

Chapter 14

Civility, Education, and the Embodied Mind—Three Approaches



Heinz-Dieter Meyer

[H]ow can we make our teaching so potent in the emotional life of man, that its influence should withstand the pressure of the elemental psychic forces in the individual?

(Albert Einstein, 1938)

The sage gives free rein to his desires and fulfills all of his emotions, but having been regulated they accord with civilized norms.

(Xunzi)

In 1998, reflecting on the atrocities in Srebrenica, Bosnia, the philosopher Richard Rorty published an essay entitled “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality,” in which he considered the ease with which heretofore peaceful people were mobilized to participate in genocidal violence. In the essay, Rorty pointed out that an education focused on reason alone does not get us past the kind of “person whose treatment of a rather narrow range of featherless bipeds is morally impeccable, but who remains indifferent to the suffering of those outside this range, the ones he or she thinks of as pseudo-humans” (p. 124). He suggested that such “primitive parochialism” cannot be overcome “by using that paradigmatic human faculty, reason” (p. 124). Rather, an answer, Rorty argued, must inevitably have recourse to the shaping of the *sentiments*—that complex of feelings, perceptions, preferences, tastes, sensibilities, and inclinations—which includes the capacity to feel empathy and compassion in the face of suffering—our own and others’—and respond accordingly. The sentiments are crucially involved in shaping how we experience the world, but play little to no role in contemporary education that is focused with increasing exclusivity on cognitive skill and competence alone. A similar idea was expressed by Albert Einstein in 1938. Five years after many in Germany applauded the National Socialists’ ascent to their reign of terror, Einstein wondered how we could make our education powerful enough so it would “withstand the pressure of

H.-D. Meyer (✉)

Professor of Education Governance and Policy, Department of Educational Policy and Leadership, University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY, USA
e-mail: hmeyer@albany.edu

the elemental psychic forces in the individual,” including such “primary impulses” as “pride, hate, and need for power.” “If men as individuals surrender to the call of their elementary instincts, avoiding pain and seeking satisfaction only for their own selves, the result for them all taken together must be a state of insecurity, of fear, and of promiscuous misery.” These observations prompted Einstein to ask: “how can we make our teaching so potent in the emotional life of man, that its influence should withstand the pressure of the elemental psychic forces in the individual?” (Einstein, 1938).

The reflections of these eminent scholars are à propos at a time when the readiness for violence in the public sphere—by means of speech and conduct—is again dramatically on the rise. For just one example, according to one US study, the number of Americans who feel “justified to use violence to advance political goals” has risen sharply and alarmingly during the past three years from under ten percent to 33%.¹ In light of these reflections, we are entitled to wonder how much hope there is for a stable civil society unless nonviolence and self-government in our *external* affairs is coupled with and buttressed by nonviolence and self-government *internally*—in our ability to regulate, govern, and harness our *affective selves*. In fact, this seems to me the challenge of education par excellence: How to train our sentimental and cognitive faculties, our heart and minds, so that we are able to listen to our better angels especially in times of stress and conflict.

In this respect we should derive great encouragement from the currently emerging confluence of philosophical and cultural traditions which point to a profound agreement on key points that our dominant educational model does not now recognize. One of them is that reason alone does not guarantee right conduct and that in order to educate men and women who are able to reason, reflect and reconcile well, they must learn to also properly develop their *affect*. In other words: Education must reach the heart. It must be minimally embodied. It must go beyond the cognition-centered learning that now dominates our competition- and economic-growth oriented educational practices (Meyer & Benavot, 2013).

The Embodied Mind: A Confluence of Traditions

Given how deeply our Western (and increasingly global) model of education is focused on training the rational faculties, it is exciting to see how the long held assumptions about the individual’s ability to rationally self-govern are now being challenged from a number of directions representing lines of thought that were, heretofore, noncommunicating. According to many researchers now at work, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is, in fact, a relationship between the rationalist-centered approach to education and the ease with which we observe well-educated people slipping into conduct espousing hatred, greed, and violence. One of them is the psychologist Robert Sternberg, who coined the term “smart fool”

¹Roper, W. (2020, October 7). Feelings of political violence rise. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/chart/23124/political-violence>/<https://www.statista.com/chart/23124/political-violence/>

and points that people fail in career and life more because of a lack of wisdom than a lack of IQ-type intelligence (Sternberg, 1990, 2001; Sternberg, Reznitskaya, & Jarvin, 2007). The thus educated person is clever, “smart,” or “rational” but not “wise.” Other leading psychologists are similarly working on understanding the relationship between moral character, intellectual learning, and subjective experience of happiness (Duckworth, 2016; Haidt, 2006; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).²

Of the growing number of writers working on redressing this imbalance, many do so by returning to Aristotelian and Socratic philosophy more broadly (e.g., Dunne, 1993/1997; Jacobs, 2001; Snow, 2015; Steel, 2014). Their efforts have yielded a robust body of work on the intersection of virtue ethics and education (Carr, 2018; Dunne & Hogan, 2004; Kristjánsson, 2015), showing how far our contemporary utilitarian educational ethic has strayed from the moral development and character-oriented educational ethic of those forebears. Much of this work—especially the groundbreaking “Back to Rough Ground: Practical Judgment and the Lure of Technique” (Dunne, 1993/1997) and Steel’s (2014) “The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education”—have yet to find their proper reception in education scholarship.

There is, however, a more recent development that I shall highlight in this paper—one that is prompted by and important for the possibility of a global civil society. This concerns an emerging confluence of Western and Eastern moral traditions, which, perhaps for the first time, offer the possibility of what Einstein (1938) called “a universal moral attitude”—a moral and civil stance that might unite people across different traditions and world views and that would be of great significance for our ability to live in harmony in a global world. If we can identify areas of obvious agreement among these traditions, this would greatly assist an “embodied” reorientation of education. By engaging that confluence, we can not only attain a sense of the degree to which our modern rationalist education is aberrant; but also some pointers as to the direction in which we might find a reorientation.

In what follows I’ll explore these areas of intersection regarding the integration of head and heart, affect and reason, and sentiment and cognition as pursued in three distinct traditions:

- the Confucian and Daoist debate on the relationship between “hot and cold” cognition in the process of self-cultivation or “inner cultivation” as recently reconstructed in the pioneering work of Edward Slingerland (2014);
- the idea of *sophrosyne* or self-regulation in accord with wisdom that was for many centuries the chief educational ideal of the Greek cultural cosmos (North, 1966/2019).

²Scholars in the field of “positive psychology” like Seligman and Duckworth tend to use “happiness” in the sense of “life satisfaction.” This is different from happiness as advancing on a path of moral development. The latter involves a reordering of tastes and preferences leading to a transformational change of character that will change our preferences and our readiness to forego a limited (e.g., sense) pleasure for the sake of a higher pleasure of inner peace. For a discussion of these differences, see Edelglass (2017).

- and the Buddhist-inspired idea of “mindfulness” which is now finding widespread use in education.

All three, I will suggest, agree on a for our contemporary debates crucial point: That the reliably “civil” person is one whose moral development has matured to a point where their intellectual and moral capacities, their heart and mind achieve a degree of balanced integration. As the commonalities of these traditions are coming into view to a global community of education, we have a perhaps a historically unique opportunity to recover a deeper sense of education that goes beyond the mere technical and instrumental competence that now preoccupies educational thought, especially in globally influential reform projects like PISA. Pursuing this path, we may eventually develop a sense of education as the kind of moral universal that Einstein (1938) sought, sufficiently “potent in the emotional life of man” that it can withstand and transform the more destructive “elemental forces” in the individual.

The Embodied Mind (I): Inner Cultivation. Integrating Hot and Cold Cognition

One of the most compelling demonstrations of the need for a principled shift in our thinking about moral and educational formation comes from Edward Slingerland’s (2015) pioneering reinvestigating of key debates in Chinese philosophy, issuing in the conclusion that “abstract thought is not a strong enough foundation to support morality” (p. 115).

Drawing on both Confucian and Daoist classics, Slingerland usefully distinguishes between two systems of cognition—hot and cold—and suggests that much modern (Western) conceptions of moral formation rest on the faulty assumption that “cold can go it alone” (p. 63). This is flawed because rational control is, as he summarizes, “physiologically expensive, fundamentally limited in nature, and easily disrupted” (p. 65). The dysfunctions of “cold only” can be seen, for example, in research on “verbal overshadowing” where an emphasis on rational analysis (for example, by asking subjects to verbalize and reason about an experience) weakens their judgment. Similarly, a task like the Stroop Task (where subjects are asked to read words like *LOWER* and *upper*, but say the case, not the word) prove to be difficult and effortful because it pits the cold cognitive system against the hot one, rather than making them work in tandem (p. 33).

Over against this effortful repression of hot by cold, Slingerland seeks to recover the Daoist ideal of *wu-wei* (variously translated as nonaction or effortless action), in which hot and cold are balanced and integrated. Unless individuals achieve such an integration, their conduct is likely to be at the mercy of untamed hot cognition. Compared to the “relatively puny” parts of brain that control executive functions “the rest of the brain *is* very much like a team of wild horses or a surging river of water” (p. 64). The problem is that in the disembodied mind the hot system overpowers the cold one any old day.

Jonathan Haidt (2006) takes a similar approach to distinguishing the two volitional systems in human decision making: one visceral and powerful, the other rational but weak. He uses the elephant and rider metaphor to compare the two, the elephant representing our hot or visceral impulses, the rider the rational ones: “when the elephant really wants to do something, I’m no match for him” (p. 4). Similarly: “Reason and emotion must both work together to create intelligent behavior. . .” (p. 13). We pay too much attention to “conscious verbal thinking” and leave the education of sentiments out of the picture. This is, in Haidt’s memorable simile like taking “the rider off the elephant and train him to solve problems on his own . . . The class ends, the rider gets back on the elephant, and nothing changes at recess” (p. 165). Haidt concludes: “Modern theories about rational choice and information processing don’t adequately explain weakness of will” (p. 4).

By contrast, the proper aim of education is a state where “the mind is embodied and the body is mindful; the two systems—hot and cold, fast and slow—are completely integrated” (Slingerland, 2014, p. 29). “As with large wild animals and rivers, the answer lies in domestication: channeling the flood waters, or taming the wild animals” (2014, p. 65).

The studies of both Slingerland (2014, 2015) and Haidt (2006) issue in a strong indictment of those forms of education that are almost exclusively focused on “cold only.” These ideas go significantly beyond traditional notions of “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1957, p. 198). In bounded rationality the emphasis is on the limitations of cognitive and information-processing capacity. The view of rationality as bounded (limited in its ability for information processing) orients us to seek compensatory organizational and computational capacities and intelligence to compensate for rationality’s natural shortcomings by means of organization and technology and, for the rest, be content to “satisfice” (rather than maximize) or “muddle through.” What Simon and colleagues ignored was that our rational mind is not merely limited in its information-processing and decision-making capacity, it is easily flooded and hijacked by our hot cognition. This capacity to be overwhelmed by our hot cognition is not addressed by expanded computational power or more modest “satisficing” aspirations. The ideas of embodiment, by contrast, point to the need to work on integrating hot and cold cognition by learning to tame the elephant and make room to use the capacities of rational cognition to its full potential.³

There is some debate as to how “effortful” the process of heart-mind integration could or should be according to the Chinese classics. While Slingerland presents the idea of “wu-wei” (effortless action) as a Daoist critique of over-effortful Confucian practice focused on regulating external conduct in accord with filial propriety, Kirkland (2004) cites more recently discovered Daoist texts like the *Nei-Yeh*

³A forthcoming study by Christopher Gowans on “Self-Cultivation Philosophies” extends the scope of this argument to further non-Western philosophies. The introduction to that book is available at “christophergowans.com/what-are-self-cultivation-philosophies”<https://christophergowans.com/what-are-self-cultivation-philosophies>”.

("Inward Training"), that exhort the practitioner to daily diligence in the pursuit of "biospiritual" practices like meditation (Kirkland 2004, p. 43).

The Embodied Mind (II): Self-Regulation in Accord with Wisdom: Sophrosyne

In the West, a major source for the rejection of mere cleverness as a sufficient outcome of education is Aristotle (trans. 1999). For him "smartness" is a tool that can be used for good and ill: "Now if the mark be noble, the cleverness is laudable, but if the mark be bad, the cleverness is mere smartness..." (Nicomachean Ethics 1144a 23). The merely clever person lacks wisdom. They cannot distinguish reliably between good and bad. For Aristotle, moral and intellectual excellence was inseparable. He would likely have been bewildered by our modern practice of educating the rational faculties of cognition and leaving the affective, embodied side to the student's private endeavors. As MacIntyre (1984) puts it: "For Aristotle excellence of character and intelligence cannot be separated. Here Aristotle expresses a view characteristically at odds with that dominant in the modern world" (p. 154).

For Aristotle, the rational person is defective in two ways: a) being merely clever or "smart," they cannot distinguish reliably between good and bad. But the lack of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in the thus educated person is not their only deficit. Another hallmark of this mere technical rationality is *akrasia* or weak-willedness. Even where the akratic knows right, they often do wrong (Ovid: "I see and approve of the better, but I follow the worse"). To counter-act the limitations and fragile nature of mere rational self-control or "continence," Aristotle lays out a path of moral development in the course of which people become "properly affected" (Burnyeat, 1980) issuing in a state of uncoerced self-regulation and self-restraint or "sophrosyne" (North, 1966/2019).

For Aristotle, moral development was not complete until it issued in a degree of self-mastery or temperance whereby the person experienced a transformation of their affects that would lead them to a harmonious balance of reason and appetites, head and heart. The goal is a balance of character where reason and appetites, *logos* and passions, are both transformed and joined harmoniously. This is notably different from mere rational self-management that uses rational stratagems (epitomized by Ulysses tying himself to the mast to better cope with the allure of the Sirens) to keep untamed appetites in check. At the point of *sophrosyne*, a person becomes properly affected and reliably chooses the right thing for the right reasons (Kosman, 1980). Aristotle was very clear that cleverness or instrumental reason alone does not guarantee right conduct. He called for a process of moral cultivation that would move us beyond the stage of *akrasia* by transforming a person's affect (Oksenberg Rorty, 1980).

The Aristotelian alternative to the education of mere rationality or smartness was always a package deal involving virtue, wisdom, and contemplation (*theoria*). Characteristically and consequentially, the life of *theoria* (contemplation),

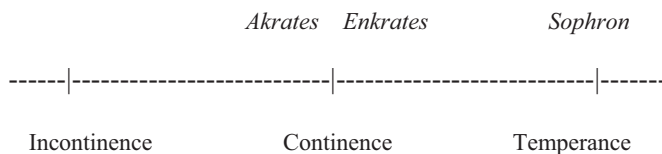


Fig. 14.1 Stages of self-regulation. Source: Design by author.

designated by Aristotle as the highest life, has frequently been mistranslated as “life of study” or even “theoretical life,” thereby negating Aristotle’s essential dimension of spiritual cultivation. To me, this idea of self-regulation in accord with wisdom and self-knowledge promoted by *theoria*-contemplation is the most important educational idea suggested by Aristotle and one of the most under-utilized discoveries of our forebears (for the *theoria* as contemplation concept see Hadot, 1995; Jacobs, 2001, 2012; Pieper, 1952/1998; Smith, 2001; Steel, 2014).

To appreciate Aristotle’s thought, it’s important to see that his continuum of moral development does not stop at mere continence or rational control of the appetites (see Fig. 14.1). Aristotle distinguishes between incontinence (wantonness, license, lack of control) and continence (control), but also between continence and temperance (Sanderse, 2015). The latter distinction refers to the person who no longer needs to engage in self-coercion to control their appetites. Thus, there is an important distinction between the *akratic* and *enkratic* person on the one hand and between the *enkrates* and the *sophron* on the other. The *akrates* and *enkrates* both do battle with the untamed appetites. While the *akrates* fights and loses, the *enkrates* fights and wins the battle. But the *enkrates* still needs to fight and use various means of self-coercion. The point is that the *enkrates* is not free of inner self-coercion where they need to employ their cold cognition to force the hot system into compliance. They must, in other words, rely on forms of more or less strong *internal violence* that, given certain situational stresses, may burst to the surface.

Reason Does Not Guarantee Right Conduct

A key implication of Aristotle’s idea of moral development is that exclusive reliance on reason or rationality do not guarantee right conduct. Where the educational ideal of rationality implies that freedom is the result of the effective suppression of the appetites by means of reason, Aristotle teaches that such a state is still unstable and vulnerable to internal and external violence. It leads at best to oligarchic man’s ability to restrain his passions for the sake of another passion: avarice, so as to prevent our passions from getting in the way of our greed. As Albert Hirschman (1977) has shown in his essay on “The Passions and the Interests,” this reinterpretation of avarice as the benign passion of self-interest that could be relied upon to keep the more destructive passions in check is, indeed, what the founders of modern political philosophy deemed to be the high-water mark of modern man’s moral psychology (see Fig. 14.2).

CONDUCT AND COERCION	With Self-Coercion	Without Self-Coercion
Inappropriate Choice / Conduct	<i>Akrates</i> (continent & weak-willed)	<i>Incontinent</i>
Appropriate Choice / Conduct	<i>Enkrates</i> (continent & self-controlled)	<i>Sophron</i> ("temperate," "properly affected")

Fig. 14.2 Conduct and coercion. Source: Design by author.

While enkratic man remains at war with his inclinations, the *sophron* has succeeded to transform their affect so that they only want what they ought to want.

Notice, that *sophrosyne* is not "self-restraint above all," but self-restraint in accord with self-knowledge. The rule of virtue is unstable and liable to extremes unless virtue is balanced by self-knowledge and wisdom. History is littered with instances of violence perpetrated in the name of virtue ("let justice be done if the heavens may fall"). So *sophrosyne* is neither a timid moderation, fuelled by fear of what one may find on the other side of passionate excess or by the boy scout's need for praise. Nor is it the terror of virtue that mercilessly doles out punishment to transgressors from an (often) hypocritical sense of purity. As North's (1966/2019) meticulous reconstruction shows, *sophrosyne* is far more than what Werner Jaeger called a "humdrum doctrine of peace and contentment," (as cited in North, 1966/2019, p. xii). It is self-restraint in accord with wisdom, supported and guided by insight-knowledge. It is based on the idea that ultimately only the self-restraint that results from self-knowledge and self-insight is free and noncoercive. Insight into the push and pull of the inclinations is the precondition for a kind of self-restraint that is not (self-) coercive (although the process may, initially, require will-power to get going), but which is the free accession to the realization of the kinds of actions which lead to lasting peace and well-being.

While it is often thought that the key step past the *akratic*'s impasse is the firmly self-controlled person, this is not what Aristotle teaches. The *enkratic* is still doing battle with their appetites and inclinations. They still depend on successfully using various means of self-coercion to avoid transgressive conduct. To get past this point, there is a need for training, guarding, and reordering our tastes and impulses so to become properly affected and want only what we ought to want. The temperate mind is, finally, capable of opening to reason. As North (1966/2019) puts it: "The special importance of *sophrosyne* in the process of education becomes clear with the assertion that unruly passion is the chief obstacle to learning—because it deafens us to the appeal of reason" (p. 244).

The Embodied Mind (III): Mindfulness

The recent explosion of mindfulness across Western and, indeed, global popular and academic discourse is increasingly noticed by social and political scientists (see, e.g., Mariotti, 2020). It has begun to reshape professional practice in many domains, including health and medicine, business, social work, and, alas, education. Some writers go as far as arguing that mindfulness has the potential to take the place of the Protestant Ethic—now that the latter seems to have shed all ascetic self-restraint and collapsed into unrestrained money making.

My interest here is limited to exploring the parallels between mindfulness and the above two practices of integrating head and heart, or hot and cold cognition, and how this might form the basis for a dialogue that can bring forth the shared educational concerns in these major traditions of moral development.

Although it has entered widespread, even inflationary, usage in the West, the original Pali term *sati* (Sanskrit *smrt*) is actually not easily rendered in one English term. In fact, as Gethin (2011) points out, the term mindfulness was somewhat of an awkward placeholder, arising from the fact that more straightforward translations of *sati* as “calling to mind / bearing in mind / remembering / constant presence of mind / turning one’s attention to” are awkward and unwieldy. Often thought of as a moment-to-moment awareness of feelings, thoughts, and mental states (“direct observation of mind and body in the present moment,” p. 267), the contemporary uses of mindfulness are often connected to practices aiming at stress reduction, anxiety and other health benefits. These uses shape, in part, the current understanding of the term as a readily available method of lessening one’s reactivity and developing a greater sense of calm and ease. This understanding, however, does not capture the full range of the term, incorporating, as it does, several qualities that are not usually combined in a single term in the Western vernacular. There are, in fact, a number of qualities or functions that the term mindfulness combines:

- a quality of awareness and vigilant self-monitoring;
- a quality of guarding and regulating the mind;
- a quality of developing and deepening the mind.

Olendzki (2009) describes the monitoring quality as a “presence of mind that remembers to attend with persistent clarity to the objects of present experience” and “a mode of awareness that is paradoxically both intimately close and objectively removed” (p. 42). The scholar Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011) describes it as “reflexive contemplation of one’s own experience” of body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena, a continuous observation of the object of experience and a “lucid awareness” that is connected to and facilitative of “clear comprehension” (p. 21). Likewise, Bhikkhu Anālayo (2003) ascribes to *sati* the aforementioned functions of monitoring and observing (p. 58), restraining and regulating (p. 56), recollecting and keeping in mind (p. 46) as well as investigating and probing (p. 64) and steering and supervising (p. 55).

An image frequently used in Buddhist scholarship is that of taming and training the mind through mindfulness as a post or anchor to which the mind-in-training is

hitched. There is, for example, the simile of the taming of the elephant by way of a post that restrains him. He is then further trained by the tamer's calming words who also provides him with the food that nourishes him. The training includes teaching him to follow commands and standing his ground against attacks (Discourse on the Tamed Stage, MN III 128).

Importantly, this mindfully trained mind is not limited to perfecting one's cognitive powers or to merely calming the mind, although that is an important first step. Rather it includes developing, deepening and transforming the mind towards embodied qualities of "attention that is at once confident, benevolent, generous, and equanimous" (Olendzki, 2009, p. 42). Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011), likewise, holds that "mindfulness and clear comprehension serve as a bridge between the observational function of mindfulness and the development of insight" (p. 34).

A common thread here is the idea of a *self-generating (auto-poietic) mind*, capable of self-regulating and self-shaping in the process of self-monitoring based on its own innate capacities and powers. This is not an empty vessel mind to be filled with content from the outside; nor is it simply the romanticists' mind that "follows the heart" wherever it may pull. It is a well-trained, well-tamed mind—one that accomplishes this training ultimately by relying on its own, ever deepening powers. This self-generating and self-shaping quality of the mindful mind is expressed nicely in this passage of the Visuddhimagga:

Sati is that by means of which [the qualities that constitute the mind] remember, or it itself is what remembers, or it is simply remembering. Its characteristic is not-floating [non-distracted, hdm], its property absence of forgetting, its manifestation guarding or being face to face with an object of awareness; its basis is steady perception or the establishing of mindfulness of the body, and so on. Because of its being firmly set in the object of awareness, it should be seen as like a post and, because it guards the gates of the eye and other senses, as like a gatekeeper. (Vism XIV, 141 as cited in Gethin, 2011, p. 272)

A person's mindful development progresses as the practitioner becomes aware of and gradually overcomes obstacles including, in the Buddhist conception, the *five hindrances* of restlessness, sloth, greed, aversion, and skeptical doubt. One result of this development is "clear comprehension" which means, among other things, that practitioners are increasingly unable to deceive themselves. As Gethin (2011) puts it:

. . . if you consistently 'remember' what it is you are doing in any given moment, you will truly see what it is you are doing; and in truly seeing what it is you are doing, those of your deeds, words and thoughts that are motivated by greed, hatred and delusion will become impossible for you. (p. 265)

Self-deception as an impairment to reason and rationality has been discussed in the literature on rationality (see, especially, Elster, 1986). In our context, it can be seen as a hindrance to moral development. As it deepens, mindfulness makes self-deception about one's intentions and motivations increasingly difficult.

What becomes apparent in this brief consideration of the range of the term mindfulness is that it describes a complex, layered understanding of mind and mental development that brings into view the mind's self-generating capacity for

self-regulation and insight. While the “present-moment awareness” as which it is often described captures an important part of the term, much of the deeper underpinnings that come into view as the self-generating mind develops include the transformative deepening of the mind whereby moral conduct and wisdom arise as emergent by-products.

Mindful contemplation thus plays a critical role in moral choice and moral development in at least two ways. First, it assists in practically wise (*phronetic*) action in the here and now, by facilitating the agent’s awareness of mental or emotional obstructions to clear seeing and acting. Secondly, mindfulness facilitates a receptive opening and sensitizing the mind for the limitations of self-view, thereby aiding in inclining the mind toward a natural and genuine interest in the well-being of others.

In all this, mindfulness develops qualities that require the integration of hot and cold cognition and run parallel to the idea of *sophrosyne*. In fact, in this perspective it makes little sense to uphold the strict distinction of heart and mind, emotions and cognition that so strongly characterizes Western thought. Buddhist thought talks instead of the *heart-mind* (*citta*). Both operate together and need to be developed together.

Summary: Educating the Heart-Mind

The three traditions surveyed above share several key concerns regarding education as a process of moral development focused on the formation of the heart-mind—a “faculty” that is distinctly different from the modern Western conception of education as focused on the intellect only. The heart-mind is known to all the traditions considered here as the seat of our experience and action. It is the ensemble of affective and intellectual, moral and cognitive faculties that undergoes transformative change as people learn about their external and internal world.

There are several assumptions that distinguish a heart-mind focused education from that which targets the cold cognition or intellect only:

- reason (or cold cognition) does not guarantee right conduct;
- there are stages of moral and intellectual development. Continence—that stage in which a person is able to refrain from harmful external conduct—is an unstable half-way house on this continuum;
- effective education involves both intellectual and moral development and must reach the affective sentiments;
- a key mechanism of moral development is the cultivation of self-knowledge through mindful self-awareness and self-monitoring.

In practice, this means that a good education must include a nontrivial element of contemplative self-awareness and somatic, embodied practice. Education that wants to reach the heart must include a somatic and contemplative dimension. It must be embodied.

A Note on Heart-Mind as that which Needs Education

Major non-Western (and early) Western traditions share and employ a core concept by which they designate the faculty that requires education as the *heart-mind*—which is distinctly different from the modern Western emphasis on rationality and the “rational” faculties. I will merely adduce some examples without elaboration to give a sense of how these traditions coincide on an understanding of the heart-mind as the core faculty to be trained by education.

Confucianism. Roger T. Ames (2016), in his translation of the classical Confucian commentary “The Great Learning,” uses the term “heartmind” (one word in the original) to connote the faculty at which education is aimed (p. 24). Confucius famous passage about the stages of learning also has the heart-mind as that which learns: “From fifteen, my heart-and-mind was set upon learning; . . . from seventy I could give my heart-and-mind free reign without overstepping the mark” (see Lai, 2016, p. 79).

Goldin (2018) argues that the heart-mind is the key concept in the work of the influential Confucian philosopher Xunzi: “In many respects, the heart-mind is the keystone of Xunzi’s philosophy, the one piece that links together all the others. The Chinese word *xin* means ‘heart’, but Xunzi attributes such strong and varied mental processes to this organ that one has to construe it as not only the heart but also the mind. (The mind was not located in the brain in premodern Chinese philosophy.)” “. . . the heart-mind is the organ that we use to discover the Way” and it is “the only organ that can command the others” (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/xunzi>).

Buddhism. In Pali, the language of the early Buddhist teachings, the heart-mind is *citta*—the seat of experience and of volition. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000) explains “[c]itta signifies mind as the centre of personal experience, as the subject of thought, volition, and emotion. It is *citta* that needs to be understood, trained, and liberated” (pp. 769–770).

In Tibetan the term for heart-mind is *kun long*—which is, according to the Dalai Lama (1999), the place “from which all our actions spring” (p. 81).

A classical passage from an early Buddhist Sutta illustrates the importance of *citta* as heart-mind. To the question “[b]y what is the world led around? By what is it dragged here and there? What is the one thing that has all under its control?” the Buddha replies “The world is led around by *citta*; by mind it’s dragged here and there. Mind is the one thing that has All under its control.” (*Samyutta Nikāya*.I.62-2).

Greek Philosophical Tradition. The corresponding concept for heart-mind in classical Greek thought is *soul* which, in Plato requires training to achieve the union of *logos* (reason / intellect) and *eros* (affective desire). As discussed above, the development of *sophrosyne* through education aims at both the rational and irrational elements in the soul. (North, 1966/2019, p. 208).

Heeding the lessons about the inherent fragility of the civil society and the essential role of countervailing moral and spiritual forces (see Chap. 2 by Meyer) requires that we dramatically expand our conception of education from a dominant focus on learning about the external world to an equally important focus on learning about our mind. To develop this kind of knowledge, education cannot be limited to conventional learning from texts and lectures. It needs to involve experience through somatic practices that bring the student face-to-face, as it were, with their heart-mind. Only as we advance in “knowing our minds,” are we likely to realize the benefits of building and developing it towards not only epistemic knowledge but wisdom. The distinction between book-knowledge and wisdom (and their corresponding types of learning) is famously brought home by Montaigne who points out that we can become knowledgeable with other people’s knowledge, but we cannot be wise with other people’s wisdom. Wisdom is something we have to develop bit by bit on our own.

Long-standing traditions and recent research on mindfulness, wisdom and self-cultivation in education (Ergas, 2017; Peters 2020; Steel, 2014; Sternberg, 2001; Zajonc, 2009) converge on this point. The right kind of education and schooling that leave room and guidance for mindful self-awareness can initiate students into habits of self-awareness and insight that can lastingly shape their ability of self-reflection and self-regulation.

Can Kindness be Taught?—Education as a Wisdom Culture

Back to Rorty’s (1998) “featherless bipeds” who wouldn’t dream of harming a member of their flock, but thoughtlessly visit violence on people who look or behave different. Can a different kind of education make a difference? Can kindness be taught?

To staff off a possible misapplication of the above: What is *not* needed is for “Kindness” to become part of national curriculum, where it is “taught” alongside algebra and French grammar. Armies of finger-wagging teachers instructing students in “universal kindness” may undermine any actual transformative education—an education that reaches the heart. It is an axiom of political philosophy that civility-virtue cannot be legislated without lapsing into mental tyranny. Nor, once achieved, can it be taken to be self-perpetuating or self-sustaining. Virtue is a plant that withers under the whip of political coercion as much as under the true believer’s totalizing ambition. In short: it cannot be generated by means of actions that directly aim at it. It can only arise as a by-product of types of action and forms of institutions that do not directly aim at generating it.

What *is* needed and is possible, by contrast, is that education develop a wisdom culture, an institutional prioritizing of beliefs and norms that make the development of kindness, compassion and a host of other moral excellences more likely. Sean Steel (2014, p. 293), one of the few to give thought to this idea, enumerates friendship, play, and contemplation as three key factors of such a culture. We need friends to help us see ourselves fully. In Jacobs’ (2001)

(continued)

memorable phrase: “the excellent agent is a living norm” (p. 77). This is why “associating with the wise” is a precept in all moral traditions.

A wisdom culture that cultivates friendship, play, and leisure can be developed based on many wisdom traditions, including those surveyed in this paper—or on a pluralist openness to all of them. In fact, a deep pluralism that honors one’s own tradition all the while acknowledging and demonstrating the deep interconnections with other traditions (Vélez de Cea, 2013) would seem to be a key requirement of a global educational community. By thus encouraging ourselves and our students to honestly cultivate our minds in an awareness of the shared fund of moral aims we may have as good a chance as human effort can procure for the seeds of human benevolence that we will find in our own minds to grow, so that, when “the other” crosses our path and perchance needs a helping hand, we know what to do.

Widening Circles of Empathy. As an example, consider the idea of teaching universal empathetic kindness in three different traditions. There is the story of Mencius who, encountering a brutal tyrant, teaches him kindness by reminding him how he, the tyrant, felt pity when he saw an ox in distress as he was led to slaughter. Mencius asks the tyrant to similarly notice that his own subjects live in fear and distress and to relax his demands on them just as he decided to spare the ox.

Similarly, there is the story of King David, who, desiring Bathsheba, sends her husband Uriah into battle where he will be killed. When the prophet Nathan tells him the story of the rich man who, upon meeting a hungry traveler, takes not one of his own sheep to feed the traveler, but a poor man’s only sheep, David is enraged by the injustice, but comes to see his own unjust deed in the rich man’s conduct. Finally, in the Buddhist Metta Sutta, this theme of cultivating a “boundless heart,” of developing goodwill for oneself, one’s friends and neighbors, and ultimately for all sentient beings, is similarly made the subject of continuous reflection and meditation.⁴ In all these stories—and more could be cited from other traditions—moral instruction starts where the “students” are and expands their empathetic and compassionate horizons *in ever widening circles*. Can this principle of “growing the seeds” of universal empathy and compassion become a building block of education today?

⁴Metta Sutta: “Wishing: In gladness and in safety, May all beings be at ease. Whatever living beings there may be; Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none, The great or the mighty, medium, short or small, The seen and the unseen, Those living near and far away, Those born and to-be-born—May all beings be at ease! Let none deceive another, Or despise any being in any state. Let none through anger or ill-will Wish harm upon another. Even as a mother protects with her life Her child, her only child, So with a boundless heart Should one cherish all living beings; Radiating kindness over the entire world...” (Snp 1.8. Retrieved from <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.amar.html><https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.amar.html>)

Educating the Heart-Mind Mind for Embodied Civility—A Basis for a New Global Dialogue?

The questions raised by Rorty (1998) and Einstein (1938) above show that the experience that our education does not reach deep enough, that it does not reliably put even our best and brightest on a path to an embodied, affective self-regulation in accord with wisdom, are not new to our current condition. But we may today be on the cusp of an encouraging difference: we enjoy today access to ideas from a variety of global traditions that share a common concern for education as the development of the heart-mind. This common fund can help us transcend two sizable obstacles that have, to date, hindered progress along this path. Firstly, it can help us overcome the overt or latent Eurocentrism that can be found in many contemporary discussions, where the problems discussed here are considered only within the tight limitations of European thought and traditions.⁵ Secondly, it can also help us realize that questions of moral development are not synonymous with religious framing. They need neither be couched in religious or theistic terms; nor need they be hostile to such a framing.

What emerges here is the possibility of a global coalition for education as a project of moral development, fuelled by the coinciding insights of a family of philosophical and wisdom traditions all of which emphasize the need to develop the heart as much as the head, the sentiments as much as cognition, the affect as well as the intellect. While they differ in important ways that are not to be dismissed, this area of overlapping consensus could prove an important resource of global peace and prosperity—especially in the decades ahead in which global peace may hinge in no small part on our ability to develop cooperative relations between East and West. What is emerging, in fact, is the possibility of a global community of educators, each starting from their own tradition, but with a sincere desire to cultivate cooperation with the members of other traditions. This global community could work towards the building of a global coalition which can include all traditions facilitating the development of the heart-mind. Where education has thus far been couched in terms of nationalist priority or of a merely economic cosmopolitanism in projects like PISA, it can instead be couched in terms of the kind of moral universalism that Einstein invoked many decades ago. Civility can deepen from mere politeness or external conformity of conduct to a disposition towards wise and compassionate action.

By neglecting the sentimental dimension of education in theory and practice, we allow that our aspirational default in education reverts to a kind of externally oriented *instrumental fitness*, an adaptation of human cognition and psychology to the imperative of efficient functioning in established institutions that does nothing to

⁵ See, for example, the view of Joseph Ratzinger: “No doubt, the two main partners in the correlationality [of reason and faith] are Christian belief and Western secular rationality. This can and must be said without false eurocentrism” (Ratzinger, in Habermas & Ratzinger 2018, p. 57, own trans.).

that prized faculty of “critical thinking” because it leaves the critical thinker victim to the vicissitudes of their untrained minds.

As long as civility is understood as mere external nonviolence or politesse, we hope in vain to close the doors on incivility that are always ajar. Under conditions of the civil society’s inherent fragility (see Chap. 2 by Meyer), even minor differences of ethnic or racial membership can appear as intrusions on the individual’s private sovereignty and bring in their tow an opening to overt incivility.

Exterior pacification without a corresponding interior moral development is inherently unstable. Rather than producing a sustainable form of peaceful self-governance, it produces prosperous, but restless, self-reliant, but anxious individuals whose jealousies are aroused by otherness and whose abiding dissatisfaction with their condition is tenuously held in check by a habit of merely continent self-coercion. This is the person who will be an easy prey for demagogues and authoritarians who promise the kind of purification in the external world that we have been unable or unwilling to cultivate in our interior.

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