

Chapter 3

Education of Desire for Flourishing



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Abstract This chapter analyses the key points of an interiorised moral education which is more incisive than a theoretical education or one based on norms, or only focused on training the behaviour.

In recent years, remarkable works about emotional intelligence and character education have been disseminated and have significantly improved our contemporary understanding of moral education. However, the challenge of internalised morality remains. Something else is still needed: a moral education from the inner subject, an education that teaches all agents to tend towards the good from a basis of freedom and enjoyment.

Keywords Desire · Education of desire · Moral education · Flourishing · Ethics

3.1 The Myth of Reason vs. Passion

For centuries, we have considered that the greatest difficulty in moral education is the conflict between reason and passion: reason wants something that passion does not. As a result, moral education has focused on intellectual and cognitive education but has neglected emotional education. In the twenty-first century, we have seen great advancements in regard to the knowledge of emotions and to various types of desire. Now, like Aristotle, we are able to see that true moral conflict does not take place between reason and passion, but between two different ways of wanting: the will, a desire linked to understanding, and another, more instinctive type of desire, that is not directly linked to reason.

This allows us to make possible the internal harmony of a virtuous agent. While we consider that reason is opposed to passion, and while we believe that passion decides action and reason does not, we are not able to establish internal dialogue for

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aiming at the good. There is no possible communication between reason (rational knowledge) and passion (emotional desire). Instead, when we discover that internal opposition between both actually creates a tension between rational and non-rational desire, we are able to try a dialogue between the two because they are both a way of desiring.

Understanding and reason are cognitive, while the will is appetitive as well as rational not in the sense that it is a function of reason, but because it is linked to reason. The intellectualist interpretation of the Aristotelian ethic has obscured this aspect and has obviated the desiderative dimension of the intellectual powers. Again, we must not restrict the intellective towards functions that pertain exclusively to understanding but to recognise the various functions and powers with which it is associated.

A different kind of desire corresponds to each type of knowledge:

In addition to these there is the part capable of desire, which is held to be different from all in definition and potentiality. And it would surely be absurd to split this up; for in the part that can reason (*en to logistiko*), there will be wishing (*boulesis*), and in the irrational part (*en to alogo*) [there will be] wanting and passion (*epithumia kai* or *thymos*); so if the soul is tripartite, there will be desire in each (*ei de tria e psique, en ekasto estai orexis*) (Aristotle 1988)

Therefore, ethical learning requires integrating knowledge and reasoning with the different types of desire, so that the behaviour could be harmoniously oriented towards the good.

However, the education regarding ethical conduct demands as a first condition the formation of moral judgement. This is a theoretical education, which enables the subject to make practical judgements. Practical judgement, for its most complete learning, requires training and experience because individuals must adapt to specific circumstances that qualify theory and introduce variations in criteria. Judgement education belongs to the field of knowledge, be it theoretical or practical. But moral education loses effectiveness if it remains only in the realm of knowledge. It must involve the will and the desire to reach the personal and internal level. In order to do good deeds, both correct judgement and righteous desire must concur.

Both conditions—correct knowledge and right desire—are necessary for personal involvement. Authors who work in virtue ethics see that education achieves moral commitment as valued for itself: “(...) virtue ethics has clear advantages over the theoretical bases of rival accounts of moral education (...) it is reasonable to suggest that insofar as it is generally proper to construe education as a matter of initiating young people into a recognition of the intrinsic rather than merely extrinsic or instrumental significance of any form of knowledge, experience or understanding—as a highly influential modern movement in educational philosophy has claimed (Peters 1966)—it should be a crucial aim of moral education to assist young people to an appreciation of the value for its own sake of moral engagement” (Carr and Steutel 1999). Only the integration of desire and knowledge makes possible the righteous desire, which is oriented towards good because it understands that it is good.

3.2 A New Harmonic Education

But the question is not only to understand what is good. The purpose of education of desire for human flourishing is indeed novel because it addresses all types of desire and seeks their integration. Such integration is not an education of the will nor an education of affectivity. It is an education that pretends to be inclusive of all forms of desire: those that are linked to reason and those that are not.

It has long been evident that rules are not sufficient for moral education, although the preference for norms has remained since Kant, Durkheim and even Piaget. Piaget's starting hypothesis is that "all morality consists in a system of rules, and the essence of morality is to be sought in the respect which the individual acquires for these rules". Piaget sees this point as solidly established by Kant and shared by the Durkheimians; disagreements "appear only when they try to explain how consciousness achieves respect for those rules" (Piaget 1971; Rubio Carracedo 1996). Compliance with standards is based on authority and duty. Reason understands the established duty, and the will abides by it. The faculties involved are exclusively rational and neglect the attention that emotions deserve.

In recent decades, Goleman has highlighted the negligence that emotions have experienced for centuries. In addition, he has provided arguments for their re-evaluation (Goleman 1998, 2011) He has offered a point of reference for numerous authors in different areas such as psychology, philosophy, education. Further, the literature on emotions has multiplied. However, in the last 20 years, studies on the role of reason and other desires that are not specifically emotional have decreased. Also the concern of integrating reason, will, emotions and understanding has been neglected. A new approach, which consists in harmonising all internal faculties involved in human action, is necessary. Both reason and desire must be integrated into the set of factors related to decision-making. If desires are neglected, moral education easily resorts to repression. Nor would it be a comprehensive moral education if it focused only on emotions; it would be a partial, biased, moral education.

A truly comprehensive moral education demands the aforementioned righteous desire, in which knowledge and will converge. However, this righteous desire is not enough, because still remains alone in the realm of rationality. Rational desire must be harmonised with other desires not associated with reason, which may even contradict it. But good, insofar as it is, is desirable. If something is good, the righteous desire must recognise it as such. Thus, some kind of conciliation with other types of desire can be achieved. This way of understanding moral education searches for internal harmony and it is based more on persuasion than on imposition. This internal complexity of the individual, which involves different ways of desiring, has an unavoidable consequence: that good has the capacity of rising joy. This is because every good action satisfies one kind of appetite, and since the agent has an internal unity, the joy of one faculty has an effect on other appetitive faculties. In this way, sensitive and intellectual pleasure will be both enjoyed by just one agent. And intellectual joy may be the way of persuading sensitive appetite.

However, what happens when the true good appears as very difficult or unattractive? This is a problem to be considered.

3.3 The Arduous Good

One of the most important problems in moral education is the arduous good. It means that something is good and the agent recognises it, but feels that it is too difficult to be done: “I want to do it” but I think it is too difficult, so “I don’t feel like it”.

On the one hand, the general opinion that the moral improvement requires effort. However, on the other hand, the effort is not enough to be morally excellent in a consistent and permanent way. Some internalisation and motivation comes from the inner will. If good behaviour usually needs an excessive effort, it means that the moral education is deficient. The effort has its own role on self-enhancing, but must not be the only or the principal way of moral improvement.

We assume three conditions to understand correctly the education of desire:

First, we consider that the problem we are analysing needs to be distinguished from any pathology or psychological conflict. The arduous good must be a difficulty which is proportional to reality. It presupposes a balanced personality in which emotions do not always follow reason spontaneously. Is not related to special trouble caused by a mental disease or non-common experiences.

Second assumption is that the understanding judges rightly about what is good. The difficulty we are analysing is not a theoretical one and does not come from a mistake on judging. On the contrary, it assumes that the understanding recognises as a good what is truly a good.

Third, we also assume that the will usually desires what the reason shows as a good.

On the contrary, it would be another problem: a lack of consistency between reason and will. This is not really frequent. It would be quite shaking if we say “I know it is good, but I don’t want to do it” or “I know it is evil, but I want to do it”. Or even “I don’t care if it is good or bad”. This would be a problem of bad will. The solution for this is reasoning about good and justice. This is a previous question to the education of desire for flourishing.

Most common questions are something like this: “I know it is good and I want to do it, but my feelings are against it”. It could be because of fear, pride, sloth... In practice, what is evil could appear together with some concrete elements that are pleasant. And, similarly, good actions could appear with some non-attractive features.

Arduous good is recognised as such good by the intelligence, but emotions are not in accordance with it. The real conflict is not between attractive evil and boring good, but between good for reason and bad for emotions. Take a simple example: I know that I must go to the gym; I know it is good for my health. But I am really lazy.

There is no conflict between good and evil; but it's just that what appears as good to my intellectual faculties appears as difficult or non-attractive to my emotions.

Emotions do not react to the imperative of intelligence, but to the representations of imagination. Inner images of actions make passions in order to tend to something, or to escape from it. This is why they are not always in harmony with reason and will. True education of desire consists in offering the analysis, narrative and images, as clear as possible, in order to make the internal representation easy, in accordance with real value of actions.

3.4 New Solution for Arduous Good

As we mentioned at the beginning, it is common to consider that the difficulty to do good lies in the conflict between reason and desire. We mentioned that it is rather an opposition between rational and non-rational desire: the practical difficulty of performing an action that, in theory, is convenient. In other words, desire is fragile, although the criterion is correct. This fragility makes the education of non-rational desires become necessary, so that they can reconcile with a correct criterion. Frequently, we try to resolve the fragility of desire and the difficulty of doing good deeds (of the arduous good) by promoting effort capacity or by focusing on training and formation of habits. Without neglecting these two effective educational models, something else is necessary: to educate desire.

If good actions are just the result of some imposition or coercion, they are not really the way towards flourishing. To develop a strong capacity of effort is positive and allows us to do things that are both valuable and difficult. Effort is the capacity of doing things that we really want to do but are not easy in practice. However, it is perfectly possible, and this is the point, that we want to do something but we do not wish it enough to push ourselves so much. The harder the good action, the stronger the willing is needed. The solution is not to try such an effort till exhaustion, but to learn better why this action is so valuable: to have clearer reasons for desiring it. Desire becomes especially important if we consider that it is the step prior to action and that it intervenes in a less tangible, but more crucial, way in decision and behaviour.

Similarly to effort, training the acquisition of good habits is also positive indeed but not enough. Trying to create habits without educating desire would leave individuals in a situation lacking moral quality and internal coherence: "...some people habitually act well in a situation although their motives are far from pure. They refrain from theft in order to avoid getting caught, stand fast in battle in order to impress their girlfriends, etc. Such people act better than the incontinent, although at least in one sense they are morally worse, for they lack the desire to perform virtuous acts for their own sake. Some of these people go on to become virtuous, I suppose, but others make no moral progress at all. They habitually act rightly, but for the wrong reasons. They show that habituation alone is insufficient to instil the desire to

perform virtuous acts for their own sake” (Curzer 2002). Moral education is not only about action and behaviour; it is also about motives and intention.

Another way of learning virtue is possible. We may rather look for persuasion instead of mere effort. The question is not to face the arduous good with all our strength, but to face it from the perspective in which it looks not so arduous. The clarity of the good is enough to minimalise the arduousness of it. This is desire education: to teach emotions and feelings in order to aim towards something which is worth it. And this requires working on an internal representation of the action and its consequences.

To understand the foundations for the education of desire, it is necessary to approach the subject in an interdisciplinary way, from a background of ethics, education, psychology and anthropology. It is fundamental to address the various aspects involved in wanting. Therefore, we need to identify the various types of desire and their own dynamics, to develop appropriate educational tools and programmes that apply such tools. This new way of educating consists in looking for internal harmony.

3.5 The Attractiveness of the Good

Moral education has to face a fallacy that is as old as human existence itself: the belief that good is or may be not completely unattractive. That is similar to say that good is not good enough to be desirable. In fact, experience shows that sometimes there is a lack of consistency between the goodness of an action and its lack of attractiveness, or between a bad action and its attractiveness. As a result, we look for resources which are alien to the action in order to conduct the subject to the correct action despite the lack of attractiveness.

Good is always the goal; however, we do not always know how to identify it or distinguish it from something that seems good. If desires can be reconciled, and if reason (*logos*) and desire (*orexis*) are contradictory, it is because in “animals that can perceive time” that the intellect’s foresight does not always opt for immediate satisfaction. (Margot 2008)

It would be more precise to speak about rational and non-rational desire. When the discord between both occurs, allusions to “duty”, law and even punishment come, in order to achieve good behaviour. Of course, we cannot forget some occasions in which the references to these elements are unavoidable to maintain the social order or the family pace. But these must be the exception, not the purpose of moral education. Moral education may be focused in a more complete perspective. This requires being confident in the good. Why are we teaching something as good? Clearly because we believe that it is really good. We should never teach anything that we do not believe in. Usually, we need to offer some explanation as to why the good is good. This is education: to help the moral agent to see the reason of a good action.

From metaphysics and ethics, one could affirm that if something is good, it will be desirable: “all things tend towards a good” (Aristotle 2004). Tendencies of each faculty go naturally to search its own good. But we do not always feel attractiveness according to the real value of the action. This lack of accordance is due to our difficulty to apprehend the complete meaning, consequences and all aspects of the concrete action. Somehow, we may say that this reveals the moral scarcity of the subject, even its moral illness. Another sentence of Aristotle states a similar idea: we don’t believe something to be sweet or bitter because it seems so to sick people (Aristotle 2004). If something good is not attractive to someone, we do not stop considering it good, but that the subject needs to learn to recognise it as such. This is a possible learning for all human beings: to discover the truly enjoyable beyond false appearances.

Again, reason for good action is not only intellectual. It could be also emotional; it must be also true practical motivation. Therefore, we need ideas, reasoning, images, stories, visual resources: all possible elements to persuade rationally and emotionally.

This is the challenge of moral education: to teach that good deeds may be recognised as such and as attractive. If an action is really good, there will be reasons to recognise it as so and therefore elements of persuasion to direct desire. Explaining that any given action is good is not enough (teaching to know); it is necessary to find ways of arousing the orientation towards that good (teaching to desire). “In any virtue, both cognitive and motivational elements are central” (Audi 2012). The convergence of the two makes the ethical behaviour possible with internal coherence and harmony.

But internal harmony needs intellectual and emotional coherence in addition to cognitive and motivational coherence. As we pointed out, at the beginning it is not the same. Cognitive and motivational elements refer to cognitive or appetitive faculties. Intellectual and emotional refer to rational (intellective) or sensitive faculties. Intellectual may be cognitive (to understand something) or appetitive (true will), and also sensitive could be knowledge (the object of senses) or appetitive (sensitive ways of desiring). Therefore, harmonious education must promote balance among the four groups of faculties. The moral quality of every human being, in normal situations, indeed consists in the ability to lean without violence towards the good.

There is a crucial element that must be not ignored: the internal representation. All possible ways of building an adequate internal representation of the good are necessary and useful. Images, examples, stories. . . All are ways in which making “visible” the goodness of the good is required. The challenge is to introduce the good in a touchable, sensitive, emotionally compressible way.

It is interesting to consider that it could be worse to present the good in an unpleasant way than to present the evil in an attractive one. Actually both are the ways in which most people are led towards evil. Sometimes evil is just the consequence of a wrong image of good.

3.6 The Role of Beauty

Beauty has the power to reconcile intellectual and sensitive faculties. This is because it is enjoyed by both sensitivity and intellect. “Corporal vision is the principle of the sensitive love, and likewise the contemplation of the spiritual beauty or goodness is the beginning of the spiritual love” (Aquinas 1994). To enjoy both ways of beauty contributes to the internal harmony of the human being.

Schiller suggests that this is a special state of freedom which is equally free from reason’s imperatives or from the physical needs. “Since the spirit, when contemplating beauty, is at a fortunate midpoint between law and necessity, it is thus subtracted from the coercion of both one and the other, because it is shared between both” (Schiller 2002). This is why he proposes moral education throughout beauty, because what is beautiful attracts the senses at the same time as it is linked to intellect. In the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller develops an education theory based on the conciliation of sensitive and intellectual faculties.

His starting point is to deny that there is a necessary opposition between the reason’s stimulus, what is freedom and the impetus of sensitivity or nature:

If we affirm an original, and therefore necessary, antagonism between the two impulses, then there is no other means to maintain the unity of man that to unconditionally subordinate the sensitive impulse to the rational one. However, it can only result uniformity from this subordination, but not harmony, and man will remain divided forever. However, there must be subordination, but a reciprocal subordination. (Schiller 2002)

Moral education consists precisely in looking for the harmony between the two. “In the event that the moral character can only be affirmed by the sacrifice of the natural character, then a degree of formation which is still deficient will be evidenced” (Schiller 2002). Moral character is guided by reason; the “natural” one is spontaneous and comes from the sensitiveness. The challenge of moral education is to go beyond the confrontation and achieve the harmony between the two. This is also an important aspect of the freedom: to be able to follow the desires of the spirit instead of the material necessities (Schiller 2002). This is achieved by reconstructing the way that has travelled only from the instinct (Schiller 2002) in order to place a new end on nature from that reason (Schiller 2002) and not become a savage, either to lose the proper space for feelings and emotions.

The harmony between reason and sensitivity is possible when we show the beauty of the good revealing that it is agreeable and pleasant.

3.7 The Role of Imagination

Roger Scruton has studied the phenomenon which considers that sometimes we do not feel what we want. He proposes to develop an education “to feel in the appropriate way”. We could say also “to feel like we really want to feel”, or to

feel in harmony with reason and will, assuming that reason and will are directed towards what is appropriate.

One of his examples to explain it comes from a crime novel: “Dr. Steiener was trying to feel sorry but he knew he was afraid. However, He was only fully aware of feeling disgust... suddenly, He was prey to an irresistible nervous laugh”.

This shows that some emotions are appropriate and other are not:

Scruton believes that we can learn to have an appropriate emotion rather than an inappropriate one; we can learn to feel what we ought or want to feel when we cannot seem to feel anything at all. He describes “knowing what to feel” in terms of practical knowledge like knowing what to do. For practical knowledge, success is certainty in knowing what to do or feel; the result is happiness. Happiness, in this sense, is a kind of satisfaction in exercising morality; it is the guiltlessness that results from knowing what is expected and reacting in that way ; one may suffer externally , Scruton says , as when someone loved dies but one will not be the victim of confused feelings or behavior Happiness means success in choosing the correct emotion or behavior , having deliberately sought to make the right choice. (Pecover 1986).

Scruton considers emotions as a way of acting. And this is a key question. Emotions emerge spontaneously and without our decision, but at the same time, we note the possibility of giving them more or less expansion, of making them grow or moderating them to act in accordance with them or against them.

What Scruton proposes, like it suggests his explanation, is that we may focus our imagination in what is appropriate, and we may make that our view of each situation was the most human possible. Before a tragic event it is not really human that I stay focusing my attention to a concrete hilarious aspect of the whole story. I have to think, because this is the most important from the human point of view: someone is suffering. If I pay attention to the sorrow of others involved in the event, my funny emotions dissipate. This is empathy and compassion, and two of the most human emotions.

We may analyse a real example to see what we may do to lead our emotions towards empathy. In March 2016, there was an accident in which three young aged people between 22 and 27 died. It was a tragedy. They travelled in a light aircraft that came from Sabadell’s aerodrome and was twenty five minutes from its destination. But the way in which the accident happened, because it was not common and rare, produced some hilarity: the aircraft crashed with an enormous vulture that tangled with the airscrew. By knowing the news, many people felt an impulse to laugh. However, the feeling of humanity in knowing the death of these young people made anyone who realised the tragedy of losing these three lives in this especially unexpected way think about their families. These thoughts which were full of meaning changed the first instinct of joke into an emotion of sorrow and compassion. No repression was necessary to change the feelings.

This is the key of education of feelings: to choose the most human thoughts, the more constructive ones, those that make us better and happier. Fortunately, since the ethical attitudes are those that lead us to the good, they always include good reasons to think on. If before the arduous good, there are no good thoughts to think on it, this means that something is wrong. Either we are mistaken towards the judgement on

the good, or we are just blind to what is good. It is not a question of being “more” sensitive but a question of feeling in accordance with intellect. This is to achieve the harmony between will and sensitivity.

3.8 When It Is Unavoidable to Push in Order to Be Ethical

There is an important difference between the “normal” education of sensitivity and the realisation of good that requires extraordinary effort. This distinction may occur for two reasons: an important lack of moral quality in the individual or the special difficulty of specific circumstances.

The first case consists, simply, in a lack of virtue. If I am really lazy, it could be extremely difficult for me to get up in the morning when the alarm clock rings. Maybe I have no creative resources enough to convince myself how good it is to get up early, how many interesting things I may do, or the great value of this effort in order to help someone else. If so, then, there is no other remedy than force myself to get out of bed in order to be able to do the good action that is to get up on time. The simplicity of this kind of difficulty makes it easier to learn to overcome them. We need to work on both motivation and training, and usually we’ll succeed.

The other case is more complex and depends on some external pressure. If the external context is really perverse something pushes us beyond the normal capacity of resisting. For example, as Kant suggests in the *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals*, “If a tyrant forces you to condemn an innocent”. . . In this situation, the agent must choose between being an indirect murder (someone will be executed because of it) and to be killed, even tortured, because of not responding to the tyrant’s demand. When acting badly under extraordinary pressure, the moral value of the action is not the same as in normal circumstances. There is some lack of freedom to be considered. But when capable of overcoming justified fear, assuming extreme risk and doing good, then a peculiar character emerges: the hero. However, heroism cannot be demanded from everyone: everybody can behave but not everybody can be a hero.

Still, there is another way of heroism: when heroic actions arise from an unusually strong desire to do the good beyond one’s own duty, over and above what justice requires. In both cases, the heroic action can only emerge from a spirit trained in the daily and free choice of the good, the constant option for the good even if it requires effort, the continuous process by which the value of the good is noticed even in the gloom, even in the pallor, when it is still only being insinuated.

3.9 Another Myth: Passion Tend to the Evil

The need for moral education is as old as human existence. However, should this education be based on punishment? Plato raises the question, among other occasions, in the narration of the tale of Giges (Plato 1997): if wrong actions went unpunished and had advantages, would not we carry them out? Plato endeavours to explain that ethical education must focus on love: education should not be based on fear of punishment but on the love of justice. Aristotle also places human action in a teleological framework: everything tends towards the good (Aristotle 2004). This concept comes from *physics*, from the observation that in nature each element tends towards its own perfection. The observation of this trend instils confidence in the attractiveness of the good. This trend is something that is implicit in Aristotelian ethics but that is clearly stated in the teleological theory of action. Everything tends towards its own good.

What passion needs to be ordered to the good is to be integrated in the whole ensemble of all human faculties. If passion maintains a good relationship with the rest of the faculties, cognitive and appetitive, then is possible to take the correct place, taking into account all other factors involved in human action.

There is a weakness in moral education over time: by noting that passions may lean towards evil, we easily used to consider that they naturally tend towards evil. But it is not so, it is just the trend to its natural object of pleasure. We have already explained that true conflict emerges for the different natural trend of rational and non-rational desire. Actually, non-rational desire is not naturally evil. It is just a natural tendency to what is pleasant in a spontaneous, sensitive, immediate way. Bodily pleasure is the most common object of spontaneous desire. Pleasure is good when well ordered. And this is the point: most times the evil action is just a disorder. It does not mean that the pleasure is evil, but that looking for it we may commit intemperance, injustice or whatever wrong deeds.

It is not wrong to look for pleasure. On the contrary, it is intrinsically correct. What could be wrong is looking for it in an isolated way: aiming towards pleasure and forgetting the global meaning and consequences of the action. When there is a conflict between rational and non-rational desire, then we must follow the rational to assure we are acting correctly. The correct is the global good, what is good for all elements that compound the action: the deeds, the intention, the involved subjects, the consequences. Pleasure alone does not see the global context of the action but instead only the particular object of pleasure.

The challenge of moral education is to show how good the good is to the sensitive passions and to make possible the accordance between rational and non-rational desires. But since contemporary European culture has a strong Kantian influence, we assume that it is better to ignore the passions. Sometimes not even the educators believe that good can be done willingly and that it can be pleasant. This belief is why effort is emphasised, habits as mere technique, self-control, instead of insisting on “how good the good is” and helping to recognise that it is. If doing the good is hard, it is because there is a sensitive good in conflict with a greater good that does not

attract sensitivity. Moral education finds ways to persuade sensitivity to desire to do good.

3.10 The Importance of Pleasure

Aristotle speaks of pleasure in different texts, giving it different meanings. However, when there is no different specification, he addresses it as bodily or sensitive pleasure. Allusions to intellectual pleasure are always followed by a specification. Sensitive pleasure is outside the intellectual sphere. It is not a knowledge either. It is a passion or emotion. In the passage (Aristotle 2004) it is clearly stated that pleasure and pain cause good or evil attitudes. Pleasure has also been defined as a joy that follows an action (Aristotle 2004).

Pleasure is not the focus of the education of desire, but it is a key question because it is all about educating the way to enjoy and, therefore, about trying to make the good both pleasant and attractive. Virtue means to be able to have both pleasure and pain, but in an appropriate fashion (Aristotle 2004).

Pleasure and desire are alike, but they are not the same. In the Aristotelian context, they are closely linked. Pleasure is not an action: in any case, it is the result of an action. It can be desired by exercising an act of desire, but one cannot perform an act of pleasure. Pleasurable actions can be performed, and one expects the result to be pleasure. Still, it is interesting to see that this characteristic is not always true.

As studies closer to our time show, pleasure slips away when one seeks pleasure by itself: “. . .if we move away from the object to turn towards the trend, we no longer perceive an object, but a state. The place of intentionality is occupied by facticity, and instead of the intention (followed by pleasure) of a value, the fact of” pleasure “appears, which is absurd in itself. Therefore, something that can cause pleasure is no longer possessed, but pleasure itself; although pleasure without support, disappears” (Frankl 1994).

Every pleasure is the satisfaction of some desiderative faculty, whether bodily or intellectual. It also occurs when there is no previous tension and it appears as a pleasant surprise, when it was not sought: there is always some desiderative power that is perceived “in fullness”. The same occurs with something as simple as satisfying thirst, or something more subtle, like enjoying a surprising beauty, or even something sublime, like performing a heroic action for gratitude.

Education of desire does not focus on the relationship of pleasure to virtues, but it does consider this relationship. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the education of the affections and virtues. Previous studies published on this topic will both contribute to and support the research. The research we propose goes beyond the topic because it involves all appetitive forms and the methods used for their guidance.

“The virtuous life is pleasant”. This is one of Aristotle’s statements that opens the way to conciliation between pleasure and virtue. If this conciliation can be understood as harmony between desire and good deed, then it does relate to education of

desire. “The virtuous life is pleasant” is a statement that, so far, does not enjoy all the credibility it deserves. It remains to be shown how this link between the good and the pleasant can be achieved in practical life. In contemporary Western culture, there is still an intellectualist cloud that obscures such a possibility of inner harmony and joy of good.

3.11 Prior to Decision: Desire and Imagination

The term desire has different meanings within the academic field. However, we will give it a broader sense than the concept restricted to passion and instinct. In common language, desire refers, in a somewhat reductionist approach, to the appetite associated with bodily needs, especially to sexual desire, and it generally implies intense, short-term ways of wanting, related to the somatic dynamics of emotions.

By educating desire, we will discard this restricted approach. The various study fields on cognitive science summarise human action as *desires* and *beliefs*. This approach confers both elements with a very broad meaning. Beliefs refer to all kinds of knowledge. Desires and beliefs have only two conditions: the verb that refers to knowledge or appetite and the specific content of the action. This is a view shared by many contemporary philosophers of the mind: “According to this view a mental state such as a desire or belief can be analysed in two components: its content, which corresponds to the object clause in sentences such as “John believes that it is raining,” “Mary desires that it stop raining”, and another element, “which corresponds to the psychological verb in such sentences” (Tuozzo 1994).

Desires, specifically, include all kinds of appetite, whether instinctive, emotional or rational. Desire is all activation of an appetite or inclination, whatever its nature, whether it gives rise to a tangible action or not. Mainly, we will distinguish two types of desire: intellectual appetite, related to reason, and sensitive appetite, characteristic of feelings and emotions (inclinations not directly related to reason: passions, instincts, emotions, feelings...).

Moral education is primarily aimed at improving behaviour. Therefore, in recent years, multiple authors and research groups have focused on the education of character and virtues (Carr and Steutel 1999; Carr et al. 2017; Kristjánsson 2007). This is currently consisting in an abundantly effective field of research and application of virtue ethics. However, the analysis of behaviour also highlights the decisive importance of an element prior to action: desire.

Most behavioural research starts with behaviour and addresses behaviour. Education of desire aims to go beyond the scope of action and anticipate behaviour by entering the scope of decision prior to action. A more incisive education is possible if centred on the ways of desiring and, therefore, of deciding. Education of desire aims to teach how to modulate the various desiderative modes, to promote ways of wanting and to promote decisions that are consistent with good deeds from within the individual.

The focus is no longer on the result of good deed—virtue—but in its cause: the righteous desire of the individual who acts. Consequently, this education will deal with four elements: the object of desire, the way of presenting it, the individual who desires and his/her ways of wanting. Regarding the individual, education is about learning to promote the best desires. In turn, the educator must propitiate a learning of the desiderative ways that integrate and harmonise all the instances involved in wanting: knowledge and reflection, imagination and narrative, feelings and emotions.

Aristotle attaches great importance to desire within ethical education: “pleasure (*Hedoné*) and pain (*Lype*) as it should be, this comprises, indeed, good education” (Aristotle 2004). The context of this affirmation and the sensitive dimension of pleasure and pain which is referred to here is clear. Moral education aims to make passions (pleasure and pain) consistent with rational desires: will (*boulesis*) and choice (*proairesis*). Rational desires “understand” or “see” what is truly good and, thus, are oriented to the good in an almost indefectible way.

The harmony between rational and non-rational desire is not always warranted, but it is possible. Desire needs to be educated to prefer what is good. Non-rational desire may learn from the rational throughout different ways of persuasion. Imagination is the key faculty that may connect both. It offers us a way to persuade the sensitivity to prefer what is really good by constructing positive internal representations. This education consists in showing that good action may be both good and pleasant. This is, in fact, an approach to character education focused on the idea that the good can be also pleasant, and education of desire teaches “the taste” to enjoy what is good.

This is not just an education of affectivity. Such education is necessary, and there are studies of great interest and benefit; however, they are still partial studies. In these studies, the focus is affectivity, not the core of the individual. Affectivity focuses on a specific type of desires that are affective. Emotional education has mainly focused on self-control, long-term motivation, etc... In contrast, education of desire is a comprehensive action: it addresses both intellectual desires and the emotional and impulsive desires.

This topic cannot be reducible to motivation either. This term has been used especially in marketing and has taken on very technical connotations, sometimes mercantilist or even mechanistic, as a modern version of the old approaches of Pavlov, Watson, Skinner... The education of the desire, as it is proposed here is, above all, a work of interiority.

Therefore, it is crucial to mould the representations. The education of desire needs to work with the representation of good. Imagination is the bridge that links outer reality with interior desire. In fact, education of desire for flourishing is a process of internalisation.

3.12 Conclusion

Since McIntyre published *After Virtue* in 1981 the interest in virtue ethics has not stopped growing and has succeeded to offer a deeper comprehension and a more fruitful application. However, emotional education as moral education is not yet well comprehended and even worse practised. Educating desire in order to achieve ethical quality does not mean to elude moral judgement as some authors have suggested (Kuangfei Xie 2015): moral perfection makes unnecessary all reasoning about one's own actions. When excellence is already achieved, it is supposed that we would be able to do everything good without thinking of it. Moral perfection would make us perfect agents who do the good spontaneously, without needing any previous reflection. But this is not the purpose.

Educating desire, on the one hand, does need the activity of the reason and its judgements. On the other hand, this moral education is not based on emotivism, when it is considered that judgements “are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feelings” (McIntyre 1981). Instead of this, education of desire for achieving flourishing means to teach desire in accordance with moral judgement.

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