The Intelligent *Pathos* of Education. Challenging the Concept of Emotional Intelligence Through Michel Henry's Phenomenology of Incarnation

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In this paper, we try to reconceptualize the popular notion of 'emotional intelligence' through a critical dialogue with the idiosyncratic phenomenology of Michel Henry.[1] Starting from the argument that the bulk of popular discourse on emotional intelligence in education suffers from tenacious functionalist and intellectualist prejudices, often inspired by neoliberal ideologies, we contend, with Michel Henry, that 'traditional' phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) is unable to provide a sufficiently radical alternative. In Henry's *philosophy of incarnation* (2000), which departs from a *renversement de la phénoménologie* and a 'pathological' decentering of intentionality, such an alternative might be closer at hand. By situating education in the Henryan tension between subjectivity's pathic life – reality's absolute, immanent interiority – and (the) world(s) made up of transcendent, intentional relations to exterior objects, we want to establish emotional intelligence as a fundamental educational agency, which keeps world and life connected while at the same time leaving their ontological difference intact. Finally, analyzing a concrete educational example, we claim that 'pathic intelligence' is not a matter of individual self-expression, but rather manifests

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[1] In this paper, we rework and expand on insights already formulated in a previous article (Koopal and Vlieghe 2019), on the basis of various incisive and critical comments that we received in the meantime.

itself in experiences that *im*press us – collectively – with the lived, post- or pre-intentional, consciousness of a life that cannot be reduced to the world 'as we already know it'.

1   Introduction: the Concept of *Emotional Intelligence* (EI) and Education

Already for some decades now, emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the most popular buzz words in the humanities, most particularly in developmental psychology and educational sciences. On the one hand the concept's entry in wider discourse can be pinpointed quite precisely, by referring to Daniel Goleman's 1995 bestseller *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ.* If in the first place this book was written for either the 'common sense individual', following dominant trends of *lifestyle* discourses, and for the benefit of corporate management and human resources strategies,[2] it also quickly sparked a more scientific – and soon well-funded – interest in the empirical conditions of Goleman's apparently bold claims. From the start, it seems, education was a major field of application for these scientific endeavours, and ever since the turn of the century studies have abounded addressing the question to what extent emotional intelligence would enhance educational success and/or specific, educationally valuable, skills and cognitions (cf. Stough et al. 2009; Allen et al. 2014; Demetriou 2018).

On the other hand, a similar interest had already been burgeoning within more speculative philosophical discourses for a much longer time. Martha Nussbaum's seminal study *Upheavals of Thought: the Intelligence of Emotions* (2008), which in a brilliant way tries to reassess the intellectual and ethical value of emotions through the retrieval of certain Antique schools of thought, may be considered a culminating point in this respect.[3] For indeed, one could think just as well of Smith's and Hume's notions of 'moral sentiments', Nietzsche's passionate 'affirmation of life', or of Sartre's *théorie des émotions* as exemplifying a profound philosophical interest in the intellectual merits of emotions. Even if most of these approaches do not altogether part with the Platonic or Cartesian mind–body dualism that is often said to lie at the root of much of Western society's disregard

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[2] Which became even more patent in Goleman's next book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998).

[3] For another interesting, but lesser-known study of a similar scope, see Meier-Seethaler (1997).

for emotions, they at least try to envision ways in which emotions might be dealt with, related to, intelligently. That is: beyond simple rationalist strategies of 'suppression' or purification. Moreover, they often maintain – Nussbaum above all, but also for instance Adorno – that precisely the false dichotomy between embodied emotions and cognitive reason should be held responsible for many of the irrational and barbaric behaviours pervading contemporary (Western) society (cf. Adorno 1971, p. 101 f.).

This immediately brings us to the point that both binds and separates the different contemporary discourses on emotional intelligence, and which will constitute the point of departure for our critical reconceptualization of the notion. As someone like Eva Illouz has convincingly shown, partly revisiting some of Nussbaum's arguments, the popular interest in emotional intelligence has not actually broken through the prevalent dualist paradigms. On the contrary, it even tends to reinforce these, by reproducing them in a capitalist logic of functionalism and efficiency (cf. Illouz 2008, pp. 211–216). By reducing emotions to measurable skills and manageable assets, they have effectively become objects that the cognitive subject – *in casu* the individual entrepreneur calculating her success in a corporate market – should strive to manipulate, control and subdue, both in herself and others, in view of a bigger productive output. When looking at the bulk of research on emotional intelligence in education, this logic is indeed omnipresent: most studies go no further than establishing supposedly self-evident empirical correlations between cognition *of emotions*, which are themselves posited as simply given, and educational success – itself mostly coined in terms of quantitative results (cf. Pekrun et al. 2017). What these studies thus conspicuously leave out of their discussions, is the ontological *nature* of both the cognition(s) and the emotions they (or those who took part in the research) deal with as given. In other words: they lack all attention for emotions' *intrinsic* logic, including its radically embodied character, and for what would make this non-cognitive logic[4] *intrinsically* educational. The risks of this approach are obvious: in the end, emotional intelligence will easily be subsumed again in a classical or updated, cognitivist model of intelligence. From a pedagogical perspective, this would leave experience and/in education dramatically impoverished, stripped of one its richest resources for creating genuinely *new* meanings and values, viz. meanings and values which go beyond reproducing the dominant socio-political establishment.

At the same time, there is reason to doubt whether an author like Nussbaum, despite the great effort she puts in countering the neoliberal functionalization of

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[4] From a completely different angle—that of cognitive science—the claim of such a logic is already by itself a reason for criticizing EI discourse (Locke 2005).

emotional intelligence, effectively bridges the gap between cognitive and emotional accounts of intelligence. The problem with her analyses, we allege, is the strong and direct emphasis on emotions' *moral value*. Although this attribution is in and of itself not at all problematic, one easily ends up *moralizing* emotions altogether – at least when they are not sufficiently accounted for on an ontological level first. Thus certain emotions – notably those which we generally consider to be negative or destructive (anger, jealousy, fear etc.) – may be quickly cast aside as immoral, and therefore even not 'properly' emotional (Nussbaum 2015);[5] an argument which, in its effects, can come startlingly close to supporting the functional, manageable and perhaps profitable status-quo. To be sure, Nussbaum herself does not uphold a management approach to emotions (which on the contrary she criticizes for still being cognitivist), but from the perspective of education her straightforward moral take on emotional intelligence runs the risk of leaving the ontological implications of emotion's radically embodied nature too implicit, and of getting appropriated all too easily by socio-political discourses that fail to account for EI as a specifically *educational* agency (cf. Zembylas 2016, pp. 546–547). The proposal of this article, therefore, precisely consists in recasting EI on the level of educational ontology and phenomenology, as a *sui generis* educational experience with an enormous transformative potentiality. If the topics of emotion in general and of certain emotions in particular, have already for much longer garnered attention from within the fields of (educational) philosophy and phenomenology (Meyer-Drawe 1984; Frevert and Wulf 2012), this has not yet (to our knowledge) given rise to any direct confrontation with the ambivalent yet dominant concept of EI.

2   Michel Henry's Phenomenology: Affectivity and Incarnation

In our search for an onto-phenomenological framework that would help render an educational concept of emotional intelligence more substantial, our attention was finally caught by the thought of Michel Henry (1922–2002). This French philosopher, who is only recently really being discovered,[6] has come up with a highly original phenomenology – often termed 'vitalist' – in which *lived experience* and

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[5] That is to say: by trying to appropriate their affects, these negative emotions end up neutralizing the affect's proper power, which for Nussbaum is positively relational.

[6] Although it remains striking that even Bernhard Waldenfels, an authoritative phenomenologist with a pronounced interest in affectivity, still grants relatively little attention to Henry (cf. Waldenfels 2008).

affective subjectivity rise to an unprecedented prominence. Mainly inspired by the obscure nineteenth century thinker Maine de Biran,[7] and often remindful of the early work of Deleuze (an affinity which he seems to ignore),[8] Henry claims to propagate a phenomenological method that radically breaks with some of the basic tenets of what he deems to be 'classical' phenomenology, in the spirit of Husserl, Heidegger and – on a decidedly lower level – Merleau-Ponty. Henry's last major work, *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair* (2000), makes this abundantly clear, as it launches its argument with an emphatical *renversement de la phénoménologie*, a subversion of phenomenology (cf. Henry 2000, pp. 1–2, 13, 15).

In the eyes of Henry, traditional phenomenology, notwithstanding the enormous (and lasting) merits of its rigorous methods, has simply departed on the wrong foot. In all cases – and one is left to wonder whether Henry's judgment is not too categorical here – it starts off from the premise of a correlation between a subjective (embodied) consciousness on the one hand, and an objective phenomenal world on the other hand; from the notion of intentionality, a meaningful reciprocity between that which appears, 'a' world, and everything belonging to it, and the consciousness *to* which/whom that world appears. In terms of emotions, to stick to our topic, this entails that through emotions we give shape to the way we relate to the world, to the horizon to which all our experience and knowledge of worldly appearances (existentially) intend. Certainly, Henry concedes, this is all very reasonable and true. Yet what phenomenology fails to account for is that emotions are not just selective modes of intentionality and phenomenality, through which we engage various registers of 'world-appearance', but that originally they *im*press and pervade us, to the extent even, according to Henry, of constituting the *appearance of appearance*, the condition of possibility of *all* appearance. We do not, as Sartre (2000) famously suggested (thereby strictly adhering to phenomenological protocols), become sad *in order to* justify or accord with the world's unsatisfying, aching appearance; we become sad because we always, already, *live*

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[7] This is most explicitly acknowledged in Henry's early work; cf. *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps: essai sur l'ontologie biranienne* (1965).

[8] Similarly, Henry rarely engages in dialogue with other well-known 'philosophies of life', such as that of Nietzsche (even though he does refer to Schopenhauer (Henry 2012)), Dilthey, Bergson or Scheler. For a broader comparative perspective, cf. *Studia Phaenomenologica*, vol. IX, which is completely devoted to (the reception of) Henry's thought.

(in) a world that appears to us – and thereby makes other things appears – *in* an alternately desiring and suffering affectivity.[9]

In other words: traditional phenomenology makes the mistake of primarily situating subjectivity and objectivity – qua consciousness, but even as body (*corps*) – in the world, rather than *in life*. And this life, for Henry, is 'transcendentally' carnal (*chair*), affective, or path(et)ic *self-manifestation* (cf. Henry 1963, p. 1; 2000, pp. 22–25). It does not take place, appear in a world that is exterior to it (*hors de soi*) and makes it stand out, and that (objectively or correlatively) causes it to be affected, according to set a priori forms of affective (cor)relations.[10] On the contrary: life is absolutely, immanently affective, encompassing all possible worlds and orders of appearance in the dynamic interiority of its self-affectivity, its pulsing flesh. Thus, in an almost Nietzschean vein, Henry's concept of a univocal, radically subjective life – a non-identical, non-individual subjectivity no longer relating to objects in any pre-existing order – blows up all phenomenological horizons, and does away with intentionality's 'horizonal' one-on-one correspondence (cf. Henry 2012). And are not what most of all confront us with this subjectivity the *non-objectifiable*, carnate emotions that exceed our individual bodies and horizonal understandings, and thereby render us *intelligent* of a more profound, direct and 'open' manifestation of phenomena, as self-affective, living subjectivities?

This is also why Henry often seems to see a strong connection (in the spirit of Husserl's *Krisis*) between traditional phenomenology's failure and the rise of both 'hard' techno-scientific objectivity and capitalist politics, as perhaps also witness in mainstream EI discourses. Their intelligence, ingenuous and creative as it sometimes may be, inevitably reduces life to world, immanence to transcendence, dynamics to stat(istic)s, flesh to body, robbing reality of its non-intentional, affective, subjectifying lifeforce (cf. Henry 1987).[11] If this sounds exaggerated, then at least we must admit that traditional phenomenology is incapable of coming up with interesting alternatives. Even Merleau-Ponty, who is generally believed to have exactly framed intentionality in more dynamic, intersubjective and embodied terms, eventually keeps prioritizing the 'world', a realm of meaningful experience and phenomena springing up from the chiastic transcendent movements of

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[9] In fact, according to Henry, this is exactly how Descartes' *cogito* should be understood, as life's original, self-referential ontological affectivity (cf. Henry 2000, pp. 11–12; Henry 2012; Mehl 2012).

[10] In this regard, there is some sense in comparing Henry's 'critique of the body' (as an *organic form*) with Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the "body without organs" (Buchanan 1997), that resists the 'organization' of the body in a pre-ordered, normatively significant world.

[11] Also notable in this regard, are Henry's unconventional readings of Marx.

human consciousness (cf. Henry 2000, p. 21, 31).[12] And what is again overloo-
ked, Henry (all too) confidently asserts, is the original living self-affectivity that
makes the experience of these movements possible, 'giving them to themselves'
(*auto-donation*), with a sense fully interior to their very becoming. Hence, real
subjectivity, subjectivity that does not project itself in transcendent dependence
on objective *percepta* or worlds, will remain unconceivable, as long as pheno-
menology does not take seriously the affective, fleshly life that a priori *traverses*
intentionality and phenomenality (cf. ibid., pp. 29–30).

As the title of his last major work indicates, Henry's solution to this problem
has consisted in the development of a *phenomenology* (or sometimes simply philo-
sophy) *of incarnation.* By resorting, especially in his later period, to the Christian
theological tradition tied to that notion (cf. ibid., p. 25, 34, 48),[13] Henry has tried
to rethink – almost in the vein of Hegel's philosophy of religion – subjectivity
as a process and a movement of continuous subjectification 'in and through the
flesh'. That is: expressly *not* the body, but the transcendental flesh of life's dyna-
mic self-affectivity. Whereas our bodies, and all experience pertaining to them
(including emotions *and* intelligence), are always already objects 'of the world',
to speak with the apostle John, and therefore in peril of becoming *dis*incarnate
phenomena, Henry contends that by living the self-affective interiority of our
every experience, we are once again truly incarnated, 'given to ourselves' as the

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[12] This seems somewhat at odds with the analyses that Käte Meyer-Drawe makes in her
seminal work (1984) on Merleau-Ponty's significance for a more intrinsic phenomenologi-
cal appreciation of the *embodied* and *pre-individual* aspects of education (and in which she
also extensively compares Merleau-Ponty's position with that of other phenomenologists like
Husserl and Heidegger). Henry's major issue with Merleau-Ponty, it seems, is that eventually,
despite the 'chiastic' twist he gives to it, he keeps sticking to a one-on-one intentionality bet-
ween subject and object as his point of reference, with the world reduced to a kind of 'ek-static'
backdrop for human existence and signification (cf. Vlieghe 2014a). Still one could remark
that Henry's critical assessment of 'classical phenomenology' tends to be unnuanced at times,
deliberately limiting itself to its earliest stages (cf. later Heidegger and later Merleau-Ponty).
For anelaborate comparison of Henry's and Merleau-Ponty's respective phenomenologies of
embodiment/incarnation, see also Gély (2012).

[13] We cannot possible go into Henry's relation to theology more at length here. Perhaps it
suffices to say that here that he considers the Christian notion of "incarnation" (the idea
that God, or rather the 'Word of God', took flesh, became human, in Christ) to provide a
powerful *philosophical* antidote for the deadlock of phenomenology, in that it goes beyond
the thought of a horizonal *foundation* (the World, intentionality) of subjective experience,
instead installing within subjectivity as such a movement of pathic/carnal auto-donation. For
Henry therefore, the Christian God is not a transcendent principle of reality, but at best—as the
Father of Son, mediated by the Spirit—a transcendental dynamism *within* reality. Cf Henry
1996: "*toward* a philosophy of Christianity".

subjective life of the world (cf. Henry 1965, p. 134). So, rather than establishing a dichotomy between life and world (even though at times very likely), the dynamics of incarnation allow us to think a radical decentering of the world and the subjects and objects belonging to it. Just as our bodies are not genuinely (self-)affective in their objective, worldly appearance (but projected out of themelves to be measured against a supposedly self-evident horizon), so the world only gains phenomenal substance, only advances horizons for our experience, through its own incarnational 'coming to life'. And according to Henry, this life – or Life, with capital[14] – is indeed *transcendentally* given as the world's (or our body's) immanent interiority, its pathic flesh; not, it is stressed, in a one-off act (or series of acts) of divine creation, objectifying the bodily creature as a *product* of its creation, but in a continuous incarnatory *genesis*, giving birth, 'flesh from flesh', to ever new forms of subjectivity and world.

Evidently, Henry's phenomenological shift has important implications for how we conceive of education, generally characterized by an *openness to the world*, and the educational significance of affectivity and emotional intelligence. First of all, following Henry's line of thought, the world indeed becomes what is called in education 'subject matter', and we might perhaps add to it: *living* subject matter. Through the decentered dynamics of incarnation, our world is always in the process of materializing and subjectifying itself in the pathos of lived experience, of the flesh, given to itself in the transcendental plenum of life. The world is no longer an objectively or existentially 'given' horizon that makes meaningful human life possible since it is itself immanent to the vibrant movement of life – a life moreover that does not originally *belong to* human subjectivity. In fact, from an educational point of view, human subjectivity can only be understood and dealt with as an intentional, (inter)individual bodily existence (which Henry believes is the only one classical phenomenology can think) but *after* it has come to feel itself to be radically ex-centric, incarnated within a transindividual, self-affective and self-creative continuum (life) that does *not* submit to any transcendent horizon for measuring its value or significance.

Although Henry has said little to nothing about education per se (the reason also why hitherto he has barely been noticed by pedagogy), we would thus argue that this rationale has a very engaging educational ring to it, especially where it concerns emotions and EI. In a profoundly ontological (or rather

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[14] Henry has the habit of capitalizing some of his major concepts, like Life, World, Flesh, and of using certain concepts (cf. life, affectivity, pathos) both interchangeably *and* distinctly. Given the (apparent) inconsistency of Henry's habits, however, we have opted *not* to capitalize any of these terms, and of using them as uniformly as possible.

onto*genetic*) sense, Henry's logic of incarnation undergirds a dynamic of educational subjectification that is both radically immanent and potentializing. At times the Deweyan concept of experience-based learning seems most close at hand (Hohr 2012). For Henry namely, all experience, when genuinely *lived*, is (re)affected by the transcendental potentiality of life as such (Henry 2000, p. 29, 34), a (self-)transformative and (self-)affective movement whose direction we cannot objectively and technically predict (by projecting it towards a horizon), and which – highly interesting from an educational point of view – immediately relates our singular experience to a living community of other singularities-in-becoming. Again, Henry's logic of incarnation is absolutely *not* one of individual creation, but of continuous *genesis*, birth. It implies the pedagogical notion of 'generation', one that establishes a fundamental, living bond (different from the transcendent myths of blood, race or genes) between subjects that only become subjects to the extent that they *move themselves along* with each other in the common flux of affective life. This, we believe, entails an incredibly strong, acute understanding of the basic experience of education, which is one of transformation-in-relation, an intensive movement that allows for new forms of experience to materialize. And also, as we will now see, it could be seen to entail an understanding of education *as* a basic practice of *emotional intelligence*, one allowing all worldly phenomenality to be suspended in favour of a genesis of subjectivity and meaning that unfolds through intense, emotional experiences of life's excessive self-affectivity.

3   The Incarnational-Educational Dynamic Of Emotional Intelligence

From here it is not so hard to imagine how a Henryan concept of education would presuppose an intimate connection between intelligence and emotions. After all, the Henryan subject is not just embodied, it is incarnate, at all times and in all of its doings coming into its flesh through self-affective, pathic experience. All true understanding of the world therefore necessarily springs up from this pathos, from this basic, transcendental dynamic of 'being moved' by life. And just as Castoriadis, echoing Foucault's description of *education*, etymologically relates *e-motion* to a movement of transformative excess, Henry's notion of affectivity is essentially decentralizing (cf. Castoriadis 2007 p. 166; Foucault 2001, p. 130). True joy and suffering, the basic affective 'tonalities' of life (Henry 2000, p. 269), do not *express* a pre-existent intelligent identity; nor can they be reduced to intelligently manipulable or manageable individual capacities. Contrary to these worldly

appearances of emotion, true joy and suffering – as movements of living experi- ence – are what originally *engenders* (in an ontogenetical rather than empirical chronology) subjectivity and intelligence, by blending their exterior appearances into the all-interior flux of life and thus making them generative of *new* experi- ences. If the talk of tonalities is definitely remindful of Heidegger's and Bollnow's phenomenological understandings of *Stimmung* (cf. Bollnow 2017),[15] it is import- ant to note that for Henry life's affective tonalities do not existentially determine the subject's outlook on the world, but are what subjectively makes existence, world and outlook possible at all: the immanent flesh of our lived experience (cf. Henry 1963, p. 65).

With Henry then, emotional intelligence becomes something of a tautology: does genuinely pathic emotion not 'contain' in its dynamic the fundamental gist of all intelligence? Certainly, this does not preclude the actual, phenomenal existence of emotions that are manipulable and manageable, and that sometimes thwart other, *formally distinct* (cognitive) modes of intelligence. Think of anger or jea- lousy: mostly these do not strike us as very intelligent *by themselves* when they do not strategically induce more positive emotional responses, and it may be all too reasonable that education does everything to tame them, to get them under control. Yet perhaps the intelligence of an emotion like jealousy must be assessed according to a measure other than moral value, cognitive plausibility and/or func- tional consequence; a measure still more immanent and impersonal.[16] Naturally jealousy can be incredibly harmful and cruel insofar it regards an individual per- son's negative emotion vis-à-vis the property of another person. In the friction of its animosity though, it also puts at stake –or en*dangers*, as Lingis (2000) says – the very idea and experience of property, the various worldly boundaries that exist between people as (political, legal, psychosocial, educational) entities. This put- ting at stake, this bringing to our attention, ontologically exceeds the empirical cause that we find so harmful (without dispensing with it of course), fully drawing its objective, exterior appearance into a shared – even if contrasting – experience

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[15] For Bollnow, whose 'theory of *Stimmungen*' explicitly unfolds as a taxonomic expansion of Heidegger's early understanding of the concept, *Stimmung* is the "basic condition of human, subjective existence", that which, in an "indeterminate" way "underlies" and "colours" all "the intentional acts of our mental life", amongst which most prominently our emotions. If the difference with Henry's position seems but a matter of nuance, we still hold that this nuance— of subjective, individual existence on the one hand, and subjectifying, transindividual life on the other hand—indeed makes all the difference.

[16] That is: Henry seems to contrast the 'individual', as a static subject that is given through an a priori constituted consciousness and intentionality, with the 'personal', understood in a Christian sense, as an *incarnate* subject that is constantly given to itself *anew* while passing through a transcendentally impersonal Life.

of the pathic life that *causes* the cause to appear in the first place (cf. Welten 2009, p. 278). The emotion's intelligence therefore is more collective and relational: not the individual jealousy is of any real interest, but rather the *question* it raises with regard to a certain status-quo of property, equality and value. It is through this ontological question, one might say with Henry, that the jealousy becomes incarnate, becomes lived experience, in one particular person (cf. Henry 2000, pp. 47–48).

We suggest to think of education here as a non-worldly context – in the Henryan sense of a dynamic field of non-disciplined, non-intentionalized life-forces – where emotional intelligence can be whole-heartedly experimented with. As such EI might truly become a collective practice of dealing with questions that arise – implicitly or explicitly – in our lived experience (within and without the pedagogical context); and thereby also a practice of giving *new shape* to these questions and the experiences they in turn call forth. To be sure: this is in no way restricted to 'negative' emotions like jealousy, anger, sadness or fear.[17] A positive emotion, like joy, may just as well reveal an ontological dynamic with far-reaching consequences. Think of how disturbing a child can be that is not able to contain its euphoria when having managed to solve a (hitherto) difficult math problem, setting off a whole chain reaction of giggles and other affective responses (Vlieghe 2014b). Again, the emotional intelligence in this situation can never refer solely to either the teacher, who could subsequently 'manage' the situation in very different ways or the individual children, who should learn to recognize, categorize and control their budding emotions. Instead, following the incarnational logic of Henry's vitalist phenomenology, an emotionally intelligent educational response is constituted as a collective endeavour immanent to the lived situation or practice affected by a certain (positive or negative) emotion (cf. Henry 2000, p. 36, 1965, p. 134 ff.).[18] In the case of the joyous child, one could say that what is at stake in the emotion is everything but a simple expression of individual self-gratification or 'immoral' disregard for the atmosphere of quiet concentration in the class. Much more interesting, it seems to us, is the dynamic process of the emotion's subjective incarnation, its becoming-flesh in the context of a collective, lived (and principally *amoral*) engagement with mathematics. That is what the child's joy – or perhaps another child's frustration – calls our attention for, and which asks for an emotionally intelligent answer in education: how can we keep

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[17] The latter is treated at great length by Henry, who revisits, with a phenomenological perspective, the Kierkegaardian framing of this notion (cf. Henry 2000, pp. 37–38).

[18] This also calls for a comparison of Henry's understanding of 'empathy' with that of Edith Stein, another phenomenologist whom he rarely mentions but who greatly stressed the pathic dimension of human meaning (Manganaro 2017).

relating to (the learning of) mathematics in an affectively interesting way, instead of taking it for granted as a worldly, horizonal *given*, that is 'out there'?

4   Conclusion: Education, a Shared Adventure of Emotional Intelligence

Let us, at last, elaborate this novel concept of emotional intelligence on the basis of a more complex autobiographical example, perhaps also to compensate for Henry's lack of attention to the practical consequences of his theory of life and of affective experience in particular. Partly the example is meant as an 'illustration' of some aspects of Henry's phenomenology that we already find interesting for coining an educational concept of emotional intelligence. However, retrospectively, we might also say – to speak with Günther Buck (2019) – that it provides a concrete experience that differentiates and resituates that concept and our prior understanding of it, thereby allowing it to extend the range of its pedagogical use.

At the end of every year, in the days after the final exams, which no longer serve any evident purpose but still require the pupils' attendance, some Flemish secondary schools participate in an event organized by Amnesty International, called "Write for Rights", which involved the copying of letters that call attention for pending human rights issues.[19] Whereas generally, it takes little trouble to spark students' enthusiasm for such a relatively easygoing event with high moral 'reward', we recall an incident with a student who was vigorously opposed to the whole initiative and who indignantly refused every cooperation. Most of the teachers were baffled by his reaction, especially since this student was not one of the kind that kept aloof because he 'did not care' and preferred to remain idle (in the knowledge that, in terms of courses and grades, nothing depended upon his effort anymore). They failed to appreciate his criticisms of 'such a good cause', which were simply dismissed as insensitivity, and furthermore concentrated their attention on the majority of students, that was completely drawn into the letter-writing's frenzied activism, fueled by quasi-heroic moral sentiments. In terms of EI: if the dissenting student's reaction was judged to attest of a lack of emotional intelligence, of proper 'empathy with the cause' (such as exhibited by the other students), the same became true of this judgment itself, as it failed to resort the intended effect ('managing' the student's unruly behaviour).

When considering this apparent conundrum now, and in the light of our previous analysis, we are tempted to say that what was problematic (instead of

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[19] Cf. https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/.

wrong) about the situation (not merely the student's behaviour or the teachers' response) was the whole set-up of the project and the way it affectively shaped an experience of the principal matter at stake, namely the issue of human rights. On the one hand, what may have bothered the recalcitrant student was the suddenness and apparent gratuity with which he was called upon to show compassion and moral zeal. Held after the final examinations, students had been given hardly any substantial information about the project, no preparatory discussions had been organized, nor had anyone considered the possibility of coming up with something more creative and personal than endlessly copying the same template letter. On the other hand, the student's resistance was also clearly directed against the moral enthusiasm that most teachers and many of his fellow pupils exhibited. This probably affected him as having at least a tinge of perverse self-righteousness and prideful joy, which he *felt* was incompatible with the 'objective' value of the participants' efforts and the project itself (cf. Henry 2000, pp. 216–217). In other words, on both sides of the strife, an objectifying tendency was at work in the emotional intelligences at play, one that put different a priori 'objective' forms of appearance at odds with each other: the socialized moral emotions anticipated by the project's set-up, *versus* the individual, resentful negation of the critical student.

Still, apart from whatever motifs, intentions and 'worldly' emotions (in the Henryan sense) were at play here, the most interesting question that announced itself in the student's discontent and the correlate shock of his teachers – and which all failed to discern and/or answer, in one way or another – did indeed not regard the merit of the project as such, but the lived experience of its cause, i.e. human rights and the values they involve. To what extent did the project, in its current format, actually harbour a (collective) experience of how human rights may affect our lives and the world we share? Therefore it makes little sense priding the *parrhesiast* student on having given – against the grain of some crowd's ignorant hysteria – the 'most' emotionally intelligent response (which he did not, as his frustration ended up turning against particular, individual objects). His individual reaction simply revisited the question what was meant to be the shared concern in all of this – learning about human rights and their moral value – and why this concern was shaped in such a way that its relation to lived experience became emotionally unintelligible for one student, who in turn made himself emotionally unintelligible for others.[20] Hence, beyond a juxtaposition of individual standpoints and emotional states, the real emotional intelligence here was the one immanent

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[20] As a disclaimer, it might be good to stress that most of our attention in this example has gone to the one dissenting student, on account of his 'extraordinary' reaction. A Henryan perspective, however, need not preclude the equal validity of the other students' and teachers'

to the situation as a whole (Vlieghe 2014b), to the dynamic ontogenesis of its lived educational experience. Neither strictly positive or negative, it manifested a highly nuanced spectrum of various emotional tonalities, that *all* pertained to the (lack of) becoming of a *common* matter.

In conclusion, then, we think it is fair to say that, following the "affective turn" (Zembylas 2016) of Michel Henry's phenomenology, emotions can no longer be seen primarily as qualities of the subject's relation to an object, appearing in a world, a noetic field, an apriori horizon that objectively, exteriorly, conditions all appearance and correlating experience. Henry's *renversement* of traditional phenomenology is grounded in the basic experience that every possible horizon of appearance, every world *appears itself* immanently in what he calls our 'pathic flesh', the self-affectivity of a lived experience that overflows the individual existence. This, we propose, is what emotions, taken seriously, are all about – and what affords emotional intelligence an absolute educational preponderance. Against the temptation of merely transcending our experience in the manipulation of an exterior world, including the manageable 'emotional objects' that EI is often associated with, genuine emotion manifests a subjectivity that, beyond opposing objectivity, moves itself along within a transcendental life that never ceases to transform both us and the world(s) we experience. Not only does this emotion, which may be instantiated in any particular emotional tonality, challenge the solid status-quo or identity of our worlds into reinventing and reinvigorating itself; it also implies that emotion always entails a *common* concern, a shared intelligence, through the 'archi-pathos' of a life that ontogenetically connects all our experiences (cf. Henry 2000, p. 347). As the final example has shown, emotional intelligence thus allows education not simply to correct and discipline emotional responses, but to collectively answer to the concerns raised by particular emotions, and to bridge the gap that always threatens to divide world from life. Emotional intelligence, far from being an accessible skill, enables educational subjects – in a different sense, both educator and educand – to affirm their lived experiences of the world, in such a way as to co-constitute the conditions, the horizons, that keep that world *livable*, worthwhile experiencing.

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emotional responses, since these, just as well, *could not* (ontologically speaking) simply have coincided with their generalized objective appearances.

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