

CONCEPCIÓN NAVAL DURÁN
CARMEN URPI GUERCIA
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UNA VOZ DIFERENTE EN LA EDUCACIÓN MORAL

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WHAT IS CHARACTER OR MORAL EDUCATION ALL ABOUT?

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In recent years character education has been the focus of increasing attention. But the issues concerning educational programmes that are designed to encourage moral development in children and teenagers are many and varied.

Moral education, which has been a constant concern throughout the history of education, has often come under attack. One of the criticisms levelled at it is the assertion that morality belongs to the inner, most personal area of human experience; it is identified with the person, who is autonomous in his/her judgements and decisions, and it cannot therefore be the object of a teaching process from the outside. Despite this objection, however, there is unanimous agreement today that moral education is an essential part of the school *curriculum*.

1. ESTABLISHING THE QUESTION

Much of the work done today on moral education is influenced by Durkheim's ideas. Of all the critiques to his theories, that of Piaget is one of the most illuminating and profound. Durkheim and Piaget present us with two irreconcilable paradigms. Both deal with morality, moral rules and the way we gain access to these rules. But "what is a rule, where do the rules which govern interpersonal relations and social life come from, why do we observe these

rules, and why are certain infringements tolerated, what is a just rule and what is a sanction?"¹.

The study of Piaget began with the observation of *children's games*. He discovered an evidence demonstrating the existence of *stages* in the formation of moral judgements, which are parallel to the stages that the development of intellectual operations. The *development in stages* is characterized made manifest in the way *rules* are used in *games*.

There is a progression from an *egocentric* stage to a *co-operative* stage. The child moves from an *objective* conception of guilt to a *subjective* one, and from an *expiatory* conception of punishment to one which is *motivated* and *reciprocal*. As a result of all these, according to Piaget, a fundamental dichotomy emerges between two kinds of morality: a morality of constriction (heteronomous, objective responsibility, expiatory sanctions, retributive justice, unilateral respect) and a morality based on co-operation (autonomy, subjective responsibility, sanctions of a reciprocal nature, distributive justice, mutual respect).

In fact, rather than being a dichotomy, these two forms of morality are both present, but at different periods in the child's development. Co-operative morality –the process of normal child development– is formed through natural interactions with the child's surroundings; thus, games hold a special function. This dichotomy has major pedagogical consequences: the *active methods*, and what Piaget calls *self-rule*, which stress on children's curiosity, their sociable nature, their need for expression and co-operation. All of these form the bases for the child's moral development. This approach is more effective than the methods which rely on coercion, on the imposition of rules, which serve only to keep the child in a state of immaturity and irresponsibility.

This is where the so-called *New School* Movement derives its inspiration, an inspiration that is related to Dewey's ideas. Piaget's ideas are in contrast with those of Durkheim. In Piaget's view, the error in Durkheim lies in his *substantialist* and *absolute* vision of society. Piaget thinks that Durkheim does not only ignore the individual, but he also fails to take into account the nature of what is social, which by its very essence is interactive and co-operative. Above all, he leaves out some considerations of the child and the special dimension of the world of children that revolves in games and the relations between equals. Consequently he leaves the child in a morality of heteronomy and dependence.

1. FORQUIN, J.C. (1993) L'enfant, l'école et la question de l'éducation morale. Approches théorétiques et perspectives de recherches, p. 81, *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 102, 1993/1. Some ideas are adopted here: cf. pp. 69-106.

1.1. KOHLBERG: MORAL EDUCATION AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

From the 1970s, moral education in schools in the United States was heavily influenced by Lawrence Kohlberg. The *theoretical importance* of his work can be ascribed to the following: 1) the originality of the focus of his research, and of the results obtained; and 2) the profound and multi-dimensional philosophical reflections that somehow included a religious dimension.

Kohlberg is above all a psychologist, a researcher, and a theoretician who studied human behaviour using the methods of clinical psychology. His main instrument is a questionnaire that is administered face-to-face. His main aim was to identify the natural mechanisms and operative processes at work in the building and forming of moral judgements in different types of individuals. The individual is presented with a story or an anecdote that involves a moral dilemma.

In Kohlberg, as in Piaget, there are stages that corresponds to the formation of moral judgement. These stages are determined by the laws of succession, irreversibility and universality.

In essence, the typology of the stages of moral development consists of 3 levels, and each level has 2 stages: preconventional morality, conventional morality and postconventional morality. It is doubtful whether morality based on fear (stage 1 of the preconventional level) and that based on interest (stage 2) really deserve to be called morality. The question is not simply one of terminology. In some texts, Kohlberg speaks of "pre-moral" stages rather than of a "preconventional morality". What difference is there between "pre-moral", "non-moral" and "immoral"? Where does morality really begin for Kohlberg: in stages 1, 3 or 5? Kohlberg himself is ambiguous on this point.

It is on the subject of "postconventional morality" where Kohlberg makes his most original and profound contribution. And it is here also where a parallelism with Piaget is most justified. In stages 5 and 6, the individual achieves autonomy in the exercise of moral judgement. This, however, occurs at a much later stage than in Piaget's model. Stage 6, the final, typically Kantian stage, thus appears more as an ideal of reason rather than something empirically attainable. A great deal of the debate surrounding Kohlberg's thesis centres on what is actually referred to by stage 6. This has resulted in the weakening and in the eventual disappearance of the credibility of his model.

What are the educational implications of Kohlberg's psychological theory? From it, we can derive an educational imperative: whatever can contribute to the child's (and that of the adult) moral development is desirable. The moral

education which Kohlberg propounds offers itself as an original solution to what seems today to be an insurmountable dilemma, namely, the opposition between relativism and indoctrination. He advises helping each child to progress in a direction to which he/she is already committed or is naturally inclined. It is not a matter of imposing an alien or inaccessible model, but of promoting and stimulating the child's own moral development.

What pedagogical method can be used to achieve this stimulation? He recommends making learners reflect on moral dilemmas and genuine moral conflicts for which there is no ready-made adult solution. This is different from the "Values Clarification approach". Here the dilemmas only serve to reveal the assumptions and underlying attitudes of the individuals concerned. The aim is not to change their minds. Kohlberg's work provides a concrete objective for moral education: to stimulate the child's moral development and help him/her to go from one stage of moral thinking to another higher level. Hence, a lot of importance is given to the way the dilemma is described, particularly the choice of words.

Another approach suggested by Kohlberg, which has resulted in different kinds of experience, is to form students into *just community schools* in which the members are invited to organize their school life on the basis of democratic rules and of adherence to the principles of justice.

The chief objection to Kohlberg's theory insofar as it is a theory of moral education (that is, leaving aside the scientific psychological debate on the validity of the theory of stages) lies in the relationship between cognitive maturity and the disposition towards morality. Is it enough to judge well in order to act well? Kohlberg, like Piaget, seems to exclude the hypothesis of cynicism, which is also referred to as the hypothesis of clear-seeing or of intelligent immorality, or of the will to do wrong. Reading these authors, it would seem that evil is not a fact of life, a part of our individual and collective experience. What is to be done with the problem of evil when "moral education" is conceived of as being purely rational?

In this context, Peters's critique in *Moral Development and Moral Education*, is of particular interest. Peters says that in the area of morality Kohlberg attributes relatively little importance to certain character traits like honesty and he regards habit-forming processes as being of secondary importance. Besides, Kohlberg pays scant attention to the connection that exists between distinguishing between good and bad and one's attitude towards that distinction. "The child must not only develop an aversion to arbitrary behaviour, but must also acquire a positive interest (...). How do children become interested in

something? I think this is the most important question in moral education; but in Kohlberg's work no clear response is to be found"².

Peters pleads explicitly for a more appropriate theory of moral education, a focus incorporating a broader vision of human nature than that offered by theories of cognitive development like that of Kohlberg.

1.2. SCHOOL AND VALUES

Alongside theories such as those of Durkheim and Kohlberg, there are others which purport to give recommendations for educators. They consist of reflections based on empirical findings or ideological constructions. These pedagogical theories take the form of *tendencies, trends* or *movements*.

Unlike in French-speaking countries, we can see genuine trends or movements in moral education in English-speaking countries. These began in the United States based on the idea of values and the teaching of values. *Values education* refers to something open and informal, in which the focus is on sensitiveness and discovery. It is obvious that, in the strict sense, *values education* covers a broader area than moral education.

Values are qualities which have worth. They can be loved or desired, and can make us act even at the cost of some sacrifices. Ethical values are therefore far from being the only kind of value. The distinction between moral education and the teaching of values is not always explicit among British or American authors; although, the expression *moral/values education* is commonly used. Kevin Ryan, in an article entitled "Moral and Values Education" (1986) distinguishes implicitly between four "moral education movements": 1) cognitive development (Kohlberg); 2) *values analysis*; 3) *values clarification*; and 4) *set-of-values*.

The aim in *set-of-values* movement is to impress on the student by means of the subjects and the way the school is organized, certain values which are considered essential in the adult community. This is a method, which was used in the United States from the 1920s, under the name of *character education*. This is a term which is being used again today in the *Character Education*

2. PETERS, R. S. (1981) *Moral Development and Moral Education*, (George Allen & Unwin, London) [1984, *Desarrollo moral y educación moral*, p. 141 (Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City)].

movement, which is based either on a set of "core values"³, or on a perspective known loosely as "communities of tradition"⁴.

Values clarification has had an important impact in reflections on moral education in English-speaking countries since the 1960s. Its justification lies in the radical plurality of beliefs and values in the modern world and in the concern to help children make and develop their personal choices in a situation of tolerance and dialogue.

The teacher organizes learning sessions which encourage and help the student to gain a clearer awareness of his/her own individual values. According to Rath, Harmin and Simon (1966), three essential abilities or operations come into play: *choosing, prizing and acting*. Three main pedagogical methods are recommended: 1) teacher-pupil dialogue in class; 2) *value sheets*; and 3) organising group discussions following different kinds of procedures.

The theoretical basis for *value clarification* has been the object of a great deal of criticism: a) the moral problems are diluted among trivial practical questions; b) it promotes individualism and ethical relativism because all choices are held to be valid, for as long as they are conscious and *authentic*.

In recent years there has been a tendency to draw away from these approaches and a corresponding return to *character education*. The stress is placed on the moral function of the school at the heart of society and a rediscovery of values and virtues. In fact, Garrod and Howard (1990) asked whether the debate on moral education today does not tend to boil down to a confrontation between two major approaches: a) that which focuses on virtues and values; and b) the *development* approach.

1.3. THE PHILOSOPHY OF MORAL EDUCATION

All philosophy embodies a moral system, or at least a reflection on morality; similarly, every morality implies some kind of philosophy, to the extent that morality seeks a basis which is not to be found in empirical evidence or pragmatic needs.

Analytical philosophy, mainly in the Anglo-American world, emphasizes the method. The main contribution of English-language philosophers to the

3. Cf. W. Bennett, J. Benninga, W. Kilpatrick, T. Lickona, J. Snarey, T. Pavkov, E. Wynne, K. Ryan and R. Lovin.

4. Among others, this includes: A. Bryk, M. Asante, B. Chazan, C. Dykstra, S. Hauerwas, P. Hill, M. Kalenga, A. MacIntyre, P. Nelson, P. Palmer, N. Warfield-Coppock, D. Wong.

reflections on moral education therefore lies in the analysis of concepts, the clarification of meanings and the possible implications of statements made in ordinary language. For an *apologia* for this point of view, see Henry Aiken in an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* (1955).

For philosophers in the English-speaking world, the relationship between the intellectual and practical component of morality, between judgement and moral action, constitutes one of the central issues in moral education. Peters wrote an original reflection on "the paradox of moral education": the tension between habit and reason. What the school does is to contribute to the development of moral dispositions through the content and skills learnt in the various disciplines. Beyond the development of abilities, attitudes and motivations, which can play a leading role in the development of the moral sense, all serious intellectual activity involves moral demands. Nevertheless, what predisposes learners to adopt moral patterns of behaviour, is neither direct nor automatic, and the outcome is not guaranteed. Morality is something interior. It has to do with our intentions. But intention is not enough; we have to act; we have to play an active part in the world. Here, we come to the question of the will.

Other issues which are tackled in philosophical reflections on moral education in English-speaking countries include the following: 1) discipline and punishments; 2) the relations between moral education and religious education; 3) the ethical aspects of certain subjects that are taught, such as physical education; 4) the relationship between teaching and indoctrination.

This last point would seem to be the most significant. A substantial amount of the discussions focus on the dilemma involved in passing on moral standards and values at the risk of becoming arbitrary or the dilemma that arises in prohibiting any incursions into the sacred domains of the individual conscience with the risk of emptying school education of any culturally meaningful content. Thus, the school has neither the duty nor the power to educate. It should content itself with instructing. In either case, however, the fact remains that the teachers actually have no choice. Even if they are not properly qualified to impart moral education to their pupils, they cannot avoid making a contribution, whether directly or indirectly, whether it is through the content of what they teach or the example they set to the children. This is one of the reasons why the idea of a morally neutral teaching is mistaken.

Another approach is put forward by rationalist philosophers like Hare, Peters and Wilson: moral issues should not be excluded from the curriculum, but it should be approached in the most general and most formal way. This results in the paradox of a moral education that is morally neutral. Although

this approach is interesting (it is present in authors such as Rawls and Habermas), it is not completely convincing.

Pedagogical reflections show that the separation of the content and form of morality tend to be problematic. We should ask with Eamonn Callan (1985) whether the development of moral reasoning as proposed by the "formalist" rationalists is truly an antidote against indoctrination, and is fully equivalent to the essence of moral education. Concern for others and taking into account the interests of all the members of the human community do not have the same rational necessity as the acceptance of the rules of scientific development. To be reasonable is impossible if we reject logic; nor can we be reasonable if we reject morality, or more precisely, if we do not heed it.

The question therefore lies in finding out how we can conceive of a moral education for schools that would not involve inculcating an arbitrary morality and culture. This begs the questions as to whether it is possible to establish a morality, or moral education based on reason alone. In different ways, some of the authors we have mentioned (at least the most important ones, that is, Durkheim, Piaget and Kohlberg) share a rational view of moral education. Yet the experience of the dissociation between morality and rational intelligence in our lives cannot be denied.

Obviously, the approaches to moral education are varied. They depend on the way the ethical theory underlying them is understood. Three focuses can be distinguished: adaptation, autonomy, and virtue. Each of these is based on a different set of assumptions, a particular concept and basis of morality, and involves distinct methodologies. We shall now look at the approach based on virtue, to see if it has a more comprehensive view of education.

2. MORAL EDUCATION AND MORAL VIRTUES

Educational improvement can be seen as having two major directions: a) that which takes place in the order of intelligence, and b) that which belongs to the order of the will. These two aspects are closely allied and complementary. Besides they arise out of a holistic concept of education. In fact, character formation is the basis for cultivating the intellect.

2.1. CHARACTER EDUCATION. INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL EDUCATION

Parallel to the issue of intellectual formation is that of moral formation. In this second dimension, education is concerned with an ideal of life in the practical order: virtue. This sphere, in which virtue is the object of human dynamism, is developed and unfolds through the education of the will. Through the educational process, children learn to act in accord with a right and proper understanding of life. *Phronesis* (prudence) through practical judgements that determine and specify what is to be done in every situation, directs the desire to act with rectitude.

The proper end of this type of education is the practice of the virtue of prudence, which enables men to justly assess the acts of their will. But this is not to say that intellectual elements are excluded. While, it consists of a state of the will, at the same time it requires knowledge.

The good man fulfils his proper function well (see Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* I, 7, 1098 a 14-15). He fulfils it well and nobly. These adverbs certainly indicate the moral nature of his way of acting, that is, in the way he fulfils his human nature as a whole. Morality is not a partial aspect of human life, but rather it affects the realisation of its specific function. To be a good man is to be a man who is good. Virtue, then, is the disposition through which human beings become good and fulfil their proper functions.

Intellectual and moral formation are two complementary aspects of education in order to acquire virtue. They contribute to the attainment of the two-fold ideal of life. The good of the intellect can be attained by learning and understanding. This is the consequence of instruction and experience. The good of the will, however, is a consequence of habit. The good of the will is principally intellectual. But as the will is an attribute of man, the good of the will requires the pursuit of secondary ends in the practical order. Among these, we can include the following: leisure that is indispensable condition for *theoria* and one of the ends of political *praxis*; noble actions, like those resulting from the exercise of the moral virtues; and the presence of certain external goods that are indispensable for life, and although they are secondary in nature, they complete our happiness.

We should point out that in education these two ends (intellectual and practical) are not in conflict. They harmoniously complement each other at the *different levels* of human fulfilment. Although Aristotle does not say that a virtuous character is needed in order to carry out theoretical activities, in his

analysis of the effects of the moral virtues, he maintains that *phronesis* makes *sophia* (wisdom) possible.

If we bear in mind these two aspects, it is clear that education should include both, so that our students perceive not only what is true, but also what is good. To achieve this, they must achieve harmony between nature, habit and reason.

2.2. HABIT

According to Aristotle the second principle –after nature and reason– that is necessary for man to become good, is that of habit, because “for the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing”⁵.

The external senses perform their proper acts immediately. For example, in the case of the eyes, we see simply because we look. In the case of habits, however, it is necessary first to learn, and once we have learnt, then we perform what has been learnt, as actions only become habits when they are repeated many times. In human beings, the acquired habit, is the principle of action in the subject, and his/her perfection is the end of this action. In the case of man this action is voluntary, whereas in the case of animals it is involuntary. If we say that the action of a subject is free, it implies that the subject possesses an ability by virtue of which he/she can distinguish good from evil.

In the first place, the word *practice* (*ethos*) is a word with many meanings. It is sometimes used to mean *custom*. The role assigned to it in education is to reinforce certain human tendencies to move in a particular direction. This involves shaping the individual's innermost forces. This educational exercise or practice is intended to act directly on the *ethos*, predisposing it in one direction or another. The result of this practice is the *habit*. Habit, then, requires practice, and practice then acts on our impulses.

Early in the life of the human being, custom and nature complement each other. “It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference”⁶.

Aristotle is the outstanding proponent of what has been an undisputed principle of education:

5. ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1, 1103 a 34-35.

6. *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1, 1103 b 23-25.

- a) the shaping force of practice and custom, as the means of inclining impulsive dispositions towards what is good;
- b) the enrichment of a natural spontaneity in the human being which when oriented well leads to a possession of a “second nature” which inclines him/her towards what is just.

The child has acquired the virtues when the passions (*pathe*) turn towards the good even before he/she has the use of reason. This is the reason behind the importance given to the role of custom in character education. The virtues are a consequence of custom.

In concrete, a man is virtuous if he acts with virtue: that is, knowing what he is doing and choosing the act for himself as a result of a permanent disposition. Thus knowledge is the first requirement for the good act, as “the intermediate is determined by the dictates of reason”, for “the mean states which we say are intermediate between excess and defect, being in accordance with right reason”⁷. But while knowing is not the only thing necessary, as Plato thought, the good act has to be accompanied by knowledge.

The second requirement is choice; that is, the choice of an action for itself, not for some other reason. The third requirement for acting virtuously is that the good act should be the result of a permanent disposition.

In culture and history, the subject of habits is associated to views about freedom. Aristotle uses two meanings of the word habit which he expressed in two different terms: a) *hexis*, in Latin *habitus*, *habitus*, essentially refers to possession (*habere*); and b) *ethos*, custom or customs, that refers to everything that is the result of practice. The permanent disposition called *hexis* has its origin either in nature or custom. Custom is a consequence of repetition or the continuity of an action which modifies a person's behaviour and which leads to the creation of a “second nature”, that is, a habit as *hexis*. Nature gave us the ability to acquire the virtues, but this ability must be developed by habit.

But not all habits are virtues. For them to be so, they have to be ordered and to conform to certain rules. It is easy to be angry, but “to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence”⁸, and this naturally is not easy. Mistakes, then, can be committed in several ways, because what is bad belongs to things that have no limit; but to get something right, there is only one way, as it is

7. *Ibid.*, VI, 1, 1138 b 18-23.

8. *Ibid.*, II, 6, 1106 b 21-24.

"possible to fail in many ways (...), while to succeed is possible only in one way"⁹. We thus come to the subject of practice in education, not as a means of acquiring any habit, but as a means of acquiring the virtues, which are essential for human perfection.

The appetite for the good, which is part of our nature, does not create virtue, but rather the aptitude for the acquisition of virtue. At least in their origins, the passions are not subject to any kind of internal necessity to always tend towards what is morally good. All acts involve pain or pleasure, or both at the same time. If the moral act brings hardship or more sorrow than joy, then the passions may turn towards a moral evil despite their natural inclination to seek the good. This is because they are at the same time inclined to look for what is pleasurable. In such a case, the passions will only follow their moral impulse when moved by an external force which is represented by educational obligation for children and legal obligation for adults.

The educator should encourage the child to perform an act repeatedly. With each repetition, the degree of habituation becomes much more profound, and in the long term it becomes easier to behave virtuously. The gradual reduction in effort in the realisation of subsequent acts increases the pleasure that comes with the performance of the act.

2.3. PLEASURE AND PAIN

"Each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity it completes. For an activity is intensified by its proper pleasure, since each class of things is better judged of and brought to precision by those who engage in the activity with pleasure; e.g. it is those who enjoy geometrical thinking that become geometers and grasp the various propositions better, and similarly, those who are fond of music or of building, and so on, make progress in their proper function by enjoying it; and the pleasures intensify the activities, and what intensifies a thing is proper to it, but things different in kind have properties different in kind"¹⁰.

In all cases, the most perfect act is at the same time the most pleasurable one. When a tendency to perform a particular act has been repeated to such an extent that the act itself has been perfected and there is ease in every performance of the act, then the tendency acquires a certain irresistible attraction that

9. *Eth. Nic.*, II, 6, 1106 b; 29-31; II, 5, 1106 a 1-6, 1106 a 35.

10. *Ibid.*, X, 5 1175 a 30-1175 b 2.

inclines it to the act itself. Hence, the need for the initial external help can then disappear.

If, besides, the object of the habit is an act which is in accord with right reason, then this act is also pleasurable and perfect. The habit can thus bring together rationality, morality, perfection and pleasure in the same action. What is morally evil thus appears to be repugnant: it is considered contrary to reason, difficult to perform and causes suffering. Our faculties veer away from it. In the virtues there is an acquired disposition through an active, spontaneous movement, that leads human beings towards what is good and directs them away from what is contrary to it. A disposition of this kind is a virtue. The moral virtues are acquired by habit, in Aristotelian sense. "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do excellence arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are perfect by habit"¹¹.

We must stress the role of pleasure in the formation of moral virtues. Morality is a source of enjoyment, of pleasant feelings. It leads to happiness. Happiness excludes suffering and involves pleasure. Education relies on this harmony between virtue and pleasure. For if suffering and goodness were inextricably linked, we would never be able to acquire any moral habit, as our nature inclines naturally to flee from suffering and to seek what we can enjoy.

"For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of pain we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education"¹².

Education consists, therefore, in making pleasure serve what is good. The attraction of pleasure leads us to what is good when the two are united in the same action. The habit which forges this union is a moral virtue. Consequently, the promotion of moral virtue requires awakening habits in children which are in essence agreeable, and which are good in their object. Practising moral virtue is simply allowing oneself to be gently carried along by a good habit.

It is undeniable that we "order our actions, some more than others, in terms of pleasure and pain", that is, the experience of pain or pleasure is very important for our actions. Being able to distinguish the pleasure in doing what is good and the pain in doing what is bad is not the only way to attaining goodness. But a correct perception of these is fundamental. Virtue consists in

11. *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1, 1103 a 23-26.

12. *Ibid.*, II, 3, 1104 b 9-13.

knowing how to behave well, and this requires knowing how to distinguish what is good from that which is not.

This is why Aristotle states that "the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits" and goes on to use a graphic metaphor: the pupil's soul must be "like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does"¹³. It is clear then that there has to be a basic foundation consisting of certain habits, without which man cannot be ruled by reason.

As regards the question whether education has to begin with reason or with habits, the answer is that the two aspects should be completely harmonious. But then an education through reason will only be fruitful if certain habits have been acquired. That is why Aristotle says that reasoning and intelligence only develop in children as they grow older. Hence, first it is most important to take care of the body and then educate the child's desires. The soul is prior to the body, and the intelligence to the desires, but this order is ontological, not chronological. Nonetheless, the education of children has to start with the acquisition of habits, even though the true principle, the one which really moves the child towards the good, is that of the intellect.

The education which teaches us to know and to perform what is humanly good cannot be understood as mere instruction, or as a process of learning practical techniques and intellectual strategies. Education is the process of forming habits which help guide the individual's subjective tendency towards what is objectively important, so that he or she can derive subjective pleasure from what is objectively most agreeable.

With respect to what we ought to do, the risk lies not in error but in blindness: in not seeing at all. Virtue reappears as the good habit of the will given its tendency towards the good. The unjust man regards as good something that is not objectively so. This keeps him blind to what is genuinely good. Because his tendencies are not accustomed to pursuing the good, he does not know goodness at all, because the things that appear to him in this guise are illusory.

From experience, considering both individual life and collective life, the human being sets for himself/herself goals that interest him/her and that give him/her pleasure. Hence, the question does not lie in lack of interest or pleasure, but in being interested and experiencing pleasure in the right things. The aim is to feel pleasure in what is genuinely pleasurable, by means of the proper education of the tendencies. In fact, the unjust man has weakened his capacity for good. He therefore thinks that something is good when in fact it is not. The

13. *Eth. Nic.*, X, 9, 1179 b 23-29.

virtuous man, on the other hand, has grown strong through his habits, and is sensitive to what is good. He pursues the truth, which he can sense to be the most agreeable thing, and take pleasure of what is best and most noble.

We can see from this that sadness and joy have to be managed with care. Their presence or absence in both acts and habits is an obvious sign of the possession or non-possession of virtue. But virtues and vices should not be confused with feelings. Virtues are objects of choice and deserve to be praised or censured. This is not the case with feelings.

This is why Aristotle recommends games and fairy tales for children, as long as both sources of fun are supervised. He was sensitive to the importance and the quality of children's small pleasures. Concretely, he values the pleasure that the child experiences when he follows his natural tendency to imitate. He describes the joy that this activity produces, as well as that which accompanies the recognition of people from their picture, and that of music. A further source of happiness in learning is that which is derived from novel experiences. Making progress in one's studies also produces happiness, increases one's interest and encourages one to study further.

To end, we can say that there were two things which the Greeks appreciated very much and which can serve as guidelines for us: the educational value of poetry, and the ethical influence of literary works that reflect the political and religious principles of a people's life.

virtues & feelings

ABSTRACT

¿EN QUÉ CONSISTE LA EDUCACIÓN DEL CARÁCTER O EDUCACIÓN MORAL?

En estos últimos años la educación moral, tanto en las escuelas como fuera de ellas, ha sido objeto de creciente atención pública y política. Al mismo tiempo se ha extendido cierta insatisfacción respecto a los enfoques que se habían adoptado anteriormente. Así se ha convertido en tarea urgente replantear cuestiones implicadas en el diseño de programas educativos para facilitar el desarrollo moral en los niños y adolescentes.

En este artículo se ofrece un doble enfoque, histórico y temático, para conseguir una clarificación de esta situación actual y que sirva de base para puestas en práctica futuras.

En la primera parte –enfocando la cuestión– surgen aportaciones como las de Durkheim, Piaget, Kohlberg, Dewey, el enfoque centrado en los valores con distintas variantes, la educación del carácter y aproximaciones anglosajonas a la filosofía de la educación moral.

En la segunda parte se elige una aproximación temática tratando de esbozar qué es eso que llamamos educación moral desde la perspectiva de la formación de hábitos. Se tratan cuestiones tales como la interrelación de la formación intelectual y moral, el hábito y la virtud, el lugar del placer y el dolor en la educación moral.

KEY WORDS

Moral education, character education, ethics, virtue

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LAS COMPETENCIAS BÁSICAS EN LA FORMACIÓN MORAL Y CÍVICA

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1. INTRODUCCIÓN

En la llamada sociedad civil, propia de los países avanzados, la formación de los ciudadanos se dirige, en general, a potenciar en el sujeto una moral de autonomía de contenido universal. Fieles a la Ilustración, se entiende que para la formación del ser humano basta con promover en el individuo el desarrollo autónomo de la razón y atender a sus dictados.

Sin entrar aquí en las limitaciones que esta concepción ética pueda tener como fundamentante de la moral, la educación cívica tal como nosotros la entendemos se debe dirigir a que el sujeto no sólo sea capaz de un razonamiento moral con criterios universales, sino que además se comporte moralmente.

Si nos centramos en el terreno de la acción moral, entendemos que ésta se ve influenciada en gran medida por el grado de autonomía personal y los valores de los sujetos, pero también por el grado de *competencia emocional y social* que éstos poseen. Porque sentimientos y emociones están presentes en nuestro comportamiento como seres racionales. De hecho, la capacidad de comprender los sentimientos de los demás (empatía), el dominio de uno mismo (autocontrol) o la autoestima, etc., pilares todos ellos básicos de la *competencia emocional*, influyen en la acción racional de los individuos y a veces la orientan.