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Philosophy with Children as and for moral education

With his leer of sympathy he [Mr. Forbes, the teacher] contemplated the small, smiling, incommunicable, deprived morsel of humanity beside him. Curdie's smile was notorious: other teachers called it sly and insolent; it was, they said, the smile of the certified delinquent, of misanthropy in bud, of future criminality, of inevitable degradation. Forbes refused to accept it as such; to him it indicated that this slum child, born so intelligent, was not only acknowledging the contempt and ridicule which his dress and his whole economic situation must incur, but was also making his own assessment of those who contemned and ridiculed. The result was not a vicious snarl, but this haunting and courageous smile. It was possible, it was likely, that the boy would ultimately become debased. Who would not, born and bred in Donaldson's Court, one of the worst slums in one of the worst slum districts in Europe? There rats drank at kitchen sinks, drunkards jabbed at each other's faces with broken bottles, prostitutes carried on their business on stairheads, and policemen dreaded to enter. Most children brought up there were either depraved or protected by impenetrable stupidity (Jenkins, 1989, p.2).

Here, in the beginning of Robin Jenkins' book *The Changeling*, we see various versions of 'the child'. The child, latent with badness, ordained to be worthless. The child with intelligence, stymied by circumstance. The child, as observer, as cynic, looking at the world with wisdom beyond his years; the *puer senex* (Cunningham, 2006). The child both as victim and not. The child, with potential; potential to overcome the context in which he finds himself. And it is the adult, Mr. Forbes, the boy's teacher, who sees this potential, who sees an opportunity to rescue the boy Tom Curdie from his surroundings and to preserve a childhood innocence he thinks is there. Mr. Forbes, in the remainder of the book, sets out to do just that. He seeks to lift Curdie from the sanctuary of what he knows by taking him on holiday with his middle-class family to the countryside where innocence and childhood can blossom. As Forbes sadly discovers, any innocence that was once there cannot be recovered and is ultimately lost in the final and tragic scenes where Curdie, recognising his own lack of childhood innocence or that what awaits him in adulthood is far from desirable, takes extreme action to avoid fulfilling the potential Forbes may have recognised in and for him.

This sense of the child as potential is one that pervades the academic literature in the field of childhood studies and philosophy of childhood (Jenks, 1996; Hallett & Prout, 2003; James & James, 2004; Cook, 2009; Alderson, 2013; Murriss, 2013). Stables (2008) draws our attention to this sense of potential, or becoming, as one of the three ways in which we think about childhood. He suggests we define children biologically, or by their age, such as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), where one is considered a child if under the age of eighteen. The third way in which Stables describes the child is in terms of their becoming, their potential. Drawing on Aristotle, he suggests that childhood is 'a period of constrained preparation' (Stables, 2008, p. 4). This is seen, too, in Matthews' (2006) sense that adult is the end to which the child is driven. This echoes Shamgar-Handelman's (1994) suggestion that childhood is a time for socialisation when children are trained for what they will become. What they will become is often understood to be 'adult'. The child under such a view is seen as 'raw material' (Kennedy, 1992, 2006) that is to be shaped and constructed into the adult considered – by adults – to be desirable.

Compassionate action

If children are seen, as many of Tom Curdie's teachers saw him, as innately bad or corrupt and in need of re-forming, there is nowhere better for such education than the school. The Dionysian view of the child (Jenks, 1996), who is inherently bad, perhaps amoral, needs to be tamed, to use a Scots word, to be brought into line, in order to fit within society. Indeed, Jenkins' novel is called *The Changeling*, a creature belonging to another world, the world of fairies and wicked elves. Tom Curdie, the story's main protagonist is, as many of his teachers see him, a changeling, a wicked imp put in place of a human (child); he is, as they would have it, less than human. It does not serve society well to have aberrant children; children are considered to be a part of society while being apart from society. The often unstated aim is to ensure childhood innocence is protected; it is the view we (adults) wish to have of children. This defence of childhood innocence, argues Cook (2009), is an 'adult priority' (p.9) because we are protecting the memory of our own childhood. To see childhood as other than this destroys our childhood and, in essence, who we are, for the adult travels with the child (Kennedy, 2006).

Children are often considered to be irrational, unpredictable, uncritical and generally lacking in competence (Matthews, 2006; Cassidy, 2007, 2012; Kennedy, 2010; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Cassidy & Mohr Lone, 2020). Tom Curdie in Jenkins' novel is seen as feral. Greta Thunberg, on the other hand, would be considered dangerous in a different way if she were taken more seriously. She challenges the social order by daring to voice the case for action to overcome the climate emergency. She may be invited to speak to global leaders, but she is mocked and dismissed by many for one reason: she

is a child. It is not that her message is unclear or that it is unsound; it fails to win adult attention and action because she is a child (Mohr Lone, 2018; Cassidy & Mohr Lone, 2020). Look, for instance, at the attention Donald Trump received as president of the USA. Certainly, most of this was not positive, but he still commanded power and status while behaving in a manner that is often ascribed to children. Amongst other things, the reason he commanded such attention was because he is an adult. Not everyone took him seriously, but as adult he was allowed to behave in a way that would never be granted a child behaving in like manner.

Mr. Forbes, Curdie's teacher in the extract above, wants to rescue the boy from his surroundings. He recognises the human in the child. Certainly, he aspires to effect some positive change in him. He aims to show Tom a world beyond slums and filth. In true Rousseauian fashion, he removes the child from the squalor of the inner city to the green and glorious countryside where he can thrive (Rousseau, 1948), where he can be human, and enjoy that childhood innocence Forbes seems concerned to protect. We recognise, in Jenkins' drawing of Tom Curdie, a way of seeing the child that resonates with Davies' (2011) sense of the child as understood in Vaughn's poem *The Retreat*; an 'emphasis is placed upon the connection between healthy early childhood experience and the moral and psycho-spiritual well-being of the adult individual' (p.386). It is the healthy future adult that Forbes is trying to protect, and Curdie's inevitable trajectory to that adulthood.

So, what might Forbes' motives have been? He was a teacher and teachers do usually not take their pupils on holiday with them and their families. Certainly, the act seems altruistic, motivated by a desire to do good, to help a child on that journey of becoming, of becoming more fully human, of becoming a good and whole adult. He recognised the potential of a clever and articulate child who could think for himself. He also saw clearly how circumstance would nip the flower in the bud and Curdie and his innocence would be lost prematurely. Perhaps the teacher acted as a result of pity, or perhaps from compassion, but he saw an alternative future, a healthy future adult.

Had the teacher acted out of pity we might not think his behaviour so altruistic because in pitying it is easy to remove oneself from the thing we pity. Pity, of course, induces some kind of emotional response, but it need not require more than a passing thought or sense that something is not right or good or fair. Daytime television in Scotland is host to adverts for one charity or another, often displaying the suffering of children living in poverty, without food or the medical care they need. The adverts exhort viewers to subscribe to a monthly payment plan where they can alleviate this suffering for a (relatively) little amount of money each month. The images, the music, the voice of the person requesting the money is crafted to move us to pity these poor souls. We pity them and are grateful that it is not us or our children. We absolve ourselves by either signing up to make the

monthly payments, or we look away, or change channel. It is easy to do so; we have expressed our pity, but we are moved to little more. Indeed, there is a danger we become insensitive to the plight of the victims because of over-exposure to their misfortune (Rousseau, 1948). Something is required to shift from the objective spectating upon misery, this tokenistic lip-service (Nussbaum, 1996). It is the thing that moves Mr. Forbes from simple sentimentalism: compassion.

Zembylas (2013) suggests that 'pity denotes the feeling of empathetic identification with the sufferer, and *compassion* refers to the feeling accompanied by action...pity requires an object whereas compassion requires a subject' (p.507, italics in the original). He warns that we should not be at a great remove from the thing or person who experiences the suffering; we should establish a connection between ourselves and the sufferer, and that connection is a human connection. Perhaps it is this human connection that Mr. Forbes makes with Tom Curdie, and this connection acts as a call to action that goes beyond simply putting his hand in his pocket and offering money. The human-to-human connection may be what prompts or provokes the action that moves us from pity to compassion. And it is this compassion that moves us to action, or, as Zembylas (2013) hopes, it is this that moves the observer of suffering to one of agentic participation. Gibson and Cook-Sather (2020) build on Zembylas' work, suggest that compassion 'entails an emotional reaction to something or someone...and may result in a state of action' (p.20), but the move to action is central, indeed, implied by compassion and it should lead to positive change. It is the sense of responsibility we might have for others when we see or hear the call of human vulnerability that may prompt a response that is ethical (van Manen, 2012), and this response becomes manifest in action. It is, as van Manen suggests, that contact is important, whether this is physical or intellectual, but it is important to consider the move from the emotional response to compassionate action.

Streaming adverts about the plight of others need not make us either connected to or active in addressing their plight, regardless of how emotional we may feel as we eat our meal as the images of suffering tug on our heartstrings. Compassion, and the action entailed in the associated acts requires thought and reflection. It demands we recognise that we live with others and that we understand others' experiences in relation to ours. Indeed, it necessitates that we accept ourselves as in-relation to others and the world. While this realisation may occur naturally, we do not trust ourselves to this. Rather, we do not trust that children will find their way to the good naturally. After all, children are under-developed, they need to be civilised (Wall, 2010), and being civilised is being adult. So, to avoid 'childish' adults as evidenced in the likes of Donald Trump, we institute moral education. Note that being childish is different to being child-like, child-like being a state we – adults – wish to preserve as it signifies innocence. If children move too far from innocence, they are considered deviant (Davis, 2011), as seen in the case of Tom Curdie above. We need, after all,

children to protect society. At least, we need them to protect our idealised, adult, version of society. They are, as Jessop (2018) argues, on the 'ideological front line. As signifiers of a specific version of the future, they become child-soldiers for that vision' (p.453).

Moral education

The way in which adults recruit these child-soldiers is through their schooling. It is there where they are inducted into a vision of a particular way of living in a specific society, whatever that imagined society may be as it is clear that whatever the current shape of society, it is not the one we presently inhabit; it is an ideal, one to which we aspire but never attain. Children are our hope for the future, though it is our adult hope for a future we may never live to experience. Nonetheless, we induct children into this imagined world, and we do it in school as arguably it is easier there to socialise children into a way of being (Biesta, 2015). Moral education, then, has the purpose, of saving children from themselves and saving them for society. Society (adults) needs those who know how to behave. It does not welcome children who do not conform as we – adults – look towards them as messianic figures who are 'our only hope that there will be a future' (Jessop, 2018, p.446), even if that future is a mythical one, some 'lost horizon' or Shangri-la.

Kennedy (2007), in discussing moral education, draws attention to the school as culture, as a site where opportunity is afforded for a 'collaborative reconstruction' (p.3). This is the way in which, to answer van Manen's (2012) question of how children 'enter our adult lives' (p.17). It is an induction. As Wall (2010) highlights, there is a top-down model of moral education whereby what constitutes moral goodness is 'imposed on children and adults if humanity is to rise above itself' (p.18). This top-down approach holds religious connotations, where adults are, as children, subject to moral imposition. Of course, not everyone subscribes to a religious life, and even in religious schools and communities, the religious authority is depicted as adult, the moral compass is directed by the adult, positioning adults, one way or another, as determining the morally good. Matthews (1994, 2006) would argue strongly that children are not, as such a top-down model would have it, pre-moral or even amoral. He evidences the capacity for children to engage in moral reasoning through his philosophising with children.

Tying moral education with religious education, as often happens, explicitly or not, provides a tension, with it being caught between a 'sceptical culture on the one hand' and 'the mythical silence of the incommunicable and irreducible on the other' (Conroy, Lundy & Baumfield, 2012, p.319). Not only does this lead to a lack of resonance with children's lives, it also induces a 'sense of boredom

and scepticism' (p.316). Such a result can only fail in provoking compassion, in prompting action, never mind encouraging children to make any sense of the world in which they live. Indeed, many children do not have religious convictions, making this alignment even more challenging. Even when situated in the realm of citizenship education, moral education tends to be exhortations to behave in particular ways that ultimately benefit the state. While such citizenship education may be appropriate, it narrows the scope of what moral education could be. Our morality is intricately entwined with how we live our lives, and how we think we and others ought to live. It is, simply put, how we are in-relation to others and the world around us, but it is vital that we have space and the tools with which to reflect on this. Without personal resonance, it is hard to see how children form their own ethical understandings that might dictate how they live their lives. The danger is that they will inevitably do as they were done unto, and potentially they will, as those before them have done, seek rescue from the children who follow them. It could be argued that there is a need, therefore, to bridge the gap between knowledge, experience and understanding in personal, ethical development (Teece, 2010) to move towards compassionate action. Of course, action of any kind is limited for children.

Childism

Part of the reason that children's action is limited is because they are not taken seriously. This lack of attention is often manifest through them not being listened to (Clark 2005; Komulainen 2007; Lundy, 2007; Taylor and Robinson, 2009; Mitra 2008) and through adults being positioned as 'knower'. Adults are 'epistemically privileged' (Lone & Burroughs, 2016, p.10), a status to which children have no access and will only ascend when they have passed through their incompetent childhood to being completely human, to being adult. This echoes Kennedy (2007), who points to the widely accepted view that children are 'inadequate, dependent, vulnerable and implicitly amoral creatures who need to be isolated from the "real world" until they are no longer children' (p.9).

Considering Kennedy's (2010) later assertion that adults have the privilege of being a "'reader" of life and the other, and the reader is by definition an interpreter' (p.14), Cassidy and Mohr Lone (2020) suggest that not only are children not afforded the status of 'knower', they are not countenanced as 'reader' because their interpretation of the world as it is and as it could be is over-looked. Children, as Murriss (2013) would have it, should be accepted as knowledge bearers. She is clear that in understanding and behaving towards children as though they are 'deficient in reason, emotion control, responsibility and maturity, has consequences for how we imagine ourselves' (p.253). In writing about Freire's philosophy, Kohan (2021) highlights that Freire understood childhood 'as a condition of human existence, associated with the human person's unfinished quality' (p. 139). This

unfinished quality is not to be understood as a deficiency; rather, Kohan stresses and demonstrates the positive way in which Freire thought about childhood by comparing the Nicaraguan revolution to a young child. He notes that the child exists in the present, is live with curiosity, is driven by questions and dreams and creates; this is not a future orientation, but one which recognises the child *qua* child.

There are other ways in which to think about children and the extent to which we see them as part of the wider social sphere. Cassidy (2007) proposes that rather than thinking of children simply as a means to an end, with the end being adult, it makes sense to recognise them as *beings* who inhabit the present and contribute in the present rather than identifying their potential usefulness. One way, she argues, in which this may be achieved is to resist the pull of the deficit view of children and their associated childhood and to consider the child, not as Archard (1993) would suggest, as an individual who lacks certain qualities possessed by adults, but as an individual who possesses the same attributes and qualities as adults, the difference being that biologically mature humans – adults – generally have more of these qualities and attributes. She likens people to cars. The child is the basic model with all the body parts and engineering required to function as a car, while the adult is the basic model with a few accessories added such as alloy wheels, a navigation system and drinks holders. It would be a mistake to think that all adults, by dint of age, are the equivalent of the high specification sports car. In essence, the child is no different in concept to the adult. And this, Cassidy proposes, can alter the way in which children exist in society. Childism (Wall, 2010, 2019) offers a view that resonates with this.

Childism is not like other -isms such as sexism or racism, though it implies some form of discriminatory behaviour toward children. Such -isms are negative in focus. Instead, childism has a positive orientation, as used in the likes of feminism, postcolonialism or environmentalism (Wall, 20019). Childism is one way of recognising children by ‘grant[ing them] full humanity precisely as children’ (Wall, 2010, p.23); without doing so, all humanity is diminished. Wall (2019) sees childism as a way of (re-)structuring society, where the norms of that society are understood to include children. Adopting this view will ultimately, says Wall (2010, 2019), ensure that *everyone* benefits from a transformation in understanding, in practice and the structures that govern how we live together. It is fundamentally about changing the politics and systems within which we exist (Sundhall, 2017). As things currently stand, even if it is well-intentioned, the child is a product of adult imagining, and it is invariably based on what adults think children will or should become (Cassidy, 2007; van Manen, 2012; Geisinger, 2017).

Seeing the child in-and-of-the-world is important if children are to be taken seriously (Cassidy & Mohr Lone, 2020). This includes us, as adults, seeing ourselves in-relation with children. Such a relationship recognises 'the child as interlocutor' (Kennedy, 2007, p.5) as opposed to being something alien. It requires that we engage in a relationship where we 'listen to oneself as well as to the other' (Kennedy, 2007, p.5), where we acknowledge that the child never leaves us, and where our sense of self emerges (van Manen, 2012). A human connection is necessary (Zembylas, 2013) to forge this relationship, where our own humanity as adults and as children is recognised and where children's humanity is similarly acknowledged. It allows that adults, and children, share their humanity, and within that humanity resides both vulnerability and scope for compassionate action that takes account of that shared humanity. Zembylas (2013) recognises this shared humanity and advocates for an ethics of compassion. This solidarity across humanity leads to Gibson and Cook-Sather's (2020) 'politicised compassion [as] a political position that encourages practical action framed within the wider critical work of social justice and equality' (p.21).

Such action will not occur from the ether. Individuals must be inducted into habits that may move towards this way of understanding. Thinking breeds action, and careful thinking breeds thoughtful action. If we accept Biesta's (2015) sense that school is a useful site for socialising children into ways of being, and, at the risk of treating children as a means to an end, schools appear to be the main vehicle through which children can learn to be compassionate actors. Pedagogies of compassion aim to 'transform students and teachers, as well as the schools and communities which they serve, by identifying and challenging sentimental and moralistic discourses that often obscure inequality and injustice' (Zembylas, 2013, p. 506). It might be suggested that these 'sentimental and moralistic discourses' are focused as much on how children are understood as on other issues of equality and social justice. What is proposed here is that practical Philosophy with Children (PwC) might be seen as a pedagogy of compassion.

Philosophy with Children

Broadly speaking, Philosophy with Children (PwC) is a generic term used to describe a variety of approaches of structured, practical philosophising with children and young people. The original programme of Philosophy for Children was created by Matthew Lipman in the USA in the 1970s (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980; Lipman, 2003; Daniel & Auriac, 2011), with other approaches evolving from this. The main common element across different approaches to practical PwC is that rather than teaching about traditional, academic philosophy, participants engage in structured, collaborative dialogue that has a philosophical direction (Murriss, 2000). The dialogue is constructed

in such a way that participants are encouraged to make connections between the ideas presented, often by offering agreement and/or disagreement, and, importantly, by providing reasons for that agreement/disagreement.

Lipman (1995) suggests that moral education reaches further than differentiating between what is good and bad. For him, moral education should support children to 'distinguish greater goods from lesser ones' (Lipman, 1995, p.61), and that this should be done through inquiry. In engaging children in philosophical inquiry, he would suggest that a moral education is provided where children 'can knit together emotions and reasoning, facts and values, intuition and argument, desires and values, beliefs and dispositions... so as to form one single, unified approach to the improvement and enrichment of human life' (ibid, p.62). Considering moral education as an approach to reflect on the life one wants to lead and the ways in which we should engage with one another and the world around us is a broader sense of moral education than the sense of induction or socialising we may find in some quarters. Indeed, such an approach allows children to reflect for themselves and about their self. It presents opportunities for them to consider themselves in-relation to others and the world in which, and of which, they are a part. In turn, this will support children to live well (Cassidy, 2012).

Living well is not the same as one's well-being in the sense that it is commonly used in terms of being physically or mentally healthy, though this may form part of the sense considered here. Living well, here, is understood as engaging positively with the world and others in it. Philosophical thinking allows children – and adults – to reflect on their lives. It is not a discrete activity, but is a way of being (Gazzard, 1996). It is an approach to living that has to be nurtured. Compassionate pedagogy allows children to 'discover who they are and what they are' (van Manen, 2012, p. 31), it supports a considered way of being and PwC may offer an approach to this. Indeed, both Sharp (1995) and Lipman (2003) highlight that PwC not only encourages children to think for themselves, it encourages them to care about the thing about which they think. Caring thinking is a central idea running through Lipman's approach to PwC, and it brings together the affective and cognitive, reason and empathy. The alteration in one's thinking moves one to action through compassion (Nussbaum, 1996). Lipman (1995) stresses that having been relatively passive until the age of majority it can't be expected that individuals 'go through a sudden and inexplicable metamorphosis which enables them to be politically active' (p.70). While the relative passivity children may display is imposed on them as a consequence of the (adult) structures and strictures under which they live, compassion requires tending. Caring thinking that leads to compassionate action may help overcome 'passive empathy', as Schertz (2007) describes it, where the affective and cognitive connect.

Caring thinking requires respect for others' views and careful attention to what is said, but it does not require that there be agreement, that views are shared or even tolerated by the others engaged in the dialogue; indeed, a range of perspectives and alternatives are valued (Cassidy, 2018). For Juuso (2007), caring thinking involves being able to determine what has value, to value the thing that has value, and that this is revealed to all. Lipman (2003) is clear that when we care about something we are making a judgement; we are judging that it matters. In order to make that judgement, when views are articulated they are received and reflected upon seriously and critically (Bleazby, 2011). In so doing, we are empathetic towards the views and experiences of others, we can situate ourselves in their place; it leads us to consider not only how one wants to live, but how one ought to live. Such questions of morality constitute ethical inquiry (Sharp, 1987; Noddings, 1988; Lipman, 2003). Judgement needs compassion to ensure one is not blind to human suffering (Nussbaum, 1996). Informed thinking – caring thinking – therefore, that marries reason and emotion, is essential if compassionate action is to result.

In order to develop compassion, and bearing in mind compassion implies action, children need to be supported to recognise themselves in-relation to the world and others. To be political, active participants they have to learn how to question themselves, others and the world they inhabit (Cassidy, 2007). PwC presents a safe environment in which they might explore and practise engaging with ideas of their own and others. A pedagogy of compassion emphasises the need to ask challenging or difficult questions (Gibson & Cook-Sather, 2020); it provokes action, while recognising that 'not just any action is good action' (Zembylas, 2013, p.505). So, while compassionate action is desirable, children should learn to reflect on what might constitute appropriate action that is reasoned and proportionate. In so doing, empathy is present, but so too is reason. Sharp (1984) argues that 'If through inquiry, rather than unquestionable dogma, a child arrives at the view that one should never treat another person as a thing, the chances that the principle will manifest itself in the child's everyday behaviour are greatly enhanced' (p.7). This is liberating, she proposes, because it is transformative in promising 'a qualitatively different life' (Sharp, 1995, p. 55). Practising PwC may support a consideration that moves away from the notion of the good life as purely subjective, as right for an individual (Fenner, 2007), to one that is a shared vision for wider society. Jónsdóttir (2015) and Griffiths and Murray (2017) question how humans should live well in the world. They understand 'world' by seeing humans and more-than-human elements in-relation, and clearly articulate the relationship we have with others and the physical world. We cannot, says Jónsdóttir (2015), pursue the good life without taking seriously the quality of others' lives. In advocating the vision of the good life as being good for all, it inevitably becomes good for the individual (Conrad, Cassidy & Mathis, 2015).

This morally enriched life supports children to consider what is, and to reflect upon, and move towards what ought to be (Sharp, 1995). For Wall (2010), in adopting childism, we are offered new ways of thinking about what it means to live a good life and this will be of benefit for all. Certainly, children's interests or focus for what constitutes the good life may not be the same as adults, as illustrated in Sundhall's (2017) example of children spending community funds on a water slide, but their concerns should be taken seriously (Matthews, 2006). Indeed, in his philosophy of childhood, Matthews presents the idea that we should 'make room for the possibility that children may have **genuinely cognitive interests that are not standardly valued by adults** around them' (Matthews, 2006, p.6, emphasis in the original). He makes clear, too, that children are moral agents and that considering them as amoral or pre-moral is neither theoretically nor ethically acceptable.

The view presented of children, so dominated by developmental psychology, is a deficit one, where children are considered to be devoid of or lacking certain capacities, assumed to be held by adults (Matthews, 1994, 2006; Cassidy, 2007). Children and adults are positioned at opposite ends of a spectrum, with adulthood being the direction to which one should strive in order to be considered fully human. Rather than adopting this view, Matthews' asserts a more balanced approach, offering a 'mirror-image' conception of childhood, one that the likes of Wall may approve. Often, says Matthews, 'the strengths of childhood tend to be the weaknesses of adulthood, and vice versa' (2006, p.14). He argues that recognising that children are better at some things than adults, and that adults are better at some things than children, means that neither childhood nor adulthood can be understood independently and that this is beneficial for all concerned (Matthews, 2006; Kohan & Cassidy, 2021). Achieving the good life requires that individuals have a sense of the good, are able to reflect critically on one's life and have opportunities to participate in political decision-making that govern that life (Nussbaum, 2011). This, if childism is an approach worth adopting, requires that children have an equal stake in the good life, in contemplating what that might mean and how it might be enacted.

Shared philosophical dialogue allows for a more equal platform in terms of recognising 'the child's epistemic privilege, to recognise a speech other than their [adults'] own' (Kennedy, 2010, p.21). The key is that children's contributions are valued as worthwhile. It presents the adult-child relationship as a positive one between individuals where age is not the determining factor in reading the world. This requires that we rid ourselves of some of the assumptions to which we, as adults, are particularly wedded (Cassidy & Mohr Lone, 2020). It allows for the development, for all concerned, of a 'philosophical being-in-the-world with others' (Murriss, 2017, p.187). Cassidy and Mohr Lone (2020) propose that power dynamics that reinforce the adult/child binary could be countered through shared philosophical dialogue and that these intra-actions may offer alternative ways of being together. This, then, requires that particular relationships demand attention.

The teacher

Given the position of the teacher in children's lives, their role in advancing a moral education merits some consideration. Positioning the teacher as 'knower' in terms of what constitutes what is morally good, and therefore how we, notably children, should live our lives, is problematic. In the first place, it suggests that the teacher knows what the good life is, particularly when this is the imagined or idealised life that adults seek to protect by charging children with the task of (re)capturing it. And, secondly, it assumes that s/he practises what s/he preaches, that s/he is morally good. Neither need be the case.

A pedagogy of compassion suggests a relationship of equality, where power relations are challenged and where teachers work to create a culture of trust in which they 'subvert patterns of subordination' (Zembylas, 2013, p.515). The teacher should not stay silent if s/he sees injustice and if s/he wishes to liberate the children with whom s/he works (Kohan, 2021). Though working with students in universities, Gibson and Cook-Sather's (2020) proposal for pedagogical partnership that seeks to address the *status quo* is relevant in school education if we are serious about reimagining children's place and role in society. It requires, as they say, that teachers hold 'their students as humans in their thoughts and pedagogical practices' (p.20). This is the manner in which Mr. Forbes, the teacher in Jenkins' *The Changeling*, behaves. He holds the untamed Tom Curdie as human and this perspective is evidenced in his behaviour towards the child. Forbes challenges the inequalities he sees suffocating the child, and this empathy, when coupled to judgement becomes compassion, which leads him to action. His behaviour, even if ultimately misguided, is ethically motivated. He does as Sharp (1984) and Noddings (1988) advocate; as teacher (as adult), he lives out the commitment he would have his pupils adopt.

Kennedy (2007) and van Manen (2012) recognise that in nurturing the child the teacher is also nurtured, particularly through collaborative dialogue. Questions of how we should live inevitably arise through such dialogic collaboration where a pedagogical relationship that respects and values the humanity of others without need of hierarchy or status, are valued in adopting an ethic of care (Noddings, 1988). Moral education need not assume the moral rectitude of the teacher. Nor does it need to look to children to save us from ourselves (Jessop, 2018) and an imagined future. Through ethical inquiry, praxis emerges that promotes a consideration of ideas and positions this consideration in such a way that it provokes action. Indeed, as Kennedy (2007) asserts, 'Any program of ethical reflection that does not assume this natural turn from reflection to action, which is content to leave things as they are, will only teach children the futility of ethics' (p.10), and cannot lead to compassionate action.

This demands not only that teachers practise their ethical behaviour and thinking, but that they listen to children. A moral education designed to elicit compassionate action, should allow for the possibility of challenging accepted structures and systems, and this requires that individuals think and reason for themselves (Nussbaum, 2010). If childism is to teach us anything about moral education it is that a reimagining of social structures where children are recognised for their humanity, for their difference and for their abilities is an important starting point. A pedagogy of compassion such as that offered by Philosophy with Children may be a way forward.

Conclusion

Lipman (2003) identifies that moral education for the majority of children is

joyless and repressive... they are puzzled as to what society expects of them and how they are to deal with the dark ambiguities that surround them. A moral education approach that enables them to learn from one another's experience, to share one another's understandings and to feel a sense of belonging to a larger community is bound to be greeted by them with joy and warmth and enthusiasm rather than with suspicion and diffidence (p.70).

This enthusiasm may arise from seeing themselves recognised as part of society. The proposed restructuring of society demanded by childism may allow for this to happen, but it is not enough. While it may be desirable that children play a fuller part in society, it is important that they are given opportunities to reflect on who they are, how they wish to be in-and-of the world in-relation with others. Spaces need to be created where children can explore the kind of world in which they wish to live, and Philosophy with Children as moral education seems to present a structure for this activity.

Sound moral education requires teachers like Jenkins' Mr. Forbes who are compassionate. Compassion entails action. Forbes' action is political; he recognises the injustice that is present and future for Tom Curdie, and he acts to overcome that injustice, a commitment to which Gibson and Cook-Sather (2020) would approve. A pedagogy of compassion recognises injustice and leads to action, but it also politicises children by affording them opportunities to comment on the world as it is and as it could or should be. At the very least, a pedagogy of compassion will recognise the 'theoretical possibility of [children's] agency (Griffiths, 2008, p.7), and at best, will take seriously what children have to say without seeing them as saviours of a future world that we (adults) have imagined for them. Adults have a responsibility towards children, as parents, as teachers, as fellow human beings. Even childism has to accept this to be the case, but the restructuring of society that

childism demands may be important for a moral education that recognises that we all live in-relation and all have much to contribute. Until, as Kennedy (2007) argues, we recognise what children have to say, the binary adult/child relationship and social structures will be maintained, and all that this entails. Compassion, Nussbaum (1996) argues, leads to greater equality. It is not that children have to be more like adults or adults more like children; what is suggested by the likes of Sundhall (2017) is 'a society that allows itself to change fundamentally in answer to what makes children different' (p.170).

In calling for a compassionate nation, Nussbaum (1996) makes plain that 'a compassionate training of the imagination' (p.58) is required. PwC may offer the compassionate training sought by Nussbaum in bringing together the cognitive and the affective. Similarly, it may provide the political space that Sundhall (2017) and Wall (2019) consider necessary for children's participation. It is important, too, when proposing an approach to moral education, that a pedagogy of compassion is sought, where children are able to engage in dialogue that leads to compassionate action. Jessop (2018) is right to be concerned that when children are politicised there is the danger that they become prey to 'ideological warriors' (p.446). However, the approach to moral education proposed here is practical Philosophy with Children, an approach that supports children to make connections between ideas, to identify faulty reasoning, to challenge arguments, and to think for themselves. It is as a pedagogy of compassion that it has the potential to enable children to reflect on the world in which they live, what it means to live well and to take action towards that goal.

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