deception. To have this attitude is another form of loving the truth. Whatever in the world has value will be acknowledged and responded to appropriately by a virtuous person. Rather than feeling that such a response has the form of obedience in relation to a command, it will be felt as love for the relevant value: a love that issues in responsive action.” (2006, p.18) Thus curiosity and open-mindedness are intellectual virtues to be revered. Other virtues might then be insight, understanding, courage, honesty, humility and intellectual rigour. Some virtues are closely aligned with intellectual skills and others are not. Zagzebski cites other examples of virtues, “fairness in evaluating the arguments of others”, the social virtue of being intellectually “communicative”, “adaptability”, “thoroughness” and even “care.” (1996, p.114) It is clear that intellectual virtues are also aligned with civic virtues. The capacity for intellectual virtue clearly contributes to the skills of critical reasoning. As such they are well aligned with civic virtue.

9. CIVIC VIRTUE, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

It might seem that deciding upon which virtues are worth striving for and which are not is a dubious undertaking and imposes undue influence on students. Yet, while more research is needed in this area, I submit that we as educationalists should be trained to apply our experience and our academic expertise to an awareness of capacities that enhance motivation,
as well as improved measurable results. Nevertheless, virtue ethics is subject to a great deal of controversy. Less controversial, however, are those particular virtues that are considered civic in character. This is perhaps because civic virtue is regarded, basically, and specifically from the standpoint of education, as a wholly rational undertaking to be accomplished by teaching the skills of critical reasoning and by providing opportunity for democratic deliberation. This conception of civic virtue thus retreats from the more problematic area of personal morality and the emotions.

The indisputable need for civic virtue, as explained by McLaughlin and Halstead, finds expression in various forms. Citing the example of Amy Gutman who is quoted as suggesting that “moral character (is) conducive to democratic sovereignty” (Gutman 1987, M&H, 1999 p 150), and that “the formation of such character (is) a key part of political education, which she regards as having moral priority over other purposes of moral education in a democratic society.” (ibid 287, M&H, 1999 ibid.) While this has a noble ring to it, what is at stake is a conception of virtue that is dependent on a particular form of government and a particular definition of citizenship and as long as we are not very clear about what we mean by democracy and citizenship this conception of virtue seems philosophically untenable. As pointed to by Halstead & McLaughlin, “substantive qualities of character and virtue (are linked) not with the moral life as a whole but with the general features and requirements of democracy and citizenship.” (1999, p.149) It is difficult to see the positive effects of such a view of civic virtue if the goal of education is not just a set of appropriate beliefs but also civic action. While Gutman’s view is intended to avoid incurring “the criticism of undue value influence.”, it would seem that it does exactly the opposite.(ibid.p.149) This discussion serves to highlight a dynamic which sees a retreat from moral education as instrumental to the shift in recent years from character education to education in fundamental values. The significance of the example above, to the aims of this essay, is that it illustrates a possible
consequence of an over-emphasis on critical reasoning as well as the incompatibility of such a view of virtue with one that includes the emotions. This leaves us with no sure footing as concerns “civic virtue” other than the contention that intellectual virtues are inherently also civic virtues. What is called for is a conception of civic virtue that can bind us together in our common humanity. Democracy requires a sense of community for its proper functioning yet diminishing faith in nationalism poses challenges for our sense of national identity and community. In a postnationalist world a focus on virtue may help resolve this aporia. And, as suggested by Kingston and Ferry, “if our theorizing is to mean anything in a world of new challenges to democratic governance, we must first seek a groundwork that conforms adequately to the experience of citizens. A positive re-evaluation of the emotions in the political realm is one step towards a more meaningful dialogue with our own democratic experience.” (2008, p. 14)

As argued by Carr and Steutel a virtue approach to education “regards moral development as a matter of crucial interplay between all…. aspects of a human being.” (1999, p. 252) More research in their view is needed in order to determine “what might constitute appropriate and effective moral-educational strategies for the promotion of such (virtuous) conduct. (ibid.) While Carr and Steutel emphasize “conduct”, however, the emphasis in this essay has been on capacities. The difference may not be entirely self-evident as there has been much reference made to moral action in the essay as well and capacities are nothing if not displayed in some way. Yet the distinction has relevance for the role teachers should play and the assessments we are required to make as we have no proper legitimacy to assess conduct. Some virtue ethicists advocate the “modeling of conduct through the examples of others” (ibid.) Here again “modeling “is either an ill chosen word or a significant difference in perspective as regards virtue ethics. Carr and Steutel refer to criticism of this view as “suspicion by liberal educationalists” that it is “sailing close to the winds of indoctrination.” On the other hand,
defending the view of “exemplification” to some extent they argue that “it is difficult to see how any coherent moral development might occur in the absence, for good or ill, of some parental, and other exemplification.” (ibid. p.253) Parental exemplification aside, that teachers should be positive role models may almost seem a platitude. Combined with a pedagogy based on virtue it must however be said that there is always a risk of teaching from a’ moral high-ground’. The conception of virtue espoused in this essay is meant to counteract such pitfalls as the ‘vice’ of self-righteousness. Schools are communities and should function as such, placing human interaction in the ‘here and now’ high on the list of priorities, interaction that fosters virtuous capacities in both teachers and students.

10. CONCLUSIONS

If I tell you that that this is the greatest good for a human being, to engage every day in arguments about virtue and the other things you have heard me talk about, examining both myself and others, and if I tell you that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being, you will be even less likely to believe what I am saying. But that’s the way it is, gentlemen, as I claim, though it’s not easy to convince you of it.

Socrates in Plato, Apology 38A

Socrates epitomizes the intellectual virtues which, in part have been the subject of this essay, the virtues that lead us to examine both ourselves and others and though he does not explicitly attribute the emotions with the dignity he does reason, he nevertheless expresses a striving, an aspiration to give life meaning through intellectual pursuits in which his emotions are invested and therefore give life “worth”.
It may be the case that we actually cannot teach virtue. This theoretical account of the emotions has nevertheless shown that emotions are very deeply related to virtue, and if we can create conditions for human flourishing in our schools by according the imagination much greater freedom and the emotions the opportunity to tread forth and be accounted for maybe we can generate a sense of moral purpose in our students. The importance of narrative understanding is of major importance to this task; the imagining of lives different from our own, as are the arts. As Martha Nussbaum suggests, “Recognizing the role of the arts has one more substantial public consequence. It means that the arts serve a vital political function, even when their content is not expressly political – for they cultivate imaginative abilities that are central to political life.“(2001, p.426) This means that more time should be devoted to aesthetic activity in schools and with attentiveness to the emotions and the imagination and to fostering virtuous capacities we may yet succeed in ‘cultivating humanity’.

11. REFERENCES


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