

Imitation, imagination and re-appraisal: educating the moral emotions

Bruce Maxwell^{*} and Roland Reichenbach

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany

No observer of research currents in the human sciences can fail to detect a new appreciation for the contribution of emotions to descriptions of such wide-ranging psychological phenomena as moral judgement, personal and social development and learning. Despite this, we claim that educating the emotions as a dimension of moral education remains something of a taboo subject. As evidence for this, we present three categories of interventions that fit unmistakably into the category of the *education* of the emotions, but which go generally unrecognized. In the light of the fact that emotional education is held not just to be possible, but is in fact commonplace, we present an error theory to explain its general occlusion. Next, we argue that the taboo surrounding the education of the emotions helps to explain the lack of recognition that relevant kinds of emotional reactions, especially guilt and shame, seem indeed to be a better measure of successful moral education than moral acts. This, we take it, is one of the suppositions of the old classroom management device called the ‘shame corner’. In the last section we propose a comparative analysis of the shame corner and its pedagogical descendant, the ‘time-out corner’, in terms of their assumptions about the structure of moral judgement and the significance of moral emotions. Without recommending the reinstatement of the shame corner, we conclude that, far from constituting progress in moral education, the time-out corner is, from this perspective, apparently wrong-headed and confusing.

Introduction

In kindergartens and primary schools of the past, and possibly somewhere still today, a discipline technique known as the ‘shame corner’ was in use. The offender was directed to a corner of the classroom where, with his or her nose wedged in close to the wall, s/he could only hear the social interactions of playmates, often in the form of jeers. Everyone who had suffered the shame corner knew that it was not much more effective than the teacher’s inevitable display of gross indignation in eliciting its eponymous emotion. Yet, standing in the shame corner is not a matter of

^{*}Corresponding author: Institut für Allgemeine Erziehungswissenschaft (I), Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Georgskommende 26, 48143 Münster, Germany. Email: maxwellb@uni-muenster.de

indifference; being symbolically isolated from the others, no one remains unaffected. And being affected, if only by feelings of embarrassment expressed in giggles, one might, if only on very rare occasions, find oneself *re-appraising* one's actions, *imagining* the effect of one's actions on others or even *imitating* the demanded emotional reaction by acting as if ashamed.

No observer of research currents in the human sciences can fail to detect a new-found appreciation for the contribution of emotions to any comprehensive understanding of such wide-ranging psychological phenomena as moral judgement, personal and social development and learning. Despite this, we claim, the idea of educating the emotions as a dimension of moral education remains something of a taboo subject. This paper aims to make this case, principally by pointing out the various ways in which educators commonly engage in the education of the emotions – that is to say, via direct and non-coercive attempts to change a person's emotions by appeal to knowledge and understanding – even though these interventions are not usually recognized as *éducation sentimentale*. In the light of how apparently obvious it is that the education of the emotions is held to be not just possible, but is in fact commonplace, we briefly develop an error theory to explain its general occlusion, arguing that primarily the two strongly influential cultural currents of political liberalism and the modern ideal of authenticity picture, in different ways, the emotions as inviolably private and hence beyond the purview of legitimate educational intervention. Next, we claim that the relegation of moral emotions to the private realm seems to explain another closely related received idea about moral education; namely, that the best indicator of successful moral education is a moral act. Here, we argue that it is not moral acts but moral emotions, in particular the emotions of guilt and shame, that are the most reliable guide to the practical moral-educational concern of whether a given moral norm has been internalized. This, we take it, is one of the suppositions of the old classroom management device known as the 'shame corner', the apparent forbear of the contemporary 'time-out corner'. In the last section we propose a comparative analysis of the shame corner and the time-out corner in terms of their assumptions about the nature of moral judgement and the significance of moral emotions. Without in any regard recommending the reinstatement of the shame corner, we conclude that, far from constituting progress in moral education, the time-out corner is, from this perspective, apparently wrong-headed and potentially confusing.

Imitation, imagination and re-appraisal

Education understood as an ensemble of techniques, devices, strategies and approaches used by educators to attain their educational goals has the unusual characteristic of being purposely and perhaps even constitutionally deficient. It has, as Luhmann and Schorr (1982) put it, a 'technological deficit'; to the extent that education approximates the ideal of efficiency and effectiveness in attaining its goals a central supposition of the modern liberal 'pedagogies of autonomy', the ideal of an autonomous learner or of a subject endowed with a free will, is put into question. If

in fact such educational technology were possible it would not just be undesirable but would be subject to what Benner (1979) called the 'technology constraint'. This ethical limit imposed on contemporary educational practice is an expression of the pedagogical antinomy of modern educational thought which Kant (1984) famously formulated in the question: 'How can freedom be cultivated through constraint?' (*Wie kultiviere ich die Freiheit bei dem Zwange?*) The question has always been one of how to get children to voluntarily do the things that they ought do and voluntarily avoid doing the things that they ought not to do. The answer is, of course, that we do not really know and the modern ethical insight that goes along with it tells us that we might not want to know.

The technological deficit and technology constraint in contemporary pedagogy do not of course render attempts at education, moral or otherwise, entirely *ineffective* or even pointless. We have enough empirical evidence to regard this as false (cf. Lempert's 1989 review). In connection with the present concern, the education of the emotions, educators do commonly intervene and, most importantly, in ways that both respect the normative ideal of the autonomous learner and are consistent with Peters' rough-and-ready but nevertheless quite uncontroversial description of education as being concerned with the promotion of knowledge and understanding (1998). We submit that observation will confirm that everyday practices of emotional education can be analysed into three general categories of pedagogical interventions or 'encounters', which we now adumbrate in turn.

First, there are requests for *re-appraisals* or requests to re-evaluate circumstances. This category corresponds with the rational or cognitive dimension of emotions. In such pedagogical situations, the educator directs emotional responses by appealing to alternative interpretations of reality, by drawing attention to the relevance of such things as circumstances (e.g., 'There is more than enough to eat for everyone. Even if you are the biggest one there's no need to grab the largest piece for yourself') and intentions (e.g., 'Don't be so upset. She didn't mean to step on your cap. It was an accident'). What this approach teaches is that the appropriateness of emotional responses is subject to a correct interpretation of reality that is in turn assessable in terms of publicly accessible standards of judgement, and getting it right morally involves attentiveness to such facts.

The second encompasses requests to *imitate* or *dissimulate*, that is to say, to adjust one's emotional expression in accord with normative expectations, either by altering the intensity of an emotional response (e.g., pretending to feel sadder than one spontaneously feels) or by trying to feel an emotion that one does not spontaneously feel (e.g., shame when one is held to have done something thought to be sanction-worthy). These correspond with the observation that, despite the spontaneity or passivity of emotional reactions, they can nevertheless be controlled and managed – a fact that seems to entail the possibility of emotional habituation. Educators might easily deceive themselves and others by using nice and politically correct terms like 'cultivation' and 'stimulation' to describe attempts to educate the emotions, but real-life educational attempts most often have an *imperative* character. This takes the characteristic form of a more or less stern command issued to a child to have an

appropriate emotional reaction. The familiar orders and statements, ‘Shame on you!’, ‘Try to have fun!’, ‘Don’t be angry!’, ‘Try to like him again!’, ‘Quit sulking!’, ‘Calm down!’, ‘Please, be nice!’ and ‘Pull yourself together!’ are all injunctions to make one feel what one does not at present feel. Of course, such requests to at least *act* as if one would feel differently often fail and they might provoke opposition and can lead to reactions that were not at all intended. But this fact does not make such attempts at eliciting emotions unnecessary or futile; they both send a strong message that the emotional reaction is sanction-worthy in the circumstances and, just as importantly, they recognize that not just acting but feeling as well is a matter of choice. What is also underlined is the fact that there is a range of choice with regard to how one responds emotionally to a situation.

The third category comprises requests to exercise the *imagination*, namely to engage in moral role-taking. Parents typically ask: ‘How would *you* feel, if your brother did the same thing (e.g., steal or damage a favourite toy) to you?’ Of course, this is not a question but rather a request, invitation or exhortation to imagine how the potential victims or beneficiaries of one’s action would or do feel (cf. Speicker, 1988). The ability to role-take and imagine the impact of one’s actions on others may be a precondition of the possibility of moral agency as such. Consider a person who is incapable of imagining the impact of her actions on another person’s interests. The possibility of success of the injunction to role-take as an educational device necessitates: (a) *oneself having* typical emotional reactions in specific morally meaningful situations; (b) *understanding* emotional reactions of *others* and *myself*; and (c) an ability to *imagine* and predict the typical emotional reactions that particular and possibly unique moral situations evoke. Interpreted more broadly than being simply a request to imagine how one would feel in the position of another, the ability to engage in social perspective taking, as it is sometimes called (cf. Gibbs, 2003), has long been considered an essential to the possibility of adopting what Kurt Baier (1965) famously labelled the ‘moral point of view’, the point of view from which moral questions can be judged impartially. Bentham’s felicific calculus, G. H. Mead’s notion of ideal role-taking, Rawls’s veil of ignorance and Habermas’ combined principles of (U) and (D) can all be understood as formalized philosophical expressions of how imaginative de-centring is inseparable from approaching practical problems from the moral point of view (cf. Habermas, 1993). In this sense, not only moral education but to a large degree also political education necessitates the cultivation of the imaginative faculty (cf. Nussbaum, 1995, 2001).

It is worth pointing out that these three strategies should be understood as analytic categories, which are not always (and possibly never) wholly distinguishable in practice. One can imagine situations in which all three are appealed to as, for instance, in a case where a parent says to her sulking child moments before visiting a family friend the child dislikes, ‘When we go inside, try to put a brave face on it (request to imitate). You know he’s really not a bad person at all (request to reappraise). And in any case, having you sitting there pouting just makes for an uncomfortable experience for everyone (request to consider others’ perspectives)’.

Most importantly, however, we should not fail to observe that these educational strategies do not appear in any sense to be forms of manipulation or indoctrination. Manipulation and indoctrination are corrupt forms of emotional education because they operate without appealing to the child's assumed faculty of autonomous judgement. Emotional manipulation in particular seems by definition to involve the use of a variety of techniques to get a person to experience a desired emotion, without the person being aware that he is being manipulated. The requests to imitate, to re-appraise or to imagine are, by contrast, transparent to judgement because they state explicitly that the student or child is indeed strongly expected or urged to change his or her evaluations and emotional reactions. It remains up to the child to choose whether to try to behave according to these expectations. In this sense, 'education of the moral emotions' as it is described here, is not inconsistent with the autonomy principle of modern moral pedagogy and in this sense the mainspring of education of the moral emotions, like education more generally, is to challenge the child in his or her interpretations and beliefs, and to stimulate reflection.

Leaving the substantive and invariably ethically precarious question of which emotions should be encouraged in which particular circumstances entirely aside, it seems clear that requests to *re-appraise* the judgements providing the cognitive basis of an affective reaction to a situation, requests to *imitate* or to act *as if* one feels otherwise than one feels spontaneously in a set of circumstances in order to meet normative expectations, and, finally, requests to *imagine* what it would be like to stand in the shoes of the other can be regarded as not just three necessary and legitimate means of education of emotions understood as part of the moral education process, but processes with which every educator even now is intimately familiar.

The sense in which educating the emotions is a taboo subject

Despite the virtual consensus in the research community that rigid dichotomies of emotion and cognition are no longer tenable (cf. e.g., Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1966; Averill, 1973; Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Weiner, 1995) and the widespread recognition of the importance of emotions in education and learning (cf. e.g., Piaget, 1981; Nucci, 2001, p.108), the question of what it might mean to 'educate the emotions' still seems to be far from clear in most people's minds. It is one thing to recognize the importance of emotions in learning and in personal and social development, which is the general thrust of such popular ideas as 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1995) and 'social and emotional learning' (e.g., Cohen, 1999) but quite another to suggest that educators set out to actually try to 'educate' the emotions. As we indicated above, to educate the emotions would, by any standard definition of the term, involve among other things, the intentional shaping or modification of another person's emotions, often via attempts to shape or modify the *expression* of the emotion. We postulate that, on the whole, educators, and especially teachers in their public capacity as professionals, regard any such

intervention in the emotional lives of children as illegitimate manipulation and, further and most importantly, that they hold this belief in the face of what seems to be the incontrovertible fact that the actual practice of emotional education is not just commonplace but is widely regarded as a legitimate facet of education in general and moral education in particular. While there is no doubting that the emotions are no longer a ‘neglected’ theme in educational research, the idea of educating the emotions remains, in this sense, a taboo subject.

A taboo subject, as everyone knows, is one that is simply not discussed because it in some respect goes against cultural and societal norms. Because a subject is taboo, however, does not imply that the activity to which it refers – for instance, extra- or pre-marital sex, masturbation or the consumption of pornographic material – does not go on: quite the contrary. What it means for an activity to be taboo is that it is not openly *acknowledged* as being one that is practised. That some subjects are taboo is perhaps understandable, especially those activities that might be seen as damaging interpersonal relations or held in some respect to threaten the social structure. What stands out in the case of the education of the emotions is that it seems instead to be a glaring case of practical educational irrationality; judging in all earnest some educational activity to be illegitimate but doing it anyway. If, as we suggest, the education of the emotions is held to be not just possible, desirable and necessary but in fact common educational practice, what could explain the moratorium on it in open discussion?

Contemporary philosophical discussions of the emotions almost invariably account for the general lack of philosophical interest that the emotions have drawn in terms of the propensity in Western intellectual culture, largely thanks to the Stoic legacy detectable in Descartes (cf. Garber, 1992; Nussbaum, 1994, 2001; de Sousa, 2001), to take the ‘passions’, as just one among other categories of emotions, as typical of the genre (cf. de Sousa, 1987; Oakley, 1992; Ben Ze’ev, 2000). Superficially, the fact that emotions occur spontaneously suggests that emotions are just not the kinds of entities that can be educated; one could no more educate the emotions than one could educate a headache. If an emotion is held first and foremost as being an irrational affective response whose principal role in moral life is to interfere with sound moral judgement – as, for instance, when anger leads to a morally inappropriate response to some perceived transgression – then far from being the object of cultivation or education, people should learn strategies for detecting and avoiding or otherwise countering such emotions (cf. Barrett, 1994). The conceptual error lying behind this received idea was already identified in Alexius Meinong’s *Psychological-ethical investigations in the theory of value* (1894). As Reizenzein, Meyer and Schützwohl (2003) note, Meinong’s approach anticipates all the principal elements of contemporary emotional theory. His main insight was that there are no emotions – or, in his term, ‘feelings’ – without cognition. First, he saw that *something* has to be *in some way* cognitively represented to become the object of a feeling; there can be no feeling without an object. This feature of emotions is now recognized by all contemporary theories of emotion and is referred to in philosophical discussions as the ‘intentionality’ of emotions (cf. de Sousa,

1987; Ben Ze'ev, 2000). Second, and relatedly, Meinong presented an early articulation of the idea of the 'rationality' of the emotions (cf. de Sousa, 1987; Oakley, 1992; Ben Ze'ev, 2000) by claiming that cognitions to a large degree differentiate emotions and that different emotions are a function of different cognitions. In brief, this cognitive view of emotion's central contribution to overcoming the notion that emotions are characteristically passionate is by reinterpreting the phenomenon of irrational emotions as emotions based on an unacceptable appraisal (cf. de Sousa, 1987; van Dam & Steutel, 1996; Peters, 1998). This idea is reflected in the way people ordinarily talk about emotions. It not only makes sense but it is perfectly common to try to convince someone that he should not, for instance, be afraid of a particular dog, by trying to expose the grounds of the fear as inadequate, in this case perhaps by pointing out the fact that the dog is well-trained, at the side of its owner and in any case has never been known to have acted aggressively. This inconsistency between actual argumentative or discursive practices and the default view of the emotions as being passionate that the early exponents of the cognitive view of the emotions, such as Arnold (1960), Meinong (1968) and de Sousa (1987) sought to expose is, of course, closely analogous to the inconsistency between actual educational practices of emotional education – that is, requests to imitate, imagine and reappraise – and what we claim to be the predominant belief that educators should not and are not involved in the education of the emotions, to which we wish to draw attention.

Other possible explanations for the taboo around the education of the emotions is better considered ethical or normative rather than definitional. One such reason is certainly that the notion rests uneasily with the principles of political liberalism. From the normative perspective that values negative individual freedom – that is, the right to pursue one's own private conception of the good life without others interfering – as a primary human good one would tend to view attempts to form the emotions as overstepping limits set by the harm principle; educators, like legislators, have the right and even obligation to sanction behaviour that unfairly harms others' interests, but they also have an obligation not to try to impose limits on what people can think, say or feel. The atmosphere of moral scepticism largely fed by, again, normative concerns related to the imperative to respect value-pluralism, seems to play a role as well. Experiencing a moral emotion presupposes a substantive value commitment that is often integral to an agent's identity, the type of attachment Charles Taylor (1989) refers to as 'strong evaluation'. It would seem to follow, then, that the education of the moral emotions would be not just the imposition of the teacher's value priorities and interpretations on children, evaluations which by their very nature are uncertain and fallible. So doing could also be seen as having the further and clandestine effect of playing an apparently illegitimate role in determining who those children *become*. The liberal concerns about the right to freedom of emotion and feeling and the concerns about indoctrination rooted in moral scepticism are further reinforced by a certain attractive psychological view of the person which has a normative dimension as well; the modern ideal of authenticity. The ideals of authenticity of the individual and the autonomy of the

individual, expressed first by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, can be regarded as the two major reference points around which modern articulations of individual freedom are played out (Taylor, 1991; Menke 1993, 1996). One is the autonomy of the Enlightenment that exhorts the use of one's *own* mind. The other, the authenticity of Romanticism, counsels, 'listen to your inner voice' and 'follow your feelings'. Not just the right but also the psychological need and, under certain interpretations, even *obligation* to be in contact with one's own feelings has had a great impact on the emancipation of the individual, in a sense liberating it from the barriers and conformity of social life and its constraints. Therefore, being in touch with one's "inner self" – whatever that might turn out to be – has become something of a modern psychological imperative: in the 'depths of the soul', truth of the feelings is expected. In psychological humanist hands this has led to a sort of sanctification of emotions which renders the notion of educating the emotions inevitably a form of manipulation or violation of the natural right to a world of personal feelings, and of the untouchable 'inner nucleus' of the authentic self.

It might seem appropriate in the context of contemporary moral education to try to locate the point at which emotions intersect with morality in the hypothesis that understanding a moral rule cannot be a mere cognitive affair. But from antiquity down to the present day, the conclusion has seemed inevitable that how one responds affectively to situations is of ethical significance for people and thus, that people, especially as children, have to learn to feel the right thing. According to Aristotle (1955), because of our desires we do what is bad and because of pain we neglect to do what is good. Therefore, he thought, one important aim of education is to habituate the young to feel pleasure and pain in the right situations. An *éducation sentimentale* would have to have the impudence to teach the *situational specific and adaptive emotional reaction patterns*. In this view, learning routines of emotional reactions – habits of the heart as Bellah *et al.* (1985) aptly put it – is indeed a necessary aim of moral education. Precisely because the moral education of the emotions is a necessary aim of moral education, it undoubtedly goes on today much as it has in the past. It is, for reasons speculated upon above, just not the subject of much discussion.

Moral emotions and educational success

The view that the best measure of moral educational success is the performance of moral acts is a commonplace, the legitimacy of which becomes contestable once one appreciates the function of emotions in the experience of normative obligation, the belief that one is subject to a normative requirement. Though some take issue with the idea that an aim of moral education is the internalization of norms, on closer examination the objection is best understood as being directed towards the connotations of the term rather than the descriptive state of seeing oneself as subject to moral norms. A case in point, and possibly the most differentiated version of this objection, can be found in the context of constructivist views of moral development which tend to avoid the term 'internalization' on theoretical grounds.

In Turiel's (1998) account, for instance, children co-construct moral norms in the give and take of their social interactions, especially through the resolution of conflicts. The notion of internalization of norms stands in tension with this account because, in Hoffman's words, 'it suggests something outside the child that becomes part of his internal moral structure, that is, the child passively acquires moral norms' (2000, p. 128), rather than by autonomous and reasoned *self-subjection* to such norms. Doubts concerning whether moral education is worthy of the name is either possible or desirable in the absence of some degree of direct socialization aside (cf. Peters, 1981; Hoffman, 2000; Carr, 2001, for an expression of such doubts), the idea that moral education aims principally at the internalization of moral norms as we intend it is meant to be at a level of abstraction which encompasses both the progressive or liberal ideal of self-legislated moral norms and the more conservative or traditional conception of the internalization of moral norms as being a dimension of the process of initiation into some basically true set of moral beliefs and values (cf. Carr, 2001, on this distinction).

That there is an emotional component to the recognized excellences of moral character is well known and scarcely needs to be repeated here. The idea is commonly associated with Aristotelian ethics: excellences of moral character are concerned not just with what one does but also how one feels (Aristotle, 1955, p. 1104b). Bravery consists not only of facing danger but facing it, as Aristotle puts it, 'gladly, or at least without distress', whereas a coward, he held, faced danger in a state of distress; moderation is willing abstinence whereas licentiousness finds it irksome; an arrogant person, one might add, feels too much self-regard while in a humble or modest person self-regard is properly balanced, and so on. Indeed, the idea that virtue is concerned with emotions is of course not just that virtue consists in both feeling *and* acting but rather that it is quite incoherent to try to separate out virtuous acts and dispositions from a substantive corresponding emotional orientation (cf. Carr, 1991; Peters, 1998). In this sense, an emotion can be considered to be a constitutive psychological component of a virtuous act: there is something conceptually amiss, for instance, in the very idea of a person believing him/herself morally compelled to act benevolently in a particular set of circumstances, to act benevolently yet be completely absent of any *feelings* of benevolence. Likewise, compassion understood as being both an emotion and a moral virtue involves an appraisal that a person is in some way distressed, some element of affective response understood as the effect of being struck or touched by their distress and a motivation to relieve that distress (cf. Blum, 1980; Nussbaum, 2001).

Though far from unnoticed, it is less well recognized that emotions, in particular what Taylor (1985) called the 'emotions of self assessment' – guilt, shame and indignation – bear a similar relation to straightforward moral rules like those interdicting such things as lying, cheating, hitting and so on (cf. also Wallace, 1994, pp. 38–39). The role of these emotions in motivating moral behaviour is one thing, and the subject of some controversy. In Freud's analysis, for example, guilt is the conscious manifestation of anxiety produced when the standards of the superego are

violated (1986, p. 459). In Hoffman's (2000) theory of moral development it is feelings of guilt, a socialized response to the prospect of harming another person (p. 151), that help to explain the workings of the process of 'de-centration' in moral development theory, whereby children come to be willing to negotiate and compromise their own claims in the face of other's conflicting claims (pp. 130–132). In the same connection, the qualitative distinction is also made between 'autonomous guilt' and 'heteronomous shame'. Moral cultures wherein guilt as opposed to shame dominates as a motivation for action or as an emotional reaction to one having violated some moral norm, are thought to gain in maturity over shame cultures; while shame is typically characterized as being inextricably bound up with fear of being caught or the subject of public ridicule, guilt suggests the subject's own self-assessment of moral failure rather than relying on the verdict of an external audience (cf. Benedict, 1947; Taylor, 1985; Williams, 1993; Tombs, 1995). Kekes argued that while 'shame is a sign that we have made a serious commitment, and it is an impetus for honouring it' (1988, p. 282), its status as moral emotion conducive to moral consideration and behaviour is far from unquestionable. At the same time as it may alert us to our moral shortcomings, it also comprises a strong attitude of self-depreciation, thereby threatening what Kekes considers to be 'our most important resource' with regards to future improvement, or what he calls 'moral progress', a sense of agency (pp. 282–283). Be that as it may, what we wish to draw attention to here is the apparently uncontroversial suggestion that the basic experience of the emotions connected with conformity to moral rules, such as shame and guilt, a category of emotions Ben Spiecker (1988) has discussed under the heading of 'rule emotions', demonstrates that an agent not only accepts that a particular moral norm applies to him or her but also that s/he has *accepted the normative validity of the moral rule*. As Spiecker puts it:

With this type of moral emotions the cognitive evaluation consists of considering a moral rule or principle to be applicable to oneself and to others. Moral rule-emotions are thus connected with moral rules, and only a person who has mastered these rules can have these emotions. These rule-emotions are rational: for, in principle, a person can explain and justify why he experiences these emotions [in terms of the moral rule's validity]. (1988, p. 46)

The relevant issue in this connection, it should be pointed out, is not whether or not in any particular case an emotional experience of shame or guilt in response to a norm violation is justified or appropriate (i.e., rational understood as standing in contrast with irrational), but rather that the experience of the emotion of guilt or shame is viewed as being related to the violation, actual or prospective, of a moral norm from the agent's own perspective (i.e., rational understood as standing in contrast with a-rational or non-rational) (cf. van Dam & Steutel, 1996).¹

Considering the experience of moral rule emotions counterfactually gives some insight into the usefulness of moral rule emotions in connection with moral education's aim of supporting the internalization of moral norms. A student who is clearly aware of having caused harm, but shows no signs of experiencing guilt about it, provides strong evidence that s/he has not grasped that it is wrong to cause others

harm. In a slightly different case, if a student's action appears to have been motivated by malice then the educator has grounds for assuming that the student has grasped the relevant moral rule – where malice is understood as being something along the lines of a will to cause disproportionate harm to another. The fact that he allows non-moral considerations to override the decision to act shows that the rule has been only weakly internalized (or that there is a need to develop competencies in managing or responding to emotional experiences, how to negotiate conflicts between emotional experiences and normative beliefs). In any case, even though the signs of experiencing moral rule emotions are often difficult to perceive and employ a range of subtle perceptive capacities that Ickes (1997) calls 'empathic accuracy', a person's moral rule emotions provide important information vis-à-vis his or her comprehension and internalization of moral norms. The moral relevance of the experience of moral emotions, even if that amounts just to *pretending* to experience the emotion, possibly derives from just this fact. Mere conformity in one's actions to the moral rules is insufficient because conformity demonstrates at most the understanding that the rules apply – but not that they are normatively valid. Conformity is also consistent with believing that the rules are neither normatively valid nor applicable to the person in question if s/he has acted only to avoid sanction attached to lack of conformity. Conversely, it seems possible to have internalized a moral norm yet not be motivated to act in accordance with it; it would seem unfair to say of a person who feels guilty after some moral omission that he does not have a strong commitment to the validity of the norm for the simple reason, again, that commitment to the norm is a precondition of having the relevant rule emotion. It is for this reason that moral rule emotions are arguably a better indicator of internalization than moral motivation (cf. Nunner-Winkler, 1998). It is only if the person experiences the relevant emotion that one can be sure that s/he is committed to both the rule's applicability to her- or himself *and* to its normative validity. The following passage from Coetzee's (1999) novel *Disgrace* illustrates this clearly. The main character, David Lurie, is facing a committee responsible for hearing charges of professional misconduct on his part. He says,

'And that will satisfy you, an admission that I was wrong?'

'No', says Farodia Rassool. 'That would be back to front. *First* Professor Lurie must make his statement. *Then* we can decide whether to accept it in mitigation. We don't negotiate first on what should be in his statement. The statement should come from him, in his own words. Then we can see if it comes from his heart.'

'And you trust yourself to divine that, from the words I use – to divine whether it comes from my heart?'

'We will see what attitude you express. We will see whether you express contrition.'
(Coetzee, 1999, p. 54)

The character Farodia Rassool's point is that only an expression of genuine contrition – that is, an admission of misconduct that 'comes from the heart' – will satisfy the committee that Lurie recognizes the normative validity of the standards of professional conduct that he has been charged with violating.

Because, then, the experience of rule emotions can be considered to be a litmus test of the internalization of moral norms, moral rule emotions are apparently a good

measure of one kind of educational success. This, however, is not to say that rule emotions, such as shame and guilt, should be explicitly and directly encouraged in children as a dimension of moral education. As we have already noted, the question of whether and to what extent such emotions are justifiable as moral emotions is difficult and controversial, and one we do not wish to embark on presently. Our main point, again, is that the occurrence of such emotions is not just a good indicator of the success of moral education but, for reasons sketched above, is arguably a better indicator than the performance of moral acts.

From the shame corner to the time-out corner

It may or may not be that cultural attachment to the idea of the personal sanctity of the emotions is responsible for the occlusion of what seems to be the obvious fact that moral emotions often speak louder than moral acts in signalling one's ethical commitments. But what is clear is that the old classroom management device known as the shame corner, described briefly at the outset, assumes that the emotions are significant in this respect; the wrongdoer is sent to the shame corner in order to conjure up feelings of shame which, if sincere, would demonstrate recognition that s/he believes s/he has done something genuinely wrong.

The use of a discipline device believed to be effective at triggering the simulation of some emotional reaction considered appropriate, rather than the desirable emotion itself, is perhaps not so surprising if we consider that children learn about how and when to react emotionally by observing thousands of other people's emotional reactions in the course of childhood (Bandura, 1977). What is learned in the shame corner is, among other things, that sometimes one has an obligation to *put on* specific emotional reactions. In the interpersonal domain, imitation has the structure of a presupposition or self-presupposition: according to more or less subtle social scripts, social expectations pre-determine which emotional reactions are socially desirable (e.g., sympathy and guilt), which are tolerable (e.g., impatience and envy) and which are sanction-worthy (e.g., rage and rapacity). This, perhaps, is because acting as if one is emotionally affected is a necessary step towards becoming a moral self; before the internalization of moral norms comes some sense of what has to be internalized. Aristotle (1955) held that morality had in large measure to be learned and, as with the learner of any other skill, the learner of morality should begin by acting like or imitating those who already possess the characteristic skills and dispositions of morality (cf. Warnock, 1998). Of course, an argument scarcely needs to be made that the shame corner deserves its place in the dustbin of pedagogical history. As Nucci (2001, pp. 200–201) has recently reiterated, such 'expedient' punishments – those that aim principally to inflict discomfort on the child while lacking any meaningful connection with the nature of the transgression under sanction – are confusing and potentially counterproductive. The unnatural and vulnerable physical position the shame corner calls for – the nose in a corner and the back to the class – is potentially humiliating. The shame corner is, by all accounts, ineffective. In the shame corner one is less likely to feel shame than to

learn what it feels like to be falsely accused or to be the one punished while others whose behaviour was even worse got away with it. The teacher, rather than one's actions, is most likely to be reappraised, the result being possibly deeper or more subtle feelings of hatred towards him or her. If one imagines anything, it is liable to be what one is going to do after school that day, or simply being somewhere else. If the shame corner does elicit shame, the chances are that, exposed to the taunts of classmates yet unable to respond, it has no connection whatsoever with the behaviour under sanction. Finally, it is not clear, as Kekes (1988) has argued, that shame is *ever* an appropriate reaction to one's own acknowledged wrongdoing; there may be, as he suggests, more productive responses to one's own wrongdoing than emotional self-flagellation.

Yet, for all that, the shame corner still seems to embody a certain amount of wisdom about educating the emotions as a dimension of moral education. First, it recognizes the ethical significance of emotional responses. Second, it recognizes that the absence of moral emotions, such as shame and guilt, following a moral transgression indicates to others a lack of acceptance of the act as a moral transgression. Third, when used to enforce classroom policies with clear moral content, it sends a serious message that the teacher views such policies as having categorical moral status. Finally, the shame corner is a non-indoctrinatory method in the sense that it does not intend to manipulate, condition or otherwise illicitly manufacture what are deemed to be appropriate emotional responses; the time in the shame corner is by intention (if not in fact) time to be spent reflecting on and assessing the moral acceptability of one's actions.

As everyone with even the most superficial acquaintance with the contemporary primary-school classroom knows, the shame corner never really died out but was instead, like a host of other traditional pedagogical practices, transformed by the more general process of the psychologization of the educational domain that has occurred over the last generation. Its contemporary counterpart goes under the name of the 'time-out corner'. We argued above that part of what characterizes the education of the emotions as something of a taboo subject is that it, like everything that is taboo rightly so-called, does indeed go on. It is just not explicitly discussed. In this respect, the cultural bias towards viewing the emotions as being highly personal has done little to change the actual practice of educating the emotions, as our sketch of the three pedagogical interventions or 'requests' to imagine, re-appraise and imitate was meant to illustrate. In other respects, however, we can see evidence of what are arguably its pernicious effects. A case in point, we suggest, is the replacement of the shame corner by the time-out corner, a familiar feature of the contemporary primary-school classroom.

Arguably the most significant transformation that the school has undergone in the last 30 years is from being generally regarded as a moralizing institution to being generally regarded as a psychologizing or psychologized institution. The reasons behind this cultural change are complex; speculation about its causes is not within the scope of this paper. In some respects, the psychologization of the school is a clear gain. If nothing else, the movement attempts to adopt a post-traditional stance

regarding pedagogy, subjecting inherited practices to rational scrutiny and demanding a theoretical base. However, psychologization has brought with it the unreflective, superficial and frequently ideologically motivated versions of individual or cultural moral perspectivism endemic in the social sciences. The combination of these views with the widespread and legitimate normative social concerns connected with the need to manage value pluralism in contemporary multicultural societies – an issue that is particularly perplexing in the context of state schools – has made for an apparently irremediable muddle regarding the moral role of schools and teachers in moral education, represented by such failed ideas as the ideal of the moral neutrality of the teacher and the promotion of a radically technocratic view of the school (cf. Carr, 2003).

It is probably safe to speculate that neither the teacher using the time-out corner or the shame corner, nor the students subject to them, usually perceive them as they are intended. The shame corner seems intended first and foremost as a tool of moral education, in particular of education of the moral emotions as a component of moral education. By contrast, the time-out corner is intended neither as an explicit instrument of moral education nor as a punishment, but rather as a ‘tactical retreat’; the wrongdoer is physically placed in a position where s/he cannot harm others or her-/himself, rather like prison sentences for dangerous offenders. In practice, however, they are both behaviour management techniques for classrooms in disguise, in that the role they play in the eyes of all involved is that of enforcing classroom rules and policies by guaranteeing that undesirable consequences will follow from rule infraction. From the moral-educational point of view of this paper the relevant question pertains to how the psychologization process has transformed the message that the shame corner, clearly an artefact of the older view of the school as a moralizing institution, once sent to children about morality. To reiterate, the shame corner assumes that emotional responses have moral significance, the absence of moral emotions, such as shame and guilt following a moral transgression, say something important about a person’s commitment to morality and that moral policies have a categorical status. Finally, in sending the student off to reflect on the moral acceptability of his or her actions it presupposes that moral claims are susceptible to scrutiny by public standards available to the student. For reasons sketched above, and again with the caveat that the shame corner has fatal ethical and procedural flaws as well, this seems to be roughly the *right* message to be sending to children about morality. The time-out corner is unmistakably built on a sports metaphor. First, the name itself recalls the option of sports coaches to call a stop to the game – a ‘time out’ – to announce to the players a change of strategy at a crucial moment of play. Second, just as in, say, hockey where ‘slashing’ receives a longer penalty than ‘interference’, the length of time a child must spend in the time-out corner correlates positively with the seriousness of the infraction. Finally, the sports metaphor reinforces (or even forces) a comparison between the time-out corner and similar elements in team sports such as the ‘bench’ in basketball or hockey, or the ‘dugout’ in baseball, a place where the pupil/player can follow the action but where he must await permission from the referee/teacher to re-enter the field/court/rink/

classroom as a player. Admittedly, the equation of classroom policies with the arbitrary rules of a game is far less questionable for non-moral policies. Used to establish or reinforce moral principles or values, however, the time-out corner seems to rest on a particularly wrongheaded form of social perspectivism. Not only is the message sent that such policies are arbitrary impositions, but by treating the classroom as a game or sports match, the idea is sent that once the student leaves the classroom other 'rules' might apply; that there is, for example, the family game, the friends game and the playground game, and so on, each with its own set of moral rules. This seems to be altogether the wrong message for the school as an agent of moral education to be sending to children.

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Note

1. Yet one could object to the claim that, while an agent's experience of the relevant kind of moral emotion supposes both the recognition of the norm's applicability to him/her *and* its normative validity might hold in the case of guilt, this is not so in the case of shame. Although shame seems to recognize that a norm *applies*, it fails to provide good evidence that the agent *accepts* its normative validity, because shame is characteristically connected with aversion towards exposure to public ridicule or sanction, as in Benedict's definition (1947, p. 223). For instance, one may feel shame after being discovered having cheated on one's taxes, without thinking there is anything wrong with it. Only private guilt about committing tax fraud would constitute evidence that one believes it to be wrong. This is a complex debate which turns on how best to distinguish between guilt and shame, as Toombs observes (1995). Suffice it, then, to reiterate Williams' (1993) claim that the distinction presupposed in this objection itself rides on some controversial assumptions about moral agency, in particular a general denial of the role of what other people think of oneself in the construction of personal identity and the conception of oneself as a moral agent (Williams' cf., especially pp. 91–93).

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