The Place for Philosophy in Teacher Formation: understanding, morality, and beauty.

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Abstract

Teachers daily face situations with implicit fundamental questions pertaining to truth and of insight, to the moral dimension of actions, and to connectedness and love of one's (civic and physical) environment. Whether conscious of it or not, teachers have implicit operational views on the nature of knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics. There is also, unfortunately, little doubt that all too many non-philosophers tend to undervalue, if not downright negate, the intrinsic importance of philosophy as well as its instrumental role in bringing to light our own developing sense what has traditionally been considered under the rubric of 'the True, the Good, and the Beautiful', of wonder and understanding, desire and morality, and love and beauty. Unless the teacher develops a reflective understanding of their own epistemological, ethical and aesthetic views, their judgement and consequent decisions leading to action remain diminished.

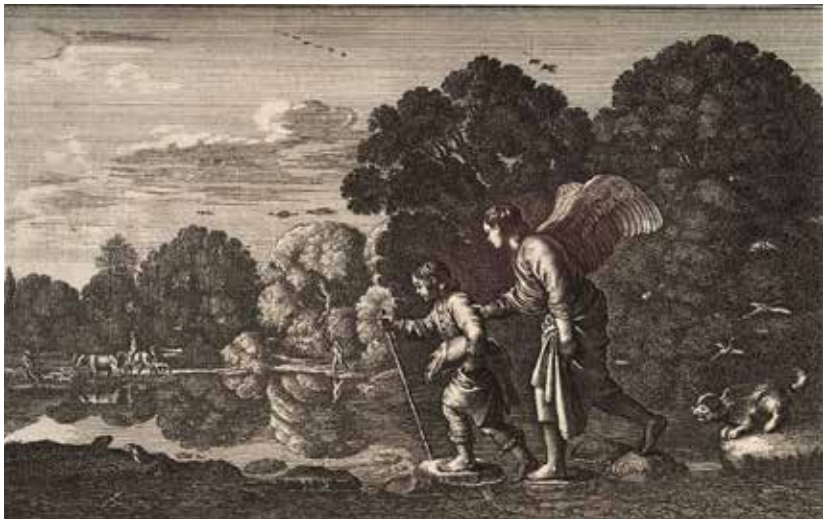
I first make preliminary reflections on the practical role for philosophy highlighting the importance of insights into epistemology, ethics and aesthetic value. The discussion is framed by, and arises out of, considerations taken predominantly from the works of - mentioned in historical order - Rudolf Steiner, Bernard Lonergan, and John Deely. The discussion is developed in a manner that implicitly differentiates between the levels of experience, of object-formation, of judgement, and of ethical action. Though my paper is framed by the works of the aforementioned philosophers, it should be noted that my task is not to elucidate their respective works, but instead to allow aspects of their formidable contributions to play out through the lenses of my own experience as I personally strive towards a deeper understanding of essential characteristics in teacher formation.

I am mindful of the central tenets announced in the 'call to papers' for this conference[1], and though principally addressing the role of philosophy in *teacher* formation, it could easily be propounded that, *mutatis mutandis*, the same considerations apply to a person's unfolding development and human formation in general. This central quest is of course not new: we may consider Plato's endeavours in the *Republic* from a perspective reflecting the notion of human formation; similarly, and perhaps more clearly expressed is Aristotle's important concept of eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία), aptly translatable as 'good human flourishing'; or again in a similar vein, this same quest as addressed by Schiller who, just prior to the turn into the 19th century, wrote a series of letters to the Danish Prince, Friedrich Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenbor, which when re-written and published, became his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man.* Each of these works, in some way or other, addresses elements pertinent to human formation.

1 With the title 'Civil Society and Human Formation: Philosophy's Role in a Renewed Understanding of the Meaning of Education', and part of the description inclusive of the following: 'Education has been widely criticised as being too narrowly focused on skills, capacities and the transference of knowledge that can be used in the workplace. […] What is missing is any conception of education as a formation of human persons so that they develop the virtues and values that they need to not only lead successful lives, but also be responsible members of their communities, working for the common good and acting to transform them into just societies […]. The central question with which the conference will be concerned is the role of philosophy in fostering a renewed understanding of education as the formation of persons and of civil society'.

SETTING THE SCENE

> I, Tobit, have walked in paths of truth and in good works all the days of my life. I have given much in alms to my brothers and country-folk, exiled like me (Tobit 1: 3).



The nature of both informal and especially *formal* education is such that it necessitates questions pertinent to how one engenders a healthy and rich development of the human person, out of which, though incidentally, civic forms inevitably consequentially unfurl. This striving towards human flourishing, I would suggest, is also of relevance to and for the teacher, and furthermore *of* the teacher's own formation.

Although I shall not pursue in this paper discussion of specific requisite knowledge and essential skills pertaining to particular disciplines, they are aspects that are also necessary and an hopefully obvious part of teacher formation: these skills and knowledge need to be adequately developed as well as mastered by the teacher. I mention this at least preliminarily in order that such consideration be neither inadvertently overlooked nor presumed to be without importance. These discipline-based (and transdiscipline-based) skills and knowledge needed by the teacher will inevitably vary according to the (students') age-group with which the teacher will be engaged, and in each case will assume

a core to be enucleated in a manner pertinent to both the discipline in question and to the students and their age-specific developmental phase with which the teacher is engaged. Further, without a *love* for both the discipline under consideration as well as for the human person under the teacher's *pedagogical* care, diminishment of insight and understanding, and a persisting restriction to one's (both the teacher's as well as the student's) horizon[2], ensues. This 'love' is something to which I shall return, for it is a love out of which emerges a pure desire leading towards insight; it is a love that arises out of what is initially and purely an inner blossoming of the student's awed participation, wonder and curiosity - or to what Lonergan in a different context refers to and expresses as 'the pure desire to know'[3].

So here, we have right at the outset a recognition that the teacher has an obvious 'what' that is to be taught, in a context that is mindful of the 'how' and 'when', and the all-important 'to whom'. In teacher formation focus has to further include *'by whom'*, i.e., the teacher him or herself *as teacher*. As mentioned earlier, I leave aside considerations relating to adequate acquisition and development of discipline-specific knowledge and skills, for irrespective as to what constitutes these, in-the-main they fall beyond the scope of this paper - though through the development of one's knowledge or skills, through a conversion[4], through a new way of beholding the world, through an altered horizon, or indeed even a new insight, follows consequences pertinent to this paper.

I am not unmindful of the complexities with which the teacher[5] is daily faced. These complexities include the constraint of inevitable timetables; media, familial, local and world events weaving concerns

2 For the concept of 'horizon', Cf especially Lonergan (1957: Ch. 10 § 1).

3 Lonergan (1957: 87).

4 See further for elucidation of this concept.

5 in what follows I limit myself to the teacher as involved in school education.

upon the unruminated experience of both teacher and student; ergonomic furniture design, weather, peripheral sound, architecture, warmth, light, and clothing inflecting mood and impeding movement. There are further complexities surrounding continuities in discipline enucleation; in social interaction; in skill development. All these in the context of daily fluctuating clarity in thinking, affective responses, and experiences with regard to personal health, dietary intake and hygiene.

The incredible task with which the teacher is engaged is not one of simple mechanistic formulation, but rather an engagement requiring of the teacher an inner fortitude to appropriately draw from the wisdom of an inner life rich in experience, a developed understanding for appropriate and just action, and an horizon reconfigured through what Lonergan terms 'conversions'[6] **that limitlessly opens and shifts the ground and capacity for decisions**. All this undertaken in moment-to-moment individualised communicative responses to experiences that are apprehended but inevitably only ever partially understood.

To even consider and understand the above involves an insight into the implicit hierarchical ordering of a series of insights[7]. Those 'individualised communicative responses to experiences that are apprehended but inevitably only ever partially understood' operate semiotically within a woven and implicit *Weltanschauung* – the unified inner and outer world of structured experience that itself unifies

6 Cf Lonergan (1971: Ch. 10).

7 or perhaps more aptly stated as a recursive multiplicative process leading to insights upon other insights held as first-order experience.

one's *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*[8] – rather than in isolation from higher viewpoints contained therein: in other words the teacher is daily faced with experiences that, in the simple act of being experienced, assume a particular shading in their metamorphosis to the meaningfully grasped; and in the communicated response, the teacher births afresh particular concepts, principles and values having their origin rooted within their *Weltanschauung*, indiscernibly *doctrinally* mediated[9]. The 'meaningfully grasped' is not, to be sure, restricted to those daily metamorphosed experiences, but equally applies to the content of the various disciplines and knowledge-areas of the teacher's *Weltanschauung*. These together and in turn form and continuously shape, within a textured altering horizon, the very *Weltanschauung* out of which experience is in the first instance transformed to the meaningfully grasped. In each instance, the world as experienced - all-at-once or 'suddenly' - begins to make sense anew: it is semiosed as a unified whole.

It therefore becomes crucially important that the part of teacher formation, that part for which tertiary education appropriates responsibility, be bold in not only making explicit how differing doctrinal tenets have specific ramifications for understanding the nature of the developing human person; but moreover what are, in at least broad paint strokes, some of the otherwise implicit views held. In other words there is a need to explicitly *elucidate* aspects of the *Weltanschauung* out of which specific teacher formation takes place, for

8 Cf Deely (2002: 126ff). It should also be noted that I here use the more familiar '*Weltanschauung*' in what I understand Deely to refer to as *Lebenswelt*, cf Deely (*ibid*. and 2001), amongst other places. On the terms '*Innenwelt*' and '*Umwelt*', Deely (2007: 184) succinctly describes these in the following manner: 'The Innenwelt is, in translation, the sum total and complex of intentional being maintained within the soul as forms within form; while the Umwelt, in translation, is the sum total of the world as experienced and known, an irreducible web of relations begat by the actions of signs in presenting to us an irreducible admixture of *entia realia* and *entia rationis* objectively presented and interpreted according to the kind of animal we are'.

9 I.e., mediated through what Lonergan terms the sixth 'functional specialty'. Cf Lonergan (1971: Ch. 12).

the future teacher, operating out of an implicit view of, for example, the child as an embodied spiritual being, has communicative responses distinct to, and from, those that would arise if instead was held an implicit view of the child as mere physiological living organism in which expands or reconfigures programmable even if somewhat epiphenomenal consciousness.

Here, then, is already an instance of the importance of philosophy's role in teacher formation. Implications include that an acquisition of epistemological notions are vital, and quite distinct to notions that arise from considerations of cognitive neuro-physiological or psychological processes (that of course have their merit). Indeed, it may not be required of the fish that it becomes reflectively conscious of the waters in which it lives and moves, but the same cannot be said of the developing human person, for the developed, cultured, caring, and social human creature is awake to its own formation, beginning with an awareness of its *telos*; its striving direction. The teacher needs to be able to sense into, and come to adequate insights, into the very fluid in which not only his or her understanding, but also the student's thinking, feeling, and actions are immersed.

The role of philosophy is nonetheless limited[10], even if central and essential, in teacher formation. **Philosophy's domain covers at least that of developing an *understanding* that encompasses those fields** that one's *Weltanschauung* informs and is in turn formed by: basically those fields **that address questions of human insight and sapience; of the moral dimension of decisions and actions; and of aesthetic sensibilities and notions of freedom**. Notice that these are preceded by '*developing* an understanding', for it is not the desirable task of philosophical education to replace one worldview by another – this view

10 'limited' in the sense that it is only part of the formation necessary for the teacher.

presented and constructed through, for example, already formed epistemological, ethical, or aesthetic frameworks – but rather to permit and encourage a growing openness towards, appreciation of, and sense for, the importance in striving to understand the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Human formation needs admittedly to take the additional step of putting into practice - through a call to be attentive, to be intelligent, reasonable and responsible - the beautiful, good, and true, thereby opening the teacher to authenticity. Without philosophical notions, the practice may be (though heedlessly) highly effective, it would remain for the teacher haphazard and without the benefit of effective understanding.

Allow me, then, to further consider and elaborate what I take to be these three most important philosophical considerations (to be included in especially university-focussed teacher formation): knowledge and truth; morality and the good; and aesthetics and love. And despite what may at first appear a 'fourth' obvious inclusion, I do include *philosophy* of education, in part due to considering education as first and foremost human formation[11], as well as for one simple practical reason: in the philosophy of education's quest for simplicity in either its communication or apprehension, the fallacy of *pars pro toto* is all too readily committed, bequeathing to education an unwarranted limited mission, with a result that education is all too often misconstrued and conceived to be 'really about' what is no more than a one-dimensional fragment abducted from the multifaceted and contextually complex

11 Steiner speaks of education in a manner that describes formation of the healthy human person that enables them with the requisite development and self-sense to effectively meet their destiny. The notion of 'destiny' has importance in much of Steiner's anthroposophical corpus, as can easily be evidenced by entering a search for 'destiny' on the Rudolf Steiner Archive (www.rsarchive.org). The notion has similarities to what, in the Christian tradition, is more commonly referred to as *providence*, to one's 'calling', and to what Derrida (2002) described as 'l'avenir' as distinct to the 'future', with the former having a quality of that which comes to meet us, rather than what we build towards.

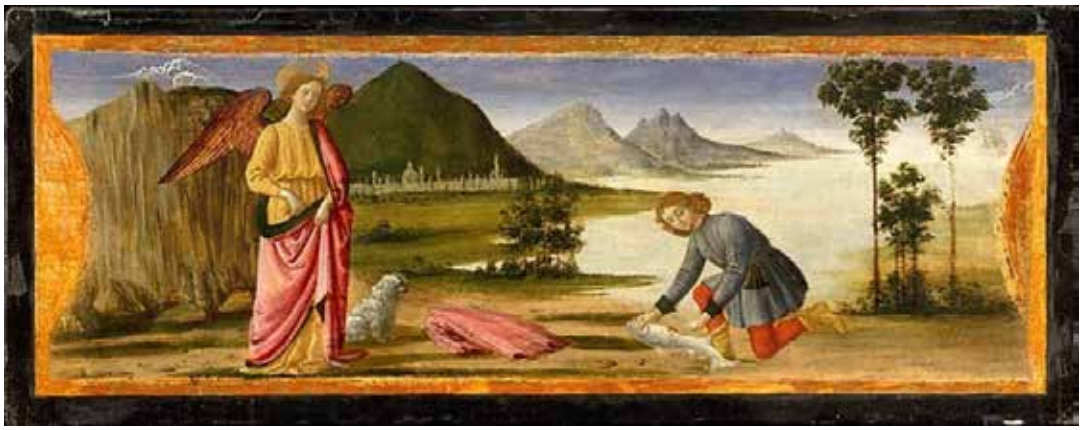
practice of healthy human formation. Better to leave this important aspect of philosophy[12] for future professional development that will benefit and deepen the ongoing formation of the maturing teacher.

Those transcendentals earlier mentioned of *the true, the good, and the beautiful* lead us to reflections on notions of wonder, of desire, of love pertinent to, in turn, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, to which we now turn.

12 It should here perhaps be noted that Deely (2010: 83-84) makes an important educational philosophical note on the need to develop a cenoscopic understanding (ie, semiotics) within university education that is able to unite and underpin an understanding of the specialisation inherent in the various specialised ideoscopic disciplines.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND UNDERSTANDING: THE TRUE

> The boy mastered the fish and pulled it onto the bank. The angel said, 'Cut it open; take out gall, heart and liver' (Tobit 6: 5).



Engaging, living, and participating in the world within a specific though inevitably (if you pardon the seeming contradiction) loose yet solidly comprehensive *Weltanschauung*, everything the teacher and each of his or her students sees, touches, thinks, considers, does, feels, is shaped and remains within its existing limiting horizon - a horizon within which reside possibilities for questions, for enquiry, for the manner in which the world is apprehended. To begin to understand the very process of understanding, of knowledge, of object-formation[13], is a task that is not only an essential characteristic for the teacher, but also something that fundamentally guides further insight into insights. For the philosopher, the temptation is to be seduced by intentions to unveil the breadth and wealth available within the philosophical tradition: in contrast, what is needed are simply the 'core' elements of reflective experience, from which is formed and out of which arises the rich and prodigious epistemological corpus. The endeavour is not for a survey of philosophical theories, but rather and more solidly those

13 This concept of 'object-formation' as semiosically bringing the world to order in consciousness is one of the most profound contributions to philosophy that Deely addresses through his vast corpus. The world as *known* is perfused with signs as objects, intimately connected to the notion of truth. On this connection, Deely (2009: 66) writes that 'the notion of truth supposes a grasp of the difference between objects and things'.

characteristics that are present in the process of knowledge formation that unveil themselves through reflection.

If I can be so bold as to suggest the nature of those essential epistemological characteristics: it is no more, in essence, than that **the knowledge process, shared with all sentient life, is no other than 'sign-making' of both external and internal world[14], that itself includes *thinking activity* that tethers, welds, bonds, merges and unites *concept* to *percept*. The world unveils itself, to someone, within the horizon of his or her *Weltanschauung*, mediated through the conditioning limitations of cognitive and cathectic capacities and of sensory experience**. Whether this rather simple idea is mediated *via* the otherwise quite sophisticated and relatively challenging works of, for example, John Deely, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan, Jacques Maritain, or Rudolf Steiner[15] (amongst others), this first philosophical task, resting as an epistemological foundation, points to and eases the conscious effort required in breaching the rampart of the teacher's own horizon, a horizon that, in normal everyday circumstance, effectively provides conceptual ontological security, psychological protection and epistemological shelter.

In my personal experience working with teachers[16] who have

14 Cf Deely (2009: 143) where he also specifically quotes a remark made by Jacques Maritain 'the profundity of which [Deely] is not even sure [Maritain] realised at the time': 'All animals make use of signs. But only human animals know *that there are* signs'. In mentioning that 'all animals make use of signs', an additional note could be made that the world as objectified is necessarily species-specific.

15 It should be noted that I am not suggesting that the manner in which I have characterised in an oversimplified manner the 'knowledge process' is found or reflects directly each of philosophers mentioned. Nonetheless, I would suggest that my description stands, even if with qualifications that need to be vastly expanded to give a full account of epistemology (which is, as Deely (1982: 83) describes, absorbed with semiotics).

16 In my situation, the context is working with teachers who themselves either work in Steiner-Waldorf schools or who wish to familiarise themelves with Steiner's pedagogical views.

limited interest in philosophy, working through some of Steiner's own description and usage of *Vorstellung*[17], which he describes as an instantiated individualised concept, highlights the semiosis that meaningfully coalesces sensations to cognisable objective form. This can, in practice, easily be brought to a reflective and therefore higher-level attention through the introduction of unusual items unlikely to have been part of the teacher's previous experience (for example a simple unusually shaped torch may serve the purpose), whereby it becomes increasingly obvious that the concepts to which one has access (limited by one's social conditions and cultural matrix within which stands personal biographical experiences) and from which one 'sees' the item in question, are used heuristically to 'organise' the otherwise meaningless percepts. In other words, from percept and concept semiosically, and therefore to *someone*, emerges the immediacy of the object, of the unifying *Vorstellung*.

Though Steiner's philosophical and pedagogical writings are easily adaptable to differing milieux, within the context of Waldorf education, using his works as primary reference makes sense. Yet similar essential foundational epistemological considerations obviously arise from the works of others. For example, Deely's varied writings in semiotics that especially address the notion of *object* as semiosically forged equally, or perhaps even more aptly - given its contemporary status - provide impetus for appropriate philosophical engagement and reflection.

The points raised above lead towards what Lonergan terms conversion[18]:

> By conversion is understood a transformation of the subject and his world. […] It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that

17 Cf, for example, Steiner (1894: Ch. 5 *et. al.*).

18 Lonergan (1971: 130).

> fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments on all levels and in all departments of human living.
>
> Conversion is existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate. But it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many, and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation and to help one another in working out the implications and fulfilling the promise of their new life.

This notion of unification of the world – ie, the manner in which objects are semiosically 'formed' and re-formed at ever-higher levels, or the 'structure' of the *Vorstellung*, the conversion experienced – this notion, to re-open my sentence, is in its various guises something which the teacher, even one supposedly dispassionate with regards philosophy, may not only find instrumentally useful, but also philosophically engaging. It is useful for the very reason that in each and every moment in which the teacher is either directly engaged, or indeed prepares for future or reflects on past engagements with the student, is an instance in which not only the teacher (whose own self-reflection may be at that instant understandably lacking), but also the student (to whom attention will inevitably be given) is profusely participating in epistemological semiosic engagement. And that furthermore the teacher is, in this epistemic pedagogical engagement, often striving for ways in which to intrude the reality of the richly variegated and complex pesky messiness of the world into experience in order to reconfigure the currently unquestioned caricatured simplified notions held by the student.

Perhaps the notion of the sign as provided through semiotic enquiry, a notion more central and important than we have given it occasion in teacher formation, is therefore highly instructive. Steiner, though perhaps expressing it by replacing 'sign' with '*Vorstellung*', would certainly agree with Deely's statement that 'a sign is what every object

presupposes'[19].

In any case, what I have striven to have indicated thus far is threefold: in the first instance, that the teacher is faced with the student's own *object-formation* in their individual process of knowledge acquisition and grasping of insight; in the second, that the teacher is normally genuinely interested in this aspect of the life of the student; and thirdly, that this epistemological process and its elements needs to be made conscious in order to better assist the teacher in meeting the student's epistemological growth. And in each of these, the explicit role played by philosophy is vital.

Needless to say, additional benefits include that knowledge is understood to itself be multifaceted and open, rather than having the fixity and closure it may otherwise be considered to have in, for example and especially, the narrowed and specialised ideoscopic fields of enquiry. It becomes important, moreover, to weigh the *merits* of viewpoint, to develop *discernment* to the very manner in which the world is conceived, rather than to adopt what may otherwise be considered as 'merely differing views'. Indeed, this increasing discernment, this effective *valuing*, is precisely something that appears to have unfortunately progressively diminished in current teacher formation, reflecting what emeritus Pope Benedict XVI earlier described as oppressive characteristics of relativism[20]. In valuing education, valuing teacher formation, indeed valuing the human person, an increased insight into insight, into object-formation, into understanding, is an orientation that necessarily increases the desire

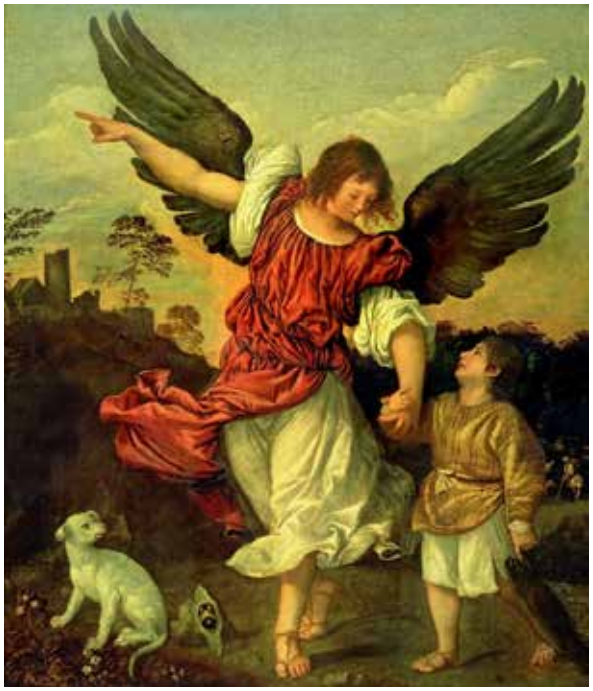
19 Deely (2008), whose one-act play 'A Sign is What?', from which the quote is taken, is useful material towards such reflective territory in teacher formation.

20 '[...] dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain [...]' as stated in a Homily as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (2005). It should be noted that this point is made and repeated in various ways in, for example, Ratzinger (2003) and in Ratzinger and Peta (2007). In this, Ratzinger abides by similar pronouncements made in 1952 by one of his predecessors, Pope Pius XII, quoted in von Hildebrand (*et.al.*) (1966: 86).

for an inner self-knowledge - that which the ancient Greeks praised as *gnothi seauton* (γνῶθι σεαυτόν) - that itself leads to heightened discernment, to heightened *valuing* of that which we daily face, have, carry, and with which we engage. To that we now turn, in its guise as *valuing* what used to be more commonly referred to as the Good.

MORALITY AND WISDOM: THE GOOD

> And he showed him the way to the house of Raguel, whom they found sitting beside his courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he replied, 'Welcome and greetings, brothers' (Tobit 7: 1).



The teacher is faced not only with the question of understanding in the student, but also with the latter's interactions, with his or her social weavings, with his or her actions - whether or not intentional - in the cultural matrix and physical world. It is to these upon which we now reflect. They provide one of the most challenging dynamics that the teacher faces, as evidenced by current verbal pervasiveness of school-'bullying' and the heightened concern of many parents for the social engagements of peers with their own child[21].

In each instance, however, what is at play arises directly out of the student's own implicit *Weltanschauung* operating at a level that prefigures reflection or, indeed, conscious understanding. Yet it is to

21 This does not negate that there are certain engagements within the social and physical world that need to be directly addressed and altered. One can consider, for example, various aggressively destructive actions.

this level that the teacher needs to build inner experience, through which the student may have a moral conversion, a reconfiguration as their own inner wealth broadens their implicit horizon of insight and understanding. Fortunately, we have, as human beings, the capacity to expand our experiences not only through socio-physical engagement and external mimicry to which many animals may similarly participate, but importantly through circuitous as well as direct activities of creative play, games and play-acting, as well as through the incredibly rich metaphoric, symbolic and allegorical experiences opened through the world of story - whether these be as ancient myths, gospel parables, archetypal sagas, legends, histories, or recollected or created analogical narratives of myriad kinds. **Myth, parables and its cognates provide heuristic vicarious cognitive and cathectic experience that guides not only inquiry, but the possibility for effective intellectual, moral and religious conversion**.

The very words, actions, dress, responses, stance, manners, inflections and habits of the teacher that are displayed or communicated to the student have, in addition, a direct impact on the developing *character* of the student. That the teacher can feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task is certainly normal and healthy, yet part of formation is for the teacher to be able to simultaneously acknowledge this revered authoritative influence whilst at the same time reflect that a working professional humility is a *striving* in a direction that provides part of the very fabric in which the student gains insight, judges, and acts.

Through inevitable mimicry, the teacher may initially thus develop habit formation in the student that results, through practice,

in characterological dispositions[22] in both teacher and student. Through engagement, particular insights are acquired and named: perseverance; care; honour; truthfulness; loyalty; justice; hope; wisdom; self-discipline; tolerance; friendliness; contentment; fervency; studiousness; gracefulness; industriousness; loving-kindness; humility; courage; decorum; dedication; congeniality; deference; charity; trust; gentleness; clarity; reflectiveness; authenticity; uprightness; valiance; empathy; fortitude; benevolence; attentiveness; adaptability; openness; faith; forgiveness; equanimity; temperance; devoutness; reverence; curiosity; amongst others[23]. These are of course easily recognisable as amongst the innumerable virtues, culturally hierarchised, and doctrinally represented and considered within a *Weltanschauung* that mediates, determines, conditions and prioritises action[24].

It is of significant intent that in the list of virtues began above, I do not mention love, for love, I would suggest, is not in itself a virtue, but rather a coronating grace that on the one hand completes and fulfills, as well as on the other grounds and underpins, each and all of them.

That the student develops virtuous characterological dispositions is more easily achieved through conscious understanding into the nature of virtue on the part of the teacher. The important role for philosophy should here be apparent: for to reflect on the nature

22 Cf Steiner (1894: Ch. 9), in which Steiner mentions that 'the characterological disposition is formed by the more or less permanent content of our subjective life, that is, by the content of our [*Vorstellung*] and feelings. Whether a [*Vorstellung*] which enters my mind at this moment stimulates me to an act of will or not, depends on how it relates itself to the content of all my other [*Vorstellung*] and also to my idiosyncrasies of feeling'.

23 I do not list *love*, as love I take to be as itself more than a virtue: something that underpins and gives rise to the living pulse and essential characteristic core of each of the virtues.

24 It is interesting to note some developments in semioethics that capture perspectives relevent to this and similar points raised below. Cf especially Petrilli (2010) and Deely (2010a: 120ff). The ethical endeavour rests, as I trust will be evident, with an appropriate notion of understanding - Cf also Deely (2001: 736 *et al.*).

of virtue is of course a role for philosophy. Through the teacher's philosophical understanding of virtue and developing the capacity for a higher viewpoint arises further insight through reflection on the practice of effective judgement and evolving discernment.

Yet it is not here that philosophy's role ceases, for the development of virtues is necessarily a *practical* development[25], even as one simultaneously insightfully develops an ever deepening understanding of these. What is of deeper philosophical significance to wakeful mindfulness is that, in the human being, each and every act (or its omission) has a moral dimension. It is to this ethical dimension, to a moral conversion and refigurement of the moral field of their *Weltanschauung*, to the direct concept of the Good, that the teacher progressively strives. In this is heightened the possibility to effectively support the healthy moral development of the student. There is here again, of course, a need to understand the differing capacities and needs of human developmental phases as it unfolds through infancy, childhood, and adolescence, eventually maturing towards adulthood.

It is in the development of understanding these notions and ethical judgements that philosophy is required. What is called for is more than the already arduous task of developing virtuous characterological dispositions; or the even more difficult task of being mindful to the consequences of one's speech, thoughts, feelings and actions; it is choosing, with the *discerning decision-making function of judgement* that

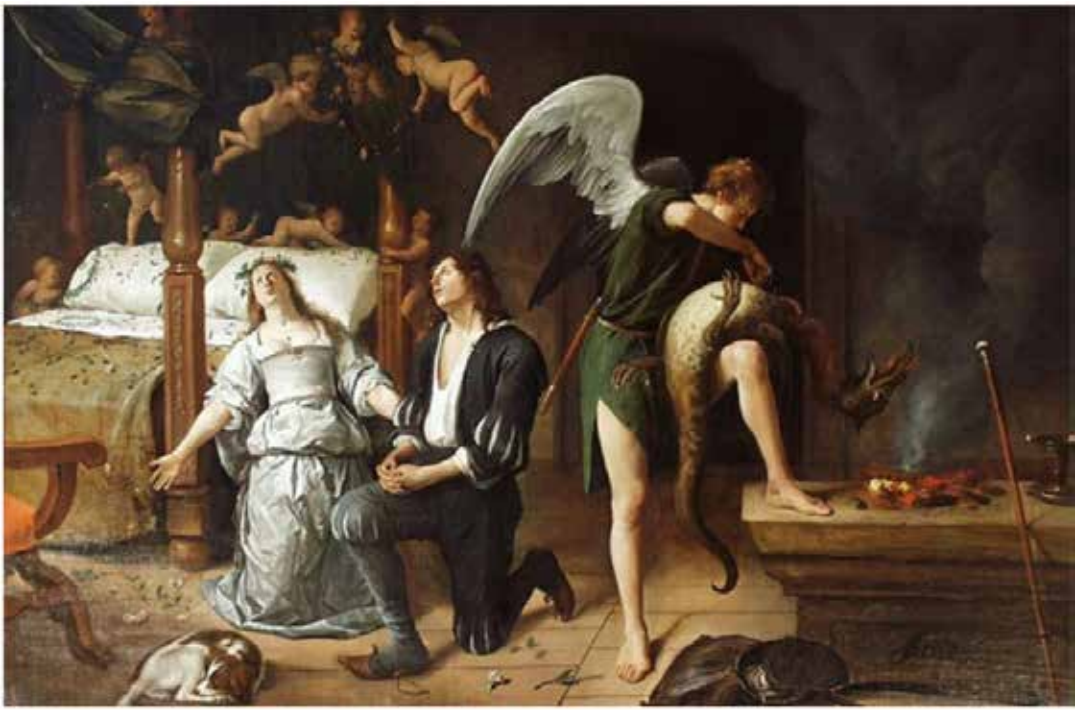
25 What Aquinas refers to as 'connaturality', about which Maritain (1951) writes: 'In this knowledge through union or inclination, connaturality or congeniality, the intellect is at play not alone, but together with affective inclinations and the dispositions of the will, and is guided and directed by them. It is not rational knowledge, knowledge through the conceptual, logical and discursive exercise of Reason. But it is really and genuinely knowledge, though obscure and perhaps incapable of giving account of itself, or of being translated into words. […] For the spiritual man, [St Thomas] says, knows divine things through inclination or connaturality, not only because he has learned them, but, as the Pseudo-Dionysius put it, because he suffers them. As I said at the beginning, knowledge through connaturality plays an immense part in human existence, especially in that knowing of the singular which comes about in everyday life and in our relationship of person to person'.

values and *desires* that which is healthy, the *Good*[26]. The teacher, in striving for the good, is mindful of the young child *imitating* right action; of the expressions of *compassionate feeling* in the child growing towards adolescence; and for *clarity of insight* into the specific situation at hand and its ethical dimension for the adolescent heading towards adulthood.

26 It should be noted that by such ethical judgement is not meant some form of consequentialist 'contextualist' ethics rightly criticised by Pope Pius XII (*op. cit.*) nor situational ethical notions (that in any case usually seem to misunderstand Fletcher's (1966) situation ethics as *method* in ethical decision-making), but rather reflective of Steiner's usage of 'ethical individualism' (Cf Steiner 1894: Ch. 9) and what is beginning to take shape in, for example, what Petrilli (2010) terms 'semioethics'. What is shared between these three forms of ethical understanding is an 'orientation' and, I would add, centrality, of *love*.

AESTHETICS AND LOVE: THE BEAUTIFUL

> And when Tobias heard Raphael say this, when he understood that Sarah was his sister, a kinswoman of his father's family, he fell so deeply in love with her that he could no longer call his heart his own (Tobit 6: 18).



No matter what our physical environment, its impact and effects are mediated through the constructed Umwelt[27] we inhabit, and though beauty will itself be a specific connected engagement with this world, it nonetheless, as with other transcendentals mentioned, in turn transforms the inhabited world. To develop within an environment that leads to greater beauty requires that beauty itself be not only present, but valued beyond measure. Perhaps beauty's philosophical resurrection has been intimated by von Balthasar[28], who writes:

> Beauty is the last thing which the thinking intellect dares to approach, since only it dances as an uncontained splendour around the double constellation of the true and the good and their

27 Deely (2004) discusses not only the importance and central place of Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt* for semiotics in general, but its pioneering role in understanding semiotics and, I would add, understanding understanding itself.

28 Balthasar (1983: 18).

> inseparable relation to one another. […] We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness […]. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name […] can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.

If the teacher is to be mindful of the healthy development of the student, to relinquish the immanent importance and impact of beauty and of love can only have dire consequences. And yet, what of the teacher's own aesthetic formation? There is seemingly an urgency in providing for the teacher a breadth of experience that includes poesic elocution; that includes eurythmic movement; that includes a striving development for *urphenomenal*[29] mimetic artistry. That includes, indeed, reading biblical texts upon which not only is grounded spiritual formation, but also from which have arisen, and continues to arise, profound influence on the craft of writing, theatre, music, architecture and fine art. And yet for too many contemporaries, the treasures held within the womb of the Torah, the books of Wisdom, or the Gospels remain veiled and unread, their covers mistakenly appearing fastened by impregnable seals from which the heart shies.

It is first and foremost in this unquenchable yearning for love that aesthetic development takes place. Therein lies, aside from the direct familial love out of which the infant begins life, a transformative influence on the human person as one who first and foremost embodies, experiences and intentionally seeks love's fulfilment.

To treasure beauty in the world results in us *desiring* to imitate and in turn create beauty in the world; or, as expressed in Matthew:

29 in the sense used by Goethe (1790). This 'urphenomena' has qualities of an archetype in the process of change and becoming.

'Wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too'[30]. It is this aesthetic sense, this force, this drive, the free play-drive (*Spieltrieb*) that Schiller has cause to behold as aesthetic sense that in the striving humanises the human person. As one develops love, whether towards God, towards another person, or within a discipline, this aesthetic *Spieltrieb* moves us towards an aesthetic engagement with the world, whether as physical world, as world of feelings, or as world of thoughts.

Aesthetics is understandably the least addressed and unveiled amongst the three transcendentals mentioned, for it requires that a sensible epistemology, an insight into insight, a semiotic, first be developed, and that an understanding of discernment, of judgement, of ethical action be similarly acquired. It is only then that beauty can begin to be held as superabundant excess in the eyes of philosophical enquiry[31]. And yet, I would claim, **beauty is primary in its human engagement: it is no less than the conscious manifestation of love towards the other; which cascades towards the good that is to be discerned and acted decidedly; that in turn unveils to reflection objectified truth**.

Here again the role of philosophy becomes an evident essential element in teacher formation through, in the first instance, providing the means by which not only to better understand beauty, but value its pedagogical role. It was Schiller who, in his previously mentioned *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, commented on the importance of the aesthetic impulse as a force in its role 'where she emancipates man from fetters'[32]. Steiner, in commending the value of these *Letters*

30 Matthew 6:21

31 Lonergan (1957: 181), in the context of discussions pertinent to what he terms patterns of experience, writes that sensations 'occur in some dynamic context that somehow unifies a manifold of sensed contents and acts of sensing'. This 'dynamic context that somehow unifies' is an apt though partial description of semiosis.

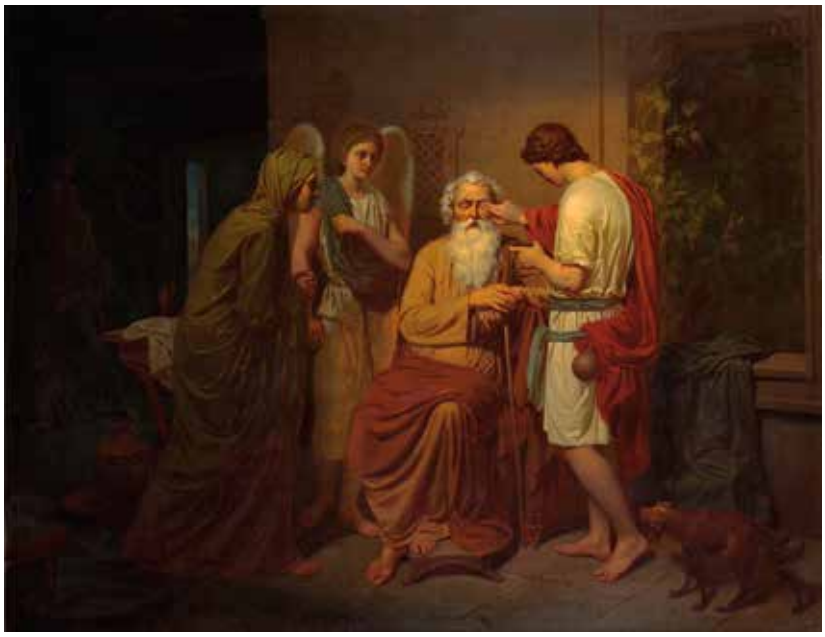
32 Schiller (1795: Letter XXVII).

in teacher formation, comments that Schiller shows that 'in general, people are not free to follow their impulses unless they are engaged artistically, creating and enjoying art or acting like children at play'[33].

It is not only the role of artistic endeavour in both education in general as well as in, consequentially, teacher formation in particular that is of import, but also in developing an *understanding* of aesthetics, in the ability not only to recognise the student's loving aesthetic striving as well as finding appropriate insight into further encouraging the student's loving engagement.

33 Steiner (1921: 250).

THE TASK OF THE TEACHER



In closing a two-week formation for teachers who were about to embark with the work of opening and establishing the first Waldorf school in 1919, Rudolf Steiner[34] spoke of four living principles:

> *first*, teachers must make sure that they […] allow the spirit to flow through their whole being [… and] in the details of their work: how each word is spoken, and how each concept or feeling is developed. Teachers [… must] stand in full consciousness of what they do in the school […];

whereby notions pertaining to what is fundamentally a spiritual, aesthetic and moral basis for education are therein encapsulated, reflecting mindfulness and what Lonergan refers to as self-appropriation[35]. He follows this with:

> *second*, […teachers] should take an interest in the affairs of the

34 Steiner (1919: 180ff).

35 in Lonergan (1971: 95), 'self-appropriation' is described as that which is primarily promoted by intentional consciousness, itself being the basic 'data' proper to philosophy. 'Self-appropriation' certainly also seems to me point to a self-transcendent drive reflective of the love inherent in the *Spieltrieb*.

> world, and should also be able to enter into anything, great or small, that concerns every single child in their care;

wherein epistemological notions are summarily raised; Steiner further continues:

> *third*, the teacher must be one who never compromises in the heart and mind with what is untrue. […] Our teaching will only bear the stamp of truth when we ardently strive for truth in ourselves;

characterising the centrality of virtues and of ethical notions resting upon prior epistemological notions. Finally, Steiner[36] returns to what is essentially a practical application of characteristics pertaining to aesthetics - *Spieltrieb*, the play-drive that is in love, spoken simply thus:

> [*fourth* …] cherish a mood of soul that is fresh and healthy!

In the monastic tradition, the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity have their respective similar role to play for both general human formation as well as, taken figuratively and reflexively, in the development of (respectively) knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics - in addition to the conversion and altered horizon to which these lead. The parallel in teacher formation gives rise to recognition of one's poverty of spirit; of moral listening and hearing; and of the innocent 'child-like' play-drive of the deeply creative act.

Lonergan writes[37]:

> the development of knowledge and the development of moral feeling head to the existential discovery, the discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between

36 In other places, for example in Steiner (1920), he refers to 'three fundamental forces in education': reverence; enthusiasm; and a 'protective gesture for what the child experiences during life'. These have there parallels to what has been discussed above.

37 Lonergan (1971: 38).

> courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an unauthentic one. With that discovery, there emerges in consciousness the significance of personal value and the meaning of personal responsibility.

Philosophy, in its triune fields addressing understanding, morality, and aesthetics, has a role that unveils the essential semiotic structure and mysterious natures of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Without consciously and painstakingly partaking of philosophy's gifts, the teacher may eventually come to these three-fold philosophical insights in his or her maturing years. Having explicit teacher education as part-and-parcel of their preparation, our task is to awaken each forming teacher to philosophical realities implicit in student understanding, moral engagement, and aesthetic creativity, each of which has merit in not only teacher formation, but human formation in general.

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