Chapter 24
The Emotional Openness of Wonder and Admiration to Educating Our Moral Desires

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Abstract Emotions comprise cognitive and motivational traits. For the former, one of the most relevant traits is the subjacent *eudaimonistic* belief, while the motivational trait becomes clear in its imperious mood of "passivity" of our actions. The first trait explains emotions in terms of a distinctive rationality: what goods and values we consider we need in order to be happy. The second trait, warns us of significant changes in our environment as a result of our situation of needy beings However, there seems to be an exception: not every emotion is *eudaimonistic*. Admiration and awe help us to recognise that there are *objects* that are not included in our scheme of goods that should be incorporated; therefore, they contribute to the flourishing of our lives through their intrinsic ability to be open to the world. Admiration and awe make us focus maximally on the *object* and minimally on ourselves. This experience happens especially with rationality, love, and beauty, but also with moral models that tend to perform heroic actions. We propose that an integral moral education includes cultivating an attentive way of looking at our world and at human suffering that might be very fostered by awe and admiration, and which at the same time motivates us to wish good for ourselves and for others. Nowadays, however, there are two widespread views about morality that slow down our farming of both emotions: sentimentalism and solipsism. As long as they presuppose challenges for the main objective, they both will be analyzed.

Keywords Wonder · Admiration · Scheler · Girard · Possessive desire

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24.1   Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is visualizing how deeply admiration and wonder contribute to educating the desire in a moral sense. In other words, the phenomenological singularity of admiration and wonder provides a solid base so as any *learner* wishes *to do good*. Its singularity lies in the capacity of openness that takes place in the subject, as it is with *awe* according to Haidt and Seder (2009)[1]:

> Awe stops us dead in our tracks, and sometimes, when intense enough, acts like a reset button on the self. People sometimes emerge from awe experiences with new selves, values, and allegiances. For this reason awe is among the emotions most often implicated in spiritual transformations and religious conversion experiences. (Haidt & Seder 2009)

At the very least and the most usual situation, the structural openness of this kind of emotions involves questioning what we believed it was our immobile belief system. At the very best, some of those experiences, reach "a fall from a horse" and a further conversion, as it happens to Paul in his road to Damascus:[2] "The light and the voice left an impression already then and there on the road that made it impossible for him to continue as he was" (Bloechl 2018). That is why both emotions—but not only these ones—are mediators for a moral change or moral progress.[3]

The phenomenology of admiration, concretely, is represented by positive surprise and interest in other person's virtues. The subject suddenly pays attention to an object or action which was until then unknown and that takes the subject to the apprehension of that which is attractive based on an *improvement* of his end and values' scheme. It is a social emotion for that appealing possibility that remains in actions, virtues, or abilities of others that impact in a positive way in personal growth. There seems to be an agreement in the field of social psychology about the fact that admiration is associated with a tendency to imitate the admired target (Onu et al. 2016). Admiration also encourages people to learn valuable skills. (Ibid.). Wonder is only different from admiration in the fact that the impact of the object does not lead to action but to *contemplation*:

> This emotion responds to the pull of the object, and one might say that in it the subject is maximally aware of the value of the object, and only minimally aware, if at all, of its relationship to her own plans." (Nussbaum 2001)

Admiration for a moral hero, a fair person or for a *moral saint* shares, probably, the same structure as wonder: it engenders contemplation and *only* later it shapes a

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[1]Awe is habitually understood as religious wonder in front of the holiness. Cfr. Ivanhoe (1997), Wettstein (1997). Even though wonder and awe share the same structure only "wonder" will be used in the paper, to avoid confusion.

[2]Saul of Tarsus belonged first to the Pharisaical school and then he changed into a follower of Christ after a radical conversion. His conversion was radical as before doing it he pursued Christians to death, as it happened to the deacon Stephen. (See Act 9, 1–19).

[3]We agree with Nussbaum (2001) when she says that wonder is sometimes an important ingredient in other emotions. Another powerful emotion which mediates moral progress is compassion.

character. Algoe and Haidt (2009) difference this kind of moral admiration from basic admiration for any other competence and they name it "elevation:" Admiration differed from elevation primarily in that admiration seems to arouse and energize people to work harder on their own goals and projects (. . .) while elevation does not energize; it opens." In other words, elevation is a kind of moral awe that explains attraction to transpersonal moral ideals (Kristjánsson 2017). This accurate concept of elevation is included in the concept of wonder to be worked on this chapter. Taking it into account, while awe and wonder are mediators for positive moral change and progress to the extent that one sees her own life in the light of high ideals, admiration embodies those ideals in virtuous persons who carry them out either continuously or intermittently.

Both emotions enable the desire *to do good*. For the time being, it would be quite satisfactory if the desire to do good begins with, following the line of Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch, "The extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real." (Hopwood 2017). However, this proposal seems to be too compromising or ambitious after the predominance of the sentimentalist discourse. According to the conception arising from Hume, if there were individuals capable of emitting a description of the world different from a reproduction of mathematical proprieties and containing any kind of nonmeasurable propriety, as for example, a moral or metaphysics evaluation, those individuals would *only* be projecting in the world certain subjective states. His main legacy for the ethical discipline could be summed up in that *vice* and *virtue* are also perceptions of the mind, such as hot and cold, so they are not qualities in the object (Hume 2008). Accordingly, saying that the wonder for beauty and nature quietness contributes in some way to a *desire* for doing good means as Stroud (2015) states, that the existence itself of these properties (beautiful) depends on the receiver reactions. "Beauty is only in the eye of the beholder" (Ibid.). Therefore, holding a subjectivist posture about emotions means that the magnitude of this kind of absolute experiences where the subject is impacted by some kind of perceived "reality,"[4] is either a chimera or a projection of the subject. Admiration and wonder sadly slide to the background and if one continues to defend the possibility of an approximate axiological ontology, one has the burden of proof.[5] Therefore, here lies the first challenge to the proposed objective. But this is not the only one.

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[4]Defending the predominance of the *perceived* over the *real* still causes trouble: how do you explain the possibility of projecting moral beliefs in the world from hypothetically non-moral situations (Corbí 2012), without postulating that our evaluations be absolutely arbitrary?

[5]The consequences of a modern scientist conception lead to a bipartite world, namely the classical division between objective properties—those that are susceptible to mathematic calculation—and subjective properties—those that are response-dependent. We do not need to think further to realize the hierarchical preponderance of the scientifically objective world over the "subjective" in our western system of knowledge. The sentimentalist explanations that touch the subjectivism of values pay honor to the aseptic, objective and neutral world that brings about the scientific revolution, in which there are no moral facts, but what, whatever it is, the "natural facts are."

Recently, admiration has stepped in the field of education through role modeling theory (Sanderse 2013). In moral philosophy, Zagzebsky (2017) makes a relevant point about motivation to do good through her well-reasoned exemplarist moral theory. Suffice to say that our theoretical starting points on admiration are different. So are the philosophical traditions that sustain them. While Zagzebsky's theory is based on Aristotelian virtue ethics, the one presented here is based on continental philosophy, specifically Scheler's vision of moral exemplars and Girard's theory of mimetic desire. Certainly Zagzebsky's points may complement the vision here presented and our proposal can help, in turn, to set the stage to overcome some handicaps of her theory, like setting differences between admiration and envy or why emulation might be also directed towards evil and possession. However, there has been hitherto a clear recession in admiration and wonder research. The reason for its abandonment in moral philosophy is due to the enlightened conception of the person as an isolated and autonomous agent. The individual is now both the subject and object of his own knowledge and does not seem to need, theoretically, any human link for his development. This conception has difficulties to recognize the *moral exemplars* as necessary for admiration—or elevation in Haidt's terms.

With this background, the proposed objective will be addressed explaining, in the first place, the peculiar intentionality of emotions (Sect. 24.2), in order to see that, both admiration and wonder, are the exception to the rule. Secondly, it will be discussed with the two positions posed by the aforementioned challenges: sentimentalism (Sect. 24.3) and the solipsist conception of the individual (Sect. 24.4). The objective of the first debate—sentimentalism—is to explain what can be considered as *openness to moral reality*. Regarding the solipsist conception, the objective is twofold. The first is to demystify the romantic discourse of the absolute abstract autonomy of the subject. This autonomy—individual without prior commitments— is approached not only as the goal of perfect personal development, but also as the basis for personal growth. Secondly, from Girard's theory of mimetic desire, educational keys can be obtained to protect experiences of wonder and admiration. Both sections can be read separately, although the conclusions obtained will be presented together in the last section (Sect. 24.5). The last chapter will provide some clues to moral education that are finally summarized in the fact that we do need moral exemplars and we do need to give in to the demands of possessive desire that monopolizes the attentive look at the world that surrounds us.

24.2   Intentional Singularity of Admiration and Wonder

One of the most complete definitions of "emotion" could be the one proposed by Martha Nussbaum (2001), not because of her cognitivist proposal, which is not exempt from criticism, but because of her surrounding interesting reasoning:

> ... Emotions should be understood as "geological upheavals of thought": as judgments in which people acknowledge the great importance, for their own flourishing, of things that

they do not fully control—and acknowledge thereby their neediness before the world and its events. (Nussbaum 2001)

These *important things* in the definition are the *objects* of emotions. The object is an *intentional* object: "that is, it figures in the emotion as it is seen or interpreted by the person whose emotion it is." (Ibid.). Emotions are not *about* their concrete objects merely or neutral *elicitors* as science likes to name "Their *aboutness* is more internal, and embodies a way of seeing," in other words, the object is seen through one's own window." (Ibid.).

Another important element in the given definition is *flourishing*, since the "way of seeing" is essentially related to the person's *end and values' scheme*. That is the reason why Nussbaum says emotions are *eudaimonistic*.

The part related to *non-control* in the definition leads us to another key. Even though the emotion projects a value, the intentionality is also *independent* from psychological states of the subject as sometimes our emotions do not respond to what we want to voluntarily pursue, acquire, control, or manifest. The absent volitional component of emotions, together with the value of the subject perspective makes the phenomenology of emotions irreducible to any other state (cognitions or conations), but neither is the sum of them: "So, which is it: are such evaluations [coming from emotions] cognitions or conations? The answer [. . .] is both . . . and neither." (Helm 2009).

Now, certainly, it seems that the dominant tone of the adequacy or rationality of emotions is led by the value granted by the subject (See Sect. 24.3) and it seems to be enclosed in the subject psychological field. Likewise, although Helm's effort to talk about double emotional intentionality is valuable, his definition of emotion—"intentional feelings of import"—seems not to yield to the subjective logic of value. Nussbaum, however, raises an exception regarding this dominant logic:

Are all emotions eudaimonistic? Do all, that is, make reference to my important goals and projects? Do all contain the self-referential element that lies at the heart of the eudaimonist structure? The most striking exception would appear to be the emotion of wonder, (. . .). This emotion responds to the pull of the object, and one might say that in it the subject is maximally aware of the value of the object, and only minimally aware, if at all, of its relationship to her own plans. (Nussbaum 2001)

It is possible to add more variables to wonder. Harry Frankfurt complains about the fact that Philosophy has paid little attention to human experiences that involve a high level of satisfaction and glorification. He draws a paradox in order to show this fact: humans *submit to* the rational and potentially lovable, i.e., we *submit* to something which is beyond our voluntary control; but that submission is not suffocating or oppressive.

When we accede to being moved by logic or by love, the feeling with which we do so is not ordinarily one of dispirited impotence. On the contrary, we characteristically experience in both cases—whether we are following reason or following our hearts—a sense of liberation and of enhancement. What accounts for this experience? It appears to have its source in the fact that when a person is responding to a perception of something as rational or as beloved, his relationship tends to it tends towards selflessness. His attention is not merely concentrated upon the object it is somehow fixed or sized by the object. (Frankfurt 2007a)

As Frankfurt claimed, wonder, as it generates liberating feelings, can be categorized into "positive/satisfying emotion" and that also, turning to another issue, has its application in learning:

> Contentment appears to broaden by creating the urge to take time to savor current life circumstances and integrate this circumstances into de new views of self and the world. [. . .] To play, to explore, to envision future achievements, and to savor and integrate . . . represent ways that positive emotions broaden habitual modes of thinking or acting. (Fredrikson 2004)

Likewise, "The emotion of interest is continually present in the normal mind under normal conditions, and it is the central motivation for engagement in creative and constructive endeavors and for the sense of well-being." (Izard 2009, pág. 4). Missing emotions such as gratitude and wonder a child would lack the essential element that introduces the interest for something different from his own self, therefore his learning would be impoverished.

Regarding the level of ethical flourishing, wonder, as non-eudaimonistic as an emotion can be, helps move distant objects within the circle of a person's scheme of ends (Nussbaum 2001). But it does not only move objects but also incorporates moral actions of others through admiration. Algoe and Haidt (2009) asked the subjects of their experiment, among other things, to say if some kind of motivation arose while admirable, pleasant or boring examples were written. They state in one of their conclusions:

> Elevation led to higher reports (compared to joy or amusement) of motivations to do good things for other people, become a better person oneself, and emulate the virtuous role model more generally. Admiration participants consistently wanted to emulate the admirable person and improve themselves." (Algoe and Haidt 2009)

24.3   The Sentimentalist Challenge

As mentioned in the introduction, the predominance of a sentimentalist discourse is one of the reasons why Philosophy and education have abandoned wonder and admiration. In this chapter moral sentimentalism will be briefly analyzed, in order to foresee what is that *reality* that gets open in front of admiration and wonder.

What is specific about emotions, as it is usually stated by sentimentalism supporters, is that they represent things as having certain evaluative properties. Thus, an emotion of admiration with respect to a friend will be correct just in case the friend is really admirable. (Tappolet 2011). Given this approach, and with respect to admiration, several questions arise. The first one is that it would be hard to explain what is admirable unless we did it from the experience of the subject that is admired. The second question arises from the *perceptual model* from which the neo-sentimentalist explanations start. Supporters of the perceptual model claim that emotional experiences enjoy a similar epistemic status than naïve perceptions at its representational level (Brady 2011). This means that if a person feels offended by a joke then the joke is, *for that person*, offensive. The emotion justifies the evaluation of the joke as, according to neo-sentimentalism, evaluative concepts such as admirable, disgusting,

amusing, or insulting are response dependent. The kind of objects and events perceived by emotion is called "values" by some sentimentalists.

The neo-sentimentalist posture polishes up two of the greatest attractions on the recovery of what emotions contribute to moral philosophy. Firstly, "Besides alerting us to moral reasons by registering them in affect [. . .] emotional discomfort reinforces moral reasons with non-moral criticism of failure to act that yields a further reason." (Greenspan 2011). In other words, they are not only evaluative markers, but also sources of moral claims (Stocker & Hegeman 1996). As an example, Améry's (2001) comments after being tortured and sent to a labor camp seem relevant. He makes reference to one of the SS lackeys, called Wajs, who hit him on the head as he considered Améry was not digging fast enough. Améry says he was, and he is the only one who is in possession of the moral truth of the blows that still resonate in his skull and, therefore, he is more legitimated to judge with respect to his executors.

Secondly, sometimes, the overpowering surge of emotion prevents someone from doing something irrational (Frankfurt 2007b). It often happens that there is no need to look for reasons for our emotions because we rely on the same evidence provided by emotional abduction. Learning to assess situations through emotions is part of our natural growth: children live *emotionally*.

However, setting aside these accurate intuitions, there are still two gaps in the argument provided by neo-sentimentalism about emotional suitability: they maintain an epistemologically modern model in the Cartesian sense because the *I* is the basis of certainty about what is experienced. Therefore, the appropriateness of emotions does not allow us to leave the subject that evaluates and then we fall into a kind of circular argument about what is relevant or *really* valuable. As an example on the first argument gap, it could happen that while I *should* feel gratitude toward my friend for the help he has given me, I feel, however, resentment. But it does not imply that the help I have been given is, *in itself*, offensive. Certainly, here the emotion pushes us to look for evaluative reasons and thus, to be able to reflect on whether what we consider important, being attached to an incongruous emotion, is really *that* important. Thus, emotions are not only, in Greenspan's words, *reason-providers* but also *reason-trackers*.

Secondly, following Améry's example, he uses his resentment so that the crime acquires moral reality for the criminal and that he does not abandon himself to oblivion, as it seemed to be suggested in the German postwar political climate, through a "forgiveness" in abstract. His argument is now interesting because, although Améry brings the lived reality of his resentment, he does so to claim that Wajs lackey does not share, at all, that damaged reality:

> If we wonder how it is possible that, despite the victim's suffering, the executioner continues to torture him, Améry's response is that he does so whilst, when he separates himself from the moral reality of his action, he falsifies it to the point of making the victim's damage invisible to him. (Marrades 2005)[6]

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[6]Own translation.

Following Améry's argumentative logic, does the absence of emotion signal the absence of morally relevant value or action? In this case, a sentimentalist may have trouble trying to justify an answer. According to Marrades (2005), Améry finds evident that the victim and the executioner conceptualize what is happening between them in a different way. Améry attributes to his executioner a description of his own acts as "facts within a physical theory," while him, as a victim, can only see those same acts as "acts within a moral system." Somehow, without pretending it, he comes to question the premises of the sentimentalism itself in its Humean version.[7]

So, to defend that there is a reality that claims for justice and attention demands a trained openness structure, which is provided, among other things, by wonder and admiration. Moreover, the opening to the existence of the other requires that just and loving gaze that Weil so demanded. Following this line of reasoning, the realism defended here is similar to the version supported by Murdoch according to Jordan: "Murdoch's hypothetical response-dependent view is existentially mind-independent, but conceptually mind-dependent."[8] (Jordan 2014). Similarly, attention to the other requires preventing the internal dynamics of self-indulgence desires, as it will be shown in Sect. 24.4, and being capable of contemplation.[9]

24.4   The Solipsistic Challenge

Part of the literature on virtues and emotions, following the essay of MacIntyre *After Virtue*, inter alia, appeals to community sense as essential in the development of moral character: "...Community has often been a missing desideratum in the discussion of the nature and development of admirable moral character." (Blum 2003). In accordance with this line drawn by Blum, this chapter will attempt to point out the origin of solipsism and its deficiencies, whereas people are in impressionable beings, which is not necessarily something negative, and essentially relational.

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[7]Some versions of neo-sentimentalism—like those who opted for ontological realism, such as Johnston or Tappolet, in a vision similar to the phenomenology of Max Scheler—are certainly conscious of the objection related to the different dimensions that are present in any response-dependent properties. The justification level is not identical in emotional responses towards moral, aesthetic, prudential or moral properties.

[8]The above mentioned is represented by the famous parable of the Good Samaritan: the Jew who has been beaten by bandits and left half dead on the road is still there, regardless of whether the priest who passed by him gave a detour as the Levite did. Not touching the blood might be a priority to practice mercy in the moral scheme of the priest and the Levite. But for Jesus it is very clear that the Samaritan is the neighbor, that foreigner who stops, looks, feels compassion and, as a consequence, acts in his favor until he recovers.

[9]"The poet produces the beautiful by fixing his attention on something real. It is the same with the act of love. To know that this man who is hungry and thirsty really exists as much as I do—that is enough, the rest follows of itself." (Weil 2003).

Through the analysis of interpersonal character, Girard's theory of mimetic desire is reached as a key to understanding the ambivalences to which we are submitted by our desires. However, the most important thing is to observe how admiration becomes envy, or how the desire to acquire a good scheme of ends and values becomes a possessive desire. The ultimate objective, therefore, is offered at an educational level and lies in discerning how we could avoid the disaster of rivalry and how we could give rise to a healthy admiration and wonder.

What, then, does community imply for moral growth? The moral agent has been conceived by prevailing Western literature as an isolated individual. This individual seems to have the absolute responsibility to be virtuous, as if he could produce a virtue "*de novo*, from individual reason or reflection." (Ibid.). But in order to offer an answer, let's continue to respond to other types of complaints about the dominant conception of contemporary ethics, even in virtue ethics. Moller Okin, for example, demands "*revising* traditional accounts on the virtues." (Moller Okin 2003). What she asks is "to include as human virtues the qualities needed to nurture, to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves, and to raise children to adulthood in which they can both flourish as virtuous citizens and enable others so to flourish." (Ibid.). In an interesting paper, Benhabib (1986) exposes part of the problem about the isolated growth of people as an axiomatic premise of modern moral and political philosophy. Hobbes quote states: "Let us consider man . . . as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other." (Benhabib 1986). The philosopher comments hereafter that the denial of being born of a woman releases the male ego from the most natural and basic dependency link. The last criticism is directed to the metaphor of the *state of nature* as the vision of an autonomous *self* under a narcissistic wound, which sees the world in his own image (Ibid.). Many current theories of justice have this modern starting point: the isolated individual. As a consequence, moral education proposals will arise and will be based, therefore, on *instilling* norms or principles to this individual *ego* that does not require prior commitments.

To illustrate this, in the philosophical literature on freedom or on practical rationality, the subject stands alone in front of a set of reasons before which he has to evaluate which ones are better to live well. Although it is perceived that the subject has a background of reasons on which he chooses, it is not known how they come to him. As Carlos Moya detects, there is "a deeply individualistic view of human agents as radically self-made, self-contained entities, whose constitution does not owe anything to factors externals to them." (Moya 2006).

Tipping the scale toward the opposite extreme, constructivist thinkers also see the subject as a passive entity, although initially cultural, it is an individual—structurally isolated—that is mechanically "filled in" by the inputs of the environment.

There are many contemporary moral philosophers who raise their voices in the face of this unreal conception of the person that has implications in education: "Quite generally, we learn emotions—how and when to have them, how to recognize our own and those of others, their significance, and so on—by engaging emotionally

with others (Stocker 2003). This *emotional engagement* has to do with the strong links established from early childhood by those Others that are relevant.[10]

Other philosophers criticize explicitly this kind of individual proposed by romanticism:

> ... A free man, a self-willed and self-reliant *individual* moving about as he likes—an individual making exchanges, drawing up contracts, forming a society with others by way of *deliberate purposes* but without a push from any unified will of life and love, and enjoying himself in forms of international customs."[11] (Scheler 1987)

Scheler comments that the view of romanticism, as well as those coming from the opposite one, depersonalized collectivism, are mechanical views of the world that do not take into account that "What determines at least the basis, and the main direction, of the being, of the kinds, forms and development of groups are solely the ruling minorities of personal exemplars and of leaders." (Ibid.). Scheler gives more value to the former than to the leadership: "Leaders only affect our will. But exemplars determine the moral tenor beneath our will." (Ibid.). Leaders only "demand action, accomplishment and comportment. An exemplar demands our being and the cast [gestalt] of our souls." (Ibid.). In our romantic Western culture based on "be whatever you want to be" there is, paradoxically, an overabundance of influencers who, in turn, follow others, as well as of rarely spontaneous leaders. The leaders who are imitated are there to attract the public to and from economic stimuli: we imitate those who succeed based on their economic status and their flattered social stereotype. This requires, by the way, a great marketing and advertising effort. Notwithstanding, experts know that the product is not sold but to whoever uses it. Therefore, the fight is not to have what is advertised, but to be like the model of the advertisement. It seems to be important here to highlight some academics who remember the mythological character of the illustrated and popular phrase "think for yourself." As Milgram comments after his famous social experiment:

> The force exerted by the moral sense of the individual is less effective than social myth would have us believe. [...] A few changes in newspaper headlines, a call from the draftboard, orders from a man with epaulets, and man are led to kill with little difficulty. [...]Moral factors can be shunted aside with relative ease by calculated restructuring of the informational and social field. (Milgram 1974)

24.4.1 Mimetic Desire and Its Consequences

In line with Scheler, Girard perceives a law that is hidden in our psychology: desire has a mimetic structure. The literary critic argues against what he calls subjectivist dogma, symbolism, and "romantic lie" and, accordingly, the criticism of the

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[10]See Nussbaum (2001, Ch. 4), about the influence of bonds in children moral development.

[11]Scheler comments that customs are now pleasure and what is useful, compared to that pertaining to the tradition of the specific community in which the person lives.

previous section keeps similar to the present. It remains as evidence what the characters in the novels do when they warn, curiously, that what the novelist[12] is trying to say goodbye to, what Stendhal called vanity or pure imitation, is what really ends up happening to the main characters:

> Romantics and symbolists want a transfiguring desire which is completely spontaneous; they do not want to hear any talk about the Other. They tum away from the dark side of desire, claiming it is unrelated to their lovely poetic dream and denying that it is its price. At the end of his dream the novelist shows us the sinister retinue of internal mediation: "envy, jealousy, and impotent hatred." (Girard 1965)

This quote contains, in addition to a critique of the romantic posture, an approach to the second objective proposed in using Girard's theory: the novelty lies in a type of desire that leads to the other side of admiration: envy. The desire to be—to be someone important—Girard calls it "metaphysical desire" and it resembles the desire for Hegelian recognition, that is, the one that imitates the model or desires what his model or hero desires will be someone only if that model recognizes it. With regard to metaphysical desire, the desiring subject does not only want the object (possessions, virtues, loves) of the admired hero (mediator), but wants to be like him; or even beyond: "the desiring subject wants to become his mediator; he wants to steal from the mediator his very being of "perfect knight" or "irresistible seducer." (Ibid.). So far there is no apparent problem if mediation is external, that is, if the hero is an unattainable model, as Don Quixote did with his imaginary model, Amadís de Gaula. However, if the hero who is imitated enters the circle of closeness or familiarity, what Girard calls internal mediation, the one who was a role model becomes a rival: "They will no longer desire the desired thing, but they will focus on one another as their opponents." (Pisk 2012). Reaching this point, the object you are fighting for is not important (possessions, virtues, loves). The fact that one has more of what was desired—whatever it is—than the model becomes now the important thing. This rivalry, according to Girard, normally leads to a violent competition. The violent competition can even lead to death; it would be the worse consequence of mimetic desire in its possessive side elicited, tacitly, for the necessity of recognition.

Girard brings to light very common psychological actions that we wish to keep hidden, as adults are ashamed of knowing we are imitators before the other's eyes for fear of revealing his lack of being, or in order to conceal his own lack of originality (Pisk 2012). It is not the same for children, who blatantly imitate what the other does or wants. However, it seems that Girard holds a thesis opposed to Scheler regarding the fruits of admiration for the model. While he explains the consequences of mimetic desire in his more than likely competitive diversion, Scheler, more positively, says that "What has a forming and grafting effect on our souls is not an abstract, universal moral rule but always, and only, a clear and intuitive grasp of the exemplarity of the person (Scheler 1987). For Scheler, exemplariness means "to cast value." The kinds of exemplariness run parallel to his famous hierarchy of values:

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[12]The authors analyzed by Girard (1965) are Cervantes, Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoievsky. Cervantes is the only one, according to Girard, who is conscious of the mimesis.

"the saint, the genius, the hero, the leading mind of civilization, and the master in the art of living."

Someone could also use the same Girardian line of negative mimesis against the idea of admiration as an emotion that facilitates the education in the desire to do good, since a totalitarian dictator or leaders of political parties can be admired while being aware that they have committed injustices. In this case, returning to Scheler, we see that he does not hold a naive conception about it: "Exemplars also have their counter-exemplars: They are frequent forms into which humans develop because of the hatred they have against someone who should be their exemplar but is not (e.g., *a child's hatred against his father*)." (Scheler 1987) (My emphasis). There might be situations in which children reject, or even hate, their parents. In a similar way, it is possible, as it happens in Proust or Dostoyevsky, that the father—a closest relative— becomes the rival. However, this scenario is not, hopefully, the usual thing. To reach that point in the fictional drama, a son must have been welcomed only to the extent that he has met the expectations of the father until a time comes when the expectations are unified and the father is seen as an equal; or the father has seen the child as an interference in his desire for something else and, therefore, the child was an obstacle; or so many other lacks of love for the children that generate in them a void that must be filled with the praise of what he considers relevant to the paternal circle. Following Weil on this subject: "Every void (not accepted) produces hatred, sourness, bitterness, spite. The evil we wish for that which we hate, and which we imagine, restores the balance (Weil 2003). Restoring the balance includes also revenge desires and hurting others. This might not justify the fact of "admiring" unfairness, but it gives us a reason to understand it. In the sad event in which where there should be welcome and love, there has been rejection, the desire for recognition and imitation will, inter alia, revolve around a love of possession regarding the objects that their referents admire. Possessive desire involves a more than likely absence of wonder and admiration.

The same can happen when admiration is conceptualized incorrectly. To illustrate, Onu et al. (2016) define admiration "as the emotion elicited by those of competence exceeding standards." According to them, admiration is also elicited when the admirer is less competent than the admired or when there is status or prestige in a nondominant hierarchy inside social groups. To comment on these conclusions, the experiments carried out were conducted in schools, among peers who excelled in skills. However, the researchers visualized that sometimes envy or negativity appears and they also attribute it to the fact that the admirer perceives that he cannot attain the competence. If we follow Girard, his theory blocks admiration among peers due to *internal mediation*. Peers will finally become competitors.

After a careful reading about the scheme of mimetic desire, the question arises whether it is impossible to sincerely admire a friend or a partner or, in Girard's words, if there can be a desire without a mediator. But there is only a brief exception and it takes place when the desire does not evoke a possession "but a desire of expression. The aesthetic emotion is not desire but the ending of all desire, a return to calm and joy." (Girard 1965). The Girardian aesthetic emotion is similar to the "selflessness" that Frankfurt described and that, as stated before, does not exclude

satisfactory experiences at all. Furthermore, if we follow the logic of aesthetic emotion, admiration could happen among peers if we give in to the presumption of the possessive desire. But we give into rivalry because we have the sincere conviction that our peer/friend, etc., contribute, complements us, or is someone from whom we can always learn.

24.5   About Education: Necessity of Openness and Nonpossessive Desire

The conclusions of both challenges come together here. It has been said that there is a reality that claims for justice and attention (Sect. 24.3), and, in order to someone to approach it sincerely, the position of the mystic or the child must be adopted, that is, someone who, without possessive desire, lets himself be impressed by what is around him (Sect. 24.4). This proposal is neither stranger to Western thought—nor stranger to the Eastern mystic—since Aristotle (2003) also says that he who feels astonished is one who recognizes that he does not know. And, as it is known, the philosopher has previously considered astonishment as the engine of philosophy.[13]

This position tacitly launches a critique of the opposite one, which is more superb, someone who considers his mind, his beliefs, his desires, as the only source of certainty and according to this "... is willing to rely upon his own inner resources and character without caring whether or not they can be validated by an authority external to themselves." (Frankfurt 1999). According to Frankfurt, the last scheme is the rebel's or Cartesian—as opposed to mystic's or Spinozian scheme.

Might it be those legitimate "external authorities" are the moral exemplars and to a much more subtle extent and perhaps, different, they are the parents and the great masters. When Scheler explains the strength of value that models print on the *moral tenor* of followers, he points out that the purest form of effectiveness is

> ...faith in an exemplar, not in a religious meaning of the term, but in the sense of a well-founded, evidential and true love, and of the full understanding of the knowledge of the exemplar and his value. (Scheler 1987)

Faith—or confidence—and love are essential for personal growth. The model, present or past, in its living, acting, and reflecting gives meaning to our actions without excluding the path of authenticity—otherwise, it would not be a moral exemplar. The exemplar's authority is not an authority that imposes itself unidirectionally, as it has been stated following Scheler, but there is a reciprocity that is lived to the extent that trust and love are shown.

Nevertheless, if the Cartesian scheme rejects any external authority, it shares the premise of the isolated individual who does not need any compromise. If we add to

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[13] As Scheler states: "In the ancient Greek world preferring the sage to the saint, it was Socrates who came closest to holiness." (Scheler 1987). Hebrew culture instead, came closed to holiness: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Pr. 7, 1).

this scheme several cosmovisions that share in some way the same structure, such as the prevailing version of Francis Bacon about scientific-technical domination and the subjectivist side of sentimentalism, we have many cultural facilities to lock ourselves into a scheme of possessive desire. Contrary to this philosophical and psychological background, in a more concrete way, we can obtain some educational clues in the following quote:

> The most direct and effective way to kill wonder in a child is to give him everything he wants, without even giving him the opportunity to desire it. The lack of limits and frantic consumerism in children destroy the wonder because thus children take everything for granted. They think that things necessarily behave as they do, which is an attitude contrary to wonder. Or even worse, they think that things and people should always behave as they want them to do. (L'Ecuyer 2012)[14]

We must protect children's experiences of wonder. But if instead, we stimulate those of continued desire, generating in the meanwhile opportunities for immediate satisfaction, we will really have problems at an ethical level in the very near future.[15] It is not possible for an egocentric person to be able to look up to see what the others' wishes would be, and find out—dear me!—they are not the same as mine.

However, with regard to wonder evoked by the beauty of nature, either by its greatness or its little things, one realizes that one's capacity for action has not influenced the harmony of what one perceives, that is, what is perceived is not up to us. Therefore, humility as an attitude is closely related to the use of this type of experience:

> . . . Everything in humility is received as a gift. [. . .] However, the gift is not at *as* my disposal. It is the attempt to make the gift as something at my disposal that contributes to its disappearance as gift. (Steinbock 2018)

Steinbock says that it may well be that gift required a sacrifice: "What has been offered up, as it were, is the prideful self, but this has already been done through the acceptance of the other person." (Ibid.) Or through the acceptance of nature, of moral exemplars, or of—maybe limited—love of parents too. A parallel may also be drawn with the thought of Weil who in graphic way explains how the contemplation of beauty works as the aforementioned girardian aesthetic emotion, and it implies a renunciation:

> The beautiful is a carnal attraction which keeps us at a distance and implies a renunciation. This includes the renunciation of that which is most deep-seated, the imagination. We want to eat all the other objects of desire. The beautiful is that which we desire without wishing to eat it. We desire that it should be. (Weil 2003)

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[14]Own translation.

[15]As an example, the reports of international organizations on sex education in Europe to children aged 0–5 years emphasize that sexual pleasure is one of the first objectives of education and therefore introduces, in a noncritical way, the learning in masturbation. Cfr. WHO, 2010. Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. https://www.bzga-whocc.de/en/publications/standards-in-sexuality-education/

In a pragmatist mood, the listening mode, that of the observer, the contemplative, that of the child or that of the artist, that is, those that stop at what is extraordinary in the ordinary, are necessary to facilitate a greater learning as well as an interior moral transformation, if necessary. In the first case, the one who "knows he does not know" will more easily host any relevant event coming from the outside world, will feel wonder more easily, will let others teach or advise him, etc. And we should remember, he will probably have a happier life, full of positive emotions that foster creativity. In the second case, in order to know how to fight against the narcissism of the demanding self that tries to fill the void and to imitate—empty—lives of others, some variables within our reach are required.[16] For example, to embark on a journey to find someone for whom my own person is a gift and vice versa. That is why family and friends who love well are so important in the development of people. In this regard, love will be "increasingly understood in terms of interchange and reciprocity, rather than in terms of narcissistic fusion and rage for control." (Nussbaum 2004). This encompasses with humility to the extent that the self will be "increasingly understood and accepted as human incomplete and partial, rather than grandiose and demanding completeness." (Ibid.). For we recognize we need each other and that doesn't impoverish us at all but enriches our personal growth.[17]

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[16]The variables that are practically outside our voluntary reach have to do with the source of the negative mimesis: it is about recovering the original love or finding someone for whom one, oneself, is a gift. That is why the family and the friend they love are so important in the development of people.

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