

Aims of Education and Well – Being

As

Absence of Disorder

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis offers an original account of what personal well-being can be. Any account of education, it is believed, has to do with and aims at personal well-being. I approach this view on well-being not in a positive but in a negative way. I put forward some items that in certain circumstances can be taken by and called sources or forms of disorder. In the absence of such forms or sources of disorder, I assume that a certain order, prudential or moral, takes place and that constitutes the well-being of the person. The concept of ‘absence of disorder’ is introduced and argued as an educationally appropriate view of personal well-being which is the central educational aim. Therefore, ‘absence of disorder’ is positioned as the central aim of education. This concept is illuminated, for practical reasoning, by a list of seven possible forms of disorder: *Comparison*, *Corruption*, *Dependency*, *Division*, *Fear*, *Self-disintegration* and *Violence*. As a view of personal well-being, ‘absence of disorder’ is initially rooted in informed desire satisfaction, via the introduction of the concept of entropy. Prudentially, the agent’s informed desire is satisfied by living a life with low build up of entropy or disorder. But, in a second move such a base is also provided by the Levinasian concept of ‘disinterest’ as a root for ‘what is to be a human’. Such ‘disinterest’ is related to the concepts of love and of ‘action for its own sake’. It is at this final approach that an attempt is made towards the approximation of the ethical and the prudential aspects of social practices. Even if only to some extent successful, the argument is directed to the following conclusion: an education aiming at ‘absence of disorder’ may promote prudential well-being and give us some confidence in simultaneously favouring moral education.

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**The noblest virtues are negative,
they are also the most difficult,
for they make little show,
and do not even make room
for that pleasure so dear to the heart of man,
the thought that someone is pleased with us.**

(Rousseau, 1993: 81)

Introduction

Main Purpose and Central Claims

The main purpose of the thesis is to explore the conceptualisation of what will be referred to from now on as ‘absence of disorder’, as an adequate theory of the well-being of the person and its implications for education. This adequacy is equated with the extent to which the concept of absence of disorder can shed light on the aims of education and some of its fundamental problems. Absence of disorder will then have to be judged both for its simplicity and its explanatory capacity. This way absence of disorder is constituted, as the highest value to which education should aim. This is justified by taking a view of the autonomous ethical person as the most important outcome of the process of education.

For practical reasoning, absence of disorder is explained, and seen mainly on psychological grounds, through seven main forms of disorder and respective sub-items, as follows: *Comparison* in itself and as expressed in competition, envy, jealousy, vanity, prestige, inferior and superior relationships (winner and loser, successful and unsuccessful), physical and intellectual capacities; *Corruption* of intention and material; *Dependency* of, substances, persons, objects, organizations and traditions; *Division* by ‘race’, nationalities, regional ties, languages, professions, social class, religions, gender, sexual orientation and ethnical tribalism, able and

disabled persons, old and young persons; *Fear* of death, violence, the unknown, comparison, authority, public opinion, failure, humiliation, shame etc.; self-disintegration of mind and body through lack of health, food, shelter and clothing; *Violence* by, indifference, domination, power, exploitation, greed, anger, punishment, humiliation, shame, blackmail, vindictiveness and physical aggression.

Any such a list, I believe, must be seen as not exhaustive, not hierarchical and certainly not final.

Armed with the central concept of ‘absence of disorder’ and its supportive list of items, the research aims at exposing a major perceived problem and to explore a solution for such a problem. The problem derives from what seems to be a certain view that sees in the very first layer of ‘what is to be a human’, self-interest. This view of the self may have had favourable economical and social transformations to become imprinted in what I perceive as dominant views of personal well-being, like perfectionism and Darwinism. In short, in Darwinism the being of animals is a struggle for life (Bernstein, 2002: 263). Perfectionism, as I will use the word in this work, sees well-being as a permanent development of personal excellences (Arneson, 1999:119). It seems to me that these views on well-being introduce distress via forms of disorder due to the fact that the base of the ‘self’ may be of a different nature.

Looking for a remedy to this perceived problem, ‘absence of disorder’ as a possible interesting educational view of well-being is first rooted in informed desire satisfaction as a more general theory of well-being. This is done via an analogy with the concept of entropy (disorder) in the natural world put in parallel with the ‘ethical environment’. An informed person will desire not to accelerate unnecessarily her rate of entropy build-up. It seems then that it is prudential for an agent to keep herself in absence of disorder. But things remain very much undecided. The problem is the one in moral philosophy that consists in giving prudential reasons for someone to behave morally. On the one hand the ethical world is more complex and it is not clear that someone immersed in a certain unethical world may not even increase his or her well-being. For example the rewards collected by a mafia boss (e.g. money and power) may provide a

compensation for the fears of going to prison. That is to say, behaving immorally may still be perceived as having a favourable prudent entropic balance and it is very hard to show otherwise. On the other hand, informed desire satisfaction as a view of well-being has itself its own problems.

The above state of affairs forces us into a second move. Following a suggestion by James Griffin (1988: 133), to demonstrate that morality is not alien to self-interest it has to be shown that it is part of the self. Maybe we can ‘... find morality a place inside the domain of prudence’ (Ibid.). At this point we approach the philosophy of Levinas and his concept of ‘disinterest’. According to Putnam (2002) and stressed also by Critchley (2002: 6) there is ‘one big thing’ rather than ‘many small things’ in Levinas. In Levinas ethics is first philosophy, previous to ontology. ‘Disinterest’ can also be seen as ‘selflessness’ or ‘otherwise than being’. ‘Disinterest’ is posited in the self previous to the complex interplay of the cognitive, conative, and emotional.

But if there is that ‘big thing’ or ‘big idea’ in Levinas, which also can be open to question as again remarked by Critchley (Ibid. 25), maybe we can show a major consequence for education. This consequence can perhaps start to be seen as a position that sees the perfectionist/Darwinistic paradigm of well-being seriously damaging what is the root of the ‘self’. Such a position I can see, for example, voiced in philosophy of education by opposing the ‘personal’ with the ‘functional’, e.g. (Fielding, 2004).

Finally, also as a consequence, my central purpose will be to try to show that, even if surrounded by complexities that carry undecided issues and objections, maybe an education aiming at absence of disorder may favour an ethical environment where that ‘big thing’ or ‘disinterest’ as ‘absence of interest’ may prevail. Being so, an education aiming at absence of disorder, it seems to me, can be seen as in closer harmony with what is at the bottom of ‘what is to be a human being’, and give us some confidence in also promoting moral education.

With this main purpose, the thesis attempts:

1. To conceptualise absence of disorder as an interesting possible view of well – being of the person and therefore the central aim of education.
2. To show that education is moral education, concerned mainly with character formation while instruction is concerned with ‘instrumental knowledge’ as a minor role in it.
3. To show that education is a universal and continuous process that should be of primary interest to all and especially to those simultaneously involved in the instruction process and schooling systems.
4. To present the form of disorder ‘comparison’ as the most interesting ‘window’ to look at late modernity, from the point of view of education.
5. To describe the items and sub-items presented as forms of disorder and some of their possible interrelations and suggest that their absence from the social practices may favour a very important ethical environment of ‘absence of interest’ or ‘disinterest’.
6. To explore an analogy between the natural and the ethical environment via the concept of entropy.
7. To show a possibility of bridging the concepts: ‘intrinsic ethical autonomy’ and ‘disinterest’. ‘Disinterest’ may be seen as the disposition to pursue ‘the action for its own sake’, conveying goodness. Such action is presented as an important educational one.
8. To show that Social Darwinism as the good of society and perfectionism, as the good of the person, are the actual ideologies dominating the late–modern society and its school system. These entail generalized disorder mainly through comparison.

Structure and Content

In this section I will start by giving a short general overview of the work where briefly some of the previous ideas are restated. In this overview I attempt to set the stage by providing the main concerns addressed in the work. Together with this I attempt to show what the major concepts brought into play are, highlighting their inter-relating factors, in order to bring the concerns of the thesis into focus. Secondly, the section presents, chapter by chapter, a brief description of the development of the overall argument. I shall try here to draw your attention to the interconnections that may provide a coherent structure to the argument and their justification.

A major perceived problem, and its identification and resolution, is the focus of this research. This problem I take to be the dominant presence in late-modern societies of a paradigm of intense inter-personal comparison at the level of both practical reality and the ideal. Such intense comparison is underpinned via an ideology that can be expressed in terms of perfectionism and social-Darwinism. Perfectionism is taken in this work as the view that, at a personal level, sees the well-being of the person in terms of striving permanently for the development of her excellences in the light of some conception of what those excellences might be. Social-Darwinism is the view that, at a social level, one sees the good of society as the intense competitive selection of the fittest. My claim is that this ideology is an impoverished one that is contra to what is at the root of 'what is to be a human'. Such a view is one that endangers our lives, affecting negatively our well-being and causing a great distress at all levels. The late-modern school-systems are examples of strong operation of such ideology. Thus, I claim, the process of education is endangered from a very early age. These can partially be seen as empirical claims.

What is then the perceived possible solution for such undesirable state of affairs? The research is directed into the development of an alternative view of personal well-being to remedy the view which is suggested in the vision of life which has been described. The alternative is based in the concept of 'absence of disorder'. This approach to personal well-being is attempted in a negative way. This concept is presented with reference to a list of seven main constitutive elements designated by

forms or sources of disorder and several sub-items, as follows: *Comparison* in itself and as expressed in competition, envy, jealousy, vanity, prestige, inferior and superior relationships (winner and loser, successful and unsuccessful), comparing physical and intellectual capacities; *Corruption* of intention and material; *Dependency* of, substances, persons, objects, organizations and traditions; *Division* by ‘race’, nationalities, regional ties, languages, professions, social class, religions, gender, sexual orientation and ethnical tribalism, able and disabled persons, old and young persons; *Fear* of death, violence, the unknown, comparison, authority, public opinion, failure, humiliation, shame etc.; Self-disintegration of mind and body through lack of health, food, shelter and clothing; *Violence* by, indifference, domination, power, exploitation, greed, anger, punishment, humiliation, shame, blackmail, vindictiveness and physical aggression.

To better illuminate this view of well-being as absence of disorder it is interesting to add some brief remarks. Well-being will be, according to this view, seen as a certain complex positive state that at a personal level emerges from the absence of the sources of disorder. I don’t attempt in the work to make any effort to describe such positive state of well-being. What the work will attempt to do is to describe with a certain detail the forms of disorder, seen as the major disturbing factors of personal well-being, at a negative level. On the other hand, the items in the list of forms of disorder are themselves seen as ambiguous and complex. A certain item may be or may be not a form of disorder, depending on the particularities of the real situation. Such assessment must be seen within the complexities of practical reasoning or the Aristotelian virtue of *phronesis*. It is by value judgement that each concrete situation can be assessed. As a simple example one can consider that a woman who is threatened by a rapist is an object of violence as a form of disorder. The violent reaction of this woman against the rapist can be easily agreed as a form of restitution of order. Violence, as most of the items of the list of forms of disorder, in itself has an ambiguous character that will have to be judged in concrete situations.

In line with some of the liberal tradition of philosophy of education, some initial positions are assumed in the research: first, the central aim of education is seen as the well-being of the person or the good life; second, the desirable outcome of the

educational process is seen as the autonomous ethical person; third, education is seen as a process of initiation to social practices.

Together with the concept of 'absence of disorder' a second important concept is introduced. This is the concept of 'the way to do or say' positioned as the place where relative absence of disorder operates. Further on I look at the content of social practices as 'form' and 'substance'. The 'form' is 'the way that we say or do' something when engaging in a social practice. The 'substance' is 'what we say or do' in that social practice. I claim that the formalist process is very interesting for the process of education, 'the way to do or say', with which we engage in social practices, is where I locate the presence or absence of the sources of disorder that I see as important for the educational process. 'The way to do or say' is the place of such a process.

In general, the research is concerned with the problems raised by the possibility of education aiming at a successful integration of the prudential and moral aspects of personal well-being. The emphasis of the research is placed on the prudential dimension of personal well-being and the tensions with moral education. My main preoccupation is to try to show that an education aiming for absence of disorder, can give us confidence in the possibility of fostering an integration of morality. That is, I argue that an education aiming at absence of disorder is capable of favouring the desired outcome which is the 'autonomous ethical person' or the educated person. Emphasizing such an outcome, I believe I am in accordance with a lot of mainstream philosophy of education.

Also central in supporting the argument is the concept of entropy. Due to its importance, historically, entropy has deserved the close attention of philosophy. This is a concept entrenched in the second law of thermodynamics. Entropy, in the natural world, is synonymous with disorder. Such disorder is related to the inescapable and irreversible continuous break down of atomic structures into more simple ones. In a closed system, and the universe can be here seen as such a closed system for this purpose, there can happen only movement in the direction of entropy or disorder build up. So the environmental issue is around the desirable slow down of the entropic process. As the research develops we tend to see that what starts to look like an environmental metaphor ends up by emerging as maybe an important

bridge between the ethical and the natural worlds. The ethical and the natural environment may have much more in common via the concept of entropy or 'disorder'.

The sources or forms of disorder are unpacked in order to expose them as such. Possible relations of forms of disorder with the present comparative paradigm governing school systems in late-modern societies, are exposed whenever possible. I can compare myself with others and remain in absence of suffering or distress when for example expressing mere desires. Or on the other hand, as in the grading systems of schools, comparison can easily bring bitterness and, eventually, develop into envy. Fear of riding a bicycle on the edge of a cliff can be very useful. But fear of being humiliated in public, e.g. in the classroom, can be paralysing. Violence can be justified in situations of the unavoidable need for self-defence, and having a low level of dependence on physical exercise in order to stay healthy can be desirable. The occurrence of the forms of disorder in social practices has to be decided under judgement of the many subtle and complex situations that can occur.

The work attempts, more specifically, to position 'absence of disorder' as a view of personal well-being. First a review of some important philosophical approaches to personal well-being is carried out. This is done via a traditional classification of the theories of well-being into three: hedonistic, desire satisfaction and objective lists. Secondly absence of disorder is characterized in relation to these major views. Within such a process it is considered important to keep, as much as possible, a first view of personal well-being as serving self-interest or prudence. Therefore, in a first movement, absence of disorder is positioned as a prudential view since it favours the slow build up of disorder or entropy. But unavoidably the confrontation between self-interest and morality must be addressed. On the one hand a subject may have the informed desire of living a life with a slow or minimum build up of disorder or entropy. This will point in the direction of an agent to act morally – not stealing for example - in order to avoid the fear and stress of being put into prison. On the other hand, that same agent may argue that he is willing to accept the trade off of such extra stress, with the future benefits of living the rest of his life with the product of the robbery. Such extra money will provide for him and his family better medical care, nourishment and so on. Therefore, all in all the entropic balance may be seen as

favourable by the agent. Such is the confrontation between prudent and moral reasons. The difficulty is in providing prudential reasons for an agent to act morally.

A second move, pursuing these questions, pulls the research in the direction of the concepts of disinterest and love. I claim here that being in absence of disorder may have as a general result an important absence: a state of absence of interest. Or, put more directly, an absence of overriding opportunistic interests. Social practices imply a complex array of interrelated interests. We are pursuing also here the issue of selflessness that starts to emerge earlier in the work. Such freedom from overriding opportunistic interests, I claim, allows engaging in a special kind of ‘action for its own sake’. This I see as the kind of ‘action for its own sake’ that conveys goodness. In elaborating on ‘disinterest’, I draw specially on Simone Weil, Levinas and Derrida. With Levinas, I take the view that at the root of the condition of what it is to be a human – previous to the intentionality of the conatus - there is a ‘secret’. That ‘secret’ is ‘disinterestedness’. Finally maybe we can say that an education aiming at absence of disorder may be in greater harmony with this view of the ‘self’, and promote the moral as well as the prudent.

Here I conclude the overall view of the skeleton of the main argument. Let us look now at the argument by approaching the way that it is organized in chapters and sections.

Chapter one deals with the aim of education. This I take to be equivalent to asking the question ‘what is education?’ This exploration is done under the light of absence of disorder and the newly acquired concept of ‘the way to do or say’. I start by looking at the role of instrumental knowledge in education. A short review of theories of education classified by knowledge centred, knowledge related and knowledge unrelated, continues. In the second section I position the place of operation of the educational process in “‘the way to do or say’” with which we engage in social practices. The aim of education then becomes ‘absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’. Absence of disorder by itself would leave us in some sort of perfectionist state. I claim that in practice perfectionism is impossible and endangers our well-being.

In chapter two I browse through the main theories of well-being: hedonistic, desire-satisfaction and objective lists. Since ‘absence of disorder is presented as a suitable educational view of well-being, it is imperative to look critically at the other theories as a background to later characterizing more closely my own proposed view. Here I also formulate a justification for the centrality of well-being in education. The description and the usual objections to those theories are dealt in section two. In the third section, I attempt to justify the negative approach to personal well-being. The search is centred not in what can bring the good life, but in what can endanger it. This chapter provides now the back ground to situate amongst these views, and that is the purpose of the following chapter.

Chapter three is dedicated to a close characterization of absence of disorder as a view of personal well-being. In the first section I explain the notion of entropy (disorder in the physical world) and initially I look at it as a convenient metaphor related to absence of disorder. As we will see gradually with the progression of the work, entropy as build up of disorder can be directly related to the concept of ‘absence of disorder’. I attempt to show what I think is a powerful connection between the important second law of thermodynamics, in the natural world, and the concept of ‘absence of disorder’ in the ethical world. ‘Imperfection’ as part of being human is characterized in the second section. ‘Imperfection’ is seen as a general designation to represent several limitations intrinsic to human nature, like: mistakes, uncertainty, insufficiency, inaccuracy, incompleteness, illusion, doubt, etc. ‘Imperfection’ is then seen as the unavoidable minimum entropy connected with existence. This introduction of ‘imperfection’ in the view of ‘absence of disorder’ is critical to keep it at a distance from any ‘perfectionism’. In section three ‘absence of disorder with imperfection’ is characterized more closely. Desire satisfaction and entropy are posited as the root justification of the theory. Next we look at a more detailed account of the forms of disorder, so that the reader can have a deeper insight into what is referred to by them.

In chapter four I take the opportunity to explain what the forms of disorder are, and how they operate. I start by recognizing a difficulty: we all went through the school system and we all were socially constructed by these late-modern societies. Therefore we can hardly imagine a world without certain characteristics that are now

in place. In order to highlight this I rely mainly on some views of Foucault, for whom something was very wrong in contemporary life. Comparison as a form of disorder - that I consider to be at the heart of perfectionism - receives the greatest attention. But in order to clarify what sort of education I see implied by 'absence of disorder' as its central aim, we move to the fifth chapter.

In chapter five I look into some tensions between well-being and morality not yet resolved by the negative approach. In the first section I look more generally at the tensions between moral and prudential values. The critical issue here is to what extent a view of personal well-being assures the prudential and simultaneously implies with it a harmonious integration of the moral. In the second section, I ask more closely to what extent we can find some help in the view of well-being as absence of disorder to solve this problem. I end up by finding the position uncomfortable. At this point I follow an important suggestion by James Griffin according to which in order for us to show that morality is no alien to self-interest we must make an effort in 'finding a place for morality inside the self'. This takes the research, in a second move, into the final chapter that looks into the concepts of the 'action for its own sake', 'disinterest' and love.

Finally in chapter six the inquiry now is led by a central question: 'When is to give really to give?' I start by demarcating two lines of inquiry into the concept of love. On the one hand the views that attempt to describe the many complex sets of emotions and dispositions that are found around certain practices and states of mind, that are perceived as being love. Thus we can hear about erotic love, care love, union love, etc. On the other hand, other approaches are 'essentialist' in the sense that they tend to follow the philosophical percept that the essence of something is what that thing is. I join the 'essentialist' party and pursue the research in that direction.

The initial section intends to show a close connection between an education aiming at, intrinsic, autonomy and absence of disorder. What we are pursuing as a desirable outcome for the process of education is the ethical autonomous person. In the second section I start to approach directly the question of the essential essence of love by looking closely at some views of Harry Frankfurt. But what I see as a more

correct answer to my fundamental question is only reached in the third section, by drawing on Weil, Levinas and Derrida. With Levinas, I take the view that the ‘secret’ of what it is to be a human is ‘disinterestedness’ and ethics as first philosophy precedes ontology in the root of the self. Being so, a prudential and moral, autonomous, state of well-being may be perhaps favoured by an education aiming at absence of disorder. But the final justification of this view may be seen as open to question.

After the final conclusions of this work, I present a small annex with some recommendations for the school system that follow directly from it. From these I wish to highlight the proposal of the introduction of ‘assessment centres’ in schools. Taking into account the technological and human resources already available, these centres could be a commonplace, I believe, in less than a decade. A research project by a multidisciplinary team could tackle all the practical problems and conduct the necessary pilot experiences. Such centres would facilitate the reinstatement of the teacher as a friend. Together with the removal of grading, such centres would easily eliminate or mitigate the many intense forms of distress which we have long endured, and through which our children and youngsters continue to be put.

Let’s begin by considering the question ‘What is education and the educated person?’ under the light of absence of disorder and see what answer we can come up with. Such is the aim of chapter one.

1 – Absence of Disorder as the Aim of Education

I argue in this chapter that the process of education should concentrate on the character formation of the person. I take this to be vital in order to inform the thinking and practices of teachers. As will be justified further on, it is a challenge for those involved in such practices to bring about a certain way of engaging in social practices in order to favour that aspect of the educational process.

In contemporary societies school attendance is universal and compulsory for a great number of years, encompassing childhood and youth. Students sit in classrooms for thousands of hours. They stand there with openness and fragility in their relationship with the teacher, the school and what these represent. That relationship resembles in many ways the one between a medical doctor and the patient. Due to the fact that instrumental knowledge is not only necessary for our instrumental needs in the world, but is the main ingredient for the operation of the ‘continual progress and perfection’ of the person, the schooling system has become focused on it. Though necessary for operation in the world, instrumental knowledge will be left here in a secondary position. My main concern will be with character formation, which is to say, the flourishing of virtues and protection of certain inner dispositions.

It is now important to introduce a brief contrast between the concepts of ‘constitutive knowledge’ and ‘instrumental knowledge’ following John White (1990: 120) when commenting on the relationship of knowledge aims and ethical values: Constitutive knowledge is presupposed in the values which guide us, and instrumental knowledge is what may be useful in realizing those values. Constitutive knowledge I take to be the kind of knowledge that informs the character of the person. That is the signs that evoke the traits that help us distinguish a person of good or bad character. And instrumental knowledge I see as what makes us more or less efficient in operating in our daily life in accordance with the kind of society where that life takes place. It is the kind of knowledge that allows us to occupy a working position and have an income. Instrumental knowledge has become the most prized value of the contemporary ‘knowledge based society’. It is the main vehicle of the current Social-Darwinism seen as the good of society and, in its manifestation at an individual level, is apparent in the ‘continual progress and perfectionism’ seen as the good of the person. Due to the equivocal meaning of the word ‘knowledge’ included in ‘constitutive knowledge’, from now on I will use in preference expressions like ‘character formation’ or development or protection of correct inner dispositions, as a contrast with instrumental knowledge.

Families become anxious about the possibilities of children surviving and achieving in this knowledge-based society. The state, in continuous comparison and competition with other states, tries to serve that demand of the families and sets up the schooling system to prepare new generations for the competitive world. Tests, standards and targets become the main concern. Occasionally all of them talk about the importance of morality and show a preference for the word ‘education’ to that of ‘instruction’; though very often they focus, in practice, only on the latter. In the next two sections I give an account of the role of knowledge as an aim of education in some important views in philosophy of education, and I try to find justifications for the way that families and the state position themselves. In the last section I argue that there is indeed a lack of practical guidance for families and the state. As we will see in this chapter, both educationalists and philosophers of education have occasionally pointed out the centrality for the process of education, not only of what is transmitted, but ‘the way’ that it is transmitted.

Presenting the absence of sources of disorder as the central aim of education, I claim that it is possible then to provide better practical guidance.

1.1 Knowledge and the Aims of Education

The question ‘what is education and the educated person?’ remains an open one. Even in the context of liberalism and liberal education, the clear demarcation of these concepts and therefore the educational aims that go along with them, has not yet generated a consensus (White, 1999:195). On the other hand, discussing the aims of education is to discuss the concept of education itself (Barrow, 1999:16) since the aims are recognized to be intrinsic to it (Peters, 1966). That is to say: the concept of education can be defined through the identification and clarification of its aims. It seems important then to elucidate, even if briefly, the concept of aims. Colin Wringle (1988: 6-9) makes it clear that aims are not ideals or objectives. The idealist is here seen as an impractical dreamer. So in this sense, aims of education should not be idealistic statements with very good intentions which are of little or no practical value. On the other hand, objectives concern specific targets to be attained in a certain amount of time. Normally objectives are not formulations of mere intentions, but are stated in preferably quantifiable elements so that their control can be measurable through time. Aims of education can be seen as in between those merely idealistic statements on the one hand and the crude time planned objectives on the other. Aims should be stated in such a way as to highlight the ultimate purpose of education. They should give us a sense of what is fundamental thereby providing guidance as a beacon. The central aim of education is therefore seen in the thesis as a fundamental statement that incorporates the answer to the question – what is education?

I turn now to the role played by instrumental knowledge in the statement of the aims or central aim of education as seen by important traditions of philosophy of education. This will allow me to go on, afterwards, with the argument that instrumental knowledge should be given a secondary role in the concept of education. The main concern of the traditions to which I am referring was always also the

morality of the person and the good life. But this morality could be seen as being achieved by a different emphasis in knowledge and understanding. I look therefore, in the liberal tradition, at knowledge-centred conceptions of education, knowledge related conceptions of education and knowledge-unrelated conceptions. The degree of importance given to instrumental knowledge is then correlated with the above classification.

As for the knowledge-centred conceptions of education, they ground themselves on most of the post - enlightenment moral philosophy for which ‘the moral life was essentially a life of reason, at least in the sense that rational reflection could establish the credentials of some overarching moral principle (whether Kantian or utilitarian) and could go on (with or without the help of empirical evidence) to derive more specific conclusions about right and wrong action’ (Haydon, 2003b). The central role in this kind of view is then given to reason and the rational principles that would help the person to rationally decide in the daily circumstances of life on the fundamental questions of ethics or good behaviour: ‘Why do this?’ or ‘Why do this rather than that?’ Specifically, the British philosophy of education of Richard Peters and Paul Hirst, in the 60s and 70s, of Kantian inspiration, is seen in this area. This liberal education emphasized freedom of thought, individual liberty and rational autonomy. In the first development of this view educational aims are mainly related to cognitive ends, postulating an implicit relationship between knowledge and ethical values (White, 1990: ch. 7).

This knowledge-centred conception evolved to the important and influential Hirstian theory of the forms of knowledge (Hirst, 1973; 1974). ‘Liberal education was the development of the rational mind, which consisted in the development of understanding in each of seven or eight logically distinct forms of understanding of which moral understanding was one’ (Haydon 2003). But these knowledge-centred theories were always seen by some as needing criticism.

Human capacities were seen in three domains: cognitive (perception, judgement of truth and validity, choice, reason, memory and imagination), affective (sensation, emotion, liking, desiring) and conative (action, disposition, will). The good life is seen as grounded in knowledge and understanding enthroneing the cognitive as the structuring element of the affective and conative, assisted by language as a key to the

development of reason and rational living (Hirst, 1993a: 384). As again noted by Haydon (Ibid.), problems were posed both at practical and philosophical levels. On the practical side, for example, Haydon notes that ‘the emphasis on the cognitive reinforced an expectation among theorists that a moral education in schools would proceed through instruction or discourse in the classroom to the neglect of wider factors in the ethos and organization of schools which might seem to teachers to have obvious relevance’. In the philosophical area, Jane Roland Martin (1981b: 273) called for attention to what she named an epistemological fallacy consisting in arguing from a theory of knowledge to what should or should not be taught. And further on, (ibid: 279) the same philosopher of education remarks that John Dewey always opposed the separation of reason from emotion, thought from action and education from life.

Examples of knowledge-related theories, making an explicit connection between ethical values and especially the aim of autonomy, and knowledge and understanding, can be found in Dearden (1968), White (1973) and O’Hear (1981). Instead of accepting knowledge by definition as in the knowledge-centred theories, these bring it in through the entrance door of autonomy. As pointed out by White (1990:115) all three theories share the important common aim of autonomy, and following that a requirement for knowledge and understanding is needed as a prerequisite for the person to become autonomous. Another important example is the more recent Whitean theory that consistently dealt with the interrelationship between four central concepts in education – personal well being, morality, autonomy and knowledge (White, 1990: 11) in order for the pupil to become a morally autonomous person (White, 1982: 140). John White emphasizes mainly the well-being of the person as the highest value and therefore the central aim of education, working through these ideas in his books *The Aims of Education Restated* (White, 1982) and *Education and The Good Life* (White, 1990). Referring to the three previous theories, White sees them as starting from autonomy and this as too narrow a position. Instead he sees as the central aim of education the promotion of the well being of the person. But for the well being of the person White, at this stage, adopts the theory of informed desire satisfaction. And so promoting the well being of the pupils is helping them to organise their desires and equipping them with knowledge about the objects of their desires so that these can be informed (White, 1990: 106). And this is the important

point of entrance of an important position for instrumental knowledge in this theory. In summary, in this view, ethical values underpin the knowledge aims required to foster informed desires that give the capacity for the pupil to decide between those desires in an autonomous way.

Still in the area of knowledge-related theories different views can be found offering accounts of education starting to be more influenced by virtue ethics. In general, these views defend a conception of education whose aims are a complex composite of knowledge, virtues or acquisition of values and skills or other specific dispositions or attitudes. As a typical example of this, one can look at the account of the educated person given by Robin Barrow: ‘Thus an educated person would be expected to understand the nature of scientific enquiry, and that would include understanding that it is appropriate for examining questions in the physical realm but not the aesthetic, and understanding such things as Popperian theories of falsifiability, Kuhnian theories of paradigm shifts, and, more generally, contemporary concerns about science. By the same token, an educated person would be expected to understand something of the nature of the aesthetic domain, not necessarily in order to appreciate art or to be a creative artist, but in order to understand an undeniable aspect of human experience. Without striving for completeness, I would add the moral and the religious as further types of understanding central to our way of looking at the world, mathematical understanding as a unique network of ideas, and history and literature as species of enquiry that speak most directly to attempting to understand what is to be human’ (Barrow, 1999: 17, 18).

Another example of this view is the following statement by Richard Pring: ‘To summarize, education refers to those activities, on the whole formally planned and thought, which bring learning. Hence, we talk about a person being educated at such and such a school or university. It is so because it contributes to personal well-being, providing the knowledge, understanding and values which enable people to think in the way that is considered worthwhile and so live their lives more fully (Pring, 2000: 16). These views of education when pressed, tend to introduce a certain relation of quantification by correlating what they see as higher degrees of education with higher degrees of intellectual knowledge (e.g.Hinchliffe, 2001: 44) which in turn are harnessed to increased degrees of abstraction. We enter the domains of so

called high culture. This also suggests sometimes, that there is a ladder of improvement going from vocational training up to education, by simply adding refined knowledge. In a sense we go back to the more rationalistic approaches of the knowledge-centred views. The root of this ‘deeply embedded belief within our (western) culture that the highest type of thinking is also the most abstract’ and the mind body dichotomy, has been exposed by John White (1998: 23; 2006).

Perhaps we can picture in the transition to the knowledge-unrelated theories, Paul Hirst’s more recent theory of education as initiation into social practices. Hirst’s views can be traced to his ideas about the demarcation of the concept of educational theory from the concept of theory in the natural sciences (1983: 135). ‘Theory’ in the natural sciences might refer to an hypothesis or a set of logically inter-related hypotheses that have been up to a certain degree of satisfaction, confirmed by observation’. ‘Education theory’ for Hirst, on the other hand, becomes now the domain of rational generation of principles to inform educational practice. And Hirst underlines that: ‘...the essence of any [educational] practical theory is its concern to develop principles formulated in operational effective practical discourse that are subject to practical test’ (ibid: 145). We can see therefore a great emphasis on practice as a primary condition to value and test any theoretical proposals. Developments of this theory can be found in Hirst (1993a) and Hirst (1999a; , 1999b). In making a criticism of his first theory above mentioned as well as a second view resting on more utilitarian presuppositions, Paul Hirst (1993b) introduces his new theory as a synthesis of those two. This second view seems close to White’s theory of education already discussed which bases itself in informed desire satisfaction as the good of the person. Reason is seen as driven by wants and desires that are essentially affective and conative. Reason, knowledge and understanding help to structure and discern wants and satisfactions, subjectively related to the individual, that encompass the good life. The well - being of the person is seen within the model of informed desire satisfaction. Society is seen as a collection of atomic individuals and education remains a practice to be rationally planned.

In between those two views of over - and under - estimation of reason falls another one. For this third view reason is always directed by our interest and is of its nature practical. Knowledge developed in practice is also practical, not simply or

primarily propositional knowledge (know-that), but tacit and implicit consciously recognised ‘know-how’ of skill and judgement. Practical know-how is developed in practice itself, its prime criterion of validity being success in achieving satisfaction. In a fundamental sense persons as we know them are necessarily social constructions and the good life is built from possibilities within the social traditions. Contrary to the previous two views, education can no longer be rationally planned. The content of education is now seen as a complex interrelated package of: actions, knowledge, judgements, criteria of success, values, skills, dispositions, virtues, sensations and emotions. Education is the initiation into the social practices that contain these complex composites of features. The curriculum must be organized around significant practices and not by forms of knowledge. Hirst is categorical when asserting that for an education concerned with the development of the good life, it is a mistake to conceive it as primarily the acquisition of knowledge (1993b: 392). This position is consistently adhered to when theoretical knowledge is claimed to be unable to provide the basis for the moral life to be constructed and is reserved to the role of ‘... means for constantly seeking to make explicit and to validate assumptions about ourselves and our context that are otherwise implicit in our understanding of our wants and their satisfaction’ (Hirst, 1999b: 111).

In order to introduce what I see as knowledge-unrelated theories of education, it is useful to review the philosophically based grounds for concentrating or not concentrating on knowledge-aims, concerning the objectivity and subjectivity of ethical values, following White (1990: 116-7). Even if ethical values rest on other values (e.g. keeping promises resting on not hindering others) we end up with values with no possible deeper justification. In a secular age we cannot appeal to theological underpinnings. Therefore, if there are no foundations for values, they can only express people’s preferences, individually or collectively. People’s preferences, and therefore ethical values, differ from individual to individual and from one community to another. If one starts education planning from conceptions of personal or social well – being, one can not help imposing one’s own values, or the values of some social group to which one belongs.

This can be seen as arbitrary and illegitimate and thus, educational planning should start from some other point. For this new starting point, we find the following

major division: Those who think that any external direction of the pupil is suspect, and those who do not think that. The first group looks for a solution in some version of 'progressive' or 'child-centred' education and they see children developing wholly from within, with guiding values written in their natures. The second group argues that the notion of innate values is incoherent and children without adult guidance court disaster. Therefore they seek some objective form of external direction that avoids the arbitrariness of beginning with ethical values. Knowledge as justified true belief is something objective, and in this way an obvious starting point of education. This second view also fears the danger of indoctrination when a start is made from ethical values and so thinks it better to concentrate on subject - matter (e.g. science, mathematics, etc). But as 'progressive' writers noted, starting the education planning from knowledge is to make also an arbitrary choice of values and we end up with a similar subjectivism as if starting from ethical values.

The progressive conception of education is characterized more closely by Paul Standish (1999) when contrasting it with the liberal one, by reference to three aims of education provided by more common analyses: '...first, to serve the needs of society; second, to pass on and develop those ways of knowing and understanding which are the common heritage; third, to help individual learners to develop, either through a process of unfolding from within or through an authentic creation of themselves (ibid: 35). The 'child-centred' movement was a reaction to a traditional authoritarian education '...commonly characterized in terms of formal methods of instruction and an authoritarian pedagogy, with the belief that education is primarily concern with the passing on of facts and skills' (ibid: 36). At first sight the liberal and progressive positions can be aligned with the second and third aims, Standish underlines that both are concerned with freeing the learner, rejecting an education that is primarily instrumental. Indeed progressivism focused more on the prescription of procedures and less on the content or the materials to be transmitted between teachers and learners. Counter arguments in this debate in favour of the progressive view can be found in John Darling (1982) as well as a more detailed characterization of the nuances in the positions of figures of this movement: Rousseau keeping a more indirect control of the learner, the more recent views of A.S. Neil and Carl Rogers

influenced by psychotherapy, Pestalozzi and Froebel. John Dewey in the USA can be seen as liberal, but is taken as a progressive by the Europeans (Standish, 1999: 35)¹.

Finally, as another ‘knowledge-unrelated view’, one can take the one presented by Paul Standish seeing the concept of education as complex and non-definable. He pictures education as centred in the good and this as ‘unsayable other than in opaque, negative and oblique ways’ (Standish, 1999: 47). This view is partially coincident with the position of this thesis, in relation to the use of the negative approach. But the consideration of opaque and oblique (e.g. literary) approaches will have to be carefully aware of the possible serious consequences of this view of the good as something ‘ineffable’: ‘Left ineffable it leaves too much room for platonic mystics, Christian theologians, deep ecologists and adherents of all kinds of exotic cosmologies to move into no man’s land – with all the risks of illiberal impositions that this brings with it’ (White, 1999: 187). On the other hand Standish correctly puts his finger on what I take to be one of the central issues, when in my view he categorically plays down the role of instrumental knowledge in the concept of education: ‘If an aim is an external end to which the means is related only instrumentally, then education in liberal terms is indeed aimless...’ (ibid: 48).

Now, we can summarize the difficulties of the different theories in providing substantive direction for the state and the families, for an education leading to the well – being of the person and the good life. The proponents of liberal rationalistic knowledge-centred theories concluded that reason by itself is not enough to guarantee the good life. The weaker versions of knowledge – related theories are forced to accept an important role for instrumental knowledge through the entrance door of autonomy or informed desire satisfaction. Maybe it is convenient to expand the explanation of what I mean by instrumental knowledge in this context. Instrumental knowledge is the kind of knowledge that is used as means to achieve further ends. If I have more instrumental knowledge of the world it is supposed that I can be more autonomous and I shall have better informed desires. On the important relationship of instrumental knowledge and autonomy, for a start, I take as strikingly illuminating the following quotation from Peter Gardner: ‘The ignorant are not *ipso*

¹ Dewey’s shift from a religious to a biological perspective on education fundamentally concerned with the unlimited growth of the individual, is registered by White (1982: 13-4).

facto heteronomous and well informed and autonomous is not a tautology' (Gardner, 1988: 99).

I am not at all suggesting that we can live without instrumental knowledge and schools should not teach it. What I have been asserting is that such a process is a pedagogical process that should not in any way override the more complex and important aspects of the educational process. Further the views of education as a complex composite of values, knowledge and skills, accepted and imposed instrumental knowledge by definition. The problem is that because the acquisition of instrumental knowledge is relatively easy, in comparison with character formation (correct inner dispositions), it overrides the concern with the latter. The process that I am highlighting here is the pedagogical one that I consider as already very well known and successful. The theory of education as initiation into social practices leaves to a great extent such social practices undefined. As for the knowledge-unrelated theories, the child-centred movement failed to clearly define what it is that should be put above the place of instrumental knowledge. Education approaching the good as 'unsayable' sidetracks the difficulties by assuming them irremovable and retreats to opaque and oblique ways of action.

Such difficulties lead me into the following argument. It seems not to be uncontroversial that contemporary societies, due to social and technological developments, came to be 'instrumental knowledge based' in their economical and therefore work spheres. It is quite acceptable that in order to function in these societies individuals must be equipped with instrumental knowledge of a certain complexity. Also it is easily acceptable that a major role should be played in this process by the schooling systems. It follows that the schooling systems must be highly successful in providing for the 'instrumental knowledge based' society without which such society cannot function. But instrumental knowledge very often concerns primarily the involvement of pedagogy and reason. As acknowledged by the liberal knowledge-centred theorists and their critics, reason *per se* does not lead to the good life. On the other hand character formation and morality that brings it about and underpins the good life is not subject to the trivial and easier instruction process that involves instrumental knowledge.

Character formation (preservation of inner dispositions and virtues acquisition) comes about in complex ways, which the educational theories mentioned above seem to fail to clarify. It is understandable in this framework that in the absence of substantive direction, families and state present the following features: First, they concentrate on the process of instrumental knowledge acquisition which is indispensable for the operation of the society and strive to maintain themselves afloat in the flood and voracious acceleration of its permanent increase. Second, they expect that good character formation is developed in an ineffable way and attempt to support the process as much as possible by including subjects in the curriculum like religious education and citizenship education; third, in good faith and certain despair, they attempt to foster as much as possible that ineffable process of good kinds of character formation acquisition, by introducing the word ‘education’ into the subjects of the curriculum concerned with instrumental knowledge (e.g. physical education, mathematics education, science education and languages education). Fourth, they exhaust and intensify the trivialisation of the concept of education by introducing the word in the greatest possible number of ways in public and private discourse (e.g. ministry of education, early years education, higher education, choosing a better school for a better education, the newspaper supplement of education, etc.). Fifth, when in crisis of lack of values or shocking social events, they turn to the schooling system and demand solutions by ‘teaching right and wrong’ the way the other items of the curriculum are so successfully taught. Sixth, after these events and without consistent solutions or ways of thinking in them, they relapse to the previous state and concentrate again on standards, achievement and prizes, hoping for the best.

I will argue in the next section that the important part of education as a process² to develop good inner dispositions and virtues (character formation) does indeed takes place permanently, everywhere and in an ineffable way. It is this learning process that keeps us functioning as persons in a healthy or not too unhealthy ethical environment. The opportunities for good or bad character formation to shape the person’s character happen all the time and everywhere. As also remarked by Standish (1999), the opportunities to do good in simple ways are many and happen daily. But as said before, such an educational process happens in many complex ways making it

² By process is designated a ‘series of actions or operations in order to do, make or achieve something’.

difficult to identify. Very often, theories of education allow, even if only partially, the entrance of instrumental knowledge – instruction - by making it a part of the concept of education. In this way they may frequently legitimize a supposed higher-level interest in that instrumental knowledge. Such interest now reinforced and legitimized, understandably, overruns any efforts and interest in the difficult and more undetectable process of the development of inner dispositions and virtues (character formation). It is what we may call the tension between ‘instruction’ and ‘formation’ or ‘development of virtues’. Therefore, a less carefully demarcated presence of instrumental knowledge in a theory of education fosters the already enormous potential of interest in it and blurs and buries deeper the development of virtues process. My claim is that a substantive direction for good character formation is possible via the analysis of the presence of seven sources of disorder. To this task I turn now in the next section.

1.2 Absence of Disorder and ‘the way to do or say’

In the present attempt I conceive education as the process of bringing about a ‘sustained ethical environment’ (Haydon, 2003a). It is interesting to note here that we move, for the moment, from characterizing education as an individual process as in forming the character of the individual – to characterizing it as a social process – since bringing about an ethical environment is necessarily something that involves more than one person. The two are not incompatible, and that is itself an important point. This ethical environment is provided by the absence of the forms of disorder. The desirable consequence of this process is educated people or, ethically autonomous people. This takes the broadest view possible that we are continuously in interaction with others, the natural world and with ourselves. Instruction is a much more narrow process that involves conveying to a learner the possibility for acquisition of skills and understanding, through the manipulation and expansion of instrumental knowledge, possibly with the help of a teacher or instructor. Under the banner of education authors like Bruner (1960) tend to focus on this process of instruction concerning ‘an understanding of the fundamental structure of whatever subject we choose to teach’, as underlined by Cherryholmes (1988: 475).

In contrast I follow the view of philosophers and thinkers for whom the main concern of education is morality and the good life. Amelie Rorty (1998b: 238) echoes Rousseau's claim that education is in the first instance moral education and its main concern is the person's active psychology. The good life as being the moral life, is also assumed by Paul Hirst (1999b: 108). Richard Peters (1966: 31) points out that a good scientist might not be an educated person. John Locke always stressed that the aim of education is to produce a healthy virtuous person (Yolton, 1998: 177) and this he persistently reaffirmed as more important than instruction in specific subjects (ibid: 184). Finally, for Socrates the aim of education is to 'build in the soul a set of value preferences or moral predispositions'; also, moral education is the only defensible aim and is closely related to healing in the sense that the 'healthy soul has order and form' (Guttek, 1972: 34).

Apparently, in this last paragraph, we have gone back to seeing the aim of education as individual rather than environmental (social). Acknowledging this, I take the opportunity to stress that it is important not to overlook the relationship of the individual and social dimensions of this view of education. As said before, education as an individual process is concerned with the person character formation. But such educational process takes place in a social context, characterized by a certain ethical environment. Each individual starts by being raised in the context of a certain maternity. This is done in a certain social context and ethical environment. It is also in a context of specific social practices, that an individual is raised and lives. But we must acknowledge that individual psychological dispositions are complex in themselves. Adding to this, it seems that it is also in many complex ways that such individual psychological dispositions interact through social practices with the ethical environment. In here I try to focus predominantly in the Socratic order, the nature of the self and the kind of social practices that may better harmonize with the letter in order to bring about the former.

I now look at this Socratic 'order and form of the soul' and attempt to see what is the nature of the interaction or relationship that can bring it about. The procedure is first to see the general process of interaction and consider its content in form and

substance³. The formal part of the process can be denoted by the following words or expressions: manner; principles of procedure; means; ‘the way it is said or done’. Correspondingly, the substantive part of the process of interaction can be denoted by: matter; ends; substance of the procedure; ‘what it is said or done’. My argument now starts by asserting that the nature of education is more centred in the formal part of the content. Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (1989: 315) explaining the Aristotelian concepts of *phronesis* as moral knowledge and *techne* as the skill and knowledge of the craftsman remarks that both are practical knowledge and they function to determine and guide action. And further on Gadamer mentions the ‘conceptual relation between means and ends’ to better distinguish moral from technical knowledge. On the one hand moral knowledge has no particular end and is concerned with the good life in general. On the other hand technical knowledge is always particular and concerns particular ends. Thus he notes that ‘Aristotle’s definitions of *phronesis* have a marked uncertainty about them, in that this knowledge is sometimes related more to the end, and sometimes more to the means to the end’. And in a footnote he reinforces and elaborates this by remarking further that ‘Aristotle says in general that *phronesis* is concerned with the means (*ta pros to telos*) and not with the telos itself’ (ibid: 320-1). It follows from this, as widely recognized, that moral knowledge cannot be taught in the way that technical knowledge can. Another particular conclusion by Gadamer is the following: ‘Moral knowledge is really knowledge of a special kind. In a curious way it embraces both means and ends’ (ibid: 322). Also important is to mention scientific knowledge, *episteme* as belonging to the area of instrumental knowledge.

For my purpose here, which concerns education and its demarcation, I leave on the side the discussion of the relations and distinction made by Aristotle in his *Ethics* between *phronesis*, *episteme* and *techne*⁴. I will consider that scientific knowledge as well as technological knowledge both materialize in a transaction through ‘what is said or done’. I therefore assign both *techne* and *episteme* to instrumental

³ Content is taken here, as ‘that which is contained in something’ which includes *form* and *substance*.

⁴ An account of such relations can be found in Bramall, S. N. (1998), *Hermeneutic Understanding and the Liberal Aims of Education*. Unpublished PHD, Thesis University of London Institute of Education, London..

knowledge. It is mainly on the formal process that I focus my attention and I locate in it *phronesis* or moral knowledge, concerning 'the way that is said or done'.

Considering the absence of the forms of disorder as the central aim of education is to consider the formal part of the process as the end. Procedures as the means, and aims as the ends then turn out to be two sides of the same coin. Means and ends merge. We then can say that the means is an end and vice-versa. A position emerges that we can say that as far as education is concerned, the more important thing in the transaction is not 'what is said or done' but 'the way it is said or done'. The process might include, simultaneously, an interest in 'what is said or done' but this is the concern of instrumental needs of communication and therefore, information transference. It is the quality of this transaction that constitutes the more important aim of education. The relevant questions then are: 'Is a social practice contaminated by some degree of disorder?' Or, irrespective of its substance, is a social practice disorder free?

John White (1982: 6,7) focuses on this problem when discussing the place of aims versus the 'principles of procedure'. But the interesting thing here is that without a clear fixed agenda for these 'principles of procedure' White cannot confer on them the status of aims ascribed to the syllabus or some philosophical normative procedure. The curriculum, in a restricted sense, is poorly effective in teaching how to be benevolent and the philosophical normative would have to deal with a swampy positive approach to 'the good'. He restricts them to a somehow more circumscribed private area of the teacher's intention as an individual: 'Among the most important things that a teacher teaches are, for instance, a respect for rationality, benevolence and tolerance; but these are not written down in syllabuses but enshrined in the very manner in which he conducts his lessons' (ibid: 6).

And further on: 'As for the emphasis on principles of procedure this takes it for granted that the teacher wants to instil in his pupils a respect for rationality, benevolence or whatever. In so far as he does mean it, this is what he is aiming at. The fact that he tries to bring about this aim not by textbook instruction but by a certain manner of teaching does nothing to show that he has no aims, or that aims are less important than people have sometimes thought' (ibid.). This allows for some

important remarks: First the difficulties of relating procedural or formal aims to the overt curriculum; Second, action is ascribed to the teacher in a self determined, voluntary way originating in what the teacher in his own character considers to be important aims; Third, the aims of benevolence and so on can be approached in an explicit way by for example direct dialogue, but most important of all is that they are enshrined in the form (manner) adopted by the teacher to conduct the lesson; Fourth, aims attached to the form of the action or ‘the way that it actually is done and said’, can be clearly recognized here.

Nevertheless, I think that an important feature should be underlined further: if the aims are embedded in the form of procedure, they cannot be presented in an insincere overt or hidden way, like for example a theatrical representation of benevolence. But this must be enshrined or done via the natural action of the teacher. A sincere, overt theatrical representation can occasionally be very useful; in order for this to happen the teacher has to be a benevolent person himself as is pointed out very commonly by philosophers and in virtue ethics. Though a teacher can have an intention of pretending to be benevolent it is not only useless but also counterproductive – since this would be the form of disorder ‘corruption’ with the added characteristic of deception that make it hypocrisy, in action - to act as in some sort of untrue way; what is relevant is the need for the teacher to have the inner dispositions, which make her or him actually benevolent in a humane, consistent way.

By this humane consistency and sincerity I mean one that rejects any striving for perfection or aspiration to become perfect. On the contrary it accommodates the unavoidable imperfection, incompleteness, misinterpretation. In a sense this ‘imperfection’ represents the human limitations performed unintentionally. Intention is therefore the main characteristic to look for, together with what I will call ‘the nobility of imperfection’. Such insufficiencies are what ground us in our human dimension, having the noble mission of eschewing perfectionism as the good for the person. So a consistently humane teacher is one that also shows in his action the accommodation of imperfection and deals with it in a noble way. This seems to be, I say, one of the most important aspects of educating through teaching.

It is convenient now to explain and determine better in the context of the schooling system, what is meant by 'hidden curriculum' and how it operates. Maybe we can identify to some extent a certain broad view of the hidden curriculum with the formal process and so with the presence or absence of the forms of disorder. And I identified the overt curriculum with the substantive process of instrumental knowledge, which can be more of a scientific or technological kind. I give to the concept of hidden curriculum of course a much broader sense than in the usual discussion of curriculum. Lawrence Kohlberg opens his philosophical and psychological approach to moral education with a direct reference to the hidden curriculum: 'My first chapter starts out by noting that, like it or not, teachers are moral educators (or miseducators) as creators of the "hidden curriculum" of the moral climate of the classroom' (Kohlberg, 1981: 1). Another important view on this issue can be found in Jane Roland Martin's paper 'What should we do with a hidden curriculum when we find one?' (1976). She starts with basic definitions: 'Implicit in the hidden curriculum talk, moreover, is a contrast between hidden curriculum and what for want of a better name I will call curriculum proper.... The contrast is between what it is openly intended that students learn and what, although not openly intended, they do, in fact, learn'.

These definitions are compatible with my view. The difference is that for Jane Martin the hidden curriculum represents some sort of more restricted agenda with sources like the social structure of the classroom or the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student. That agenda includes only the negative aspects in the classroom as can be inferred from the title. In this sense she mentions that the hidden curriculum in public schooling in the United States, is abhorrent. These aspects, you can eventually spot and deal with. My proposed view is that not only 'bad' but also 'good' is transmitted via the hidden curriculum in the broadest sense possible. But her most valuable and important conclusion must remain intact: the way to deal with a bad hidden curriculum is to bring it up to conscious level for inspection.

In an example of its broadness, taking the concept of hidden curriculum in a brief comparison with the process of education in the family, it may be said that what is many times more important for the process of education is what is not said rather than

what is said. The most relevant things, either good or bad, may be present by the silence of their absence. Therefore the process of education is an intense and extensive one, relegating the process of instruction to a much more restricted role. Betty Sichel (1988: 72, 79) expresses this more generalized character by saying that moral education occurs from birth and ‘its aims are embedded within and overlay all of education’. Also ‘Hegel’s conception of Bildung is clearly broader than our usual conception of “education”, which has to do with the activities of schools and their pupils, teachers or tutors (including parents) and their students, whether they are children, or adolescents, or adults’ (Wood, 1998: 311)

I now try to expand the explanatory capacity of these views on the characterization of the aim of education using two more examples. One of these can be taken from Michael Oakeshott’s account of his experience with his gymnastics army instructor: ‘And if you were to ask me the circumstances in which patience, accuracy, elegance, and style first dawned upon me, I would have to say that I did not come to recognize them in literature, in argument or in geometrical proof until I had first recognised them elsewhere; and that I owed this recognition to a sergeant gymnastics instructor who lived long before the days of ‘physical education’ and for whom gymnastics was an intellectual art – and I owe it to him, not on account of anything he ever said, but because he was a man of patience, accuracy, economy, elegance and style’ (Oakeshott, 1967, p. 176)

What was the nature of the core transactions, relationship or social practices with their ‘complex inter-related packages of such elements as knowledge, beliefs, criteria of success, judgments, values, activities, skills, dispositions, virtues, sensations and emotions’ (Hirst, 1999b: 115) that caused such an impression on the author of those words? The complexities and elements involved in such transactions or social practices are remarkably well described in a compact way by Hirst and give an instant picture of the difficulties of characterizing and mapping the interplay of such elements in the continuum of daily practices. Would such positive and sensitive memories be possible if forms of disorder e.g. violence or fear, so common in the kind of environment where the reported experience took place – were in some way dominantly present? Was Oakeshott’s sergeant just an instructor, a pedagogue, a vocational trainer, directing typical military drills, or did he happen to be

simultaneously an educator? Did he act in an educated way? The many and complex elements of the Hirstian social practices interplayed with a similar set of elements in Oakeshott's dispositions when participating in such social practices. Did this interplay of practices and dispositions created the possibility for good character formation to take place? Where should we look to grasp the key of what happened in such an ethical environment? My view is that the form – 'the way of saying or doing' – is the place to look for an answer. This seems to be in line with Oakeshott's remark that what was so special in the sergeant was '... not on account of anything he ever said ...' making us turn our attention to the 'way that it was said'. In such transactions or social practices' the main characteristic and the important one for education is the relative absence of the forms of disorder in the "the way to say or do" with which we engage in social practices.

In contrast with this example we can examine a, now, fictional similar one. Consider a teacher with 'an inflated ego' (Hirst, 1974: 105), possibly not a very rare situation, introducing in class the poem 'I'm nobody! Who are you?'⁵. Suppose that the quality of the interaction – the 'the way to say or do' - or social practices is contaminated by a sense of superiority, eventually derived from the teacher's position of power in the class and eventually reinforced by the differential of knowledge in literature obviously in his favor, established through very subtle – maybe the more sincere and therefore effective ones – signs of non verbal communication (intonation of words, body language, etc.).

Comparison, through a superiority and inferiority relationship may in fact undermine the core message of the poetess. More than that, students might come to dislike literature altogether. Not only Emily Dickinson but also poetry as a whole. Would these students remember this experience the way Oakeshott remembered his? Is not this teacher just an instructor falling short of an educator? A teacher is not and cannot be a neutral instructor. Like all of us in our daily life, a teacher is a creator of entropy or of its absence, contaminating with it the environment and the students. It happens that the 'substance' of the transaction – what it is said or done - is a beautiful

⁵ I'm nobody! Who are you? / Are you nobody too? / Then there's a pair of us / Don't tell! – They'd advertise, you know. // How dreary to be somebody! / How public like a frog / to tell one's name the live long June / To an admiring bog!, in Dickinson, E. *Emily Dickinson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

poem. But a form of disorder, which is comparison by feelings of superiority, dominates the ‘the way to say or do’ – ‘the way it is said or done’ – and undermines the whole relationship. We therefore identify here the open substantive process and, a hidden substance welded to the formal process. This ‘the way to say or do’ I see as the degree of presence or absence of the forms of disorder. The form is the means and the absence of the forms of disorder as its substance is the educational end, thoroughly entangled in each other. Therefore means and ends merge into one entity, as remarked by Gadamer.

It is interesting to put this view in perspective with certain kinds of stories drawn from ex-students. It is possible, fortunately, to come across someone saying that her school life was unhappy or dull until she met a certain teacher who dramatically changed that. Sometimes these ex-students became very interested in the subject taught by that teacher, or even themselves became teachers of it. The question is what was special about those teachers? Very often the answers are of the type: ‘He or she made me feel good and the classes were very pleasurable; I admired her very much for all that she transmitted to me’. And if pressed further: ‘She or he was a good, loving and caring person with a great ability to make you interested in the subject’ or, ‘I felt worthwhile and I respected her’ and finally, an elucidating ‘I don’t know... I hardly can describe it in words’. The curious thing about all these statements is that they are general and vague. From them we can’t conclude much to help us to know in fact what happened that was so important. My contention here is that the difficulties and vagueness of these descriptions is understandable. The reason, as I see it, is that the most important in those interactions was the result of something systematically absent - something inexplicable or ‘unsayable’ – for now I will leave it like that: undefined and unexplained. My contention is that it was the absence of disorder and its forms and shades, of the ‘way of saying or doing’, that the social practices had, that made them so powerfully important. The means are the ends, as stated by Gadamer. If the language of paradox can be of any help, one can say that it doesn’t matter what you say, it only matters how you say it, even if what you say is about the way that you say it.

As for instruction, it is useful to look at its etymology: it comes from *in-struere* or ‘to build into’ (Rorty, 1998a: 11). It is therefore the domain of *episteme* or *techné*.

It concerns the 'built into' of instrumental knowledge; training or drilling can do this. Its aim has to do with the instrumental needs of life and is therefore, I argue, a minor concern in education. Paul Hager (1994: 400) gives an account of the trivial fallacy of the distinction between the so called vocational education and 'genuine' education entailing: 'body vs. mind, hand vs. head, manual vs. mental, skills vs. knowledge, applied vs. pure, knowing how vs. knowing that, practice vs. theory, particular vs. general, and training vs. education'. This is all part of the substantive process, dealing exclusively with instrumental knowledge and instruction. Therefore it is not the important part of education aiming at absence of disorder and the formal process. If philosophers and philosophers of education have no clear agreement about what is education, the same cannot be said so categorically when they take the *via negativa* to assert that instruction in itself is not education: 'Aquinas distinguished carefully between *educatio*, informal education, *disciplina*, formal schooling (Guttek, 1972: 97); 'Augustine concludes his assault on the knowledge – transfer model of education by pointing out cases in which speech does not convey to the hearer the thoughts of the speaker' (Quinn, 1998: 85); For Jefferson it is lost time to attend lessons on moral education (Brann, 1998: 278); And Socrates in the *Meno* asserts that '...virtue will be acquired neither by nature nor by teaching...' (Plato, 1961: 383). Finally Rousseau emphasised this point when he referred to instruction, borrowing an expression from the Italian language: 'Qui no c'e la radice' (here is not the root) (Rousseau, 1993: 107).

We have now a clearer view of education under absence of disorder. We are also armed with the concept of 'the way to do or say' with which we engage in social practices. Let's look now closer to the different aspects of personal well-being taken as the aim of education.

2 –Personal Well - Being as the Aim of Education

Is ‘to live well’, necessarily ‘to be a good person’? How can we produce a concept of well-being that helps educators to bring up children to live well, implying by that living in a virtuous way? These seem to be central questions for an attempt at formulation of a conception of education for well-being. This is the problem of the tensions between personal well-being and morality or self-interest and the public good. John White highlights this important difficulty when he remarks: ‘A familiar problem that arises from making the promotion of personal autonomy the only aim of the educator is that this seems to leave morality out of account’. And further on he points out: ‘As we shall see, too, it is through investigating well-being that we shall be able to throw light on the relation between education for autonomy and education for moral goodness; for the underlying issue here is whether well-being includes or excludes moral goodness’ (White, 1990: 28).

In the first section I start to look at the reasons why personal well-being should be central for education. Secondly I engage in a preliminary examination of the main theories of well-being and their characteristics. I follow the most common main division of the theories of well-being into hedonism, desire satisfaction and objective lists. In the third section, due to difficulties in defining positively well-being; a research in the negative area is attempted. The search becomes therefore not for what is good, but instead, for what is not good. Defining the good life in a positive way raises enormous

difficulties. Therefore in this final section I give an account of some of those difficulties and of the benefits of approaching the issue in a negative way.

This will provide the base to approach in the next chapter, more closely, absence of disorder as a view of personal well-being with some potential interest for education.

2.1 The Importance of Well-Being for Education

What is it that makes personal well being so important for education and for its aims? Why should personal well-being, be the central aim of education - the one from which all other aims of education and procedures should derive and be subjected to? These are the main questions to be briefly addressed in this section.

The well – being of the person and its interrelations with morality, autonomy and knowledge has been a persistent interest of John White (White, 1990: 11). Already in his early work on the aims of education he noted that: ‘It is not exaggeration to say that until now the official wisdom among educators and educationists alike has been that education should centrally (if not wholly) promote the well – being of the pupil’ (White, 1982: 27). But where is the justification for this centrality of well-being? Later on, in his inaugural lecture delivered at the Institute of Education University of London, White focuses on the issue again and he initially notes: ‘The concept of personal well – being is central to thought about the aims of education. In bringing up children, the skills, attitudes and kinds of knowledge that we are transmitting to them are intended, among other things, to help them to lead flourishing lives. So it is essential to be as clear as we can about what it is to lead a flourishing life, or, to put the same thing another way, about what the concept of personal well-being involves’ (White, 1995: 3). Then we can ask the question ‘what is a flourishing life and the source of it?’ And White puts the question: ‘What would it mean to say that the source of personal flourishing is found in Reality, natural or supernatural?’ (Ibid.8). But could one conceive a flourishing life without good – morality? It seems that human beings have to be understood as living with other human beings, in relationship with each other and the natural world. And the Aristotelean view (Aristotle, 1984) that one’s own flourishing is closely related to and influenced by the flourishing of our family, friends and the political community in

general has been of great influence over time, it still is influential in contemporary philosophy in 2006.

Martha Nussbaum, Charles Taylor, Alasdair McIntyre and Joseph Raz, are among those that ‘... have converged in different ways on the view that personal well-being is to be understood against a larger, social framework’ (Ibid, 6). If religions can appeal to some sort of a cosmic framework as the source of ethical values, within which what is perceived as the will of God is what determines what is right or wrong, what sort of source can a secular person appeal to? White rejects the religious stance and also the answer given to this question by Iris Murdoch - seen as a quasi-religious one - by those who would argue for a still more secular answer rooted in human nature. Murdoch presents something like a ‘Platonic Form of the Good’ as an account of a ‘non-theistic stand-in for God’ in her works *The Sovereignty of the Good* and *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Murdoch, 1992; Murdoch, 2001). White sees it as difficult to attach sense, probably because of its vagueness, to the view that the universe is the locus of a source of value. As for the innate view, it attaches the source of values to human nature itself – ‘as in ideas of innate goodness underpinning theories of child development’ (Ibid, 7-8). John White refers here to the child-centered educational theories of Rousseauian inspiration. These views take the biological metaphor of the child as a natural seed that contains in it the good ready to unfold as long as it is properly cared by a ‘gardener’. He himself returned recently to this issue of the possibility of innate concepts to argue convincingly against this view, in favor of a conception of Wittgensteinian influence. He recognizes the importance of a stage of ‘sign-cognition’, innate in the child. Such a state, allows for the initiation of the process of acquisition of concepts. This is made in a simultaneous complex way that evolves by itself, during the interactions of the child with the world. But concepts by themselves, are not recognized as innate (White, 2002a, Ch. 2).

In denying a connection between ethical values and a natural or supernatural world, White says: ‘Ethical values, including values associated with personal well-being are, as far as I can see, through and through a product of our human world. They have been developed across human time in response to our needs and desires as biological creatures and our interest as social beings in creating congenial forms of communal life. If you ask me why friendship is a good thing, or sexual pleasure, or concern for the needy, or

personal autonomy, my answer will have to be in those terms. There is no need to appeal to a deeper basis in the ultimate nature of things – and neither, as I say, is it clear what any such appeal would mean’ (Ibid, 8). This is also the view that I will take as the bedrock for ethical values and consequently for the life lived well, or lived as the good life. Nevertheless, I intend to revisit the ideas of Iris Murdoch on love, in my last chapter, that I think will be useful to further on scaffold such a view of the foundation of morality and the well-being of the person. It would be very difficult to justify a central aim for education different from personal well-being. What would that central aim be? Indeed, scanning for examples in the table of possible aims of education provided by Gingell and Winch, one can see that all of them can be seen as promoting the good of the person and the good of society, which will be reflected at a personal level. Such aims are presented in three possible ways: a) Concerned with the needs of society and with the needs of individuals; b) Instrumental versus intrinsic aims; c) Liberal versus vocational aims (Gingell and Winch, 1999: 13).

Aims of education like the promotion of autonomy of the person, the preservation of a society’s culture or even the promotion of economic development, can easily be seen as justified by nothing else but the promotion, in the end of it all, of the well-being of the person. Such centrality of the concept of well-being in education, has been recognized in British policy documents, namely, in the statement of Values, Aims and Purposes of the school curriculum found at the beginning of the post – 2000 National Curriculum Handbook (White, 2002b: 661). But recognition of the importance of personal well-being in education and having a clear and helpful picture, for policy makers, parents and educationalists, of what that is, are two distinct things. The many difficulties can be seen by starting to look, from a philosophical point of view, at some theories of well-being and at the concept of happiness.

2.2 The Main Theories of Well – Being

I will approach the theories on well-being from the more commonly accepted division of these theories into hedonist theories, desire theories and objective list theories, although this division may not be considered rigid (Crisp, 2003: 1). The concept of well-being itself, Roger Crisp notes is used in philosophy to explain what is

ultimately good for a person and therefore has a non-instrumental character. From a philosophical point of view the person's well-being is what is 'good for' the person and is in their 'self-interest' and not in the interest of the others. In more common parlance the term well-being can be more restricted according to the context. As in a reference to health in the normal day-to-day activity of a surgery, the Doctor may regularly ask: 'and how are you, have you been feeling well?' But philosophically Crisp also remarks that the term can be used negatively to refer to someone in pain and therefore lacking well-being. As closely related terms he refers to 'welfare' and 'happiness' - the former connected to how a person is faring as a whole. The latter may be understood as in classical utilitarianism inaugurated by Jeremy Bentham, as consisting of the balance between good and bad things in a person's life (ibid.). Crisp dismisses the convenience of the use of 'happiness' and says that: 'When discussing the notion of what makes life good for the individual living that life, it is preferable to use the term 'well-being' instead of 'happiness' (ibid. 2). I take it that the use of words in this context, especially for education, is not a small matter. Because next, Crisp also mentions as possible alternative terms, the Greek word *eudaimonia* and the term 'flourishing'. This last one is widely used in discussion of education. Commonly translated as 'happiness', *eudaimonia* presents the same problems. Crisp also mentions the inconvenience of the fact that the word refers exclusively to human beings, since the ancient Greeks did not see the animals as having the possibility of being *eudaimon*. I agree with Crisp when he defends the preservation of the possibility for the life of an animal and even a plant to be considered 'good for', at least, that animal or plant.

But more important to education is to look at the word 'flourishing' when used as a synonym of well-being and as an alternative to happiness. Roger Crisp says the following about it: 'An alternative here might be 'flourishing', though this might be taken to bias the analysis of human well-being in the direction of some kind of natural teleology' (ibid.). Indeed, 'flourishing' seems to imply that a life well lived is like the blooming of a flower - a movement, action that unfolds from inside and that should be permanent and desirable in it self, towards some end. We seem to be inevitably close to the biological metaphor, dear to child-centered educators' views, of the seed resident in the child, which must unfold if properly cared for by a gardener. But now it is the person that must be 'active' in a movement for a better or a more perfect state. A permanent movement towards a *telos*, never completely reached, seen as an always-higher

perfection. Certain unrest is welcomed. I would say, for the moment, that the complex state of affairs that can conveniently be represented by the word ‘flourishing’ pulls us in exactly the opposite direction of what is required for well-being. This will be addressed more directly in several parts of this chapter. In agreement with Roger Crisp, and with special concern for education, I consider then that the word ‘well-being’ is the one that correctly expresses the concept, and other words used as synonymous present great inconveniences when replacing it.

Derek Parfit on the three main types of well – being theories, also calls them theories about self-interest, and provides the following brief definition: ‘*On Hedonistic Theories* what would be best for someone is what would make his life happiest. *On Desire-Fulfillment Theories*, what would be best for someone is what, through-out his life, would best fulfill his desires. *On Objective List Theories*, certain things are bad or good for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things’ (Parfit, 1984: 493). He starts to distinguish narrow hedonism from preference hedonism. Narrow hedonism, as a simpler form of balancing pleasure and pain bearing in mind the ordinary use of these words, considers that pleasure and pain are two different kinds of experience. And this, Parfit takes to be false since different situations of pleasure - like for example listening to music, solving an intellectual problem or knowing that one’s child is happy – do not have any common quality. Preference hedonism is a more sophisticated version that takes into account that pleasures and pains have a common relation, and that is made possible through our desires. Under this view it is therefore possible to prefer or desire something that can bring more pain than pleasure in order to fulfill a second order desire. And Parfit retrieves an example presented by Griffin: Freud, at the end of his life, refused to take pain - killers because the drugs would prevent him from thinking clearly, which he preferred. So a preference hedonist would claim that Freud’s life was better since it went according to his preference (ibid., 493-4). Tracing the roots of the hedonistic views, Roger Crisp mentions the Platonic dialogue *Protagoras* and Socrates as being the first to espouse such views (Plato, 1976). And in the recent tradition of philosophical utilitarianism, hedonism is in Jeremy Bentham who opens his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, stating that: ‘Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do’. And further on Crisp makes it more precise that what makes pleasure good and

pain bad is: 'The pleasantness of pleasure, and the painfulness of pain' (Crisp, 2003: 5). Bentham's version of hedonism seems to fall into the narrow view stated above. And Thomas Carlyle described the hedonistic component of utilitarianism as the 'philosophy of swine', because it places all pleasures at the same level (ibid., 6).

An elaboration of this more simple hedonism of Bentham based on duration and intensity as the two properties that determine value, was presented by John Stuart Mill. He introduced a third property to characterize 'quality', distinguishing between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures (Mill, 2000: ch. 2). One objection is raised about what is a high or a low pleasure? Mill suggests that would be decided by 'competent judges' that would be experienced in both types of pleasures (ibid.). But a next objection consists in a thought experiment. This consists in admitting the possibility of someone being plugged into a 'pleasure machine' or 'experience machine' that would give one the most pleasurable experiences desired by the person⁶. Would it be wise from the point of view of the person's well-being to plug the person to the machine? This suggests several objections: in the machine you can have the sensation of friendship but you can't have a friend; also a loss of autonomy and a state of dependency could take place; there is a difference between fulfillment and pleasure. Finally we would have to ask what experience or pleasure would mean in this context? Another objection, to hedonism in general, is the intricacy of comparing and measuring the pleasures of different courses of action. As noted by C. Wringer this causes: '... the alleged absurdity of the 'hedonic calculus' and the idea of calculating the relative amounts of happiness or misery caused by this course of action or that' (Wringer, 1988: 28-9)

Finally, in an attempt to summarize the hedonistic arguments, narrow or preferential, these may come down to the saying that no matter what we do, it all ends up by being for pleasure and in the interest of the agent and there can be no rational action outside that. Such a declaration seems to be equivalent to the admission in the mission statement of a corporation operating in the market that its purpose, after all, is to generate a profit. Therefore we don't have to investigate anything further, because necessarily we will fall on the previous end result. This would not add anything new, because profit is in the first place the reason for any corporation to exist and it is redundant to state that. So profit is the ground where necessarily everything must fall. Similarly there is nothing

⁶ The kind of experience that is described in Aldous Huxley's novel, *Brave New World*.

new is saying that all our actions are, in the end, motivated by self-interest and pleasure. It seems dispensable to say that a person seeks to be in well-being. The opposite would be very odd and counter to common sense. Without a careful conceptualization of what is meant by 'self-interest' or 'pleasure', these are words that may stand only for well-being. And, indeed, well-being seems to be the common ground where everything will have to fall. But well-being is what is most urgently in need of being convincingly described. And hedonism seems to leave that description, and its complexities, on the side by concentrating solely on the more obvious end result or, as I called it, inevitable common ground. This is an important point, because this hedonist 'reduction argument' resurfaces frequently not only in philosophical debate, but also in the more general educational one. It seems then that the hedonistic views are not convincing as a representation of personal well-being.

The remaining two general theories, desire theories and objective list theories, are seen nowadays as the main contenders to be more promising in the exploration of personal well-being (White, 2002c: 3). It seems that developments of welfare economics are responsible for the importance given to desire theories (Crisp, 2003: 7). Since pleasure and pain are inside people's heads and it is difficult to assess and measure them, economists developed 'utility functions' for individuals. These are used to rank the preferences of individuals. Using, for example, money as a standard, methods of assessment of individual preference-satisfaction were developed. Therefore, the satisfaction of people's preferences or desires began to be seen by economists as the well-being of the person (ibid.). Given the prominence of economic views in present societies, it is useful to register the remarks of John White on this: 'At the level of national economics we have become used these days to equate an increase in people's well-being with an increase in their ability to consume goods and services' (White, 1990: 31). And White adds that considering us as simple 'economic men' balancing the total satisfaction of different possible courses of action is against what we know to be human nature (ibid.). Indeed the economists' view of well-being, though serving their specific purposes, by being based on the satisfaction of materialistic desires, seems to be an impoverished view for educational purposes.

On desire theories, Roger Crisp mentions four versions of increasing degrees of sophistication: present desire theory, comprehensive desire theory, a global version of

the comprehensive desire theory, and the informed desire version of the comprehensive theory (Ibid.8) The *present desire theory* being the simplest version, states that my life is better off simply because the satisfaction of my current desires is fulfilled. This seems to leave out the need to fulfill second order desires like protecting my health. Satisfaction of desires like smoking, drugs or indulging in food, according to the theory, would make me live better. Considering now the *comprehensive desire theory*, what counts as the well-being of the person is the overall level of desire-satisfaction taking into account life as a whole. Interesting here is the so-called *summative* view of this theory according to which the more desire-fulfillment the better, because of the counter example presented by Dereck Parfit (1984: 497). Parfit, proposes a thought experiment which is to increase enormously the well-being of the person who accepts the summative desire theory by offering him daily, free of charge and in unlimited supply, a drug that will cause him strong addiction. Such a drug will not bring him extra pleasure but will avoid the suffering of not having it by fulfilling the strong desire then created. The sum of desires satisfied, repeated daily, would outweigh the desire to be cured and not to become an addict, and therefore one's life would go better. As noted by Parfit: 'This conclusion is not plausible' (ibid.).

In an attempt to overcome the above difficulties, a move is made into a *global* version of the comprehensive theory. Such a theory takes into account the fact that the satisfaction of some desires is more important than others, for the well-being of a life as a whole. Thus it is more important to desire not to be dependent on a drug than being able to fulfill the intense desire for that drug repeatedly. But Roger Crisp introduces a counter-example as follow: 'But now consider the case of the *orphan monk*. This young man began training to be a monk at the earliest age, and has lived a very sheltered life. He is now offered three choices: he can remain a monk, or become either a cook or a gardener outside the monastery, at a grange. He has no conception of the latter alternatives, so chooses to remain a monk' (Crisp, 2003: 8). And here Crisp remarks that surely the young monk could eventually have the possibility to live better outside the monastery. But he is not sufficiently informed about the other alternatives and therefore his decision is narrowed in a way that does not serve his best interests. The young monk has not the tools, or is not equipped to choose in an informed way. Or as it seems to be explained by John White, the decisions based on post-reflective desire satisfaction may not be enough to guarantee the well-being of the person. The satisfaction of desires,

which one may come to have after reflecting on the possible options for action, may, yet, be the result of not informed desires (White, 1990: 29).

The need for information in the example of the orphan monk, takes us to the final view on the desire satisfaction theory – the *informed desire* version of the comprehensive theory. This last state of the view considers that my well-being is the one I would desire if I were fully informed about all the (non-evaluative) facts (Crisp, 2003: 8). But a general problem with desire-satisfaction is identified by Crisp. He introduces the concepts of substantive and formal theories of well-being: ‘The former state the constituents of well-being (such as pleasure), while the latter state what makes these things good for people (pleasantness, for example)’. He then remarks that pleasurable experiences as what makes life good for people, from the substantive point of view, can be agreed by hedonists as well as desire theorists. But from the formal point of view, they diverge. Hedonists will consider pleasantness as the good maker, and desire theorists will consider desire-satisfaction. Thus, for Roger Crisp, it becomes difficult to distinguish hedonism from desire satisfaction because if pleasure is characterized as an experience then the subject wants, or desires, to continue such experience. He concludes his criticism of desire theories by pointing that desire-satisfaction, as a ‘good-making property’, is odd. This is because: ‘As Aristotle says (1984 [C4BCE], *Metaphysics* 1072a, tr. Ross): ‘desire is consequent on opinion rather than opinion on desire’ (Ibid. 9). That is to say, taking Crisp’s example, we desire to write a novel because, previously, we hold the opinion that a novel is something independently good; we do not think that a novel is good because it will satisfy our desire for it.

In order to conclude a first overview of the main theories, I look now at the objective list theories. According to these types of theories, certain things are good or bad for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things (Parfit, 1984: 493). These theories present a list of items that are supposed to constitute the well-being of the person and this may be different from mere pleasurable experiences or the satisfaction of desires (Crisp, 2003: 9). Such a list might include items like friendship and knowledge, if these are seen as advancing the well-being of the person. But, as noted by Crisp, given the fact that a hedonistic view may imply this sort of list, we end up with a main opposition between objective list theories and desire-satisfaction. It is in this kind of theory that *perfectionism* is usually included that looks at the inclusion of

items that are considered as contributing to a more perfect human nature. About perfectionism, Crisp specifies: 'If it is part of human nature to acquire knowledge, for example, then a perfectionist should claim that knowledge is a constituent of well-being' (Ibid.). The major questions with objective list theories are 'what is the good-maker?' and 'how is it justified?' That is to say: what are the items to be included in the list and why are they included? The process of justification being based on reflective judgment and intuition can raise objections on the grounds that intuitionism is not a satisfactory process. But Crisp argues if the other theories can be based also on reflective judgment and not on intuition, we still may say that the result of intuition is still subject to argument. Also he suggests that there are other possibilities to reach truth by stating: 'Argument is one way to bring people to see the truth' (ibid.). This possible intuitionism of objective list theories can be mistaken and thus, says Crisp, provides hedonists with a line of defense of their position by attempting to discredit the importance of our natural beliefs about what is good for the person.

In the same context, Parfit presents, in opposition to the objective list theories, a version of what I called above the 'reduction argument'. Some hedonists may justify their position by attacking an objective list containing as goods, for example, knowledge, rational activity and awareness of beauty. The hedonist argument is then presented as follows: 'Would these states of mind be good if they brought no enjoyment, and if the person in these states of mind had not the slightest desire that they continue?' (Parfit, 1984: 501). By concluding that this is not the case, since people consider those activities as good because in the end they experience some sort of enjoyment and therefore they like them, hedonists consider they have proved their case. The word 'interest' is also frequently used in common parlance: 'it all ends up being in some sort of interest of the person' - it is said. But as I argued above, we seem to be left with the obvious; not more than a few concepts to a certain extent synonymous with well-being, and that seems to be of no great help, in the field of education where well-being is positioned as the central aim. What advantage or useful developments, could we expect by saying that the aim of education is enjoyment, interest, happiness or pleasure? Certainly none, besides an endless debate about what is implied by those concepts and what would bring them about. Other objections to objective list theories, presented by Crisp, are those of authoritarianism and perfectionism. The first is dismissed because of the possibility of including autonomy in the list that provides by definition the

preservation of the person from authoritarianism. As for perfectionism, Crisp remarks that ‘... any theory of well-being in itself has no direct moral implication’ and therefore holding a highly elitist conception of well-being may be compatible with a liberal view that is contrary to any paternalistic interference (Crisp, 2003: 10). But I take the search for this link between well-being and morality to be crucial to education. Finally, a common objection to objective list theories is that they are ‘elitist’. The meaning of elitism being here the fact that a list of goods is claimed as such even if those for whom it is intended don’t find them enjoyable or even don’t want or value them. One of the solutions for this, proposed by Crisp, is to take this criticism on board – bite the bullet – and admit that an elitist theory can also be true (ibid.).

We can now proceed to a more in depth characterization of more details and refined views of theories of well-being. Some of the problems put against the objective list theories shown immediately above, force us to consider the important distinction between objective and subjective theories of the good. Arneson (1999) carries on a discussion of objective and subjective theories of the good and other details of those theories, by starting to define the concepts of a ‘prudent person’ and ‘prudential value’: ‘A prudent person seeks her own good efficiently; she selects the best available means to her good. If we call the value that a person seeks when she is being prudent “prudential value”, then an alternative rendering of the question to be addressed in this essay is “what is prudential value?” (Arneson, 1999: 113). He then considers that to say that someone has a life high in well-being can be equivalent to say that someone has a life high in prudential value. Arneson refers to a definition of subjective theories by Sumner as being those that make welfare depend, at least partially, on some mental state (Sumner, 1996: 82). Objective theories, by way of contrast, would consider a correspondence between well-being of the person and a certain state of the world independent of the person’s state of mind. Plato’s theory of forms –human good is the perception and understanding of the forms - would then be considered subjective and Arneson claims that this would be confusing since a lot of philosophers count such a theory as paradigmatically objective. Hence, Arneson gives his own account, which implies that the Platonic theory be seen as objective, of contrast between objective (1) and subjective (2) as follows: those ‘(1) which hold that claims about what is good can be correct or incorrect and that the correctness of a claim of a person’s good is determined independent of that person’s volitions, attitudes, and opinions, and (2) views

which deny this' (Arneson, 1999: 115). Further on Arneson defines the 'agent's sovereignty claim' as the one that gives the person the totality of the capacity to determine what is good for herself; and so, a subjective theory is one that affirms the 'agent's sovereignty claim', and an objective one denies it (ibid. 116). This is the meaning that I will attribute to the concepts of subjective and objective theories of well-being.

I now intend to register some aspects of the perfectionist theory, since this is the view about which I make the double claim that it is dominant in late modern societies and that it is responsible for creating enormous disorder in them, together with some objections to the rest of the theories presented by Arneson. He remarks that an objective theory and perfectionist theories should be distinguished because the latter is just a branch of the former. Arneson defines perfectionism as '... the doctrine that the good or intrinsically desirable human life is one that develops to the maximal possible extent the properties that constitute human nature'. Such a life is therefore a '... life in which the individual develops the excellences of the species to a high degree' (Arneson, 1999: 119-20). He also points out that according to Hurka (1993: 16), the properties that constitute human nature are 'those that are essential to human and conditioned on their being living things'. In his critique of perfectionism, Arneson finds its imperative to maximize perfection as very unconvincing. Also the fact that perfectionism considers invaluable too many of the human activities that seem worthwhile by focusing only on the ones that promote perfection, takes a too narrow view of the human good. He gives examples of activities that can provide pleasure without 'effort or sacrifice' or the intervention or promotion of any of the agent's special talents that can be called 'cheap thrills'. I take this to be of particular importance because it seems to involve the concept of the 'activity for its own sake' and the possibility of starting to uncover the argument that perfectionism may imply the exclusion of such activities from the good life.

Liberal philosophy of education takes what is involved in the 'activity for its own sake' as an important aim of education (White, 2002a: 147-8). As White underlines, the 'activity for its own sake' may involve simply joy or pleasure. 'Effort' and 'sacrifice' that were mentioned by Arneson and transcribed above seem to be near to the *ethos* of the perfectionist theory. Arneson himself provides in the essay that I'm following, a reference to what is intrinsically good for the person as being what is

good ‘for its own sake’; that is a good in it self, or as an end, and not a means to some further end (Ibid. 118). ‘Cheap thrills’ are pleasures with no redeeming social value beyond their pleasantness’- as stated by Arneson.. Being so, they seem to be excluded from perfectionism in spite of maybe being an important ‘activity for its own sake’. Even if we agree that cheap thrills are ‘activities for their own sake’ – when they are activities at all not just sensations – we can still doubt that they are educational That is partly because a person is not likely to learn much from a cheap thrill, but perhaps more importantly because apparently no education is needed in order to enjoy a cheap thrill. This seems to be the crucial issue that involves the clarification of the relations between education aiming at ‘absence of disorder’ and ‘the action for its own sake’. Such clarification will take place throughout the work, with emphasis in the closing chapter. For the moment, the purpose is just to stress the tensions that exist between perfectionism and the ‘action for its own sake’. Arneson adds that given the nature of the world and human condition, cheap thrills are ‘important sources of enjoyment’ but they ‘don’t register at all on a perfectionist measure of the prudential value of people’s lives’. What seems to be enhanced by perfectionism is the register of the presence of ‘effort’ and or ‘sacrifice’ in assessing of what is or what is not, prudential value. Arneson concludes that at least for a more narrow perfectionism ‘the insignificance of cheap thrills to the prudential value of lives is a simple closed issue’ (ibid. 120).

Arneson presents in this chapter some other conclusions and critiques of the theories of well-being. Hedonism he sees as counter intuitive because only the individual’s experience matters. The most developed version of desire-satisfaction, which is the informed one, requires a new version, which introduces an ideal-advisor. The reason for this is that in the current informed desire-satisfaction an agent’s satisfaction and well-being is higher if the decisions are taken in an ideally informed way about the issue, in order to avoid mistakes. But in many situations – like for example in the desire to learn physics – to be fully informed about the subject would cause the cessation of the desire itself. To counteract this problem the new version of this theory introduces an ideal – advisor, as a version of the individual himself that is supposed to be ideally informed about the different issues. The agent should then follow the opinion of this adviser to seek and decide what is prudentially valuable for her. But Arneson presents what he takes to be a decisive objection to this view of the theory. Considering the desire for a

delicious meal, if we were ‘fully and vividly’ informed about the processes of digestion of that food, we might completely lose the desire for that meal. But it would be very odd to conclude that enjoying good food is not part of the good life. In summary, the introduction of the informed-advisor may generate embarrassing counterintuitive situations (ibid. 133-4). About the objective lists, the major problem consists in skepticism about the decision on what putative goods should be or should not be included in the list and Arneson ends up for arguing in favor of this kind of account.

Because of these difficulties with the theories of well-being, Sumner (2000) suggests, after Griffin, to look for ‘something in between’. Sumner presents the essential of the position of Griffin in his important and initial work, *Well-Being* (Griffin, 1988) and this author’s evolution is reflected in a more recent book: *Value Judgment* (Griffin, 1996). Griffin (1988) presents a formal account of the nature of well-being. Such an account sees well-being through an underlying structure of pluralistic prudential values. The underlying structure or unifying view is the informed desire-satisfaction theory. The stronger the desires the greater the utility, is another feature of this view. Griffin’s own list of prudential values shows the plurality of such values: ‘accomplishment, the components of human existence (autonomy, basic capabilities, liberty) understanding, enjoyment and deep personal relations. Sumner remarks that these items are similar to those in most of the objective list theories. The difference in Griffin was that these items all fitted into the form of a theory, giving them the common denominator of unification (Sumner, 2000: 2). In his later work Griffin seems to leave aside the theory of desire-satisfaction and keeps up with the discussion of prudential values by conserving the initial list (Ibid. 3). This seems to suggest that Griffin’s enthusiasm for the desire-satisfaction view has decreased, which he confirms in his reply to Sumner (Crisp and Hooker, 2000: 281-5).

Nevertheless his position may be seen as not completely desire independent and therefore not as a typical objective list theory (White, 2002b: 666). By agreeing with Griffin in the rejection of mental-state accounts – illusion or veridical experience are equally valued as long as they are phenomenologically indistinguishable - like the hedonism in classical utilitarianism, Sumner renovates his belief in the possibility of a general theory of well-being (Ibid 4,9). The problems with desire theory are seen, in short, as being of two natures with a common logical form: ‘Desires whose objects prove

disappointing in the actual experience of them and desires whose objects never enter our experience at all – these are both cases in which the satisfaction of our desires appear insufficient to makes us better off’ (ibid. 12). For Sumner mental-state accounts are too narrow and desire accounts are too broad. The former exclude too much of the world that can be included in our well-being, and the latter imply many of those states that can not be part of the good life. Consequently he proposes, and merely starts sketching, a view in between mental-states and desire, anchored in a certain development of the concepts of enjoyment and happiness seen as personal life satisfaction (ibid. 13-5).

The above screening of the theories of well-being seems to show many problems, questions and undecided matters that are crucial for education. A recent revision of the theories of well-being was produced by John White (2002b) that restates the problems of desire-satisfaction and objective list theories to which he consistently points as the major players. But, showing the difficulties on the issue, White affirms: ‘I cannot pretend to be able to give a definitive, or possibly even a coherent account of PWB [Personal Well Being] which makes most sense of the positions referred to above and reveals their educational applications’. White also rejects Sumner’s ‘authentic happiness’ theory (Sumner, 1996) because he admits that we can have a good life without reflecting on that life (ibid. 665).

In the next section I shall, therefore, look at personal well-being from a negative perspective.

2.3 Problems with Attempts to Define Well-being Positively – - The Via Negativa

Philosophers and philosophers of education have long shown an interest in the concept of order. Some examples: ‘The love of order permeates Plato’s account of reason and Freud regarded it as one of the main effective sources of civilization’ (Peters, 1973: 215). The Freudian theory of psychoanalysis can be seen in its therapeutic dimension as a process of change of a state of painful neurotic disorder into a state of tranquil order. Writing about liberalism and the human good in a reference to Aristotle, John White and Patricia White (1986: 350) mention that:

‘Aristotle held this [the good life] to be a rational ordered life in accordance with the virtues. On this account being courageous, temperate, just, magnanimous, etc. are implicit in one structure of ends.’ That is to say, the person in a state of an Aristotelian order would have incorporated in her self the cardinal virtues and other virtues as an end and not as a means to achieve something further. Also as an end in itself is how Barbara Herman (1998: 262) underlines the concept of order in Kantian morality: In Kant ‘Morality brings order as a final end’. Another reference to the importance of the concept of order is given by Peter Winch (1989: 12) in his account of the philosophy of Simone Weil: ‘Simone Weil follows Descartes in conceiving thinking as essentially involving order. So the introduction of the thought “je puis donc je suis” into her meditation is essentially a recognition of the possibility of order’. These examples give an approximate account of how different thinkers and philosophers had an interest in the concept of order and its nature⁷.

Nevertheless it seems that insurmountable problems arrive when approaching the concept of order in a positive way. Seeing the rationally ordered life through a positive direct approach to the good life is far from trouble free. John White (1982: 68) indicates that because of wide difference of opinions about what is morality when one starts to advocate its content more firmly, incompatibility problems arise. Eamonn Callan in his work *Creating Citizens* repeatedly warns us about the difficulties in describing or defining the good (1997: 28, 66) and that an ‘authentically liberal moral doctrine could not dictate the content of the good life in all its fine detail’. Further on Callan comments that Rawls considers as one of the burdens of judgement the fact that anyone’s conception of the good has to be inevitably partial (ibid: 191). And finally he points out that ‘An increasingly influential view is that the significance of moral disagreement goes much deeper than Mill supposed: the obstacles to convergent judgement in morality are far too recalcitrant for a shared and comprehensive vision of good and the right to be more than an utopian aspiration

⁷ Other direct references to the concept of order or the well - ordered society can be found in: Peters, R. S. (1966), *Ethics and Education*. London: Allen & Unwin.; Hirst, P. H. (1974), *Knowledge and the Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.; Gutek, G. (1972), *A History of the Western Educational Experience*. New York: Loyola University, Random House.; Rorty, A. O. (1998a), *Philosophers on Education : historical perspectives*. London ; New York: Routledge.; Wringe, C. (1988), *Understanding Educational Aims*. London: Unwin Hyman.; Rawls, J. (1996), *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, Rawls, J. (1999), *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press..

(ibid: 214). Another author, Malcom Jones (1985: 148) notes that the good life has not been defined successfully in 2,500 years. These persistent and unsuccessful attempts at defining the good are finally dismissed by Amy Gutman (1989:32) not only due to cultural diversity or other circumstantial disagreements but because ‘... no mortal, no matter how wise, can legitimately impose the good life on people who can not live that life from the inside’. This last view brings us back to the liberal ideals of respect for the person and consequently of neutrality in what concerns the kind of life chosen by her in the private domain.

This state of affairs means that the questions about what is ‘the good life’ and how to achieve it are no longer relevant. This means that the question that I take to be pertinent is the following: what is the not good that brings’ disorder (that possibly brings misery and suffering) and how can one stay away from it? The ‘what’ and the ‘how’ are twisted to the negative side. Disorder is the ‘not good’ or the absence of order. And, to stay away from it is the opposite of trying to achieve it. What is enhanced is more the build up and possession of inner dispositions acquired by habit, that naturally makes us act in absence of disorder and therefore away from the not good.

I suppose that any description of what these inner dispositions are will be a positive account of something that is good. They will be good because they help us avoid the bad, so this still fits into the *via negativa*. In any case a positive account of good dispositions is not a positive account of the good life. It can be said that proposing the concept of ‘absence of disorder’ is simply equivalent to the old conversation about ‘order’. ‘It is a matter of logic’. One is simply another wording of the other. This is certainly a plausible objection. As noted above, elaborating intellectually about inner dispositions can be seen as a positive exercise of logic about life. Life - the good life - itself may not be exactly that description. When referring to possible entities that actually may happen in our lives we may be not just into such exercises of logic. This may be especially true about those entities for which there are difficulties to give a name and therefore it is legitimate to question their existence. One good example of this, I think, is the one provided by the philosophy of Levinas, which I will approach more closely in the concluding chapter. In her book on Levinas, entitled *The Metaphysics of Love - Gender and Transcendence in Levinas*,

Stella Sandford (2000: 31) mentions, ‘Plato as straining towards that conceptual emancipation from the hegemony of being which Levinas was pushed to articulate as *autrement qu’être*, ‘otherwise than being’. And Stadford continues: ‘This might also be evident in the attempts of some commentators similarly trying to get to grips with the thought of something which does not at all designate the opposite of being, *but something different to being.*’ The same author adds: ‘It is perhaps Plotinus who best illustrates this:

By this Non-Being, of course, we are not to understand something that simply does not exist, but only *something of an utterly different order from Authentic-Being*: there is no question here of movement or position with regard to Being; the Non-Being we are thinking of is rather, an image of Being *or perhaps something still further than even an image.*’

What I am implying is that ‘absence of disorder’ is being argued as another possible way of thinking about such ‘otherwise than being’ which is not a ‘Non-Being’. We may say that an ‘Authentic-Being’ may be the one in ‘order’. Such ‘order’ we may describe by positively describing the virtues. But ‘absence of disorder’ intends more than to reflect in a negative way, this Authentic-Being. ‘Absence of disorder’ aims at self transcendence that may bring something unique that goes beyond the positive ‘order’. This, as mentioned before, will be argued as being best described by the Levinasian concept of ‘disinterest’.

It seems that Plato, Plotinus and Levinas, refer to themselves as a ‘Non-Being’ that exists. Or, as said by Sandford, something that Levinas was ‘pushed to articulate’ as ‘otherwise than being’. From a logical point of view, surely this is absurd. Are we then engaging in an illogical or obscure discourse? Certainly we are not. It seems that what we have here is a justified recourse to a language close to paradox. This is done not to mislead us, but – perhaps revealing certain despair – to attempt to show and describe something that has been proved to be very difficult to grasp. Particularly for Emanuel Levinas, it seems that this was the main goal of a life time work. Besides the more common ‘self transcendence’ or ‘going beyond the self’, Levinas seems to use other words like ‘alterity’ and ‘disinterest’, in his attempt. ‘Disinterest’ is the preferred of these words, to be focused on in this work. I will attempt to argue if favouring ‘absence of disorder’ is tantamount to favour

‘disinterest’, perhaps then we can conclude that ‘absence of disorder’ is positioned not merely as the logic counterpart of ‘disorder’. This is to say that ‘absence of disorder’ is argued as more than a convenient way of wording the concept of ‘order’. It is this feature I think, that makes it a genuine and distinctive negative approach.

Further on, a posture of passive awareness of possible ways that disorder can insinuate itself and the comprehension of its many ways of entering our lives, might take place. But this awareness and understanding that may facilitate the self - investigation of disorder is not comparable in importance with possessing the inner dispositions of order as if they were hardwired in the self. Also what is viewed as important is a passive state that permeates and resides naturally in the way we lead our life as opposed to an active striving to become or achieve something. The former of these states can be seen as a sustained renovator and eventually even expander of the person’s psychical energies. The later, the active striving to reach or become something is seen as exhausting and continuously stressing the person’s energy⁸.

The complementary, question relative to the ‘how’, can be long-drawn-out with the following formulation: how to acquire the inner dispositions to remain in absence of disorder and if possible how to recognize the forms of disorder? We find ourselves in the *via negativa*. This is a route already suggested by philosophers. Paul Standish (1999: 46) presents the good as to be understood in terms of what is not, and gives the example of Iris Murdoch as someone never being far from this *via negative*. Approaching theories of the good, John White (1982: 42) considers the good as ‘sui generis’, not identifiable with anything else. Not identifying with something else exterior to it – God’s will, nature, happiness or post-reflective desire-satisfaction – ‘as educators we may not be able to tell the pupil what good is, but it does seem that we can warn him about what it is not’. Another negative approach seems to be given by Emma Rothschild (1998: 222) when she presents education in Condorcet’s work as consisting ‘in such a discipline of the primitive impulses as shall lead men to do right, not by constraint of mechanical external sanction, but by an instant spontaneous and

⁸ It seems that it is with this sort of concern that we may see Michael Slote’s arguments on ‘satisficing’. He argues that rather than constantly trying to maximize it is better to ‘satisfice’ – to aim for what is good enough (a good enough house, a good enough career, a good enough education etc) rather than constantly striving for what is best. Slote, M. (1985) *Common – Sense Morality and Consequentialism*, London, Routledge.

almost inarticulate repugnance to cowardice, cruelty, apathy, self-indulgence'. This repugnance to cowardice and cruelty seems to stress the need to stay away from such negative dispositions first of all by a involuntary or unconscious reaction in our feelings and eventually, less importantly, by awareness and recognition of them.

The *via negativa* is therefore taken as central for the thesis in its attempt to chart a possible universal common ground, or as put by Amelie Rorty (1999: 11), a 'normative moral Esperanto'. The seven forms of disorder – comparison, corruption, dependency, division, fear, self-disintegration and violence – seen mostly on psychological grounds, are presented as a skeleton of such a moral Esperanto. Several sub-items are considered for these seven forms of disorder, but as already pointed out they should not be seen as a final list and certainly not as independent. It is easily acceptable that these patterns will present themselves in many different, complex and interrelated ways - subtleties of appearance, degrees of intensity and in a multitude of proportions and combinations. If as Karl Popper noted '... human misery is the most urgent problem of a rational public policy and happiness is not such a problem' (Popper, 1988: 361), it seems to be of the utmost importance to attempt to address the question: what brings misery or non happiness? We find ourselves in the *via negativa* as the preferred option. Researching the kinds of forms of disorder that bring misery and their nature might be a possible reasonable task, to help look for an answer. Popper's own philosophy of science seemed to have taken this route when confronting the important question: what is a science? Locating the answer in the mechanism of refutation and not on the positive affirmation, seems to be well into the negative approach (Popper, 1959).

A possible investigation of further justifications for attempting to map the not good, apart from the well-known difficulties in doing it for the good, might be found in considerations of an anthropological nature. A Wittgensteinian language game in all its multiple complexities, might present itself with some more favourable characteristics when the not good is the centre of that game. The hypothesis is that the not good seems to be more concentrated in the language. Perhaps it is reasonable to speculate that such a language game is less complex than its positive counterpart. Being so, maybe we can see it also as being less complex to comprehend and describe. Maybe this supposed less complexity is originated in an urgent need to deal

effectively with the threats of the many aspects of the not good. Perhaps then we can say that a certain practical wisdom is reflected in such language game, rooted possibly in the important instinct of self preservation.

Homo sapiens have survived as a species for millions of years. Other species of humanoids were not successful and disappeared. Language as a major tool can reasonably be appointed as playing an important role in this process, especially in overcoming life threatening and dangerous situations, guaranteeing survival in the natural environment. Such situations, like confronting or escaping wild animals or evading natural threats, due to their urgency require immediate alertness, decision, speed and powerful action with all these characteristics transposed to communication. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that language used as an important device at the service of those most immediate needs, would adapt itself accordingly matching the characteristics and urgencies of those situations. This is not at all to say that such a language game is simple, because clearly there is not such a thing. But by targeting disorder or the not good we might better convey the urgency of practical reason and expect that we can bring into action ‘... other more powerful and primitive layers of mind’ (Peters, 1966: 225). It is, in this way, to a somehow Jungian common unconscious mind that we are appealing (Jung, 1979). The conjecture is that the menace is felt more directly upon the fundamental instinct of survival. Such experience is reflected in the common heritage of the *anthropos*, acting in the natural and wild environment.

It is now time to explore further the negative approach to personal well-being. This takes me to the view of ‘well-being as absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’. I will try to show that this view of well-being is more appealing than the previous views and useful for practical reasoning in education.

3 –The Negative Approach - Well-Being as the Absence of Disorder

The survival of human beings in the environment and their multiple dimensions and different interactions can be the motif of an interesting analogy in order to shed light into one of its most important aspects: the ethical environment. This analogy between the natural physical environment and the ethical environment is explored by Graham Haydon (2003a) in his paper called ‘Values education: sustaining the ethical environment’. Developments in such a comparison will allow me to present and explore, one important concept of the natural environment that also relates in a most attractive way, to the *via negativa* as an approach to the ethical environment: entropy.

Haydon opens his paper with a quotation from Simon Blackburn (2001: 1) that inspires his article and a warning that the subject of his interest is not in environmental ethics. Indeed the Blackburn citation draws our attention to the comparison of the quality of the moral or ethical environment as the ‘surrounding climate of ideas about how to live’ and the problematic of the quality of the physical environment. Very thoughtfully, Haydon pushes the metaphor into the arena of values education invoking Richard Rorty’s persistent advice about the benefits of talking in different vocabularies. What I want to capture here are exactly some of the benefits of these discourse variations, taking one more step in the clarification of the role of the concept of absence of disorder in education

I further on develop this negative option with an analogy between the ethical environment that involves the person in her inner psychological process and the environment of her relationships or social practices, and the ecological environment. The concept of entropy is explained in order to better explore the metaphor of environment. Entropy is an important physical concept that correlates with 'disorder'. Disorder in the ethical environment, is seen with the help of the unavoidable disorder or entropy build up, in the physical entropic process. The first and second laws of thermodynamics are mentioned, in order to enhance the important concept of entropy. The concept of entropy is explored in the ethical arena in order to help us, later on in the thesis, towards better reasoning around the tensions between the prudential and the moral aspects of personal well-being.

In the next two sections I try to characterize more closely 'absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection' as a view of personal well-being. As two sides of the same balance, in section two I look into the 'nobility of imperfection' and in section three at absence of disorder. I attempt to demonstrate that this view may give us some confidence in being able to foster a suitable integration of personal well-being and morality. In doing so I contrast absence of disorder with perfectionism and attempt to show that perfectionism is the ideology which is responsible for great distress in schools and society since it is based on comparison. Let's remind ourselves that perfectionism is being defined as the view that sees the good life as the one lived through the maximization of the properties of human nature. This has a strong foothold in contemporary societies.

Nevertheless I will conclude that to better integrate the prudential and moral aspects of well-being we must carry the enquiry further.

3.1 The Concept of Entropy and the Ethical Environment

I start by giving a brief account of entropy, a concept entrenched in the second law of thermodynamics, by following on this matter Jeremy Rifkin (1985). The first and second laws of thermodynamics are very important in the understanding of the way that the physical world functions. They offer comprehension of the problem of

matter and energy transformations in the universe. The ecological problems in the natural environment are in most part related to energy sources, their use and scarcity. The problem is how to sustain the physical environment by using more friendly and self-renovating kinds of energy. The goal is to protect the quality of our lives not only in the present but in a responsible way, also for future generations. These are in brief the issues that ecology brought to the attention of us all during the last decades and therefore we all have by now a reasonable awareness of them. Actually in our lives we have incorporated certain routines like disposing waste in separated containers for recycling and whenever possible turning off the lights for energy saving. These are becoming frequent and normal concerns. But we all also know that the major problems are far from being solved in a satisfactory way and that they raise doubts about the future. The two laws of thermodynamics to which I now turn give the main reasons for this. This account although given in an accurate way avoids any mathematical formulations or unnecessary jargon.

‘The first law [Lavoisier] states that all matter and energy in a closed universe is constant, it cannot be created or destroyed. Only its form can change but never its essence’ (ibid: 16). This equates with the familiar saying that nothing wears out and it can only transform itself. So, apparently, we should have no reasons for concern. From this first law we know that energy and matter continue to be all the time around us even after we used them a first time. So why simply not reuse them over and over again? The obstacle that places an irrevocable impediment to this energy-spending extravaganza lies in the inevitable and more important second law of thermodynamics. ‘The second law [Clausius], the Entropy law, states that matter and energy can only be changed in one direction, that is, from usable to unusable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered’ (ibid: 16). Therefore we have a certain stock of energy that is arranged in a certain orderly way since the beginning of the universe, a certain atomic structure, etc., that after being used once, necessarily transforms itself into a more disorganized atomic structure in a way that we can not reconstruct it. Or to be more accurate, we cannot reconstruct it without spending more energy from other sources than the quantity of energy that we would regain and therefore causing a balance of more disorder somewhere else.

Let me give two simple examples to clarify this issue. Suppose we burn a couple of wood logs in the fireplace to heat ourselves. The matter of the logs transformed itself in smoke, heat and the remaining ashes. That is to say, the atomic structure of the matter constituting the logs supplied a certain energy that is still in the universe. But in doing this the atoms became more disorganized. Now, suppose that technologically we can capture all the atoms that have been released in this process in the form of smoke, heat and ashes and reorder them so that we obtain again the original logs. But in achieving this I had to use human physical force, thus causing disorder in the constitutive atomic structure of the food that nourished me. Also some kind of technological devices that to function had to consume some quantity of energy, also disorganizing the vehicle of this energy. What the second law implies is that necessarily the energy that I spend to rebuild the wood logs is always more than the energy contained in the logs themselves. We say that entropy will always increase. Choosing now a second simple example but of a different kind, we can consider a water dam that produces electrical energy in the usual way by dropping the water from a higher level and passing it through a turbine. Downstream we can collect the same water and somehow transport it again to the upstream section of the dam for example by pumping it using an electrical pump. Again this is not done because the electricity spent in the pumping operation is certainly more than the one obtained with the reuse of that water. The law of entropy is basically the reason why university departments or scientific laboratories do not investigate the perfect energy reuse machine, that is to say, the perpetual motion machine.

Entropy is then a measure of the increase of disorder in the natural world. According to this law the increase of entropy never ceases and in the end the whole universe will be a vast space with inert matter, with no events and therefore with no time. For the ancient Greeks the view of the world was in accordance with the law of entropy and 'history was a process of continual degradation' (Rifkin, 1985). Although the science of physics is evolving in the area of the near truth attempting to change itself by refutation of its assumptions, this law of Entropy was considered by Einstein as 'the premier law of all science' and so one very difficult to overthrow (ibid: 16). Therefore a wise view of the physical environment should be one supporting a cautious and minimum creation of entropy, looking to the process from the negative perspective. That is, what we need is to avoid raising the rate of increase of disorder

or entropy and create the best conditions for this to happen and be aware of it. This is in conflict with the paradigm now in place. According to the currently dominant worldview, 'growth for its own sake' is beneficial and continuous progress is possible. Science and technology with all its knowledge can create a more ordered world and, more than that; can continuously make it more perfect. History is one of progress (ibid: 16).

Looking now at the ethical environment, Graham Haydon notes that we can't live out of it and since the atmosphere isn't just out there; since we breathe, 'it's inside us too' (Haydon, 2003a: 3). As human beings we are embedded in the environment. This total communion means that we do not internalize but we are the 'internalization' of the order or disorder that is established in a certain environment where we 'breathe'. Also such intimacy makes us sensitive to the variations in the entropy of our relationships with objects and persons located in the environment. That is why colloquially we hear talk about a climate of oppression in the classroom, aggressiveness in the schoolyard or joy in the visit to the art gallery. Or in a more personal way, we talk about the bad feelings we had in a particular 'suffocating polluted' environment of a meeting with several persons or the encounter with one certain person.

Now that these distinctions of personal or collective and of outside and inside are removed by taking the view that there are no such distinctions, I can confront the main issue. The main problem that I want to raise here concerns the two worldviews contrasted in the above paragraph. I argue that also for the ethical environment that concerns education we should be mainly concerned with avoiding increase of disorder, in line with the law of entropy and the ancient Greek vision of history. The intention is to undermine the version in education and schooling of the second worldview, or paradigm, that I designate as the view of 'continual progress and perfectionism'.

Haydon (2003a: 5) discusses the adequacy of three concepts applicable to the ethical environment in order to select the more appropriate, given that we have '...the possibility, certainly of contributing to the deterioration of the environment, and perhaps also of improving it...' . They are: preservation, conservation and sustainability. He further argues that the first two are not adequate. Preservation

would entail an effort to keep things as they are, including the present damages. Conservation would entail keeping the good things and reparation of the bad ones. One can consider the conservation of objects of art that may include restoration, as an example. But Haydon also sees this as suggestive of a 'steady state' leaving no room for a more positive improvement. And he adds: 'After all, it is a very important feature of the human ethical environment that it has changed and that in at least some cases – attitudes towards slavery, for instance – the changes have been pretty uncontroversially for the better'. Finally he elects 'sustaining' since it allows these kind of changes and also 'connotations of caring for and nurturing which can be significantly educationally'.

My contention is that in this decision of Haydon we can begin to detect how the 'continual progress and perfectionism view', insinuates itself. Starting by considering the example of the work of art (e.g. a painting), how can we, besides doing restoration works, improve it? Apart from any careful reconstruction of the original, what extra intervention to improve its quality would be legitimate? Certainly that would represent the introduction of unacceptable alterations to the original which might be not only wrongdoing in itself by eventually diminishing the quality of the piece, but certainly by doing violence to the true spirit of the artist. On the other hand, restoration would imply repairing the piece and caring for it by putting it in a temperature and humidity controlled room, watching it, etc. This would be the main goal of the museum. As a minor task one can accept a replacement of the frame, but not a touch in the painting. In this I agree with Haydon.

Considering now slavery it seems at a first sight that indeed we are in the presence of a major important change. But one might stretch the view and see that before slavery necessarily such a thing didn't exist. Therefore its abolition was in fact a mere restoration of the previous state by eliminating the damage of a major disorder or increase in entropy, perpetrated by some human beings against others. The crucial change that should be avoided, the one that should be absent, was the beginning of slavery. Going back to the ecological metaphor, one can say that the original environment in the planet is not improvable or made more perfect. Therefore there can be no change into the positive side, as prescribed by the law of entropy.

What is crucial is to avoid and restore the possible damages and delay the inevitable degradation.

What about the ethical environment that concerns education? One can say that the ethical status of a person can improve along his life and that is of course a desirable positive change. Certainly with time reason plays a role in habits in this acquisition. In what concerns ethics, the entropy law does not apply. But this is at the personal level of the individual in their inner process. Should we place emphasis on positive changes in values education? Some hard questions start to arrive. What positive changes? Who is to say that they are good? As for the process of looking and striving for positive changes themselves it seems to introduce a stressful state of permanent dissatisfaction. The justification that usually follows is that this is necessary for improvement of quality or, if nothing else, for the sake of improvement itself. But what if this very same process of striving for improvement is a form of disorder?

Perhaps we can more fruitfully approach this matter in a negative way. Here preservation and restoration play the key roles. The emphasis is on preserving the ethical environment by avoiding disorder or entropy entering in it. In other words, by keeping disorder absent. Restoration will concern itself with the recovery and reparation of disorderly states previously induced eventually not by acting in any special way but by simply keeping a persistent state of absence of disorder. Looking again at Graham Haydon's two examples, the work of art and slavery, I can devise three ways of improvement. Two of them in line with the *via negativa* and the law of entropy, that I will call relative entropic improvement, and a third one that I claim to be one of the characteristics of the 'continual progress and perfectionism' paradigm, that I will call absolute or perfectionist improvement. First, the improvement in the restoration of the work of art; I see it as a change from one bad state to one less bad state, assuming that the original work in perfect conditions would be always preferable to the restored one. We can see that the decadence or entropy of the piece was reduced and the second version relative to the first was improved. Secondly, the improvement in slavery by its removal and restoration of freedom, I see as a change from one bad state to a good state, with no need for further justification. Again there

is a reduction of disorder and a restoration of an original older state that in relation to slavery has less entropy.

Thirdly, and now I have to extend the slavery example, I look at the improvement of the ex-slave and new free person, being improved into an even better person. I see it, at first sight, as a change of a good state into a better state. Say that the new free person is given the opportunity to learn how to play the piano and lead a more joyful life. We could say that on top of one good we added another good and a relative improvement was achieved. But, there is a problem. There is the possibility that, for example, the new pianist gets a job in a bar where he has free drinks and becomes an alcoholic. Therefore it seems that one cannot guarantee that the improvement is for better or for worse. It can be for better if our pianist becomes a successful concert player. But we cannot be sure. There is a bigger problem with the ‘continual progress and perfectionist’ paradigm. This happens when it assumes this characteristic of being permanent. Improvement then is taken to be good in the name of something like achievement, quality or something vague like excellence⁹. This corresponds to the pianist being always dissatisfied with his current level of playing: he continuously sets himself new standards towards which he strives - this is a different state of improvement with intention but with no striving, where it just happens naturally. Then the improvement becomes absolute in the name of perfection. But with this there also seems to be in place a state of lasting dissatisfaction. By being all the time dissatisfied, the pianist is in a state of disorder and permanent build up of entropy. Such is the state of absolute or perfectionist improvement seen by the light of entropy and the *via negativa*. The well - being of the person seems thus to be in peril. What we are chasing here is ‘the activity for its own sake’ and not the activity for the sake of progress.

In conclusion from the argument above, I would agree with Haydon’s proposal of using the word ‘sustaining’ applied to an ethical environment concept, providing that this is done with precaution. Careful disentangling of the kinds of changes or improvements should be done, as I did here in the case of the slavery example. Otherwise, the door would be open to the entrance of perfectionism or absolute

⁹ On ‘the idea of excellence’ see chpt.2 in Readings, B. (1996), *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

improvement. The full extent of the interest of this discussion on the ethical environment, will be better perceived in the last chapter when the discussion on the preservation of a Levinasian ‘disinterested’ self, is carried on. We move now to characterize better how a slow build up of entropy or disorder, can be an educationally interesting view of personal well-being.

3.2 Well-Being and ‘The Nobility of Imperfection’

Si fallor, sum (‘if I err, then I exist’). Such was Augustine’s argument against the Academic Sceptics about existence (Hughes, 2001: 519). Anticipating Descartes’s *‘cogito ergo sum’*¹⁰, Augustine’s choice in positing the proof for human existence was ‘error’. ‘Being’ is presented as inseparable from ‘error’. Both are intimately connected. To deny ‘error’ would be like denying an essential part of being human – of the human condition itself. Such a denial would perhaps be like denying the existence of a limb that is part of our body for example, or attempting to reject it. It would be reaching perhaps for ‘perfection’. Why then is ‘error’ noble? I take it to be ‘noble’, in the first place, because I see it as part of the self. But surely there are aspects common in human character that we would like to discard (e.g. unjustified violence). These are the avoidable undesirable traits of character. Such traits of character may or may not be present. But, ‘error’ is previous to this and it is unavoidable. ‘Error’ is always present. Because of its unavoidability ‘error’ frees us from the illusion of perfection and the distress that it brings. ‘Error’ grounds us in our human condition. The word ‘noble’ may imply possessing greatness of character or elevated morality. ‘Noble’ originates from the Latin *nobilis*, source of the English, ‘noble’ and ultimately from the Indo-European ancestor of the English word ‘know’. Thus the evolution in the direction of: to be ‘well-known’ as a person of noble character (Fowler and Fowler, 1931; Partridge, 1966; Rooney, 1999). The person, who errs and discloses it, offers the possibility to others to learn from her imperfection. This also I take to be a noble action. ‘Error or imperfection’ can be seen also as being an important building block of learning.

¹⁰ As at least it seems Descartes came to realize, these arguments imply circularity because they depart from ‘I’ in the premises to conclude the existence of that same ‘I’.

‘Imperfection’ represents several limitations intrinsic to human nature, such as: mistakes, uncertainty, insufficiency, inaccuracy, incompleteness, illusion, doubt, etc. ‘Imperfection’ is the ever present minimum entropy connected with existence. Man’s imperfection does not happen accidentally or occasionally like when he stumbles against something. The fact that man exists entails action. Such action builds on previous social practices, it renovates existence in the previous existence. This is to say that existence is action itself. There can be no existence without action. Contemplation is action. The important thing here is to contrast this state of affairs to the ‘perfectionist view’. Perfectionism stresses ‘action’ of a certain kind; prefers the action for positive improvement; prefers also continuous and strenuous action of this kind; dismisses or devalues the sort of ‘action’ that can be brought about through contemplation. Perfectionism dismisses or devalues the sort of action and contemplation that can be ‘for its own sake’. This is because perfectionism is by definition for the sake of some sort of progress. Whatever the state of life, it seems that there can be no life without action¹¹. Even sleeping involves the brain and the body functioning at certain levels. It may involve dreaming which is an important kind of action at the subconscious level (Freud, 1954).

There is something here that, I think, should leave us in perplexity. If ‘imperfection’ belongs to the essence of what it is to be a human being, why is it that it is denied, condemn, demonized, or repressed? Why is ‘imperfection’ systematically rejected as our ‘limb’? Why is there, I claim, a ‘horror of imperfection’? Because, it seems to me, if ‘imperfection’ is systematic and unavoidable it would be reasonable to expect that a core or important set of dispositions to deal with it, would have developed and would be put in place in a robust way. We should expect as crucial the development of an armor, to protect us. A good harmonization of life with ‘imperfection’ seems to be a reasonable expectation. We should be perplexed by the fact that ‘imperfection’ is always taking us by surprise. It always seems to strike us as something that could be avoided. Something about which I easily may feel guilty because I didn’t made my best effort to avoid it. Something that I should have foreseen and I have made possible to do away with. Therefore something about which I have reasons to develop negative

¹¹ For the moment it is interesting to note with Levinas that what is here involved ‘... is not accurately suggested by the notion of action which is customarily opposed to the pure receptivity of the sensible’ Levinas, E. (2004), *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.

feelings like: incompetence, shame, frustration, fear or anxiety about repetition of ‘imperfection’, and the resulting low self-esteem. Great sets of feelings that we can say erode and cause serious harm to self-confidence. Such erosion of self-confidence gives way to the many manifestations of psychological inferiority, namely the psychological superiority (for the explanation of such apparent paradox, please see section 4.1 – Comparison). We should also be perplexed by the absence of a systematic approach in education focused around the dispositions and strategies required to deal with ‘imperfection’.

Dispositions like: a habit of expecting the unexpected and how to deal with it; welcoming and praise of ‘imperfection’ as creating opportunities for expanding an enquiry; easiness in revealing our ‘imperfection’ to others; being comfortable in maintaining ourselves in a state of doubt; tranquility in handling uncertainty; to show easy acceptance of insufficiency, etc. Why is this? Human beings have developed different successful strategies in attempting to propagate themselves - the species. Why is it that there is no successful strategy in dealing with ‘imperfection’? Is there a different and possibly bigger need being served? A need that is being tamed maybe at enormous costs? The history of this ‘horror of imperfection’ and the deep need that it serves is a very long one. It is also easy to accept such history as complex and interpenetrating many other aspects of social life. Perhaps we may take one or two detours in order to explore the territory around the area of ‘imperfection’ and education. Maybe we can start by looking at the Foucauldian ‘historical man’, ‘memorable man’ and ‘calculable man’ (Foucault 1991: 193); declare, in this Foucauldian ‘classical age’, the beginning of what perhaps can be called ‘the proliferation of podiums’ and the ‘age of comparison’; and finally conclude that the need that is being served is the need to deal with the fear of death. On this journey we look at some of the main projects of enquiry such as mathematics, physics and morality; and examine the ‘imperfection’ inherent in them¹².

The Foucauldian ‘non-historical’ and ‘historical man’ became ‘calculable man’ in order to be able to qualify as ‘memorable man’. The ‘memorable man’ is the one that beats death. Man that gains eternity, if not in heaven at least in the

¹² For a history of the idea of death see for example Choron, J. (1963), *Death and Western Thought*. London: Collier-Macmillan.

memory of others. How does he do this? By having his ‘name’ registered through many different strategies including by familial legacy. The aspirant to ‘memorable man’ is still reaching for perfection. But perfect in doing what? As long as it provides fame any kind of perfection will do. A notorious criminal will qualify to have his biography – his name - in the dictionary of important persons as long as he makes a relevant impact on society¹³.

The ‘calculable man’ is sorted out by comparison and *calculus*. Mathematics, defined in a narrow sense deals with ‘... a universal uniform measure as an essential determinant of things, i. e., numerical measurement’(Heidegger, 1962: 293). In this essay – *Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics* – Heidegger mentions the developments of Newton in physics followed by a more general law of conservation of energy that deals with ‘... *expenditure* and *consumption*, as work-names for new basic representations that now enter into the study of nature and betray a notable accord with economics with the “calculation” of success’ (Ibid. 293-4). Such ‘calculation of success’ is notably done through mathematics. We seem to be in parallel with the enlightenment or the Foucauldian ‘classical age’ (18th century) and the appearance of the ‘calculable man’. The industrial revolution brings with it the need for instrumental knowledge. This implies the ‘proliferation of podiums’ and the possibility for those of lower birth to become important persons, to become someone: to be more. This represents an explosion of ways or opportunities to leave a trace. It is accompanied, as noted by Foucault, by an increase in record keeping and the need for observation (panopticism) (Foucault, 1991). Mathematics is the basic tool to sort out who are to occupy the podiums through an assessment system that observes, measures, records, list and compares against some standard. Thus we have the ‘calculable man’. The more perfect, are the chosen ones. Mathematics, enormously successful in its applied dimension, is also seen as a ‘perfect’ tool – with absence of ‘imperfection’ entailing certainty. In many ways, maybe we can say that this problem is exacerbated in post-modern societies, namely through universal and compulsory schooling systems. This system requires that everyone with no exception has to go through an intense comparison. Such a system praises

¹³ Jack the Ripper is an example. This falls under the type of perfectionism named ‘generalized perfectionism’. As Thomas Hurka puts it: ‘A generalized perfectionism does imply that, if essentially cruel beings existed, the development of cruelty in them would be intrinsically good’, p. 22, Hurka, T. (1993), *Perfectionism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

perfection and shows a ‘horror of imperfection’. Consequently rewards and punishments are pervasive in schools.

‘Error’ in its different occurrences can be present at the very root of some of the more important human types of enquiry. Mathematics seems to be a ‘perfectionist’ pretender. In fact it seems to be founded in even more unstable ‘quick-sands’ than maybe morality is. As an *a priori* inquiry, independent of the world, mathematics has at its base arithmetic - the theory of numbers. The problem surfaces when an attempt is made to try to prove the most basic assumptions – axioms - of a theory of numbers. Gottlob Frege was the first to attempt this via a *formal system*. That is a special simple language with perfectly defined symbols and rules of operation that once explained can lead us to proofs not contaminated by ‘... any surreptitious appeal to intuition or any other principle not explicitly stated’ (Dummett, 2001: 132-3). Thus Frege also invented modern mathematical logic. Frege’s logicist project and efforts were rendered inconsequential when Russell devised some insurmountable paradoxes – self-referential statements. Russell and Whitehead set themselves the task in their *Principia Mathematica* ‘... of developing a natural system of logic free of paradox and capable of serving as the basis of mathematics’ (Grayling and Weiss, 2001: 734). But such an enormous effort was frustrated a few years later by Kurt Gödel’s famous incompleteness theorem. The theorem proved that not only Russell and Whitehead’s axioms in the *Principia* were an incomplete system but also necessarily any similar system had to be flawed. A limited set of axioms can always be challenged to prove a version of the liar’s paradox – ‘This proposition is false’ – when transposed to the symbolism of a formal system.

The remarkable conclusion is that – not only the set of basic axioms of the *Principia* but - any formal system is necessarily incomplete when executing the task (Hofstadter, 2000: xxiv). The formal system at a certain point contains more true statements than it can possibly prove (Felder, 1996: 1). It is worth recording Grayling’s comment on these frustrated attempts that points clearly to one of the aspects of the ‘nobility of error’ of both Frege’s and Russell’s work: ‘the journey is as important as the arrival’ (Ibid. 787). Similarly the deterministic project of physics – the vision that everything can be foreseeable or pre-determined – took a severe blow from quantum mechanics. This was a result of Heisenberg’s uncertainty

principle. Newtonian physics received the enthusiasm of Kant and others for its promises of ‘certainty’. But Heisenberg devised a thought experiment through which a microscope was used to observe and measure the momentum and position of an atomic particle. But the microscope would require some sort of radiation, like light or other, to bounce into the particle in order to detect its presence.

This radiation, a form of energy itself, interacts with the particle in a way that affects the certainty of one of those two variables. If we know the position we can only have a certain probability about the speed and vice-versa. Like in mathematics, the interesting thing is that apart from any possible technological limitations on the observational devices uncertainty cannot be reduced to zero¹⁴. Concerning quantum mechanics it is also puzzling to note that: ‘If quantum mechanics is correct – and masses of striking experimental results support it – then the world is really radically different from the classical picture. We have to get use to the idea that electrons, for example, may – in a perfectly definite sense – be at a given time everywhere and nowhere’ (Worrall, 2001: 249). Note nevertheless that in spite of such striking empirical success, quantum mechanics two basic principles seem to lead to contradictory interpretations (Ibid. 255). Again ‘imperfection’ seems to reside in the base of an important system of human enquiry.

About Wittgenstein’s view on ‘laws of nature’, Grayling and Weiss write: ‘His response it is to say that it is an illusion to suppose that laws of nature are explanatory. When we discover a ‘law of nature’ a uniformity that governs natural phenomena; rather, laws of nature are (in part) summations of regularities in our experience’ (Grayling and Weiss, 2001: 766). What it seems that we have here is sometimes called the ‘scandal of induction’ according to which one cannot be certain whether the sun is going to rise tomorrow even if it has always done so in the past. Wittgenstein dedicated considerable thought to certainty and this is one of his remarks: ‘194. With the word “certain” we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is *subjective* certainty. But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not

¹⁴ This leaves us in a state that: ‘one certainly cannot predict future events exactly if one cannot even measure the present state of the universe precisely’, p.59 Felder, K. (1996), Kenny's Overview of Hofstadter's Explanation of Godel's Theorem: <http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/kenny/papers/godel.html>.

possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn't a mistake be logically excluded?' (Wittgenstein, 1972).

Wittgenstein seems to question the possibility of objective certainty. Consequently great enquiring systems – at the present state of the art – are grounded in modalities of 'imperfection': incompleteness, uncertainty, ubiquity, and groundlessness. Does this represent any catastrophe? It seems not. Human beings seem to be able to function very well within this state of affairs. Since - as I have been trying to show - 'imperfection' is part of human nature, would not the opposite be the cause for admiration and surprise? It seems that a harmonious integration of 'imperfection' can only favor a self-confidence that we can oppose to 'psychological inferiority'. The opposite – aspiration for perfection – seems to counter such a disposition by definition. Perhaps pulling in this direction is an inglorious attempt to pull our-self against the nature ('error') of the self. This can only bring endless conflict of self against self. We have to renew more deeply our confidence in ourselves because as John White states: 'We all have an implicit understanding of the kinds of creatures we are...' (White, 1997: 23). The problem here I think is that the social transformations in the 'Foucauldian classical age' seem to have exacerbated the conflict.

I have been concerned with the question 'Is it possible to live in well-being without 'imperfection'? I have argued for a negative answer. Also I tried to show that the opposite – attempting to live in well-being with no 'imperfection' – is necessarily to condemn oneself to failure and therefore to disillusion, conflict and low self-confidence. These features make a life to be lived in a way exactly the opposite of well-being itself. We looked into this side of the equation of well-being. I will move now to the attempt to characterize well-being as absence of disorder, as the other side of the same equation. Absence of disorder and the nobility of 'imperfection' are like the two sides of a scale.

3.3 Well-Being as Absence of Disorder

I have been presenting absence of disorder through a list of items and sub-items taken to be in certain circumstances, sources of disorder: *Comparison* in itself and as expressed through competition, envy, jealousy, vanity, prestige, inferior and superior relationships (winner and loser, successful and unsuccessful), physical and intellectual capacities; *Corruption* of intention and material; *Dependency* of, substances, persons, objects, organizations and traditions; *Division* by ‘race’, nationalities, regional ties, languages, professions, social class, religions, gender, sexual orientation and ethnic tribalism, able and disabled persons, old and young persons; *Fear* of death, violence, the unknown, comparison, authority, public opinion, failure, humiliation, shame etc.; *Self-disintegration* of mind and body through lack of health, food, shelter and clothing; *Violence* by indifference, domination, power, exploitation, greed, anger, punishment, humiliation, shame, blackmail, vindictiveness and physical aggression. How should we classify this view of well-being anchored in seven basic forms of disorder? Is it just a form of negative utilitarianism? Is it an objective list? Or is it a formal theory circumstantially supported by a non-permanent list of items? Does it leave room for subjectivism? Does it integrate morality or has it the potential to do so?

I start by looking to negative utilitarianism. We can see the notion already present in J.S. Mill in his *Utilitarianism*. By taking the concept of Utility as the Greatest Happiness, Mill adds that happiness is not only pleasure but also the absence of pain (Mill, 2000: 13). And later Mill expands the concept of utility and says very explicitly: ‘Since utility includes not solely the pursuit of happiness, but the prevention or mitigation of unhappiness’ (Ibid. 21). More recently Popper also enhanced the importance of the absence of pain, suffering, or in general human misery. For him this is the priority, as I mentioned in the second section of the first chapter (Popper, 1988: 361). But first of all, can some sort of mathematical calculations similar to positive utilitarianism here attract us? Could we adopt a formula symmetrical with the one expressed by: ‘the greatest happiness for the

greatest number' as a criterion of decision? Something like: 'the least suffering for the greatest number?' It seems that such is not possible. A human life, any human life, is an incommensurable. This implies that it cannot be comparable (Griffin, 2000: 285). It is an absolute value in itself. We reject then, in this context, the possibility of statements like 'one person dying (or suffering) is better than ten'.

Comparing now absence of disorder, seen first through the basic seven forms of disorder, it seems that they do not fit in with a negative utilitarian approach. Absence of disorder seems to be broader in scope. For example to be in absence of violence is not only to be free of the pain and suffering as results of others violence. It means most of all to be in absence of the need to exercise any kind of unjustified violence. That is, in general, the absence of the forms of disorder is not applicable only to the possible victims. Most importantly, the emphasis is shifted to those who may promote the forms of disorder. The person that uses forms of disorder is in disorder herself. Negative utilitarianism seems to target just the end result – suffering, pain – and is not concerned with the sources. It leaves those sources undisclosed. Both accounts are negative views of well-being. Some overlapping occurs. But this is limited to the area of those whom we may call the sufferers. It seems then that we can conclude that negative utilitarianism is a more narrow view than absence of disorder and they don't match.

Is absence of disorder simply an objective list theory? It is certainly introduced here supported in an objective list. But it seems that all the theories end up by having some sort of objective list underlying their view. The test of such views ends up by appealing to verification through items of a list that can be more or less implicit. Such informal lists may rely in the end on intuition and plausibility. This was the process through which we have analyzed the problems of theories that appear with no supporting list – hedonism and the desire-satisfaction views. How can we better demarcate objective-lists from subjectivist ones? I think that Arneson makes this point and refines it when he contrasts the qualities that can be found in the possible items of objective-lists or subjective views: 'Even if a subjective account and an objective-list generate similar lists of things that are valuable, the status of the items on the lists is different in the two accounts' (Arneson, 1999: 115).

As Arneson remarks, the subjectivist is ready to revise his list: ‘For the subjectivist, the list is provisional and defeasible, at least in theory. What renders something intrinsically good for someone is that she (under the appropriate conditions specified by the particular subjective theory) has a favorable attitude toward it. If it turns out that our lore about what people will in fact regard favorably under appropriate conditions is mistaken, then the subjectivist is prepared to revise and rewrite the list of valuable things’ (Ibid.). Such is not the case for the objective-list that by definition is not dependent on individual evaluation. This seems to leave enough room to take the view of well-being as absence of disorder as a subjectivist account. There is no reason whatsoever, as I have made clear, to see the supportive list as exhaustive, or final. It is therefore open to revision providing that that is done within the appropriate conditions of this view. What are those conditions? This may be equivalent to asking the questions: For absence of disorder as a view of personal well-being ‘what is the good maker?’ and ‘how is it justified?’

The answer is found in informed desire satisfaction. Of course the list itself is an attempt to show and explain these concepts as well as an attempt to render them operational. Any item to be added or removed from the supportive list will have to be put under reflective judgment to pass the question: why should such an item be considered a form of disorder that affects (or not) the well-being of the person on prudential grounds? ‘Absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’ presents itself then as a subjectivist theory embracing the ‘agent sovereignty’ claim. As stated by Arneson and noted in the second section of this chapter, the ‘agent sovereignty claim’ is the one that gives the person the right to decide about what is good for her.

John White (1990: 32) pictures desire-satisfaction as a formal theory covering autonomous and non-autonomous ways of life and capable of fitting all kinds of substantive examples. On the other hand Griffin (2000: 283) referring also to desire-satisfaction sees it also as a formal account in the following way: ‘I meant it to explain not what actually contributes to a good life but what it is for something to be prudentially valuable to someone’. But a list account is, in an important way, a substantive account of well-being; the list consists of components of a good life. The form of desire-satisfaction seems to be provided by individual desire as the

underlying common structure that is used to scrutinize all the substantive candidates as contributors to well-being. It seems to me that similarly, absence of disorder and its supportive list can also be seen as a unified formal structure rooted in desire satisfaction. An agent fully informed about the concept of entropy would desire to live a life with the lowest possible entropic build up. I consider then that absence of disorder can be seen as a formal theory able to explain what it is for something to be prudentially valuable for the person. The supportive list, always subject to revision, is an important way of helping to open up the concept of absence of disorder as an underlying unified structure of well-being.

Sumner (2000: 2) underlines the proposition of Griffin that it is important that a theory of well-being tells what it is for something to be prudentially valuable for someone by giving the appropriate relation to complete the following kind of formulae: ‘ x is prudentially valuable for y if and only if x stands in relation R to y ’ (Ibid.). For example the absence of a certain kind of fear (x) is prudentially valuable to the person (y) iff such absence of fear (x) represents an absence of disorder (R) to that person (y). Would it be possible for an absence of fear not to be an absence of disorder for a particular person? If this is a possibility, this brings out the subjectivity of the approach. But if an absence of fear is necessarily an absence of disorder, this makes it sound like an objective list theory. It seems possible for an absence of fear not to be an absence of disorder for a particular person. I take this to be equivalent to: an absence of fear that may represent a presence of disorder. See for example Damasio in his description of certain persons with particular brain damage (A.R. Damasio: 1996). Some patients seem to be aware that they can’t move one side of their body. But they don’t reason accordingly and don’t fear the future as a common person would. In milder cases, I assume that it is possible for someone to be careless – not fearful enough – to cross the road without looking appropriately to both sides. This seems to be an imprudent absence of fear. An absence of fear is not necessarily an absence of disorder, this would make it sound like an objective list theory. But surely an absence of a phobic fear means an absence of disorder. Sumner adds: ‘An account of the nature of well-being is one thing, a list of its sources or ingredients quite another’ (Ibid.). He also considers important the fact that it is different from a typical objective list to have a conception of well-being with an underlying ‘unified nature’ in spite of diverse ‘sources’ or ‘ingredients’. My claim

is that 'absence of disorder' is a concept capable of providing a 'unified nature' of this view of well-being, providing it with a formal character. The supportive list of forms of disorder plays the role of diverse 'sources' or 'ingredients' that are subject to updating or revision.

Can absence of disorder be taken as a mental-state theory of well-being? A mental-state theory of well-being may allow the possibility of some sort of delusive mental-state to be better than a mental-state that prefers to know, or to be close, to reality. It can be said that a person in a state of illusion may fare better than in a state of knowing the truth or reality. What follows is something like the question: so why be in a state of suffering or discomfort just to be close to the truth? Sumner (Ibid. 4-6) presents the hedonism of the classical utilitarians as an example of mental-state theory. He also presents the critique that Griffin produced of these views. On the one hand Griffin says that there is no single positive or negative feeling such that having more of it would make us better or worse off. Griffin gave the example of Freud, already mentioned, preferring lucidity with pain instead of drugs with drowsiness. On the other hand, Griffin considers the counter attraction of hedonism with the 'reductionism argument': 'Freud preferred what for him was a better mental-state'. To this Griffin argues that we may prefer 'bitter truth to comfortable delusion' as in a case of faked love. It seems then that illusion (or any mental-state of delusion) is in irreducible conflict with absence of disorder, because it is – by definition – a disturbance of the quiet mind. Illusion or illusory states of mind are the ones that are prevented from perceiving the truth of reality. Such minds, in illusion, perceive something other than reality. It seems then that what follows is that absence of disorder as a theory of well-being is itself in opposition to mental-state theories that allow a place for such illusory states. The mind in absence of disorder is not the one with happiness or with no pain. It is the mind in absence of illusions, namely originated in many complex social constructions like 'racism'. I think that it is not a state of disorder if someone's illusion is, say, an optical illusion dependent on physiology – e.g. the perception that a stick half immersed in water, is a broken stick. This former case seems to be a comparatively easy one to drop such illusion. We can then maybe conclude that absence of disorder as a view of personal well-being is in direct opposition with mental-state theories as defined above.

Allow me to close this chapter, by paying a tribute to Rousseau who in a passage of his *Emile* seems to catch luminously this aspect of well-being and ‘absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’ as a view of personal well-being. Says Rousseau: ‘The only moral lesson which is suited for a child – the most important lesson for every time of life – is this: Never hurt anybody. The very rule of well-being, if not subordinated to this rule, is dangerous, false, and contradictory. Who is there who does no good? Everyone does some good, the wicked as well as the righteous; he makes one happy at the cost of the misery of a hundred, and hence spring all our misfortunes. *The noblest virtues are negative, they are also the most difficult, for they make little show, and do not even make room for that pleasure so dear to the heart of man, the thought that someone is pleased with us* [my emphasis]. If there be a man who does no harm to his neighbours, what good must he have accomplished! What a bold heart, what a strong character it needs! It is not in talking about the maxim, but in trying to practice it, that we discover both its greatness and its difficulty’ (Rousseau, 1993: 81).

I have dealt in this chapter with the central aim of education as being absence of disorder. If ‘Order is basically a feature of individuals mind...’ (White, 1995: 16) and ‘... a rightly ordered soul is the paramount good’ (Gutman, 1989: 31) it is worthwhile to look at how such order, or ‘absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’ can be seen through the list of items of sources of disorder. This takes us to chapter four, where I try to unpack what I singled out as possible sources or forms of disorder.

4 – The Forms of Disorder

Attempting to uncover the nature and operation of the forms of disorder, I start the chapter by recognizing a difficulty. We have all lived through a schooling system designed to serve perfectionism and Social–Darwinism in late-modern society. Later on we live embedded in that same society. How can we then recognize a life in absence of disorder?

Let me start by drawing your attention to this important difficulty by using an analogy with strawberries – the fruit that everyone seems to know and appreciate. What is it that is so special about them? When I was a child my mother, like most mothers in Portugal, used to make strawberry salad in a big bowl and it was delicious. Not only delicious in the sense that our mother’s food tends to be, wherever mothers live or whatever mothers cook or prepare – if you are lucky enough to have a good mother. The strawberries that I’m talking about were small, dark red, matt and naturally very sweet and this would make them delicious. But such strawberries would grow only once a year and the time of picking them was the strawberry season so eagerly waited by children like me. When I was an undergraduate in Lisbon in the seventies I could still find them for sale by small traders in the squares of the town. They would buy them from growers who cared for them on small plots of land around the city. But very sadly in the seventies these strawberries started to disappear.

On the one hand urban expansion was an important factor of change in use of the land. On the other hand new growing processes and genetic engineering introduced other kinds of strawberries. These new strawberries grow several times a year in greenhouses, they are bigger, shining, and good looking but they are a hundred times less tasty than the old ones. The new strawberries are now available in restaurants and supermarkets all year round and the food industry offers a myriad of products where they are included. If I were to choose strawberries as a model for a still life painting, I would choose the new strawberries. But to eat, I wouldn't hesitate in opting for the ugly old ones. If I ask myself the question: 'which are the real strawberries?' I think I would have to start to investigate around the concept of the 'essence' of something. If I accept for the moment that the essence of something is that attribute, the universal, without which I can no longer name that thing by its original name, maybe I end up with a curious conclusion about strawberries. Looking at some attributes of a strawberry like form, colours and taste, etc., what would be the universal elements to be included in the essence? Would I be able to dispense with taste? Suppose that I look at strawberries made of plastic. Could I say that they were strawberries? They certainly don't taste like the real ones. What about the new strawberries made of a substance resembling the old ones but with more water content and other characteristics that in a way gives them a taste only resembling, remotely, the old ones? To me and probably for those who tasted the old strawberries, there are no doubts that taste must be part of the essence of what we used to call strawberries.

Therefore the old strawberries for us are the 'real' ones. The new so-called strawberries are fake versions and they are not real strawberries. The real strawberries vanished almost completely from the face of the earth. Now the problem starts to be the following: for the generation after mine, for example for my son and my daughter, what are named strawberries are not strawberries. The description of the fake strawberries is similar to that of the real ones. The images in paintings or photographs may also be hard to distinguish. Most of all everyone keeps giving the name strawberries to a certain kind of fruits. In the middle of all this, how can I explain to my son and my daughter what strawberries are? More than that, and more importantly: how can I show or transmit to my son or my daughter the beauty of the taste of real strawberries? I don't think that I have an

answer for this problem. Maybe I never will. I am left with the poverty of verbal descriptive attempts. I use such descriptive attempts from the most possible directions expanding as much as possible my imagination. But exhausting these imaginative descriptions I have to stop and hope for the best result possible.

Now let's look at the sources of disorder and the possible life lived without them. I am referring to a life not invaded by perfectionism as the good of the person and Social Darwinism as the good of society. I think that the problem we have here is even more difficult than the problem with the strawberries. Why? If for strawberries we can still find those that knew what the real ones were and can attempt a close description, for life without pervasive accepted forms of disorder that is hardly possible. For example let us look at the schooling system as one important aspect of society. Not only my generation but also generations before mine have gone through the compulsory schooling system. We did that from a very early age in a most intensive way. We sat in classrooms for thousands of hours. We lived always with grading systems as ever-present systems of comparison between students. We went through hundreds of tests, exams and different ways of assessments racing through time and nervously looking frequently at our watches. We saw the best ones being praised and admired and eventually we envied them. Countless times we sacrificed and committed ourselves in studying a subject not for the sake of that subject but for the sake of progressing to the next stage and sometimes for the sake of prizes. We went into numerous classes in fear of saying the wrong thing (and also sometimes, the right thing), of being humiliated, by professors and peers alike.

The fear of failing has been continuously with us. Some of us even lived through days of physical punishment in schools. We all lived through the possibility of psychological punishment and humiliation privately or, much worse than that, in front of the class. We all had countless tedious home-work that killed the joy of our leisure. We were told that if we did not succeed in studies we would be losers and nobodies. We felt a certain power operating around us. Such power was an unquestioned power from which we could not escape. Living these situations and many others in complex subtle intertwining ways and with different degrees of intensity is and was for the great majority of us the norm. We are therefore 'normalised' people in dealing with them and accepting them. Therefore detaching

us completely from this picture is very difficult. In many ways it may be like asking a fish to jump out of the water and learn how to keep breathing. Therefore the problem is not only approaching something that vanished from the face of the earth like strawberries. The difficulty is to approach something that, in general, vanished a long time ago and hardly was tasted by all of those who went through, for example, a school system or a work place in these late modern societies. The everyday is too complex to be fully described, as I believe was said by Aristotle. Each particular situation requires therefore a particular judgement and I don't think we can escape from that. I think that probably this is one of the most interesting things in life and certainly life would not be the same without it. Thus we are not pursuing some magic formula for the good life or the moral truth but a way of thinking about the good life.

I move now to look into the forms of disorder and their sub-items, giving only some examples because each of these items can be a vast ground when properly unpacked. Let me point out that the list of items and sub-items under the forms of disorder does not follow any underlying system. The list is compiled, necessarily, out of my personal experience and references found in the literature. Comparison and division are the forms of disorder that receive most attention. Foucault is said to have perceived '... that something is terribly wrong with the present' (Gutting, 1994: 10). Regarding comparison, I emphasize the Foucauldian insight of internalisation of the system of comparison, and the forms of disorder in general, by the subject. This deals with Foucault's ideas of 'the ideal point of penalty' and the perverse 'asymptotic movement' of actual performance striving to meet an ever-receding 'perfect standard' of comparison. Regarding 'envy', I think, I have the best opportunity to clarify how comparison as disorder works and how someone in absence of disorder avoids it. Dependency and division as forms of disorder, provide, I hope, the opportunity to mention briefly the important item of autonomy. I look at division by gender and I attempt to clarify and support the Platonic saying that '... sex [gender] is a difference that makes no difference'.

4.1 Comparison

Comparison is the root operation that may develop into the forms of disorder listed as its sub-items: competition, envy, jealousy, vanity, prestige, inferior and superior relationships (winner and loser, successful and unsuccessful), physical and intellectual capacities. Since we have different talents the question of equality is an elusive one. Instead, the burning issue is comparison and its developments. But in itself, comparison is also an important form of disorder deserving the close attention of philosophers. David Hume devoted considerable attention to comparison as a negative trait of human character. Annete Baier writes that Hume's 'principle of comparison' is among the two '... fairly sharp good/bad contrasts he draws among the forces affecting motivation and affecting character ...', and 'makes us wish to fare better than others, so blocks sympathy, giving us, on the contrary, pleasure in another's pain and pain from their pleasure.' (Baier, 1998: 232).

In his *Treatise Of Human Nature*, Hume contrasts two principles of human nature. The first principle is the principle of sympathy. The second principle is the principle of comparison. These principles are in opposition. Concerning the principle of comparison, Hume mentions that we judge more objects by comparison than by their intrinsic value, but the more obvious comparison that we do is amongst ourselves (Hume, 1992: 593). For Hume this all-encompassing operation of comparison mixes with most of our passions (Ibid.). On comparison among human beings, Hume writes: '*In all kinds of comparison an object makes us always receive from another, to which it is compar'd, a sensation contrary to what arises from it self in its direct and immediate survey. The direct survey of another's pleasure naturally gives us pleasure; and therefore produces pain, when compar'd with our own. His pain, consider'd in it self, is painful; but augments the idea of our own happiness, and gives us pleasure*' (Ibid. 594) (sic).

I take it that engaging in comparison is an almost inevitable trait for anyone living in relationship with others. Many times such comparison will find justification and is serving moral principles, virtuous intentions and pursuits. How

could the end of slavery and the general movement of defence of human rights take place without comparison? How could I protect my rights and urge the scope of such rights if I was not to make comparisons? Certainly I have to engage in comparison with how others are faring and the conditions underlying their situation, and ask myself how would I fare under similar conditions. It seems that the concept of justice itself would be hard to grasp and apply, without the intervention of comparison¹⁵. This is not the outcome of comparison that concerns Hume. What so sharply concerns Hume is the outcome of comparison that blocks sympathy in an unreasonable way. As noted above by Baier, and as we can directly infer from Hume's own words, what concerned him was the outcome of comparison that consists in non-moral dispositions that corrupt the virtues and inflame passions. Such dispositions cause pain when the others experience some improvement and 'pleasure' when on the contrary they become worse or suffer a setback.

As for pain felt from inadequate kinds of results of comparison, we can say that disorder is already with the person that feels that pain. As for 'pleasure' we have to look closer. I placed between inverted commas the word pleasure because apparently one could ask: how could our own pleasure constitute a form of disorder? On the one hand I can say that such non-moral 'pleasure' tends to be reflected negatively in the relationship with the other and therefore is a disposition that may bring disorder to the other. But on the other hand very quickly we find, as Hume did, that such 'pleasure' brings upon the person developments in several directions of disorder. Hume starts to mention comparison when he looks at the passions of envy and malice. Hatred can be produced after comparison as Hume points out, and he also stresses that sentiments of mortification can follow from comparison with superior or inferior merit perceived on the others. In what situation does someone experience negative sentiments of mortification, by comparison with an inferior? I think this is possible when the person perceives what she takes to be not sufficiently strong enough in his or her 'superiority'.

Hume remarks that vanity and negative ways of pride can also spring from comparison. The proud and the vain may engage in continuous 'disagreeable

¹⁵ For views on the problem of comparison for purposes of distributive justice see Elster, J. and Roemer, J. E. (eds) (1991), *Interpersonal Comparison of Well-being*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

comparison'. The proud never endures the proud, and looks for the company of those with opposite dispositions in order by comparison to make a difference. The vain is in constant need of comparison in turn to support his vanity (Ibid. 596). One of most pervasive traits of mankind is the selection and admiration of all sorts of 'heroes'. Those 'heroes', self-proposed or not, gain a place in 'eternity', be it at world, national, regional or even family level. Hume takes on this issue and he starts to note that very often actions and sentiments that became admired by all are rooted in luck, pride, and vanity. Such traits of character of a hero can render him the 'admiration of posterity' – death transcendence – but also, says Hume, may ruin his affairs and bring him difficulties and dangers otherwise unknown. Hume points to the fact that contra the usual general admiration of heroism or military glory, 'men of cool reflexion' see in them 'infinite confusions and disorder' (Ibid. 599-601). On the passions of malice and envy, Hume assigns their root to comparison. Hume defines malice as the desire of causing evil to the other, 'in order to reap a pleasure from the comparison'. But as for envy he elaborates in more than one direction. He starts to mention that envy arises from some pleasure experienced by another that by comparison diminishes in our eyes our own value.

Interestingly, next Hume comments on other possible forms of envy that require a double comparison. It is the kind of envy – perhaps possible to call a negative envy – that we experience when someone perceived as an inferior starts to bridge the gap or to overtake us, and Hume writes: 'In this envy we may see the effects of comparison twice repeated. A man, who compares himself to his inferior, receives a pleasure from the comparison: And when the inferiority decreases by the elevation of the inferior, what shou'd only have been a decrease of pleasure, becomes a real pain, by a new comparison with its preceding condition' (sic.) (Ibid.377). Inferior and superior relationships receive special attention from Hume. Hume sees sentiments like respect, love or contempt, as revolving around the comparison that may lead to perceptions of inferiority, equality or superiority (Ibid. 390). Finally Hume pictures the metaphor of 'distance' as the result of sentiments of superiority: 'A sense of superiority in another breeds in all men an inclination to keep themselves at a distance from him, and determines them to redouble the marks of respect and reverence, when they are oblig'd to approach; and where they do not observe that conduct, 'tis a proof they are not sensible of his superiority' (sic.) (Ibid. 393). Let us remind ourselves

that this problem of the inferior and superior relationships is of utmost importance among teachers and students. The educational process, it seems to me, depends enormously on the sensibility of teachers for these aspects of their relation with students. Rightly Hume emphasizes the issue. His views would certainly make an enormous difference in teacher trainer courses. Psychological superiority seems to be in fact a manifestation of inferiority. The opposite of inferiority is a self-confidence that dispenses with comparison.

We go back to the problem of those teachers ‘with an inflated ego’ (section 1.2). Why is this? If she or he has an inflated ego that means that she considers her or himself psychologically superior. The relevant question here is the following: what is the real opposite of psychological inferiority? If we think about a simple example of a new and inexperienced teacher acting arrogantly (appearing as a superior person), one can ask where is the origin of this arrogance? The origin of such ‘superiority’ may be in insecurity that the teacher feels. We must conclude then that at a psychological level, superiority equals inferiority. They do not oppose each other and superiority is just the expression of inferiority. If we look at the experienced teacher, not insecure anymore, who keeps acting as someone psychologically superior, through arrogance or other ways, one must see that this person is involved continuously in a process of comparison with others. This compulsive need for comparison and consequent permanent demonstration of psychological superiority is originated in entrenched psychological inferiority. This need also can be translated as the permanent need to demonstrate to the others that one is not ‘any-body’ but ‘somebody’. The real opposite of psychological inferiority that is missing in those teachers, and in fact does not abound in the present school system, is self-confidence. The self-confident person dispenses with comparison. That is to say, dispenses with the need of compare herself permanently with the others, at a psychological level¹⁶. I’m therefore defining here self-confidence as the real opposite of psychological superiority or any other manifestations of psychological inferiority and thus the absence of the occurrence, or the need of occurrence, of such manifestations. The opposite of inferiority is a self-confidence that dispenses with comparison. Let us now survey some other similar views of other philosophers on comparison.

¹⁶ These relations of inferiority and superiority are addressed by Aristotle in his *Ethics*, p 65-6; Aristotle (1998). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Toronto. Dover Thrift Editions.

On comparison generating feelings of superiority or inferiority, Descartes and Condorcet seem to share the same position. As noted by Garber, Descartes emphasized that he could not be placed above others because he didn't see himself possessing special talents, wisdom, or a more perfect mind (Garber, 1998: 136). It is interesting to reproduce part of one of the quotations that Garber takes from Descartes as follows: '... I consider myself [says Descartes] very fortunate to have happened upon certain paths in my youth which led me to considerations and maxims from which I formed a method where by, it seems to me, I can increase my knowledge gradually and raise it little by little to the highest point allowed by the mediocrity of my mind and the short duration of my life' (Ibid.). Descartes acknowledges the importance of luck in his life development, and also the limitations of his mind and the duration of his life. Condorcet's future society would have no place for 'heroes'. It would emphasize the non-heroic (Rotchield, 1998: 223).

This is an important shift in the significance recognized to the many individuals who go about their life not causing problems. These are the anonymous unnoticed non-heroes that dispense with the publicity of big accomplishments that would elevate them by comparison in a podium above the others. It's a view in which societies recognize the lack of importance of 'heroes'. 'Heroes' always abound and always will in society. Candidates queue for the role. The issue reminds us of one interesting ritual in military ceremonials. Military rituals ensure the praise of heroes through medals, statues, etc. that by making real the transcendence of death compensate for the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice of life. But at the same time the military recognize that they must extend that privilege to the immense number of anonymous soldiers without which the mission cannot be accomplished. For these they have the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In Rousseau, as seen by A. Rorty, the pre-social natural men 'do not define themselves by comparison or competition', and Emile is 'formed by a natural non-comparative sense of *amour de soi*'; this way, the 'natural marginal physical inequalities do not generate the debilitating passions that accompany psychological and social inequality' (Rorty, 1998b: 241, 248). Rorty notes that Rousseau carefully constructed Emile with no siblings in order to guarantee the absence of personal comparison with them (Ibid. 250).

This draws attention to the important and potentially destructive process of comparison so common when carried into the realm of the privacy of the family. I think we can reinforce this view by noticing some interesting points made by Rousseau in his *Emile*. Rousseau writes very clearly: ‘... but selfishness, which is always comparing self with others, is never satisfied and never can be; for this feeling, which prefers ourselves to others, requires that they should prefer us to themselves, which is impossible’ (Rousseau, 1993: 209). Rousseau seems to highlight also that a selfish person is imprisoned in this destructive mechanism of comparison. On the other hand Barbara Herman writing on Kant notes some of his views on comparison as follows: ‘... the comparative principle leads us to a sense of our own well-being that is continuously measured against the well-being of others’ and ‘we judge ourselves happy or unhappy only by making comparison with others’; This way, ‘... the highest goal is to be comparatively best, the requirement that we give priority to moral over nonmoral incentives is likely to be reversed’. Finally Herman concludes that for Kant ‘... the competitiveness and conflict that comparative judgements provoke’ then takes over (Herman, 1998: 262).

Nietzsche, according to Schacht grew disillusioned with his view that we need exceptional ‘true men’ to lift us and serve as exemplars, mentors and educators. Nietzsche thought to find such examples in the Greeks, Wagner or Schopenhauer, but became disappointed by those whom he previously revered (Schacht, 1998: 311, 322). This comparison that stems from reverence of what is thought exceptional, often leads to disappointment when one comes to realize that persons cannot be perfect. More than that, it seems to be inhumane to ask someone (demand) to play the role of ideal perfect person seated in the podium of comparison. Finally, also on perfectionism we can notice a remark made on the Yeshiva school: ‘Scholars tend to be competitive and arrogant, and the cultivation of intellectual self-perfection often becomes deeply narcissistic. A Yeshiva that continuously rewards talents and intellectual achievement can be a cruel place to those less rigorous intellectually’ (Halbental and Halbental, 1988: 465). Indeed comparison can be brought to the personal level when via self-perfectionism the person keeps comparing herself with herself and demands ever better results. *De facto*, a place of constant reward and punishment of intellectual achievement is what the schools of the late-modern society

became, via the grading system. It seems that, in a certain extent, such a school system may easily become a very cruel place for the students that attend it.

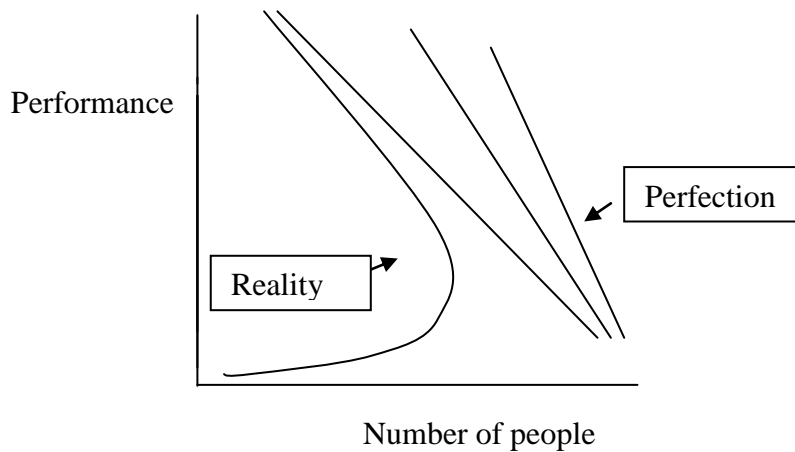
A philosopher who looked closely at comparison was Foucault. In his *Discipline and Punishment* Foucault assumes that places like schools, hospitals, military barracks, hospitals and prisons, have much in common in trying to control individuals' time and space. Foucault (1991: 180) identifies gratification and punishment as the two elements of discipline. The concept of discipline itself is seen here as the mechanism that produces subjects as 'docile bodies' (Ibid, 138). This new political anatomy, the disciplinary machine, '... made the educational space function like a learning machine but also as a machine of supervision, hierarchizing, rewarding (Ibid. 147). Time and the time-table became very important in order not to be 'wasted'. Speed and maximum efficiency became a landmark (Ibid. 154). The time clock became indispensable in schools not only to avoid the 'loss' of time but in a process of rigorous comparison, to guarantee that exams were done by all in the same amount of time¹⁷. The selection of the fittest is done at maximum speed and in supervised equality in order to guarantee a quality process of comparison - that is to say selection. Specifically on the school Foucault writes: 'Similarly the school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching. It became less and less a question of jousts in which pupils pitched their forces against one another and increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and judge' (Ibid. 182). This vision of the school that Foucault evokes embodies the forms of disorder

¹⁷ This time control made in the name of equality is done through restriction. Time limited exams introduce stress. It is not enough to do well. One has to do well under stress and speeding. This is an important factor in the selection process: not only to do well at mathematics, but to do it well speeding and under pressure of a dead line. It does not occur to anyone in the system that equality can be achieved by allowing, as much time as found needed by each student. That is to say, each student would have as much time as they like. I've been using this rule for years with my students. Students don't exaggerate the time that they stay in the room - they simply get bored and get out. It is often said, as a justification for exams with time limit and stress, that students have to be trained for the real situations in real life. But on the one hand life is not a permanent emergency (or it should not be a race of chained stressful urgencies). On the other hand training someone during more than a decade - in some cases almost two - in hundreds of tests, does not guarantee that personal capacity for an emergency but rather tends to destroy it. Training military commandos not in mock operations but in real action against a real enemy, repeatedly, would end up by destroying them all. Finally it is assumed that students' life itself is not a 'real life' and they can be twisted in any direction as rubber toys, regardless of their present well-being for the sake of a possible future well-being. Aren't we touching here the frontiers of stupid destructive cruelty? Or maybe better said, of long slow stupid destructive cruelty?

that can exist in the classroom. This perpetual comparison can easily bring bitterness. Such bitterness may possibly develop into envy and fear or anxiety.

The exams are seen as ‘a constantly repeated ritual of power’ (Ibid. 190). The power of the assessment and the exams are in the centre of the possibility of teachers’ ‘inflated egos’. Exams are a culmination of such power. After the exams and with the classroom empty teachers’ ‘egos deflate’ since the source of power is not there any more. But this is a permanent cycle and a permanent game because the next generation of students is about to fill the same classroom, and teachers’ idiosyncrasies manifested through and supported by the renovated power, will go up again on stage. Later on in the book Foucault strikes in an intense way at one of the main characteristics of perfectionist ideology and procedures. He mentions not only permanent comparison and measurement, but also suggests that such unstoppable comparative measurement has a second movement that takes it dynamically and permanently into a magnetic field of attraction for higher and higher norms of comparison¹⁸. What I think that Foucault is focusing on here is a technology of power that not only comes from the outside but also becomes internalized by the subject who starts to penalize himself. On this Foucault writes: ‘The ideal point of penalty, would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgment that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would be interlaced with the rootless curiosity of examination, a procedure that would be at the same time the permanent measure of a gap in relation to an inaccessible norm and the asymptotic movement that strives to meet in infinity’ (Ibid. 227).

¹⁸ The point may be illustrated by the following text found in the press: ‘The number of first-class honours by Britain’s top universities has increased by 50% in five years, it emerged yesterday; The massive rise prompted claims yesterday of dumbing down that was rendering the system meaningless’. As you can see it does not matter that a great number of students are genuinely achieving the most desired results. What it is taken as important is the relative achievement that has to account (select) for a fringe or ‘aristocratic’ minority. In Foucauldian terms, British Universities are losing the ‘point of penalty’. No doubt the system will readjust itself with the usual consequences.



Consider that the origin of the axes is zero. The vertical axis shows increasing levels of performance. The horizontal axis represents an increasing number of people. The straight line, with negative inclination, intends to represent the 'perfectionist' trend - those within the 'norm' or 'the normal'. Here the lower levels of performance are achieved by a large number of people. With higher levels of required performance, the number of successful achievers is less and less. The curve that intends to represent a situation closer to 'reality' depicts a positive inclination that later reverses to a negative one. Very low levels of achievement can be found in particular minorities (e. g. mentally or physically impaired). By slightly increasing the levels of achievement, a greater number of people – 'the normal' – meet the standard. With increasing levels of performance, the successful achievers tend to be fewer – these are 'the exceptional'. The curve here changes to a negative inclination and tends to converge with the perfectionist straight line. Within the 'perfectionist paradigm', all – including the more 'exceptional'- should strive continuously to achieve more. This is represented by the fact that the two lines never touch. They only converge asymptotically. Whenever they tend to touch each other, such impossibility (dissatisfaction) can be depicted through an eternal and unavoidable generation of other straight perfectionist lines. These always recede, keeping away from touching 'reality'. They constitute the ever present next 'target', typical of this ideology

Foucault's 'ideal point of penalty' – that I take to be a possible penalty of the others to us, of us upon ourselves, and from us to the others –is the permanent comparison that leads to the measurement of a gap between an actual performance and the performance established in an ever higher standard or inaccessible norm.

This inaccessible norm or standard establishes the perfect or ideal performance. Such permanent comparison can be infiltrated in many relevant aspects of our lives, including leisure. This permanent comparison propels the striving to bridge the gap in a movement that tries to converge asymptotically the actual performance into the ideal or perfect performance. But the final meeting of actual and perfect performance is condemned to be frustrated. Perfection slides always into higher levels. They can meet only in infinity. This may imply a life style permeated by a permanent chain of stressful efforts and urgencies in order to improve. One of the major factors to have in mind in this permanent system of comparison I take to be the consequences of the fact that we have started to live in a 'global village' and its instantaneous or real time information transference and communications. How then is the 'impossible norm' established? Who sets the perfect standard? Or who are the 'best', those who achieve higher and more, to be put in the role of guidance and example?

It seems to me that there is here a tragic consequence of globalization. This generation of standards can be made in the house, in the building, in the classroom, in the school or year level, in the neighbourhood or town. But it is here that things tend to be more complicated because these days there are no boundaries and the possibility of standard fixing expands geographically in any possible direction encompassing the examination and recruiting at always 'higher' and 'higher' standards. The county level gives way to the national level that precedes the continental level, and finally touches the world level. That is to say, the best are the best in the world. The best runner or team in sports, the best piano player in music, the best writer in literature, the best scientist in the field, the best manager, the most wealthy person, the best actor, the employee of the year or of the month, the most beautiful person, the worst (or the best) dressed member of the jet set (which is of course a contest of notoriety), the best artist, the best dog etc.¹⁹. It cuts across all aspects of human life. It involves all ages and conditions, children, adults, animals, and disabled²⁰. Competitive contests and Prizes and Nominations proliferate

¹⁹ This is an endless list and can come down to the variety of absurdities in something like the Guinness Book of Records where all kinds of people have the opportunity of 'perpetuating their name' by doing something bizarre. The pyramids of Egypt, of doubtful aesthetic level, could qualify for this purpose

²⁰ Contrast the regular Olympic Games with the Olympic games for disabled persons.

everywhere and can involve everyone at many levels of ability²¹. It spreads to leisure, work, arts, vice, and virtue. It involves natural or acquired capacities.

Foucault points to two ways of comparing, by measuring and ordering, and that one can always reduce the former to the latter (Foucault, 2002: 58, 63). Foucault mentions again mathematics as the science of ordering things. Therefore all the systems of comparison can be put in the form of first, second, etc. Peters (1966: 141) refers himself to this categorization and he underlines that ‘different’ is often generalized to ‘worse’ or ‘better’. Wringe (1988: 81) considers that ‘... the notion of equality is in some way vague, meaningless or incoherent’. Further on this same author considers equality as being ‘boring’ and ‘coercive’ and that there is an important confusion in the debates around equality that is to confuse this notion with ‘sameness’ Ibid. 85-6). But Wringe ends up by rescuing the important notion of equality from sameness when he underlines that what is important is the equality of respect. He points out that although equality and justice are not synonymous there are important connections that in the end brings them together (Ibid. 93). Finally Wringe mentions that equality should be valued and applied at the level of rewards, when he writes: ‘... for someone committed to equality it is not differences in intellectual achievement which are underivable but the different rewards and levels of social status we choose to link with them’ (Ibid. 91). The position that enhances the need for reconciliation of diversity and equality of treatment by pointing to the fact ‘... that equal citizenship is constituted by recognition of equal worth rather than sameness’ is also shown in Gingell and Winch (1999: 69).

Competition follows from the basic operation of comparison. But what is it that is at stake here? Should we not be able to enjoy a football game or a game of dice? Fielding (1976: 349) points to the fundamental problem when he quotes Iva Howerth as follows: ‘The eternal and insuperable objection to competition from the ethical standpoint is the state of mind involved’. That is, can those involved in a game of football in the end of it turn their back to the field and in camaraderie naturally ‘forget’ the result of the match? Liberals accept competition but restricted to the economic market and in controlled ways. There has been over the years an

²¹ Exceptions occur by repudiation of playing these games. Sartre was one of them when he refused the Nobel Prize.

increasing interest in the area of business ethics both at academic and corporate levels. To be competitive in the market does not imply being ruthless or unethical about one's employees and competitors. Big corporations have dropped procedures like the nomination of the employee of the year or of the month. They recognized that in the medium and long term such 'podiums' – many times correlated with material or status incentives - entail destructive comparison and competition that are detrimental to the necessary cooperation, which is the backbone of sustained performance. Some important corporations found that job security and considerate treatment of employees, suppliers, clients, competitors, and official authorities, maximizes their utility and the probability of achieving their central economical aim: profits. In a word they have become concerned with their ethical environment.

Also in a simple way, many know that to be a successful businessperson does not imply falling in a penumbra close to violent aggression, or corruption. Fielding correctly points to the fact that a correct understanding of competition must be framed by some conception of what it is to be a person and the good life to be lived by that person. He dismisses competition seen as some sort of 'motivation chameleon' in the classroom (Fielding, 1976: 356). Dearden (1976: 335) concludes that the educated person should be in a state in which it makes no sense to compete. K. Strike (Strike, 1983: 224) dismisses elementary school as a place to start the competition for social benefits. A much-praised means of education is sport, sometimes seen as a solution for too many things. But as Ken Jones (2001: 132) remarks, competitive sport involves psychological risk since defeat can cause humiliation. I add to this that competition can easily bring with it anxiety, frustration, disappointment, envy, self-punishment, exaggerated dedication, etc. Rawls takes it that '... the particular envy aroused by competition and rivalry is likely to be stronger the worse one's defeat' (Rawls, 1999: 469).

If we look at the Olympics whose original spirit is highly praised several forms of disorder can be intensely present, the way they are conducted today. Press articles about the Olympics may be instructive in showing that its original spirit has been tarnished by corruption in the managing bodies and money-grubbing athletes who at that level of competition are full of drugs, very often hurting their health, and divisive nationalisms. Darwin stimulated John Dewey but he rejected Spencer's and

Sumner's sociological interpretations, and the view of the school with competitive activities in order to bring the fittest to the surface (Guttek, 1972: 267). This same author notes also that Plato is '... critical of the athletic competitions that were popular among the Greeks because he felt that such spectator-oriented performances failed to promote proper emotional dispositions. The competitive spirit fostered an unhealthy individualism rather than a cooperative spirit (Ibid. 39). Finally, revealing perhaps how stable are the fundamentals of character of human beings across times Rousseau quotes Pythagoras and writes: 'The spectacle of the world' said Pythagoras, 'is like the Olympic games; some are buying and selling and think only of their gains; others take an active part and strive for glory; others, and these are not the worst, are content to be lookers-on' (Rousseau, 1993: 238).

A very important sub-item of comparison as a form of disorder is envy. Envy is impossible to experience if not rooted in a comparison. But I can compare myself in many ways with others and not feel envy. I can express a mere wish: 'I wish I would be so rich as such and such'. But by expressing that wish I'm not affected by it and I get on with my life. What is then the nature of envy? Can there be excusable envy as suggested by Rawls (1999: 468)? Can it be a moral emotion as argued by La Caze (2001; 2002)? If it can be a moral emotion then maybe it is not a form of disorder at all in those situations? Is there any chance or situation where envy may not represent disorder for the person who experiences it? I am especially interested in this last question, which I intend to address briefly. Let me look first at La Caze's claim according to which envy and resentment, usually seen as negative emotions, may play an important role in ethical life by making possible the recognition of injustices to ourselves or others (La Caze, 2001: 31). This author accepts that some forms of envy are not moral – improper envy – but in others envy is a moral emotion (La Caze, 2002: 155). In response to this view we can mention Ben'Zev (2002) and van Hooft (2002). For Ben'Zev envy is 'a negative emotional state towards another person's advantage and the desire to gain what this person possesses' (1993: 3). Ben'Zev comments that Aristotle, Spinoza, Thomas Reid, Augustine share a view of envy seen as intrinsically evil. Christianity and Buddhism also have a place for envy in their lists of seven sins and six poisons (Ben'Zev, 2002 149). Ben'Zev sets two central criteria to analyse what constitutes a moral emotion: 'a) whether the core

evaluative concern of the emotion is moral and b) whether the emotion tends to lead to beneficial moral consequences' (Ibid, 148).

The first criterion concerns the emotional intrinsic evaluative component. Ben'Zev gives some examples. Compassion, involving a positive evaluation of the other that is suffering, is a moral emotion. Regret, as sorrow over a missed past opportunity, maybe regarded as morally neutral since its core evaluative concern has no reference to moral aspects and is independent of them. The second criterion is concerned with consequentiality in the sense that the experience of an emotion may lead to consequences that are, on balance, morally beneficial or harmful. Under this criterion Hate is immoral since it is directed to bring harmful consequences (Ibid. 148-9). Ben'Zev argues that in the light of these two criteria envy cannot be classified as moral or immoral and is best viewed as morally neutral. That is to say, there are situations in which the core evaluative concern of envy can be moral or immoral. On the other hand, there are situations in which the consequences of action rooted in envy, may be moral or immoral. For my central purpose here – to determine if envy is or is not always a form of disorder - it is also interesting to register what Ben'Zev says about anger and resentment. He says that anger consists in an immediate response to what we perceive as unjustified harm brought upon us or to others whom we somehow relate with. Resentment, like anger, is also a negative attitude against a harmful action and those who carry it, but on a more long-term level than a sudden outburst of anger (Ibid. 152-3). Anger and resentment, by being reactions to a perceived wrongdoing that attempt to rectify it, contain both an implicit moral accusation and an attempt to bring about a corrective consequence that may or may not be moral. In conclusion Ben'Zev asserts that contrary to anger and resentment, envy cannot be seen as a moral emotion, and in this respect La Caze is wrong. Anger and resentment can be seen as moral, according to Ben'Zev, on the grounds of the first criterion: their core evaluative concern is moral.

Coming into this debate on envy and resentment, Stan van Hooft joins forces with the traditional and historical philosophical views of Aristotle, Spinoza and Descartes by condemning envy and resentment as negative emotions that can be ingrained as permanent traits of character. He quotes a more 'thick' description of envy from Robert Solomon, as being 'an essentially vicious emotion, bitter and

vindictive' with a place among the deadly sins 'because it is not merely misfortune, not merely impotence, but self-imposed, self-indulgent, undeserving greed' (van Hooft, 2002: 142). Against La Caze, van Hooft says that envy is not only a set of cognitive judgements about a perceived good that the other enjoys and we are missing. Envy implies that the good or benefit envied is desirable: 'One wants what others have, not just because one judges that it is desirable, but because one actually desires it'. It follows from this that: 'There is a set of self-referring attitudes lying at a deeper level than the envy and upon which the envy depends' (Ibid. 144). Very importantly he attributes to such self-referring attitudes lying at a deeper level, a form of dissatisfaction with oneself. Taking the example of envy of the benefits of a politician acquired unfairly, van Hooft notes that the envious ends up by picturing himself in the situation and accepts the immoral way the benefits were acquired. He remarks: 'One can hardly envy an immoral person without being infected by that immorality oneself' (Ibid.).

Envy is seen as always negative because it starts by being rooted in greed. But most interestingly van Hoof points to closeness between envy and resentment since both share an element of feeling injured. For van Hooft envy is not only 'to want what the others have but also to be in their shoes' (Ibid. 145). As for resentment, this same author prefers the term indignation. He points out that this view goes in accordance with traditional intuition: '... resentment is expressed in wounded pride, self-righteousness, fear and a sense of powerlessness' (Ibid. 146). Soloman is again quoted as saying: 'It is a sense of impotence that is critical to resentment, the sense of inferiority, and the goal of revenge and control that structures this morbid view of the world' (Ibid.). Indignation excludes this sense of resentment. I take this view of van Hooft as a general description of envy and resentment. This is a view that is close to intuition and common sense that has been characterized by some of the philosophers mentioned here as very negative. The different deep lying emotions and feelings can be many and interrelated in different ways.

This makes envy a form of disorder by itself. But let me underline a characteristic of envy that is pointed out by all the authors, with no exception, and because of that I think deserves a special reference. I start by remarking that in this last quotation of Soloman by van Hooft, there is mentioned a 'sense of inferiority'.

This resonates with Rawls who very interestingly takes it that ‘ ... the main psychological root of the liability to envy is a lack of self-confidence in our own worth combined with a sense of impotence’ (Rawls, 1999: 469). I mentioned before that I see the opposite of feelings of inferiority – or its expression through superiority – is self-confidence. It seems then that the self-confident person is not prone to envy, as much as the person experiencing feelings of psychological inferiority. Maybe it seems that, as pointed out by Soloman and Rawls, the self-confident person is one who may be in the position of dispensing with the many negative and complex interrelated feelings that can arise from comparison and eventually evolve to envy.

I take it that in order for me to be an envious person there must be present and working inwardly a process of self-misery or self-distress. Ben’Zev (2002: 152) states that envy may be harmful to the envious. Stan van Hooft mentions that La Caze includes in the definition of envy the view that envy is an emotion of displeasure for those who experience it (van Hooft, 2002: 141). The same author also refers to the Stoics asserting envy as leading to an unquiet life, and van Hooft takes it that the envious person is dissatisfied with himself and therefore cannot be happy (Ibid. 144-5). Finally, another author, Gabrielle Taylor, refers to envy as being close to jealousy and that both ‘ ... are hostile and unpleasant emotions, painful for the agent to experience’ (Taylor, 1988: 233). This is the important point of which I think the envious or the jealous person should be aware.

Taylor (Ibid.) together with Gingell and Winch (1999: 79) mention, in relation to jealousy, the key word that comes associated with this emotion: possession. Without a sense of possession there is no place for jealousy. The way I see jealousy is that it is a state equal to envy, with the same steps of evolution, but entails a further one – since it implies a triangle, even if the third element is an imagined one – which is the fear of losing a possession. I cannot lose something, which I do not think I possess. As a compulsive, or occasional, jealous person I fear to lose ‘my’ girlfriend to someone, real or imagined, because I think she is mine. Interesting to note is also a reference of Taylor (1988: 237) to Aristotle’s suggestion that envy is frequently directed to those who are ‘like’ and ‘equal’. As authors often remark envy can be even more virulent with those that are close to us (Ben'Zev, 2002: 151). But the same feelings of envy can be directed to those perceived to be inferior but who

threaten to catch up. For example, if I have a job with a permanent contract I can enjoy feelings of superiority and dominance over my colleagues that are only on a temporary contract. I may engage in manoeuvres to maintain this state of affairs and engage in a form that I called negative envy – which is anticipation of the possible advantage given to the other that eliminates or reduces the gap. Shall we have to revise the definition transcribed above, given by Ben'Zev, that envy comes from a position of inferiority towards a perceived advantage of the other? I don't think so.

It is important to remind ourselves that feelings of psychological superiority are the expression of psychological inferiority and that is what determines a person being driven to envy and disinterested comparison in general as a form of disorder. These same feelings of inferiority (superiority) preside in emotions like vanity and prestige. Tony Skillen depicts greed and vanity as socially originated and stimulated in society and in particular in the class room, by example and flattery (Skillen, 1997: 56). Skillen refers also to the collapse of psychological inferior and superior feelings, by writing: 'Indeed, not only is it possible for someone simultaneously to act as if they were the centre of the world and to think themselves worthless, the former may in part be a consequence of the latter' (Ibid.). Finally, before we leave this long section let me make a short remark on prestige as a form of disorder. As I see it prestige may affect us in the sense that we may build an image or accept an image tailored for us, to which we attach ourselves psychologically. This way we cannot abandon the preoccupation of keeping and guarding this image, inviting the permanent fear of losing it or damaging such image. We move now to the next section on corruption.

4.2 Corruption

Let me start this section with the help of the last author mentioned – Skillen. This will give us the opportunity to try to reveal corruption being introduced to children and how the forms of disorder can operate intertwined. Skillen mentioned greed and vanity being fostered in the classroom by example and flattery. As an instance Skillen mentions the practice in the classroom, which consists in distinguishing children with 'stars' in reward for what is understood as some sort of good behaviour (Ibid.). As usual, at the base there is comparison. The children not

rewarded either behaved ‘badly’ or were by default considered not eligible for the stars – a sort of neutral indifference or negative punishment. Eventually they are invited to take the example of the colleague if they want to gain a star and be also flattered. These children are invited to good behaviour as the basis for reward. Not for the sake of good behaviour itself, but for the sake of a star. In other words, the message given to the children can also be read as follows: if it’s not for the sake of a star, good behaviour is not worth it. Or, in another more general way, the message is also: one should only strive or aim at something if there is some sort of reward at the end.

Children not rewarded by the star will eventually feel disappointment and bitterness, and these emotional states can escalate to envy of the colleague who was praised. They can eventually feel fear or anxiety at the prospect of not achieving the goal due to external reasons or due to lack of confidence in themselves. After all not all children can be praised and flattered because that would render the system meaningless. The child that received the star and the flattering may also be passing through a complex emotional state. She may feel joy but also fear or apprehension for having to keep up with the responsibility of being a special student. She may also feel superiority towards her colleagues – the experience of first podiums. But one thing she is led to learn, is that in the end of good behaviour there is a reward that is extrinsic. This I take to be a great start for children to learn how to behave in a corrupt way. It is a way to get children into corruption as a natural way of living. It is an accepted and cultivated way into corruption, as a complement of the ever-present grading system. Reward and punishment, even if by default, together with extrinsic motivation, by opposition to intrinsic motivation, are the key words here. But what is the nature of corruption?

An author that is square on the effort to explicate corruption on an occasion where he is particularly concerned with moral education, is McIntyre (1999b) in a chapter entitled ‘*How to seem virtuous without actually being so*’. One of the central tasks of McIntyre here is to distinguish ‘genuine virtues’ from ‘mere counterfeits of those virtues’ (ibid. 118). The counterfeits of virtues are qualities that may take the appearance of genuine virtues but in fact are not. For McIntyre a correct understanding of genuine virtues can be shown through the answer to four

questions. The first one of these questions concerns the sort of counterfactual judgements to which I'm committed when judging someone – based on what she has done or refrained from doing - to be brave, or generous, or just. The answer has to clarify what the person would do or will do if certain events had occurred or will occur, and what type of future actions, or absence of actions, would provide us with reasons to modify or withdraw our previous judgement. The second question is concerned with the types of reasons that someone has to act as brave, generous, or just. McIntyre here notes: '... to be virtuous it is not sufficient for someone to do what a virtuous person would do. It is also necessary that the relevant actions are performed for what are taken by adherents of that particular standpoint to be the right types of reason' (Ibid. 119-20).

McIntyre mentions someone who does a certain action in order to impress an audience and another who does that action in spite of the absence of such an audience. In his example a person may act bravely by throwing away a grenade about to explode to demonstrate skills and agility in front of an audience. Now contrast this action with a similar one by another person who is motivated to throw the grenade away because a child is standing close to it (Ibid.). Therefore calling someone brave will have to search for a correct question about the reasons behind the brave acts. The third question asks: what was it that pleased or pained the agent of the virtuous act? To be a virtuous person implies to feel pleasure and pain in certain appropriate ways. Avoiding danger through courage should bring pleasure to the virtuous agent and conversely pain should be present with the exposure of innocent people to danger. Finally the fourth question asks what different types of actions and situations allow us to designate or characterize a certain agent with a certain virtues – e.g. a courageous or just person. According to McIntyre we should make this judgement using a sufficiently numerous range of different actions (Ibid. 121). This framework gives more than enough for my purpose here, which is concerned solely with corruption. But I take it to be useful as a more broad reference at hand. McIntyre also points to the critical point here for education, which he takes to be, especially for the young, the transformation of the motivation in the direction of the virtuous motivation (Ibid. 123).

Such transformation of the natural self-centredness of children in the direction of the correct motivation within the virtues cannot be the aim of the school giving stars to the students, in the opening example, as we can perceive by the framework just sketched. Reward and punishment seem to be in the opposite direction. They seem to be in the direction of corruption. For central to corruption, lies the second question of the above framework that concerns itself with the true reasons motivating the agent. I take it then that corruption is present motivated by something different than the virtuous or genuine motivation. The person throwing a grenade out of exhibitionism acted in a corrupt way. We can take an important step forward in order to reach from corruption to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is simply intentionally disguised corruption. Hypocritical actions can include for example those intended to acquire power, or fame, or admiration, when apparently something else is intended. Adam Swift (2003) presents the following definition of hypocrisy: ‘... the practice of falsely presenting an appearance of virtue or falsely professing a belief to which one’s own character or conduct does not conform’.

On this important topic of moral motivation Graham Haydon’s (1999b: 254) transcription of Kant is enlightening: ‘the most ordinary observation shows that when a righteous act is represented as being done with a steadfast mind in complete disregard of any advantage in this or in the other world, and even the under the greatest temptations of affliction or allurements, it leaves far behind it any similar action affected even in the slightest degree by an alien impulsion and casts it into the shade: it uplifts the soul and rouses a wish that we could to act in this way. Even children of moderate age feel this impression ...’ Also Annette Baier (1998: 228) about pleasure and disinterested action in Hume, Shaftsbury and Hutcheson, writes: ‘... since if one behaved apparently benevolently only in order to feel pleasure, and to get pleasure from giving others pleasure in one’s own benevolence, then the disinterested benevolence would be only apparent – one would be motivated by desire for approval or self-approval ...’. The theme of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was important in Peters (1966). Hirst (1973: 105) classifies as frauds those teachers with inflated egos, because their intentions are not clear. White (1990: 44-5) denounces corruption in society at large when he writes: ‘In our society we have grown used to living among appearances of kindness, concern, friendship, recognition,

tolerance and respect. But they are nonetheless appearances for all that, and not the real thing’.

Finally let me come up with two brief simple examples that I take to be paradigmatic of this picture that John White traces of our habituation to corruption in society. They intend to show how corruption can be unnoticed and ingrained in our daily lives. At Christmas I, and millions of other consumers, are used to receiving greeting cards from some big corporations – utilities, communications, etc. One could say that these are considerate gestures. But unavoidably these are impersonal gestures. That is to say that the board of administration of a company cannot have personal relations with millions of people. Therefore the relationship is between a corporation and a consumer. This relationship is understandable at the correct level. That is at the level of providing a service or product that I need. But this does not have to be developed into the affective level entailed by a season greeting card. Being a non-person how can I embrace or kiss a corporation that makes a move into the affective sphere towards me? How can a corporation have some genuine affection for me? Is there any real need for such a masquerade? The second example has to do with the (bad) habit of some restaurants mentioning in their menus that service is not included. This means that I will have to tip the waiter. But having this rule how can I know that the waiter is not acting falsely just to get the highest possible amount? How can I know that he does not detest his job and me? Am I buying sympathy? Is it possible to buy sympathy?

We move to the next form of disorder: dependency.

4.3 Dependency

When is it that dependence on, substances, persons, objects, organizations, and traditions, is a form of disorder? Is there a central idea that can orientate us? In order for us to answer these questions I take it that it is important to understand first how and to what extent we are dependent. In the late-modern society with its vast division of labour, dependence or inter-dependence is necessarily high and accompanies us in our daily lives. I’m dependent on roads built by others to go from one place to the other. I’m dependent on the police to keep those roads safe.

I'm dependent on the food that others grow in order to nourish me. When I wake up in the morning, and even before I leave the house, I depend on more than a dozen products and services provided by different companies, to start my day comfortably. But there is more than this material dependence. I can easily become disabled because of an accident or illness. I certainly will grow old and fall into vulnerability, etc. Interdependence is at the very heart of human nature in many respects. Illustrative of this importance is the title of the book where McIntyre deals with this problem: *Dependent Rational Animals – Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (McIntyre, 1999a).

In this book McIntyre sets himself a double goal. He intends to show the importance on the one hand of the vulnerability of human beings, and on the other hand to show our animality in order better to answer the fundamental question of ethics: 'Why should I do this rather than that?' (Ibid,4,67). The way that McIntyre chooses to pursue this goal is by exploring the connections of human anthropological relations with other animals, and through the recognition of human vulnerability and dependence. Nevertheless he underlines that the reason he is doing so is because in his opinion there is insufficient attention from moral philosophy to those human universal conditions, especially the second one – the condition of dependence and vulnerability. Very interestingly, recalling the view of the self as an intimate interrelation of the affective with the cognitive and the conative, McIntyre offers within his purpose a view that recognizes in human nature a conflation of human animality with independence and dependence. His central idea is as follows: 'It will be a central thesis that the virtues that we need, if we are to develop from our initial animal condition into that of independent rational agents, and the virtues that we need, if we are to confront and respond to vulnerability and disability both in ourselves and in others, belong to one and the same set of virtues, the distinctive virtues of dependent rational animals, whose dependence, rationality and animality have to be understood in relation to each other' (Ibid. 5).

McIntyre points out that central to the need for us to evolve correctly from our initial animal condition into a desirable state of independent practical reasoners, is recognition of our dependence as rational animals. Central to McIntyre's thought are in consequence the virtues of dependent rational animals that acknowledge such

dependence in us and in others. About the connection of human beings with other intelligent animal species - that he takes to be pre-linguistic rather than non-linguistic, like dolphins or monkeys – this author proposes that instead of a single line of division between ‘them’ and ‘us’, we should think in terms of a scale or a spectrum that connects us all (Ibid. 57). But if during childhood humans are close to pre-linguistic animals, McIntyre acknowledges from psychoanalysis through the work of Winnicott the need to highlight that we may remain attached to antagonisms of early childhood and the importance of ‘good mothers and other care giving adults’ to our early experiences. Such processes seem to be crucial for the transition of the child to independent practical reasoning through the transformation of external reasons into internal ones (Ibid. 84-7). It seems to me that this McIntyrian view gives us a correct way of looking at the interrelations of dependency and independency in human nature.

In a context more related to education and schooling the problem of independence and interdependence was treated by Morwenna Griffiths and Richard Smith (1989). In conclusion these authors underline the need of seeing dependence and independence not like an on-off ‘binary system’, suggesting that necessarily there are degrees of interrelation (Ibid. 291). In order to attempt an answer to our main question – ‘When is dependency a form of disorder?’ – I think it is illuminating to look at a brief statement by Peters: ‘To get attached to pets, people or possessions is a bad bet *sub specie aeternitatis*’ (Peters, 1966: 157). I think that we have here the clue to figure out dependency as a form of disorder, that is to say a way of bringing upon us some form of distress or unethical trend. Irrational psychological attachment or affiliation is what I think we should avoid in our relationships, as seems to me is suggested in Peters’ words. Rational criticism is buried in an attachment that is more of the emotional kind. In my relations with persons, traditions, objects, organizations, or involvement in taking substances, irrational psychological attachment and affiliation is what we have to look for. As usual, particularly in what concerns personal relationships, things are very complex and seem to be in need of further clarification. Of course there is the beauty of certain attachments between persons that correlate with love. Maybe we have here some of the most gratifying things in life itself. These should not be placed side by side with, for example, obsessive compulsions of one person towards the other. In this sense, being

attached to people –especially to people – is a bad bet *sub specie aeternitatis* but it may be a very good bet – about the best available to us – in this mundane world for the brief period we have. I mean, love between persons – which is certainly an attachment and quite probably an irrational and non-volitional one – is probably one of the most valuable things we have. A more complete clarification to this is attempted in the concluding chapter, when the concepts of love and ‘disinterest’ are addressed.

I certainly can enjoy watching my football team playing, providing that I prevent myself from being psychologically affiliated with that particular group of fans, or organization, so far as to make me lose my individuality and my critical capacity to judge when it is best to join them or keep a distance. I can have some attachment to possessions, but if that becomes an exaggerated dependence then the fear of losing them can be dominant in my life. Dependence on substances like drugs can easily bring total psychological and physical slavery and destruction. Popper on tradition writes: ‘Quantitatively and qualitatively, by far the most important source of our knowledge – apart from inborn knowledge – is tradition ... anti-traditionalism is futile. But this fact must not be held to support a traditionalist attitude: every bit of our traditional knowledge (and even our inborn knowledge) is open to critical examination and may be overthrown (Popper, 1988: 27). Popper sets himself up to establish a rational theory of tradition, which shows the importance he attached to the subject (Ibid. ch. 4). If I found myself as a member of a society where there is a tradition of killing adulterous women by stoning, it seems important that I may be able to move from a dependent state of automatic, convenient psychological attachment stemming from the tradition of such society, to a critical psychological independence about that particular aspect. On public opinion Popper points as a myth to the saying, *vox populi vox dei* – the voice of people as a kind of final authority (Ibid. 347).

I think that there is an interesting question here that may be formulated as follows: it seems that too often people choose psychological dependence and affiliation, why is that? This is the question that I think can be appropriated to open the important next form of disorder – division.

4.4 Division

Someone wrote that the ways by which people divide themselves are endless. Why is that? Why is it very easy that we affiliate ourselves psychologically to groups in such a way that we lose our critical capacity? In fact there is an enormous diversity of groups to whom, with different degrees, we attach ourselves irrationally in a fusion that can escalate to loss of individual identity. It seems to be an undesirable transcendence of the self – or better say a disguise of the self since there is something that emerges strangely from the melting pot. What seems to emerge is a collective self that may act randomly or unpredictably. The individual self becomes welded to this collective self. In the list of forms of disorder I'm highlighting what seems to me the most important ways of division. Division by 'race', nationalities, regional ties, languages, professions, social class, religions, gender, sexual orientation, ethnical tribalism, able and disabled persons, old and young persons. A useful way to start to address this issue of division as a form of disorder is to try to expose an important element that I see underlying all the forms of division.

I claim that 'illusion' might be a crucial feature underlying all the forms of disorders that I listed under division. Certainly we can devise many ideas that are socially constructed. But I consider that these ideas underlying division are part of the imaginary that we should put under the designation of 'illusion'. This is so because such images deceive and alienate from reality. Since it is so, it is one mission of education to help us to drop such illusions. If we consider for example the gender division, maybe we can easily accept that there is much in which women are socially constructed differently from men. In this context, Jane Roland Martin (1981a: 324) criticizes the Platonic injunction in *The Republic* that 'sex is a difference that makes no difference'. Jane Roland Martin presents her feminist critique in the context that a set of intellectual disciplines is devised to construct the educated male and female in the same way and she sees this as potentially detrimental for women. In this I agree with her. But let me attempt to rescue Plato's important idea for this delicate form of division. I take it to be a delicate issue because it may involve half of humanity in deep discomfort and disorder. But the other half if eventually in less discomfort is nevertheless no less in disorder.

Let's try to uncover what I take to be the centre of this division. I think Plato is right in his saying that 'sex is a difference that makes no difference'. Why is that? The way that I see that we should move the enquiry ahead is to start by asking the central question of the problem of feminism, which I take to be the central question of the gender division. Susan Okin (Okin, 1999) offers a useful view of what is feminism: 'By *feminism*, I mean the belief that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex, that they should be recognized as having human dignity equal to that of men, and that they should have the opportunity to live as fulfilling and as freely chosen lives as men can'. It is also interesting to register Okin's view of multiculturalism as the claim that minority cultures need protection by group (and not merely individual) rights or privileges, given the importance of 'societal cultures' and the need to protect them (Ibid.). From the definition of feminism above and the mentioning by Okin in this work of the 'control of man over women', 'differences in power', 'rape', 'violent assault', and 'clitoridectomy', I think we can formulate a first answer about the central problem of feminism. If we ask 'what is the central problem of feminism?' perhaps we can answer with Okin that it is the injustice that is made through domination and oppression of women on the basis of their sex²². But I believe that we cannot be satisfied with this answer.

I would say that both are available to women. I take it that it is very important that we proceed further with the enquiry, and this is critical for education, as I will try to show. I consider that we should ask: what is it that is in the centre of the historical domination of women by men? What is the cause or causes? What is or are the significant differences that are the origin of this problem? What is the root cause of the whole thing? It seems to me that education is the only remedy for the problem. But if we don't search into this question how can we give way or an

²² Even if more directed to the public sphere I think it is interesting (we can easily translate it to the private sphere) to be more precise about these concepts of injustice, domination and oppression by following what Iris Young writes about them: 'The concept of injustice covers both domination and oppression. Domination consists in institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participation in decisions and processes that determine their actions and the conditions of their actions. The aspect of social justice that domination denies is self-determination. Oppression, the second aspect of injustice, consist in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying or expansive skills in socially recognizing settings, or which inhibit peoples, ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen. The aspect of social justice that oppression denies is self-development' Young, I. M. (2000), *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

opportunity to education? This is the part of the enquiry that I take to be more important and I don't see authors in general and Okin in particular addressing this question firmly. If I am to give an answer to this central question 'what is the root cause of the problem of feminism?' I will start to note that it seems that the domination and violence that is going on in this context must be of a particular kind. Maybe we can put the ideas of oppression, domination, etc. under the concept of violence. But can't women be violent too? Women can be found in all the good and bad aspects of human life. Women can be thieves, terrorists, deceivers, killers, and were always present also in the bad side of the gulags of human history. It would be also injustice to deny women the possibility of 'imperfection'. Why shouldn't women like men, err? So what is it that women on average - let me emphasize that we are talking of averages - are not able to do in comparison with men? If we split violence into the simple dichotomy of psychological violence and physical violence

Now I can ask: on average, what are the kinds of violence, psychological and physical, that are available to women against men? It seems to me that it is not difficult to accept that the kind of violence that on average is not available to women against men is physical violence. Psychological violence seems not only to be equally available to women; it seems that many times it's the only resource available to them since women may not be able to use physical violence. So I take it that in the centre or origin of this oppression and domination of women it is crucial to stress that it is brought about through not only violence, but by the particular kind of violence that is physical violence. Should we stop the enquiry here? I don't think so. Thinking always about education I believe we should press on and ask what is the relevant difference between men and women that provides the former with a definitive advantage when they come to physical confrontation and violence? I think we can now reach the very inner circle, or root cause of this feminism problem. The relevant difference, the only difference that gives men an inescapable advantage over women is that men have more muscle mass than women. Having more muscles, on average, men can easily dominate women physically. It seems to be reasonable to expect that muscle mass becomes less relevant with technologic changes - the appearance of lighter weapons such as guns, etc. The reference to muscle mass appears to be a stronger argument as part of an evolutionary account of

how man originally came to be dominant. Nevertheless, I consider that a stronger body mass and the immediacy of availability of its strength, continues to be a determinant factor in this issue.

There are of course many other biological and socially constructed gender differences. But muscle mass is the one that I take as the main one relevant for what is here designated by the central problem of feminism²³. It seems reasonable to accept that women have in many ways ‘different voices’, but my claim is that that is not relevant for the central problem of feminism. Emphasis on the ‘different voices’ of women can only distract us from what is crucial. What is critical is the difference in muscle mass that gives women an inescapable disadvantage, and this is certainly not an illusion. Because it is not an illusion and it is a very real fact, is why education is so important and in reality the main resource to overcome the problem. Women can be and are at all levels of social life and all professions. Women can only be considered underperformers when the human physical force, therefore the muscle mass, is inescapably involved. Consider the example of armed forces. Women can be found not only in logistics, command and administration but also in fighting positions when that is done mainly through technology – e.g. helicopters, fighter planes, etc. Where is that women cannot be found in the armies? They cannot be found in the role of the foot soldier; the infantryman that even today goes finally and occupies the ground. Why? This is the situation where you can easily find yourself engaging decisively the physical resistance and physical force that is based on muscle mass.

Now can I be part of an educational process without being clear about how I position myself towards the feminist problem? And if not, how do I position myself towards this problem? It seems to me, and this is the important educational insight, that there is only one possibility for me to position myself correctly towards this feminist problem. I have to see that the only way to bring about equality between men and women is for me as a man to give up completely and definitely my inescapable advantage, which is the use of my stronger muscle mass. I have to drop that advantage totally and forever, and only then I can start an equal desirable relation

²³ It seems to be not important, for education, to take the differences into the hormonal level (namely testosterone levels, etc.).

with those who don't have it - women. I can start then a relation in equality of respect and sensitivity for the 'different voices' with which men and women are socially constructed. This is the insight that maybe I can provide a way and opportunity for others to engage with when in an educational process we enquire around the important question: how can we put an end to male domination and oppression? In a word, how can we put an end to women's suffering? If we come to this insight then maybe we can rescue Plato and together with him understand why and how 'sex is a difference that makes no difference'.

Let us look now at the other forms of division starting by national or regional ties. This phenomenon of nationalisms that concerns us here is a particular modernist conception²⁴. It is one of the more illusive forms of division. People are encouraged in schools to perceive themselves as part of this group, a nation. The nation coincides many times with a geographical territory. When it does not it is still connected with a sense of security and preservation of a culture, that brings people together and serves several needs, namely the one of physical and territorial safety. Nevertheless if it may be taken as acceptable that if we live in a certain community we should have a close interest in that community, many developments on this lead into a separation that is problematic. John Dewey saw good nationalism consistent with internationalism (Ryan, 1998: 406). Adam Swift wrestling with the problems that involve liberalism and the nation state criticizes the promotion of patriotism for the sake of counteracting 'sectional thinking' caused by class or culture. But Swift goes a step further than this cosmopolitanism and asks: 'In any case, isn't nationality usually a myth – an 'imagined community' – constructed, sometimes deliberately, to foster a sense of common identity where none would otherwise exist?' And Swift concludes that we all know how dangerous the idea of nationhood can be (Swift, 2001: 172). Let me point out that Swift underlines that it is an imaginary or set of images that we are dealing with again here. It is once more a state of illusion of a separation – 'us' and 'them'.

Penny Enslin in her 'The Place of National Identity in the Aims of Education', argues against the promotion of national identity in schools because it undermines

²⁴ For an historical overview of nationalism in Western Europe see Llobera, J. B. (1996), *The God Of Modernity - The Development of Nationalism in Western Europe*. Oxford: Berg.

autonomy and democratic citizenship (Enslin, 1999: 100). Enslin also mentions the 'illusion' of nation (Ibid. 110). I see as a milder position the one taken by John White, on this issue of patriotism. On the one hand White calls the attention to the vice of chauvinism, which he defines as the view of compatriots as better than foreigners. On the other hand he shows what he calls the vice of deficiency that rejects possible benefits of national sentiment. Advocating a view in between White writes: 'As with other virtues it depends on learning to do and feel what is appropriate to particular situations under the guidance of one's practical wisdom' (White, 2001: 144). I think it is worthwhile to emphasize this mild view by highlighting the bizarre or caricature discourse that can involve the two extreme vices just mentioned. Typical nationalistic discourses can show us as being part of one of the great or greatest nation on earth that has done such and such. Or at the other extreme, the discourse can take the down turn and say that 'only in this country can this happen' and we 'are always the same': we do this and that wrong and no one else would do it like this. I think also that schools, parents, and state cannot ignore completely a sense of national community but the challenge is to do it together with a sense of union or non-division with the others. White comments: 'They (parents) could make it clear that people from ethnic backgrounds within the larger community are 'us' rather than 'them' (Ibid.150).

The division by languages is also very important and I consider that what is needed here is maybe the anthropological approach. This is indispensable in showing the history of men and the fact that all languages have a common origin. This anthropological view of man I see also as very useful to position us in relation to divisions by social class or professions. Rousseau remarks: 'There are professions which seem to change a man's nature, to recast, either for better or worse, the men who adopt them. A coward becomes a brave man in the regiment of Navarra. It is not only in the army that *esprit de corps* is acquired, and its effects are not always for good' (Rousseau, 1993: 371). Again I think we have here the problem of a psychological attachment that endangers our autonomy.

Moving on to the form of division by sexual orientation, it is convenient to say that sex is an area where children are very ignorant. Personal biographies, it seems to me, are complex and unique. What is important is that everyone must find his or

her own harmony also within a certain sexual life, and that is in the interest of all. Another form of division is the one created by ethnical tribalism. Let me in this context make some short remarks about a certain idea of multiculturalism that I think very unfortunately has gained ground and installed itself, in my view with the worst of results since it emphasizes the division instead of uncovering and favouring the perception of the illusion of that division. In order to try to show what I take to be more important here, let me draw on an analogy. If we look at a tourist who hangs a camera around her neck and travels to another place, we can ask: what is it that motivates her? What is the motivation for tourist travelling? Our tourist arrives at this new place and starts to point and click the camera at different directions. Apart from her, what is it that the tourist clicks at? It seems that is easy to agree that the tourist clicks at what she perceives as different. She clicks at natural landscapes, architecture, food, people's faces, and ways of dressing, etc. that she didn't see before. The tourist looks for what she perceives is different from her own place, and therefore interesting. She wouldn't pay money to see what she has in her own place. So the tourist disregards the sameness to concentrate on the differences. The world would be a very dull place if there were not such touristy difference.

Nevertheless what is maybe overwhelming is sameness. In this other place, people have to eat, sleep, go about their daily life by caring about something, and have most of the same anxieties and joys that human beings have in any other place. I think that this gives a picture of a good multiculturalism – touristy multiculturalism. I don't think, for example, women's clitoridectomy is a tourist thing deserving to be photographed by tourists. A certain idea of multiculturalism that I've been criticizing seems to emphasize, like our tourist, the difference, and as Wringe (1988) pointed out, even to accommodate the bizarre and oppressive. Walter Feinberg (1993: 159) mentions the importance for the understanding of our behaviour as culturally bounded, the understanding of other cultures. What I think is the core of a multicultural education is the relevance of the sameness dominating the minor superficial touristy differences that make this world a tourist place. I mean an education that concentrates on the reverse of the tourist attention. Such education in doing that reversal of concentration, unlike the tourist that concentrates only on the superficial aspects, must show both aspects and weigh their relevance. Worlds

worthwhile to travel around for enjoyment are fortunately many, though it is always the same world.

The enquiry is now around the question: how are we to justify the best possible educational policy to overcome the problem of division by 'races'? Colin Wringle (1988: 108) summarizes the policies for rectifying racial prejudice and injustice, in which he includes also gender. Among several proposals of policy he mentions the following: (1) reverse discrimination; (2) a policy of 'colour blindness' or 'gender blindness' ('treating them all the same'); (3) valuing minority cultures ('multicultural education'); (4) a deliberate policy of anti-racism (or anti-sexism) education.

Let me take as an example the agency that in the UK is in charge of dealing with the problem of racism: The Commission for Racial Equality. What do you think is the first fundamental question that the people who set up this commission are asking? I mean looking at the title of the commission – and titles are very important – what is the fundamental question that the business of this commission is dealing with? As I said, looking at the title – and by the way also looking at the web site and documentation – I think that the fundamental first question that concerns this commission is the following: 'How can we bring about equality between races?' The problem of racism is then to bring about equality between races. This is indeed a humane and fair goal. But as is often said there are no 'races'. So it seems that there is a slight problem here. Now, if there are no 'races' how can you bring to equality something that does not exist?

This is where those many multiculturalists and possibly many in the commission will give you the following answer: of course there are no 'races', from the biological point of view, but what we are after is very important and real; what do exist are social constructions of 'races'. That is to say, 'races' are socially constructed. This would seem to be an answer that could leave us with the necessary confidence to continue with the next steps of designing and planning our strategies towards the end goal: to bring all races to equality. But I think that we keep having here an important difficulty. This important difficulty is the following: If there are no 'races' how can you socially construct something that does not exist? Can there be social construction of something that we declared as nonexistent? It seems to me that we

are here dealing with a very old idea. This idea is that out of nothing you can get only nothing²⁵.

In answering the fundamental question ‘what is the problem of racism’ with the answer - the problem of racism is the illusion that there are ‘races’; we certainly can devise very different policies. We can try to abolish from the discourse – in the media, in political life, in school books, etc. - the use of the words ‘black’ and ‘white’, except to criticize their use. This indeed requires a huge educational effort. We can use always the word ‘race’ between commas. We can stop classifying people by colours or geographical regions or a mix of these two²⁶, and we can emphasise the word ‘illusion’, etc.

Finally let me remind you that I opened this section with a question. This question was: why do people so easily divide and affiliate themselves psychologically, sometimes so strongly, into all sorts of groups? It is time now to attempt to cast some light on this, considering what was said about the forms of division as background. I think that we affiliate ourselves irrationally to groups because we need to feel secure. It is therefore out of insecurity that we affiliate divisibly in groups. It seems then that such insecurity that takes refuge in a group, uncritically, originates in the fear of being alone. But it seems that when we attach ourselves uncritically to groups we create division. Out of such division can spring antagonism. It seems then that out of antagonism we may have the possibility of confrontation. Finally the possibility of confrontation drives us to insecurity. It seems to me that we end up with the opposite result that motivates the blind affiliation to groups that creates the division of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The capacity to be alone – as I argue further on in the concluding chapter - is the capacity that I tend to position as intrinsic autonomy. I also tend to think that autonomy is a double capacity. Since the capacity to be alone is also the capacity to be with the other in freedom, it seems that we may conclude that autonomy is where we should look for remedy of the disorder of division. The autonomous person is the one that can be in

²⁵ *Ex nihilo nihil fit* – out of nothing we cannot extract anything; or we can obtain only nothing, p. 59 Morwood, J. (1998), *A Dictionary of Latin Words and Phrases*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ These classifications can give us an idea of how confusing these existing multiculturalism policies can be. They classify people by the colour ‘black’ or ‘white’ and suddenly may shift to geography by using Afro-Caribbean, Asian, etc, and next in total confusion may use a mix of these two, like black Indians, etc.

non-divisible groups. The autonomous person is comfortable with the possibility of being alone.

Another important problem connected with certain multiculturalism is that division often designates minorities that are seen as at a disadvantage. This can come in the context of 'races', sexual orientation, and ethnic minorities or nationalities. Rawls writes in this context: 'The less fortunate are therefore often forcibly reminded of their situation, sometimes leading them to an even lower estimation of themselves and their mode of living' (Rawls, 1999: 469)²⁷. No wonder that this fostering of low self-esteem can happen in societies where one is reminded constantly that, in spite of the fact that we are 'different' we should nevertheless be given the favour of being treated equally. This same idea applies to division between able and disabled or old and young people, where the McIntyrean virtues of acknowledged dependence have to be introduced in order to show us the illusion underlying such divisions. To terminate I think it is important to mention that division can come in simultaneous forms, which increases its danger. Wars can easily go on around groups that have at the same time a different nationality, a different religion, and different physical looks²⁸. I think that in many ways we are here playing golf with the detonators of bombs – maybe even atom bombs. But I don't think that we are doing that in the wilderness. We are doing it in the very same storehouse where we keep those bombs – it seems that this is not so much a metaphor anymore²⁹.

Let us move now to look at fear, self-disintegration and violence, as forms of disorder.

²⁷ A similar position is assumed by Taylor, C. (1994), 'The Politics of Recognition'. In A. Gutman (ed.), *Multiculturalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²⁸ For an interesting approach of 'lookism' and forms of division see Davis, A. (2003), *Good looks the self and the value of the individual*. *Should education combat the scourge of 'lookism'?* Paper presented at the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain annual conference, New College, Oxford.

²⁹ In the recent annual conference, June 2004, of the Royal Institute of Philosophy at the Institute of Education University of London, Noam Chomsky mentioned that is clear for those that follow closely the phenomenon of international terrorism that it is just a matter of time before someone in that area lays their hands onto some sort of weapon of mass destruction.

4.5 Fear, Self-disintegration, and Violence

Fear as a psychological disturbance, of death, violence, the unknown, comparison, authority, public opinion, failure, humiliation, shame etc; is one of the forms of disorder with a long tradition in the classroom, assuming many different patterns and leaving behind deep marks. Fear as said before can be useful in life preservation, but as a form of disorder can come in countless mixes of variety and intensity. Intense irrational fear can be designated as a phobia. The list of common phobias can easily contain tens of items. In schools, fear can be connected with the peer group, class, and family – bullying, fear of shame, and fear of difference (namely achieving under or above the average), fear of authority, of failure, of public opinion, of saying the wrong thing, of violence from family, etc³⁰.

Rituals of shame and humiliation, and also corporal punishment have a long history in classrooms, and come in many forms. Psychological punishment is usually the worst and is always present, accompanied or not with corporal punishment. It is very important to remove or mitigate as much as possible every possible form of fear. Thus my proposal of giving a better chance to reinstate the teacher who teaches as a friend by creating exam centres (see annex) that would handle all the assessment. Shame is one of the most intense emotions. Shame can be accompanied by public exposition, which brings humiliation. Annette Baier (1998: 227) transcribes a definition of shame from Locke according to which to feel shame is to feel: ‘... uneasiness of the mind upon the thought of having done something which is indecent, which will lessen the valued esteem that others have for us’. For Williams shame can be connected with the feeling of having done something low or contemptible (Williams, 2002: 115). Somewhere else Williams makes an analysis of shame and guilt. He identifies the root of shame with an exposure of being at a disadvantage, which he calls a loss of power (Williams, 1993: 220). As pointed out before shame is one of the most intense negative emotions. Shame can easily be connected with punishment, which makes it a popular

³⁰ Somebody said that Einstein made a terrible mistake when in his assumptions and equations declared that nothing can travel above the speed of light. There is one thing that is faster than light. That thing is fear – before we know it, we have it.

companion of the classroom. The fear of shame is therefore a very important one, deserving careful attention.

I mentioned before as a very important and fundamental form of fear, the unresolved fear of death. Addressing this kind of fear in the classroom should be an object of multidisciplinary studies³¹. Françoise Dastur looks closely at death and finitude, in a work that draws heavily on Heidegger and is concerned with being and time. Cultural rituals and mourning practices have an important role (Dastur, 1996: 8). But what we are aiming at here is something more ambitious than only dealing with our death through the death of others. Maybe we are looking for the good life that cannot dispense with the reflection on death. After Plato, the Stoics and later Montaigne, to philosophize is to learn how to die (Ibid. 17). What we are after here is a 'care of life' that must go along with the 'care of death'. Dastur writes: 'Platonic philosophy triumphs over death in the sense that it does not flee from it, that it looks it in the face' (Ibid. 21). Maybe this learning about death is the permanent and ultimate process of education which the 'care of life' cannot dispense with – this is an education about, as Dastur mentions, knowing oneself to be mortal since everyone is condemned to die alone. Death giving meaning to being is seen by Dastur in Heidegger when he asserts: '... being for death, that the certitude of one's going to die is the foundation of the certitude Dasein has of itself, such that is not the *cogito sum*, the 'I think, I am', that constitutes the true definition of Dasein's being but, rather, *sum moribundus*, 'In dying', where only '*moribundus*', 'destined for death' is what gives '*sum*', 'I am', its meaning' (Ibid. 49). This is the basic ground for this educational stance – the education for life inescapably facing death.

The virtue that deals with fear is courage. This gives courage a special interest for education. The educational point of view is what concerns Patricia White (1996: ch. 3) with courage. Aristotle (1984) sees courage as a natural, not forced, disposition that is built up through habit. I think that it is in this sense – after exposing difficulties with some definitions of courage – that Patricia White remarks: 'Courage is perhaps best regarded as a wide open set of enabling dispositions' (Ibid. 20). These enabling dispositions that do away with debilitating fear are the central

³¹ This issue has been raised, see Freen, A. (2004, Tuesday May 4), 'Children 'should be taught about death at school'. *The Times.*, May 4

concern of the process of education, and I see them as delicate, uncertain outcomes of such a process.

Self-disintegration of mind and body through lack of health, food, shelter and clothing, is the form of disorder that deals with the mind-body issues. The designation self-disintegration of mind and body is intended to acknowledge not only the distress arising by lack of essential goods like food, shelter and clothing. It is intended most of all to acknowledge psychological disorders usually identified under the name of neurosis. Psychotic disorders are states that imply unawareness of them by the subject (Reber, 1995: 491, 622). Amélie Rorty (1998: 247) writing on Rousseau's understanding of the process of psychological formation says: 'It suggests that only those with a well formed psychology are capable of a rational consent'. This formation of a good psychology is what I have been arguing is at the centre of the educational process. As for the body seen in conjunction with the mind, it is interesting to look at the following remark by Peters: 'For without a fit body a man's attempts to answer the question 'Why do this rather than that?' might be sluggish or slovenly' (Peters 1966: 163). The ontological view of mind-body is important for its possible consequences. John White (2002a, cpt. 3) points to two conceptions in confrontation. The dualistic view historically connected with Plato and Descartes, in which the soul or mind is something that outlives the body. And a holistic view that connects human beings with their animal condition and where the mind is seen as not distinct from the body.

White remarks that there are some trends of thought that can be traced to the dualistic conception of the mind-body. He says: 'We see the shadow of this traditional outlook – which goes back ultimately to Plato, via Descartes – in the prestige we attach to abstract thinking. It appears in the pride of place given to mathematics in the school curriculum. And in the belief that intelligence is best displayed through performance at the abstract tasks used to measure IQ' (Ibid. 12). I've been relating in different ways the longing for the transcendence of death with perfectionism. This I related with the Foucauldian view of mathematics as the instrument of measurement and power. Mathematics, which is seen as perfect knowledge used to sort out the more perfect that may serve as examples or models. In name of such perfectionism, connected with the traditional dichotomist view, I've

tried to show how we push ourselves to the limits of asymptotic perfection. I claimed that such effort drives us into quasi-inhumane standards and repay us in many forms of psychological self-disintegration. It seems to be clear now how important it is for us to base ourselves on a view of the self that grounds us to the earth, with no salvation in death, but allowing the ‘nobility of imperfection’ and the integration of life with the inevitable death. Taking one road or the other makes all the difference for education.

Violence, by indifference³², domination, power, exploitation, greed, anger, punishment, humiliation, blackmail, vindictiveness, and physical aggression, in its diverse forms and with its psychological damages permeates societies and schools. In a certain sense any form of disorder seems to imply a certain violence – for the Tibetan Buddhist, the end of disorder is seen as the end of violence. The importance of violence by itself as a form of disorder, can be seen in the centrality given to the concept of reasonableness in liberal philosophy (Rawls, 1996; Rawls, 1999), and in Popper when he states: ‘I am a rationalist because I see in the attitude of reasonableness the only alternative to violence’ (Popper, 1988: 355). In the classroom, violence can be easily present by ‘humiliating penalties’ (Wringe, 1988: 15). In some European countries, a few decades ago, physical punishment in primary schools was a triviality. Also in the family, violence can easily take over, for example in the form of ‘filial servility and parental despotism’. Punishment can easily be connected with violence, and therefore justifies careful consideration. Considering punishment, Richard Smith (1985: 361) finds acceptable ‘... that the general justifying aim of punishment is to secure greater obedience to laws and rules by deterring the offender’. Though Smith’s aim can be important I see the need to take the central aim of punishment to be rehabilitation. This direction takes into account the ideals of care and justice brought together (Callan, 1994: 56; Callan, 1997: 70).

The possibility that a certain form of violence can undermine and mark the ethos of a society may be unveiled by looking at the issue of the death penalty in the judicial system of different countries. The comparison of positions on the death

³² I’m grateful to my colleague Jane Green for calling my attention for this important form of violence. The prefix ‘in’ can mean inclusion or exclusion. It is in this last sense that indifference – not acknowledging the other and her needs - can be a greater violence than some other forms of harm.

penalty in the USA or in the EU countries can be enlightening. It might be argued that the abolitionist position of some Europeans not only considers the value of life so important that it refuses to commit the very same act that it is punishing, but it may as well refuse revenge or vindictiveness. This collective vindictiveness, which might be seen as coming from hate, is revealed in the USA by the possibility given to the relatives of the victims to be present at the act of execution. Like in other geographical areas, namely of religious fundamentalism, we seem to be dangerously close to the ‘barbaric law of an eye for an eye’ (Peters, 1966). The consequences for the community ethos regarding violence seem to be foreseeable. The argument may become clearer; looking at the next step of abolitionism towards life imprisonment, already enforced in some EU countries. This position seems to imply that whatever the infraction we cannot give up completely the possibility of rehabilitation even if this takes many years. Hope and care for the wrongdoer need to be added to the demand for punishment as a matter of justice. Perhaps this general central aim of punishment - rehabilitation - can be developed in order to provide practical reasoning for the so many different and complex situations of the day to day teaching in the class room. Finally let me stress again that unusual acts of violence in society are what usually prompts calls for moral and values education³³. But the presence of violence can take many forms and disguises as I have tried to show in this last example.

We can now start to approach the central problem of integration of well-being and morality. But it is indispensable to revisit carefully the relation of well-being and morality. I do this by looking more particularly at some views of Joseph Raz. This is a crucial point that makes John White ask: ‘How far should students be brought up to keep prudential and moral considerations in separate compartments?’ (White, 2002b). To answer this is the aim of the next chapter.

³³ For an approach to values education having violence in the centre of preoccupations see: Haydon, G. (1999a), *Values, virtues and violence : education and the public understanding of morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

5 – Problems Not Yet Resolved by the Negative Approach – Tensions Between Well-Being and Morality

In the first section I look in general at the tensions between self-interest and morality and more particularly at a view found in Joseph Raz. Considering the aim of education I conclude that there are limitations in the Razian view, and that we must extend the enquiry on the issue. In the second section, I address the contribution of a view of well-being as absence of disorder, as it is formulated up until now, to bridge the gap between the prudent and the moral.

In chapter three I have rooted the view of personal well-being as absence of disorder in informed desired satisfaction and in the concept of entropy. But I will conclude next that this seems to be insufficient to integrate self-interest and morality, by looking at the examples of the ‘Mafia-boss’ and the ‘rational egoist’. So far the negative approach is seen to have also important limitations. This brings extra complexity to the tensions between selfinterest and common interest or the prudential and the moral. Such tensions are revisited in the last chapter in order to cast light on the difficulties here mentioned and attempt to go beyond them.

5.1 Personal Well-Being and Morality – The Tensions

Roger Crisp underlines well-being as a central concern in moral theory (Crisp, 2003: 10). He mentions that well-being can even be viewed as the final end to which everything can be reduced, and in conformity with this claim he transcribes Joseph Raz's 'humanistic principle': 'the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality' (Raz, 1986: 194). When this view is extended to non-human beings, it places well-being as the ultimate justification for any moral reason. Such a view is known as *welfarism*. Contrary to modern ethics, the ancient view of ethics was more concerned with well-being and the question 'Which life is best for one?' Ancient philosophy considered the proper answer to such a question, as being 'egoism – the view that my strongest reason is always to advance my own well-being' (Ibid, 11). But such a position reveals the central tension when we attempt to bridge the concepts of well-being and morality. Egoism presupposes the priority of individual interest and morality deals with the need to recognize the others' interest, if necessary, in opposition to the individual one. In order to counteract egoism, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, with minor differences, argue in favor of a virtue ethics. The virtuous life is the life of well-being. Though Plato seems to imply that self-sacrifice can be necessary - when in the simile of the cave, after seeing the sun's light, philosophers return inside the cave to try to rescue the others (Plato, 2000) - Aristotle argued for virtue as being always in coincidence with personal interest (ibid.).

Arneson introduces a version of the 'reductionism argument' when he mentions as possibly deceptive, the tensions between the good of the individual, the good of the others and morality. He adds to this: 'For all that I have said here, the correct theory of individual good might yield the result that sacrificing oneself for the sake of other people or for the sake of a morally worthy cause can never occur, because helping

others and being moral always maximizes one's own good' (Arneson, 1999: 113)³⁴. This argument that I have called the 'reductionism argument', states that in the end it may be in the individual's interest not to act in his immediate or narrow self-interest. But, as Arneson notes next, such view cannot – or should not - be presupposed in a theory of well-being. It should be the result of such a theory. This is indeed a very important point for education. A theory of well-being integrated with morality, should provide justification for action in the absence of individual interest. Such action may give a route to the priority of the good of all. The required justification seems to be out of reach of desire-satisfaction and hedonistic views.

Consequently, for these theories of well-being, morality must come from somewhere else. John White (1990) struggled with this problem and noted: 'Philosophers have looked for ways of convincing the rational egoist that, despite appearances, it is after all in his (or her) interest to be moral, but none of the arguments put forward seem conclusive' (White, 1990: 57). He adds to this that the rational egoist can always argue that striking to reason may provide him with the motives to defend his personal interest and not to be moral. From these tensions and the efforts to resolve them, White concludes: 'We still lack any good reason why one's well-being must include morality...' (ibid.58). This seems to be a crucial matter for philosophy of education, and White expressed the anxiety of '... shifting from one inadequate position to another' caused by the fact that there is 'no secure resting place' (ibid. 59).

Together with Griffin, Joseph Raz takes the view that morality and well-being are not separate or distantly related domains (White, 2002b: 664). Raz presents his ideas on personal well-being around the central position that well-being consists in the achievement of the person's goals (Raz, 1986: 289-90). This seems to be a consistent position up until his most recent writings on the issue (White, 2002b: 664). The goals that Raz takes to be in the centre of the issue are the person's goals and no one else's; they don't belong to any kind of objective list. Such goals may have been chosen, deliberately adopted or simply naturally embraced with no special reason in

³⁴ A similar view can be found in McIntyre and Hirst: p.363, Bonnet, M. (1983), 'Education in a Destitute Time'. In P. H. Hirst and P. White (eds), *Philosophy of education - Major Themes in the Analytic Tradition* (Vol. I). London: Routledge, Hirst, P. H. (1993a), 'Education, Knowledge and Practices'. In P. H. Hirst and P. White (eds), *Philosophy of Education - Major Themes in the Analytic Tradition* (Vol. I). London: Routledge.

the course of one's life. Raz uses the word 'goal' as an all-inclusive name for: '... projects, plans, relationships, ambitions, commitments, and the like'. He considers that the person's goals are the normal way through which usually the person can improve her well-being (Raz, 1986: 290-1). An example of this view is the following: 'Since I never wanted to be a concert violinist I am none the worse for not being one. Someone whose ambition it is or was to become a concert violinist is, other things being equal, worse off if he is not one than if he is' (ibid. 292).

The problem of self-interest is one of great importance for the practice of education (White, 1986: 165). From it one is rapidly attracted to the problem of definition of the good life and well-being. Therefore it is interesting to go into more detail about Raz's view on self-interest. As a way of distinguishing well-being from self-interest, Raz attributes to the latter a character more oriented towards biology. In a certain way the person's biological needs set the boundaries of her self-interest. He also produces four additional characteristics in order better to distinguish well-being from self-interest. First, frustration of biological needs always frustrates self-interest but might not frustrate well-being (someone suffering shortage of life from medical help to others in an epidemic, may not see her well-being reduced because her life is not less successful in pursuing a valuable goal). Second, a major determinant of well-being is success or failure in pursuit of the person's goals, and this may not involve self-interest (a mother paying the university fees of her child, may see her well-being increased at the expense of her private, personal self-interest) - although Raz considers that there is not a clear line of division of the aspects of well-being that affect self interest, he presents a negative approach as follows: 'Basically a person's self-interest, to the extent that it is served by the success of what he cares about, is served by the success in those of his pursuits and relationships which he does not enter into to improve the well-being of others' (Ibid. 297). This negative approach, he explains later on, takes self-interest to be what remains when we exclude the part of the successful pursuit of goals that makes an impact on the well-being of others;

Third, the contentment of success in other goals contributes to the person's self-interest, although the success in the goal itself may not. Well-being is affected positively or negatively with the success or failure in the pursuit of goals, whether the

person is aware of them or not. Self-interest depends on the person's satisfaction with her life, separately from the fact that it is or is not justified. It is very important that Raz underlines the point that the major factor of evaluation of success of the person's pursuit of goals is in the way through which she pursues her goals. He gives an example of a campaigner to prevent the use of DDT who may see, during his lifetime, the use of this chemical increased. He clarifies this by saying: 'What matters from that point of view is the way he pursued his objectives and the contribution he made, relative to what could be expected, to his cause' (Ibid. 298).

Fourth, a person's well-being depends on the value of her goals and pursuits. Between a gambler and a farmer, both successful in their activities, the farmer has a life of greater well-being. Well-being is sensitive to the quality of the agents' activities, but self-interest is not. Raz considers that the activity of a farmer is to be assigned a higher well-being than that of a gambler. This occurs even if the gambler is very successful (Ibid. 298-9). It seems that we can start to say that, as in the other views of well-being, Raz has some kind of hidden agenda containing a flexible 'objective list' of goods that can be introduced by judgment. He formulates the judgment that gambling as an activity is less valuable than farming. But he sees this caused by the fact that the gambler can eventually opt for another more valuable activity. Such an activity would provide him and his life as a whole with a better level of well-being. On the other hand, Raz considers that between two persons who could not have the option of altering their main activities, such comparison of well-beings cannot take place. Both must be credited with an equal level of well-being and life success. The concept of well-being is taken here as subjective – limited to the real possibilities of the person in her life. It is not instrumental, in the sense that would be correlated with the effects of a certain activity and goal pursuit on others. As Raz says: 'Whenever we are given a choice we aspire to choose wisely, to make the best decision open to us in the circumstances. We can aspire to no less. But nor can we aspire to more' (Ibid). The limitations of real circumstances bounding personal lives are here recognized.

This first approach to Raz's view on well-being and his contrast with self-interest allows us to formulate some initial comments. First, Raz seems to adopt a complex and sophisticated view. To say that well-being correlates with success in pursuing

goals seems not to be enough to reflect what is the base of his account. The way through which those goals are pursued is important and can constitute an achievement in itself. One can object, for example, that someone who sets herself the goal of gaining a Nobel Prize in the next ten years has a great risk of failure. Consequently her well-being would seem to be greatly and negatively affected. A Razian can easily deflect this first objection to the theory. The reply would be that such a person could have reached a great degree of success in the process of trying to achieve the Nobel Prize. It is more the way in which the person pursues her goals that matters. Not the end result by itself. It seems that here Raz may be credited with a view close to the one that we have underlined in Gadamer: means and ends collapse. But it also seems to be a subjective matter to decide how much of the effort of the person in pursuing the Nobel Prize should be assigned to self-interest, well-being or both. How can we know what share of her efforts, if any, the person committed in the pursuit of that goal in order to improve the well-being of others? This seems to give this view a subjective character. Such an aspect is reinforced by the fact that to a large extent maybe we can accept that only the person herself is able to know what were the restrictions on her personal biography. Such restrictions made her decide, or led her into, a certain direction of her life. Such restrictions determine the real choice among the possible activities and goals to be pursued.

Raz takes the view that not only much that is good but also much that is bad are born from social practices (Raz, 1999: 202) Apparently this view would resemble a position close to some form of relativism. But this seems not to be the case. As Raz himself writes about social practices: 'They are necessary for the existence of values. But they are not their justification' (Ibid. 210). Such justification for social practices has to be looked for in higher order values. Relativism seems to start to be excluded when it is underlined that not only the good but also the bad stem from social practices. This seems to imply that other values have to be brought in to exclude the bad (e.g. all sorts of atrocities). And again Raz calls our attention to the role, in the process of justification, of the 'way' or the 'means' - how the social practices are carried on: 'Justification proceeds in terms of other values, and the way they are to be realized in particular circumstances' (Ibid.). Consequently, social practices are a precondition for the existence of the good and together with a certain

broader culture in which they are involved form the necessary and inevitable ‘background’.

From the educational point of view it seems to be interesting to note that Raz repeatedly states that most goods conveyed by social practices cannot be learned by description. Such learning takes place ‘by assimilation and by habituation’ (Ibid 205). Most of the socially created goods can be appreciated through the intuition of their ‘standards of excellence’. And, as Raz puts it: ‘Their mastery constitutes a skill, rather than a body of articulated knowledge’ (Ibid. 212). I have been trying to defend the view, after Paul Hirst, that ‘social practices’ are the important factor to take into consideration for the process of education as understood here as concerning moral education. It seems possible to conclude that this position agrees with Raz’s view that social practices are the preferential vehicles of morality and well-being.

Following on his views in *The Morality of Freedom* (1986: ch.12) Raz again addresses directly the problem of well-being and its integration with morality in his – ‘The Central Conflict: Morality and Self-Interest’ (Raz, 2000). Raz starts by reflecting on the identification of the core of morality: ‘It is sometimes said that the central question of morality is: why is it that we must conform with morality even when doing so involves significant sacrifice of our own interest? The answer, it is thought, would explain the normativity of morality’ (Raz, 2000: 209). Raz sets himself the task of exploring the view that he favours which consists in developments of the moral ‘classical view’ in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle. He opposes such a view with what he calls a ‘common view’ that separates prudential and moral values. He attempts to prove that this latter view is mistaken.

As for the central claim of the chapter, Raz states the following: ‘... while people may reasonably care about their own well-being, a person’s well-being is not, for that person, a source of reason for action’ (Ibid. 210). What Raz designates the ‘common view’ is one that separates prudential and moral reasons. According to such a view well-being and morality are separate and conflict frequently. By opposing this view Raz does not claim that there is just one source or argument – as in Kantianism - of normativity for both prudential reasons and moral reasons. But he says that there are several arguments with many diverse values and requirements that play that role. Important to transcribe is the account given by Raz of the notion of personal well-

being. I agree with this account and it is the one that I adopt in this work: ‘ Like others I take the notion of a person’s well-being as the notion we use in general judgements about how well people’s lives went for them – that is, excluding any consideration of their contribution to the well-being of others, or to culture, etc., except in as much as such contributions affected the quality of the life judged from the point of view of the person whose life it was’ (Ibid. 212).

Raz underlines that the problems are in the actions that are morally good but cannot contribute to the well-being of the person. Other actions may enhance the well-being of the person by themselves, or enhance it in concurrence with the well-being of others. Raz gives the example of someone taking care of her sick mother. Such actions will improve the well-being of the mother. But they also improve the well-being of the person since her relationship with her mother is cemented, enhancing the quality of her life. On the other hand, Raz presents as a clear-cut example of moral action against self-interest the case of a requirement to give to a charity the equivalent of ten per cent of the person’s income. Transferring a certain amount from my income, is to diminish my resources and is against my interest. . To justify the moral action against self-interest as belonging to personal well-being raises two kinds of problems. First we are in danger of automatically writing morality into the concept of well-being, and this is not acceptable. The former should follow the latter. Raz recognizes that giving something to a charity is valuable because it is doing something good. But this, he asserts, is not the equivalent of saying that a moral life is consistent with a life of well-being. Raz adds that we can live well without implying that a life is exempt from ‘moral blemish’.

A second problem is the view that self-interest is connected to pleasure. As for this second objection that ties well-being with pleasure, Raz takes it to be a misconception. Although Raz recognizes that there is a subjective element in his view of well-being, that I transcribed above, such an element may not be pleasure. And he adds: ‘People’s lives go well for them only if, as we saw, they are at peace with themselves, and to the extent that they are whole-heartedly engaged in their relationships and in the pursuit of their goals’ (Ibid. 216). It seems that the objection that Raz is rebutting in this second part is concerned with what I have been calling the ‘reduction argument’: in the end of it, all the actions serve one purpose, which is self-

interest. Raz disconnects, or dismisses the intimate connection of self-interest with pleasure. In its place he puts the ‘whole-hearted’ activity that seems to build on the people’s ‘peace with themselves’.

Previously, Raz asserted that, other things being equal, a life is a better life in so far as it is more successful. But Raz notes the following, about the other factors that can make a difference: ‘The life of people who are consumed by self-doubt, or self-hate, or suffering from very low self-esteem is diminished by these factors. Similarly, success in relationships or enterprises that are demeaning, worthless, or evil does not contribute to one’s well-being. But, *provided* [my emphasis] one’s success is in something worthwhile, and that one is at peace with oneself and wholehearted about one’s life, then well-being depends on the degree to which one is successful in one’s relationships and goals’ (Ibid. 212). But here seems to be the beginning of some problems with this view that, from the point of view of education, one cannot afford to overlook. It seems that Raz builds one of his central ideas of well-being - to have success in worthwhile goals or in the process of achieving them—on top of certain dispositions that he designates by ‘peace with one self’ and ‘wholehearted’ action. I think that these two conditions have to be in place in order for the person to pursue her worthwhile goals. Raz introduces the condition by using the word ‘provided’, which I take to mean ‘if’.

This is where I see the difficulty because from the point of view of education this seems to be a big ‘if’. Educationally, I would say that to be at ‘peace with oneself’ is already an enormous step accomplished, especially in the area of the education of the emotions. This is equivalent to saying that a person must be in ‘peace of mind’ and then proceed with her interests and try to succeed in the pursuit of her goals. In fact one can imagine someone very successful in pursuing her goals, but doing so in suffering terrible pains from phobias or other disturbances. These, as Raz says, would diminish her well-being and damage her self-esteem, etc. But as I said, for education this broad base, peace of mind, is of primary importance and must be given a prominent position in a view of well-being. Such a base has also to be explicated in order to clarify educational action. It seems that one must accept that for someone to be ‘at peace with herself’ may not imply that such a person is a moral person. Eventually – lets admit for the moment - a criminal like a ‘Mafia boss’ may live a life

in such a state of mind. But as I think that Raz agrees, without ‘peace of mind’, at least kept in reasonable boundaries or level, it seems difficult to accept a life as being lived in well-being.

About his central claim that well-being is not a main reason for action, Raz explains that we can start to see that by perceiving that self-sacrifice ‘is not essentially connected to well-being’ (Ibid. 221). What people care about directly is not their well-being but goals and relationships (Ibid. 223). So these are the real reasons for action. Such action is similar to the one involving more trivial non-moral issues, and ‘sacrifices for morality’s sake are like all sacrifices’. In certain circumstances, if those goals, at least the ones considered as central, are somehow threatened we react in order to protect them in such ways that disregard our well-being. And Raz reiterates what he sees as the two major factors that affect personal well-being as follow: ‘As we saw, one’s well-being depends on success in worthwhile and wholeheartedly engaged-in goals and relationships’ (Ibid. 228).

Together with ‘peace with oneself’ Raz seems to erect a second pillar to sustain well-being. This is the ‘wholehearted activity’ that he repeatedly mentions. But where does he look for the founding justification for this ‘wholehearted’ activity? In absence of a direct reference, I think that this can be answered via his focus on the ‘intrinsically good’ act (Ibid. 215). He sees such an act as rewarding in itself - ‘the result is intrinsic to the act’. But it seems to me that such a justification leaves morality too far from the centre of the picture. This needs perhaps to be reformulated in a way as to provide a further and thicker underpinning for the ‘wholehearted’ action. Such an underpinning can be pursued through the development of what some philosophers of education denote as ‘the activity for its own sake’. I think such a concept can be seen as overlapping with the Razian one. I claim the need of a more careful grounding and extra scaffolding of what makes something ‘intrinsically good’. The absence of instrumentality or the extrinsic is what seems to be taken as the source of the ‘intrinsic’. As I asserted before these developments take us into the research on the concept of ‘love’ and the educationally praised ‘activity for its own sake’.

In summary, it seems to me that Raz’s argument in favour of the inseparability of well-being and morality is compelling. Prudential reasons and moral reasons can

interact in such a way that action may be determined, in certain cases, by the latter to the detriment of the former. This may be justified by the need to preserve important goals in spite of that being detrimental to self-interest. Nevertheless, being closely concerned with education, I see that Raz's view of well-being can be found unsatisfactory for the practical reasoning of educationalists. The grounding of two of the piles of Raz's conditions for well-being as successful pursuit of worthwhile goals – 'peace of mind' and 'wholeheartedness' – it seems to me requires a more specific explanation.

Considering the above limitations, we move now to look at the contribution of the view of well-being as absence of disorder, as it is formulated up until now, to the prudent and moral conflict of prudence and morality.

5.2 Absence of Disorder and Morality

It is time now to try to position absence of disorder in relation to morality. How far does absence of disorder provide a proper integration of morality and well-being? This brings in the usual problem of conflict between narrow self-interest and the common good. I have been avoiding the simplicity of the 'reductionism argument' that states that the common good must prevail when necessary because in the end that is what is better for the person and for her self-interest. As stated before, Arneson (1999: 113) notes that such a position should be the result of a theory of well-being and not its presupposition John White discusses the example of a 'Mafia boss' in the context of education involving autonomy and morality (White, 1990: 28). Considering now the same example of a 'Mafia boss', can we say that by being in 'peace of mind' he is also in absence of disorder? It seems that one thing cannot follow automatically from the other. We can imagine a 'Mafia boss' in peace of mind with himself in the sense that he lives a happy life (which is not the life of well-being, as we saw). But we cannot imagine a 'Mafia boss' living without doing evil things or thinking about doing them. Such conduct is by definition the conduct of a 'Mafia boss'. It is therefore questionable what kind of 'peace of mind' a 'Mafia boss' experiences.

It is very important that a view of personal well-being be in the first place a prudential one (Griffin, 1988: 68, 70). I'm talking here in a first move which is to consider a prudential absence of disorder rooted in informed desire satisfaction. Can we do this with 'absence of disorder with imperfection'? For the moment I think I can give to absence of disorder the status of a prudential view by rooting it in informed desire about the concept of entropy. I can then say that it is not prudent for the 'Mafia boss' to act the way he acts. The justification for this is that the 'Mafia boss' by doing, or thinking on doing, evil actions, experience the discomfort of fear of being caught by the police. Such discomfort may represent, I argue, unnecessary entropy build up. Such acceleration of the entropic process seems to be not in the best interest of the 'Mafia-boss'. By being informed about the entropic process, the 'Mafia-boss' may conclude that it is in his interest to behave differently.

I can think of an objection. Maybe the 'Mafia-boss' considers that it is a good deal, at the entropic level, to rob a bank. He may say that by doing this successfully he can later have a better material life, with top medical care and all the amenities that slow down the entropic process, in a way that overturns the discomfort of the previous stress. For this I don't have an answer. I can at the moment try to position absence of disorder by including a certain morality that may be seen itself as also prudent, following Griffin in this when he states: '... being moral enters that list [of prudential items] only by being part of what it is to be at peace with one's neighbor and with oneself. This sort of peace is a prudential value, and when morality enters considerations under that heading it takes on prudential weight' (Griffin, 1988: 70). At this moment this seems the best that I can do and I don't think I can give stronger reasons to remove the 'Mafia-boss' from his position. I have to accept a compromise that I take to be a weak position. I will pursue these matters through different routes in the last chapter when, in a second move, I will try to root personal well-being and absence of disorder in 'action for its own sake' and the concept of 'disinterest'. As Griffin notes in his *Well-Being*: 'To show that morality is not really alien it is enough to find a place for it somewhere inside the self' (Ibid. 133).

Let me now consider the case of the 'rational egoist' as another traditional example. This is equivalent to asking: 'Can the rational egoist be in absence of

disorder?' John White wrestles with this problem and he states: 'The egoist, it seems, can always deny that it is in his interest to be moral, without being irrational' (White, 1990: 57). White also presents a more enriched view of self-interest put by Griffin that enhances 'a life of point and substance'. But again he underlines the risk that Griffin also recognizes '... that one writes morality by definition into the richer concept of self-interest' (Ibid. 58). This seems to be the problem that I face if I say that the 'rational egoist' is not in absence of greed, which is listed as a sub-item of violence as a form of disorder. If I bite the bullet it seems to me that the supportive list of absence of disorder becomes more rigid. It is more like an objective list without being underpinned by an overarching concept. Hence greed would be a candidate item to be irremovable. What is at stake here is important for education and so requires a more cautious approach.

What we are looking for is an answer to the preoccupation expressed by John White: 'We still lack any good reason why one's well-being must include morality' (Ibid.). Most importantly what I think that the egoist is missing is not only any particular item of the supportive list of absence of disorder. What the egoist is missing seems to be what we can take to be some of the core dispositions or set of dispositions that are the global result of absence of disorder. What the egoist is missing is the disposition that allows him the possibility of engaging with 'the activity for its own sake'. Since the 'action for its own sake' has in its essence an important absence, which is the absence of interest, how can the egoist experience this? That is, the rational egoist lives without the possibility of absence of interest. But it seems that to act from self-interest this egoist has to assess or determine what that self-interest is. This must be some sort of previous systematic basic operation that shows her at all times what is her self-interest.

It seems that the egoist is not able to detach herself from such an operation. She can't escape it. What sort of operation is that? Could we determine what our self-interest is without doing some sort of comparison? It seems to me that the operation underlying the egoist conduct is the first of the forms of disorder: comparison. With such a characteristic can this person ever be in absence of disorder? It seems that— I argue - that is impossible since one of the global results of absence of disorder is the possibility of absence of interest that can give way to the 'activity for its own sake'.

As I have been suggesting we seem here to be dealing with love and its essence. If the mediocre egoist cuts himself off from the experience of ‘disinterestedness’ or ‘the activity for its own sake’ can we still say that he acts rationally? Is he not necessarily an irrational person? Is he not a ‘blind’ person permanently victim of comparison? It seems that the person cuts himself out globally from the dispositions of absence of disorder. The reason not to act only in self-interest seems to follow from the need of absence of disorder – that is from the true interest of the person in her well-being - and not from morality itself. But the difficulty persists that if the egoist argues that the entropic balance is in his favor, I don’t have a decisive argument against that.

Without engaging extensively with the concept of ‘disinterest’, this is where we can leave this matter. The ‘Mafia boss’ and the ‘rational egoist’ are good examples since they seem to provide difficult cases. I’m not able to decisively counteract their claim to a better entropic balance. They provide the case of the antithesis of absence of interest. The hope here was to provide the minimum of depth and breath of argument in order to better characterize ‘absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’. The purpose is to justify the action in absence of individual interest that may give way to the priority of the good of all. Here maybe it is wise to give warning that of course personal-interest has a place in our lives. This is dealt with, for example, by McIntyre when he addresses the role of ‘give and receive’ in our relationships (McIntyre, 1999a: ch. 9). This is an important item also addressed by Foucault under the general banner of the ‘technologies of the self’ and ‘the care of the self’ (e. g. Foucault, 1988).

Let me finally make some comments on perfectionism as a view of well-being, the way that I see it now operating in some societies. Richard Arneson takes from Rawls a view of strong perfectionism which provides a useful way of looking at the basic operation underlying this ideology: it is a ‘teleological theory directing society to arrange institutions and to define the duties and obligations of individuals so as to maximize the achievement of human excellence in art, science and culture’ (Arneson, 2000). Therefore Arneson comments that society should be ordered to ‘promote the higher achievements of a few geniuses’. He adds to this: ‘Rawls sees perfectionism as the enemy of the liberty and autonomy that are the birth right of all individuals in a just and liberal society’ (Arneson, 2000: 1). Rawls also associates this narrow

perfectionism with elitism defined as: ‘... the idea that the proper function of political society is to serve the interests of a minority of its members’ (Ibid.).

Following Plato with his philosopher kings and Marx as perfectionists, John Rawls gives the example of a typical paradigmatic perfectionist statement by Nietzsche: ‘Mankind must work continually to produce individual great human beings ...’ (Rawls, 1999: 286). Both Arneson and Rawls develop compelling arguments against perfectionism. How can one achieve the perfectionist telos? What is the most basic operation required? It seems to me that unavoidably it’s got to be comparison. The interesting thing to note here is the coincidence with the ‘rational egoist’ who seems also to operate basically on comparisons. Maybe this is more than a coincidence. Maybe the perfectionism now in place in society and the ‘rational egoist’ match each other in the same purpose: to serve self-interest. For my purpose here what seems relevant is that I have posited absence of disorder as a view that acknowledges the difference in talents. Therefore absence of disorder is a view that embraces equality of respect for the person but not the egalitarianism (sameness) of performance.

By criticizing perfectionism head on are we entering into contradiction by apparently criticizing high performance? Are we attempting a view that in the end tends to equalize performance? I say that it is exactly the opposite which is being attempted. Performance of students, for example, in schools has to be different. It is not higher than what it is now because of perfectionism. I say that it is what it is not because, but in spite of perfectionism. Why then, in spite of the badness of perfectionism is the knowledge-based society functioning so well? I think the reason is simple: the instrumental knowledge-based society is also highly specialized; the working places require but a great continuous repetition that needs only a narrow amount of knowledge; the schooling period takes a long time and an extremely intense program; even with all its defects it would be very strange if the school system did not accomplish at least this goal since it is complemented by training in the work place. Instruction after all is a relatively easy task.

In achieving this, a schooling system operating within perfectionism may cause, I claim, enormous damage to all of those participating in it. It operates with many of the forms of disorder, especially comparison, and introduces excesses of entropy that

psychologically damage all those involved. No wonder that distress in what is being called the ‘Prozac society’ is advancing. I said that the instrumental results are good in spite of the perfectionist theory in place, because without perfectionism and with sensitivity for the forms of disorder I say that the expected results would be better. Most of all, such results would follow from a true passion enjoying the engagement with subjects in concurrence with the preservation of health and personal well-being of all. Let me now try to characterize perfectionism against absence of disorder, through some key words. For perfectionism we may have: best, more, progress³⁵, maximization, quality, excellence, success/failure, selection, ends/arrival, certainty, horror of imperfection, purity, constant striving and comparison, self-dissatisfaction, to be or to become someone, to have a name. For absence of disorder: less, the way, the road with no end, removal or mitigation of entropy, imperfection, natural flowing, contemplation, to remain, anonymity, restoration, preservation, no name, incommensurability and no comparison.

At this point it is interesting to look at Amy Gutman’s view about first principles: ‘Philosophy gives common sense its due by recognizing that first principles are impossible to prove, that they must be judged in significant part by their practical implications and that this judgement entails the use of common sense (‘practical judgement’ is the strict term)’ (Gutman, 1989: 42). It will be then in practical reasoning that absence of disorder should also be judged and not only according to any deeper framework.

Finally I think I had better conclude this chapter by pointing out briefly some characteristics related to the view that sees absence of disorder in practice as a negative approach. If I look to the classroom for example I tend to look for the forms of disorder like fear, comparison and so on. I look for ways to remove them or mitigate them. But in my daily practice things become more interesting. How can I be recognized by the evil that I haven’t done today? How can I be rewarded for that? As Heidegger (2000b: 351) warned us it is impossible that only something negative is going on here. In sparing (preserving) the other by not harming him

³⁵ On the important idea of progress and its history see for example: Pollard, S. (1968), *The Idea of Progress - History and Society*. London: C. A. Watts, Fromm, E. (1976), *To Have or To Be?* London: Jonathan Cape, O’Hear, A. (1999), *After Progress - Finding the Old Way Forward*. London: Bloomsbury. I’m grateful to Tal Gilead for these references.

something positive becomes possible in 'dwelling'. But that something is mostly anonymous and discrete. It goes unnoticed. That something tends to be not in the game of 'reward and punishment'.

The important issue of the relation between prudent and moral aspects of well-being, is left open, namely in the example of the 'Mafia-boss'. In a second move – given also the insufficiencies that I see in the Razian approach - seen in the first section - I follow now the important suggestion by Griffin previously mentioned. I look at the possibility of 'finding a place for morality inside the self' (Griffin, 1988: 133). I relate that finding to personal well-being. As Griffin emphasizes, this is a critical point in order to show that morality is not alien to self-interest (Ibid.). These new routes takes us to the 'action for its own sake', the concepts of 'disinterest' and love, and to their possible role in personal well-being seen from the perspective of absence of disorder

6 – Absence of Disorder, ‘Disinterest’ and Ethical Autonomy

To give prudential reasons for someone to behave morally proved to be an intractable philosophical problem for some time. The attempt here is, in a certain way to sidetrack the problem, and to look in the direction of the Levinasian concept of ‘disinterest’. Let me try to frame again the essential features of the problem, by introducing a short story. Years ago I had a debate with one of my students in the cafeteria of the school. This debate was about selfishness and the importance in our lives of ‘action for its own sake’. I mean, the centrality of action exclusively for the sake of the object of that action implying an absence of interest for anything else. I argued that such action as long as it is directed to the good, is what sustains life –is what makes life bearable. My student himself entrenched in the sceptic position, argued that whatever I said, what in the end moves the world is personal interest. To the examples that I would come up with, the student would reply that even if an action is carried out for virtuous purposes how could he be sure that the one who carries it out does not have an ulterior motive? Even if the person that carries out the virtuous action is doing it in complete assured anonymity that only makes us suspect that such a person is not interested in exterior forms of rewarding, like respect, fame, etc.

How could I guarantee that there was not some sort of inward compensation or satisfaction that simultaneously is being sought after – like going to heaven, pleasing some god, simply feeling good and so on? I am pleased to confess that the student was very good and determined in defending his position and I ended up frustrated in

my attempts to dissuade him. The one who ended up discomfited was me. I felt not only frustrated but a great incompetence in formulating a sound argument against his sceptic wall. The central purpose of this chapter is an attempt to provide a proper reply to my sceptic student, recovering from my incompetence. Central to such an attempt, I shall argue, is the concept of 'disinterest'. You will decide to what extent I am successful in my argument.

One can also say that what we are looking for is for the possibility of an ultimate uncorrupted human action, with priority over all the other ones. Is this maybe a very important educational action? I believe that the way to shed light on this issue is to research into the essence of 'disinterest' by looking at the concept of love, which some see as closely related with 'disinterestedness'. Agreeing with this view, in order to research on the essence of 'disinterest' and love, I take as central the question 'When is to give really to give?'

The word love has been imported and used for countless language games by all sorts of human activities and dragged down all over the place. It is used exhaustively by poets, novelists, song writers, screenplay writers, and popular traditions, 'high' and 'low' cultures. In a word it is used in many kinds of public discourses. It is confused with sex, different sorts and intensities of passionate states, correlated with jealousy or other emotions, passions, or affectionate states. Love has been put in parallel with friendship and all sorts of attachments - to people, things, animals and ideas. In the paroxysm of such multiple uses, love has even been equated with hate - or something that can easily transform into it - suffering, risk, states of delusion, and so on. Love can even be simply equated with liking. What I think that can immediately be inferred from this huge and frantic discursive activity is that maybe this is signalling that something terribly important is going on here with this thing called love. Maybe many of those aspects of human life may in fact include love.

When looking at some philosophical approaches to the concept of love, namely the trilogy by Irving Singer (1966; 1984; 1987), and for the purpose of analysis, it seems to me to be useful to start by demarcating two sides. On the one hand there are those approaches that look at love as a complex set of dispositions and inner states of emotions and affections that float around certain human states of mind and

practices. These approaches tend to focus on the description of such complex states of mind and social practices attempting to characterize them according to their context. Thus one can hear about erotic love, care love, union love, romantic love, appreciation love, love of nature, love of neighbour, religious love, love of country, and so on – I refer to these as ‘the bag of loves’. On the other hand, some approaches tend to follow the philosophical insight that the essence of something is what that thing is. Such approaches tend to prefer a line of investigation that attempts to understand and expose the essence or central structure that is maybe operating in love. For convenience of speech I will designate the first kind of approach by the name of ‘romantic descriptivism’ and the second kind as ‘essentialist’ approaches. In short, the justification for the use of the word ‘romanticism’ here it can be given by the connection that can elicit things like a certain ‘vagueness’, ‘irrationalism or predominance of emotions’, ‘obscurity’, ‘holism’, ‘subjectivism’, ‘nostalgia’, ‘what ineffably predominates in the attachment between persons’, and so on. A detailed description of romanticism in the context of love can be found in Singer’s trilogy mentioned above.

More accurately this issue is luminously presented by Frankfurt (2004: 43) in the following passage: ‘It is important to avoid confusing love - as circumscribed by the concept that I am defining – with infatuation, lust, obsession, possessiveness, and dependency in their various forms. In particular, relationships that are primarily *romantic* [my emphasis] or sexual do not provide very authentic or illuminating paradigms of love, as I am construing it. Relationships of those kinds typically include a number of vividly distracting elements, which do not belong to the *essential nature* [my emphasis] of love as a mode of *disinterested* [my emphasis] concern, but are so confusing that they make it nearly impossible for anyone to be clear about just what is going on.’ This relatively long passage reflects the position that I’m assuming here. Nevertheless I am convinced, perhaps contra Frankfurt, that very frequently romantic relationships contain, and vividly can show, the essential nature of love and they deserve in their own right to be designated also as such. I hope that the conclusions of this research will in some way help to demonstrate this.

As usual these are not clear cut distinctions. Romantic descriptivists seldom engage in attempts to come forward with a theory of love, and essentialists do have to

engage in descriptions and also may fall into the field of more or less romanticized descriptions and characterisations, due to the difficulties in completely and satisfactorily achieving their goal. I will attempt to adopt the normative essentialist approach. My aim here is to identify and characterize in the best possible way the essence or central structure of ‘disinterest’ which I will try to relate with love.. That is, to identify the one thing that without its presence, it will be not possible to call something as such.

Aiming at an education for absence of disorder and aiming at autonomy, is approached in the first section via an attempt to define a view of ‘intrinsic’ (psychological) and ‘extrinsic’ autonomy. I next address more directly the question of the essence of ‘disinterest’. In the third section I look for an answer to the central question, ‘When is to give really to give?’ There is a concern to show that such actions of ‘giving’ are common and frequent in our daily life. It is intended also to show that such actions are what may contribute seriously to sustain life itself and are at the root of what is to be a human being. Finally, in the fourth section I try to illustrate what may be the ‘disinterested’ self in action, in our daily life.

6.1 Absence of Disorder and Ethical Autonomy

Colin Wringer points out that promoting rational autonomy is potentially coercive (Wringer, 1988: ch. 5). Apparently, says Wringer, rationality is the vehicle of choosing autonomously. But paradoxically this may imply a limitation in ones’ freedom. What is established as rational in a particular society may be influenced or determined by certain powerful groups. This suggests that for example the school system may be seen as a tool to convey the dominant ideas that at a certain point in time are considered as rational in a certain society. In this sense, educating for rational autonomy may be coercive of the person’s freedom. Swift (2001: 62) also concentrates on this idea and he claims that rational autonomy may get to be dangerous when some other entities like the state may tend to define what is ‘rational’ and what is not. Another tension commonly pointed out is the fact that societies are different or multicultural and therefore autonomy cannot be considered valuable universally (Standish, 1999: 38). John White sees this problem as being presently

one of the main divisions among liberals. The tension is between the liberal line of thought ‘...based on a core value of autonomy for everyone in the community, and a liberalism which does not privilege this core value as it recognises that members of sub-cultures within the community may live in non-autonomous ways and are entitled to equal consideration with others’(White, 1999: 195). Another problem pointed out more particularly for autonomy is one that sees it as potentially undermining social cohesion. Education of individuals as strong autonomous persons together with the problem of parents’ rights to educate their children as strong heteronomous persons is discussed by Winch (1999: ch. 7). Finally, perhaps related with this latter problem is the accusation that some forms of autonomy may transform individuals into ‘atoms’ and therefore promote the ‘apotheosis of individualism’. These related forms of undermining society are mentioned in Midgley (1997: ch.3) and Standish (1997: ch.4).

The above are some of the important issues related to autonomy requiring a great deal of attention. I will not try to deal with these problems involving the concept of autonomy in the context of absent disorder as a view of personal well-being. That would require a much greater depth and breadth of argument. The goal in this section is much more limited and consists in getting across the point that: whereas extrinsic autonomy is a matter of not being subject to various kinds of external constraints, intrinsic autonomy is a matter of absence of (internal psychological) disorder. This is why I claim, in the context of educational aims, there is a close connection between aiming at autonomy and aiming at the absence of disorder. But in order to do this we must underline the importance of personal inner psychology in the determination of autonomy and the possibility of defining two levels of autonomy: intrinsic and extrinsic autonomy.

Christopher Winch in his *The Philosophy of Human Learning* explores some insights of the philosophy of Wittgenstein, namely the human relation with the evolution of animals in nature. Such insight was contra the Cartesian dualism of seeing human nature clearly divided into body and soul. As pointed out, Wittgenstein didn’t want to see humans as *automata*, the way that Cartesians saw animals. Such a view would declare humans to be irremediably non-autonomous. What such a view draws attention to was the fact that if one can, for analytical

purposes refer to the human condition as cognitive, conative and affective, in reality these aspects are closely interrelated and they are not distinct faculties of the mind (Winch, 1998: 6). This seems to point to a more holistic view of human nature. Winch also underlines that autonomy is primarily psychological autonomy but since complex societies have a range of goals it is difficult to attribute to autonomy the status of ‘the *exclusive* educational aim’ (Winch, 1999: 76).

In line with this view that the inner psychological dispositions built into the person are of capital importance, Raz also asserts that bad psychology leads to heteronomy when he states: ‘A person who feels driven by forces which he disowns but cannot control, who hates or detests the desires which motivate him or the aims that he is pursuing, does not lead an autonomous life’ (Raz, 1986: 382). Interesting to introduce here is a classic stoic view on the emotions as espoused by Anthony Grayling in his *What is Good?* (2004: 122). Stoicism promoted the view that among the virtues to live the good life when facing external (mis)fortune one should have the disposition of ‘apathy’. Failing to do that would correspond to have ‘pathetic’ behaviour. By ‘apathy’ they meant control of the feelings. But as we know from Aristotle (1984) ‘control’ here means that these dispositions are spontaneously present. Maybe this is the reason why more than one author points to the possibility of an education for autonomy being caught in a paradox similar to the moral education paradox. Wardekker (2001: 108) underlines that autonomy is not something that schools can transmit or that pupils can show in a test; and again Raz makes clearly this point when he states: ‘But it is the special character of autonomy that one cannot make the other person autonomous. One can bring the horse to the water but one cannot make it drink’ (Raz, 1986: 407). Nevertheless this last metaphor contains something that I take to be important for education. In spite of the fact that we cannot guarantee that we teach people to be autonomous – and I call this the autonomy education paradox – we can still favour the process in different ways. We can only try our best to bring the horse to the water hoping that it will drink it. All this seems to imply as in education itself that the outcome of the build-up of the inner emotional structure that sustains the autonomous person is again a complex result of inner (re)elaborations that have a fragile unpredictable outcome.

On the important relationship of instrumental knowledge and autonomy, I repeat from the first section of the initial chapter, a quotation from Peter Gardner: ‘The ignorant are not *ipso facto* heteronomous and well informed and autonomous is not a tautology’ (Gardner, 1988: 99). This is the view that I will attempt to support here. In terms of sensibility Noddings (1992: 43) adds: ‘Evidence abounds that people can attain high levels of intellectuality and remain insensitive to human beings and other living things’. Also John White (1990: 10) subordinates knowledge aims to autonomy. It seems then possible to conclude that White does not see a direct strong connection between knowledge and autonomy. This suggests that also for him the more autonomous person is not necessarily the more knowledgeable and one cannot make such a direct correlation. White also recognizes that there are ‘cognitive requirements of autonomy’ (Ibid. 26). As was underlined before the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of human nature don’t come separate and, on the contrary, it is a whole that produces a result. Someone with good practical medical knowledge can be seen as having an added capacity to operate autonomously in an expedition in the desert. But certainly if such a person is concurrently plagued by a heavy psychological depression, she may even be in a state of not being able to leave her home. Certainly different people have different levels of instrumental knowledge. But I think that it is relevant to note here that the acquisition of instrumental knowledge is inevitable and follows directly from life itself. Acquisition of interesting instrumental knowledge does not follow necessarily from more or less years of attendance in schools. Ivan Illich stresses this point as follows: ‘A second major illusion on which the school system rests is that most learning is the result of teaching. Teaching it is true, may contribute to certain kinds of learning under certain circumstances. But most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school. In a few rich countries, school has become their place of confinement during an increasing part of their lives’ (Illich, 1971: 12).

We can move now to the attempt to characterize a possible view of autonomy as intrinsic and extrinsic by starting to look at Raz’s conditions of autonomy. Raz says that the capacity for autonomy is a secondary sense of ‘autonomy’ and he adds: ‘The conditions of autonomy are complex and consist of three different components: appropriate mental abilities, an adequate range of options and independence’ (Raz, 1986: 372). Further on he explains what is the content that he ascribes to these three

components. First, mental abilities are the capacity to form certain kinds of complex intentions and to form plans for their execution. They comprehend minimum rationality, the capacity to set adequate means to achieve certain goals, the mental capacities to plan actions, etc. Secondly, the capacity to choose requires the possibility of having available a certain range of options. Thirdly, by independence Raz means that the person's choice should be free from of any sort of coercion or manipulation by others (Ibid.). It is in the separation of the first of these components – the mental abilities – from the other two that I think we can look for the division of intrinsic and extrinsic autonomy. Raz himself emphasizes the importance of the emotions and the inner psychological apparatus of the person when he writes: 'A person who feels driven by forces which he disowns but cannot control, who hates or detests the desires which motivate him or the aims that he is pursuing, does not lead an autonomous life' (Ibid. 382). We can say that autonomy is based on freedom and this is why it is such an important issue for liberals. Certainly the components of choice and independence – the two components that I'm taking as extrinsic – require exterior negative freedom. But the capacity for mental abilities that guarantees autonomy I take to be based in another form of freedom: the freedom from self-disintegration as a form of disorder. Conversely, extrinsic autonomy based on two other Razian components – range of options and freedom from coercion – I take to constitute self-directedness or the capacity to determine our own life.

Mary Midgley (1997: 31) refers to the fact that from the Enlightenment on, moral views have become 'obsessed with protecting individual freedom'. She locates such isolationism mainly in Nietzsche but also in economic Social Darwinism. Further on Midgley writes: '... western culture preaches individualism making personal freedom itself a central ideal and calling for constant innovation. People don't only find themselves isolated from their traditional background and forced into competition, they are also told that they *ought* to be innovative, independent and competitive, that this is the way to adapt to a fluid situation (Ibid. 33). I think it's appropriate to repeat what is the basic misconception in these accusations against autonomy, the way I have been trying to picture it. Autonomy by being based on intrinsic autonomy is the capacity to be alone that allows us to be with others and therefore engage in true cooperation in freedom and equality of concern. Providing that the autonomous person accepts Mill's 'harm principle' he is bound by the rights

of others. It seems that autonomy is a fragile outcome or an uncertain by-product of the complex process of education. I think schools can adopt procedures that can favour more or less the possibility of occurrence of such outcomes.

As for Migdley, she provides a good example of what I have been arguing. There is a dramatic confusion in assigning to autonomy and its base which is freedom, the responsibility for producing atomic individualism. What we have to clarify here is that late-modern societies are not *ipso facto* completed liberal societies. They are only limitedly liberal. In their practices they frequently and seriously damage the liberal ideals of autonomy and freedom, namely through the universal compulsory school system. As I have been arguing from as many directions as possible, the so-called liberal societies inherited and nurtured in them, in parallel with such unquestionable liberal values as the value of democracy, a perfectionist drive served by a rootless Social Darwinism. This monstrous creation, as I see it, has nothing to do with liberalism and its ideals and its ideology or procedures seem to be not found in liberal philosophers. John White (2003: 150) referring to the claims that liberalism foster egoistic and atomistic behaviours, argues that support for those claims can not be found in liberal theorists from Locke through Mill to Rawls. I've tried in several places above, even if timidly, to trace the genesis of perfectionism and to give reasons for its justification.

Migdley's own writing mentions Social Darwinism and provides some of the necessary examples. First, people are forced into competition. In fact the schooling system carries out in an intense compulsive way the assessment of each student hundreds of times by comparison. Basically students go through this ordeal in isolation and very much against cooperation. Second, students are persistently told that they ought to be innovative. It is a characteristic of perfectionism to be permanently unsatisfied and compulsively to look permanently for the new or the more or the different. Third, people ought to be independent and competitive. Correctly Migdley connects the word independence with the word competition. In fact the perfectionist view of independence is one of competitive individualism that entails isolationism of action and attitude, and that is always involving comparison with others. It is not achieving independence as the capacity to be alone that brings freedom to be with the other that can imply competition. This state of affairs

generated by Social Darwinism throws all of those going through the schooling system, which is everyone, in the direction of loneliness and the heteronomy of not being able to be alone implying the incapacity to be in freedom. This relates to 'disinterest' which is to say the 'alone-interest'. In the remaining sections, I will attempt to clarify these relations with that of autonomy. For the moment it seems interesting to start by looking at the usual definitions of 'alone' and 'loneliness' that can be found in dictionaries, followed by a couple of examples. Loneliness is usually depicted as a set of bad feelings that translate sadness for being alone, having no friends or someone to take care of us. It can be seen as craving for companionship. Such loneliness, for example in the work place as well as in schools, may frequently equate with frustration and can assume forms of aggressiveness³⁶.

On the other hand to be alone can be interpreted, at personal level, as being without any help. As I argued previously, such aloneness allows for the capacity to help the other. Most importantly I will try to show in the chapter that this capacity to be alone can also favour a certain 'alone-interest'. This is to say, alone-interest represents or characterizes the possibility for someone to engage in a special action: 'the action for its own sake'. Paramount to the action for its own sake seems to be a certain 'disinterest' or absence of other interests in conflict. Such state of disinterestedness – or alone-interest – will be related with the Levinasian 'disinterest' and a possible special low level of disorder or entropy.

In order to start to clarify this issue, before we go more deeply into it by tackling its relations with morality, let me give a couple of examples that may illustrate the possibility of this alone-interest in action. First consider the case of a rock-climber on a difficult rock-face, mentally focused entirely on how to get to the top. There is enormous physical effort involved here; but mentally, there is just one focus of attention – perhaps a case of near 'alone-interest' – perhaps mentally, there is almost no effort at all here. Perhaps the climber is in the state that some psychologists have called 'flow'. From such low mental disorder or entropy that springs from disinterest in everything else, takes place what seems to be a special mental focus

³⁶ It seems extremely difficult to accept that idiomatic expressions like 'the rat race' were cast after influences of ideas found in liberal philosophers. Some other potent ideology or ideologies must be at work in the undergrounds of these late-modern societies. These I take to be perfectionism and Social Darwinism.

accompanied by extra physical energy. As a second example, we look at a description of the Japanese archer practiced in Zen as described by Herrigel (1953). It is stressed that the archer is not engaged in (conscious) mental effort as he pulls back the bow. His mind is focused on the target (alone-interest). He is not judging; he is not thinking about when to let go. By not judging, it seems that the archer is naturally and effortlessly in absence of conflict of interests. He is not even thinking about when to let go. At the right moment, he does let go. By opposition, such is the state of mind that seems to be out of reach of loneliness in its heteronomy.

What about the central problem of the harmonious integration of morality and autonomy in the context of education for well-being as the absent of disorder? I have tried to establish that the most important form of autonomy is the intrinsic one. I have correlated such intrinsic autonomy with the inner psychology of the person. But in order to reinforce the view that an education aiming at the absent of disorder, also aims at an ethical autonomy – not only autonomy *per se* – I think that it is convenient to look at the concepts of love and ‘disinterest’. Such is the purpose of the remaining parts of this final chapter.

6.2 ‘The Action for Its Own Sake’ - Chasing the Essential Essence

Let me remind you that I’m trying to exclude ‘romantic descriptivism’. That is, the many complex items that are part of the more permanent passionate and emotional dispositions that someone has towards some object. These are items that are the focus of ‘romantic descriptivism’. As I said, I’m not at all interested in describing these myriad of items or the endless situations where they can be involved. If for example we look only at friendship, the shades of intensities and variations of emotions and contexts involved seem to be beyond description. This is the view of Joseph Raz (1986: 312) for whom, many and complex are the degrees of intimacy and intensities involved in e.g. business friendship, personal friendship, golfing friendship. These are the items where we can find, in a word, ‘the likes’ or sympathetic dispositions that eventually can originate many practical actions in accordance with them. For example, the many actions or social practices between partners who enjoy a relationship that involves sex, besides the affection that goes

with caring for each other. Such a list involving some of those items, can take the following form:

- Love of a partner = sex + caring + friendship at a high level of intimacy, common interests, etc.;
- Love of a son or parent = caring + friendship, at a familial level of intimacy, etc.;
- Love of a friend = caring + friendship at diverse levels of intimacy, etc.;
- Love of nature (art, animals, sport, etc) = caring + joy of experiencing it, etc.

The important question is: ‘what is it that has to be present for us to use the word love in those different situations?’ ‘What is it that is common to all situations?’ I’m not at all sure that one can produce a clear answer to these questions. Cautiously, I place them in inverted commas.

I think that in order to better start to clarify the issue, it is convenient to make a brief reference to two important Wittgensteinian concepts that relate with his view on ‘language-games’: ‘family resemblance’ and ‘a form of life’. On the one hand ‘romantic descriptivism’ may be seen as dealing with a particularly complex ‘language-game’. As pointed out by Biletzki and Matar (2005): ‘Still, just as we cannot give a final, essential definition of ‘game’, so we cannot find “what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language as parts of language” (PI 65)’. These same authors also note that: ‘It is here that Wittgenstein’s rejection of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, is best pronounced. Instead of these symptoms of the philosopher’s “craving for generality”, he points to ‘family resemblance’ as the more suitable analogy for the means of connecting particular uses of the same word’ (Ibid). At this level, we should reject the possibility of reaching a universal and essentialist view. Such is my position on what concerns the complex ‘language-game’ surrounding the description of mental states that are presented as correlating with love. According to such an ‘essentialist’ view, in certain cases, it would be possible to reach an essence or core meaning of a word. Such a core meaning would be characterized by a universal application and also by being a reflection of the essence of ‘what is’.

On the other hand, I think we have here reasons to pursue an essentialist universalistic approach. In doing so, maybe we can draw on that other Wittgensteinian concept of ‘a form of life’. Together with Levinas, perhaps we can position ‘disinterest’ and love as important enough to be considered integral parts of a ‘human form of life’. As again noted by Biletzki and Matar (2005): ‘Grammar is not abstract, it is situated within the regular activity with which language-games are interwoven: “... the term ‘language-game’ is meant to bring into prominence that fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life” (PI 23)’. My claim here is that perhaps we are dealing with a prominent ‘form of life’ in this quest for the essence of ‘disinterest’. As again Biletzki and Matar remark there are here some possibilities for relativistic readings of Wittgenstein, since a certain ‘form of life’ can be seen as cultural and historical dependent. But the same authors underline that also in Wittgenstein: ‘... it is the form of life common to humankind, “the common behaviour of mankind” which is “the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language” (PI 206). This is clearly a universalistic turn, recognizing that the use of language is made possible by the human form of life’ (Ibid). This is the path of research that I will be pursuing here.

At first sight there is immediately an urgency of clarifying what I see as the huge and frantic invasion of the metaphorical discourse that includes the word ‘love’. At a first more immediate level, we can see the use of the word ‘love’ just being one of a short hand for ‘to like’. Consider the example when we for instance say ‘I love salmon’. Certainly I don’t love salmon, and certainly salmon would appreciate that I would not love it like that. What I’m here asserting by the word ‘love’ is that ‘I like very much to eat’, in this particular example, salmon. But there is a much more important metaphorical distortion here. If I’m right in picturing love as being preferably detected through an action and not a permanent mental state, what is it that I’m saying when I say ‘love of a son, friend, nature, etc’? What I think is entailed in those idiomatic expressions is that we are in an emotional state such that is possible or comes naturally. More correctly we could say, ‘state of readiness for love’. Such a state of readiness for love can be worded as ‘state of readiness for love towards a son, a partner, a friend, etc.’ This way of wording the above listed propositions, can also be put as ‘a state of readiness towards a son, partner, a friend

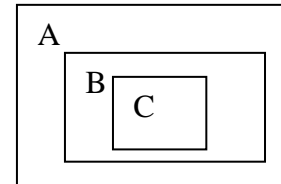
etc.’ If we think of an ‘action’ as the process of doing something towards the ‘other’, perhaps we can say that such state of readiness can easily translate in an ‘action’. Also due to enormous difficulties I am avoiding any exhaustive description of such state of readiness. Perhaps the best way to translate both the state of readiness and the action that may follow from it, is to designate them by ‘active love’. This is then the role of the expression ‘active love’ that I’m using extensively through the rest of the chapter. To be correctly worded, the items on the list would have to be presented as follows:

- A state of readiness for the active love towards X = caring for X + many other things.

Maybe the ever present metaphorical discourse misleads us in the investigation. The question that we are pursuing is not ‘what is the nature of the state of readiness that originates the active love?’ Such is the question that, misleadingly I say concerns ‘romantic descriptivism’. The question that concerns me here, instead, is the one that asks, ‘what is the essential nature of the action that is called love or through which love is manifested?’ The name ‘love’ is correctly applicable to the action and also to the state of mind that originates such action. My claim is that it is difficult and perhaps misleading to try to describe such a mental state. Being so, colloquial sayings like ‘being in love’, ‘staying in love’, ‘falling in love’, in themselves – or in their literal meaning – may have no more value than the more obvious and discredited ‘making love’. What is then the correct wording of these kinds of expressions? Being/staying/falling in love is to say, being/staying/falling, in a state of such dispositions that favour the occurrence, or bring the readiness, of the action called ‘love’. With others, it was mentioned previously that also Frankfurt (2004: 43) sees ‘... the *essential nature* [my emphasis] of love as a mode of *disinterested* [my emphasis] concern’. With the previous examples of the ‘rock climber’ and the ‘Japanese archer’, we tried to show how ‘alone-interest’, or ‘disinterestedness’, can play a fundamental role in a particular kind of action. In order to keep ourselves safe from the permanent trap of metaphorical discourse, I will try to use always, preferably, the expression ‘disinterest’ (‘active-love’) to designate this view of love. Such view includes the action itself and the state of mental readiness to perform such action.

I think that we can proceed more safely and conveniently with the research around the relevant question: ‘what is the essential nature of active love?’ Then the list of items depicted above must be rearranged as follows:

- (Caring + many things, for X) may originate active love =



Maybe it is interesting to depart from a certain conception of the essence of love, that I regard as convenient. With others (e.g. Frankfurt 1999; 2004) I see in the centre of the concept of love ‘disinterest’. Thus the essence of active love can start to be seen as the ‘action for its own sake directed to the good of its object’ (A). I see as entailed in the ‘action for its own sake’, ‘disinterest’ (B). With these elements, I think I can conclude that I’m not ready to provide an answer to my sceptic student. I cannot prove yet that in the ‘action for its own sake’ there is not disguised an inwardly ulterior motive that ultimately corrupts such action.

Therefore the central quest is for that something else (C) that will eventually allow me to attempt a response to my sceptic student. That search I see as coincident with the answer to the question ‘When is to give really to give?’

Now you can say: ‘Isn’t there at least the appearance of a contradiction here? Action directed towards some good is, apparently, instrumental – undertaken as means towards the end of the other person’s good. And that is not the same as action for its own sake.’ On the other hand there clearly is a contrast between action undertaken for the good of another and action undertaken for an ulterior reason of self-interest. This is a very important issue that I think deals with a misconception. The confusion is the one that sees the ‘action for its own sake’ as an action that can not serve any need outside of itself. As I heard someone say and I fully agree, ‘the action for its own sake’ it is not the action with any purpose. In a first move we can look again at the ‘Japanese archer’ that is fully concentrated with an ‘alone-interest’ in his action. This action has the purpose: that is to hit the aimed target. Now consider a second example of someone helping a sick mother. It seems that it is

reasonable to conceive here the possibility that this action is directed just for the sake of the good of the other. Nevertheless we have a purpose and a need being served. The mother being helped is in need of such help. But what kind of necessity do we have here? Where is it located? The intervenient, mother and son, can also here be seen as a giver and a receiver. Being so, necessity can be served in what the receiver is concerned. But in order to compare with 'the action for its own sake' of the Japanese archer, necessity cannot be present with the giver. Or we can say that the son has a unique need. The son must remain focused with the 'alone-interest' in the action for the good of the mother with 'disinterest' for anything else. Perhaps like the archer he is forgetful of himself. This issue will only be fully addressed by clarifying 'when is to give really to give?' For now, I wanted to establish the reasons why in my view, the 'action for its own sake directed to the good of its object' can be an action with instrumental purposes that can also serve necessity of that object or receiver.

Disinterestedness located here, was such as to originate a concentrated interest in the good of the thing itself or the interest just for the sake of the good of the object of interest. Let me underline this. Such interest is not in something vague in the object or some 'private interests' of the object of the active love; it is an interest always directed to the good and this good is meant for the object. Further on we can call this interest the 'alone interest', since it should not be accompanied by any other overriding interest. From this 'a-loneness' I say that the mind can be taken to be in a special 'effortless state'. The context in which these characteristics of the active love can take place is very important. There are two relevant aspects. First, 'disinterest' can occur entangled with the 'practical' aspects of our life. Second, 'disinterest' can therefore be frequent and arise in daily social practices. Such is in summary, the picture of active love to start with. But, there can not be any ulterior motive in 'action for its own sake'. To the 'action for its own sake' and the 'alone-interest' that entails, was always given an important place in philosophy of education. Perhaps it may be interesting now to look, briefly, into the meanings that 'action for its own sake' and 'disinterest' have been given in such philosophical and educational contexts, taking a few examples.

John White (1984: 197) writes that Peters' hallmark of education is the pursuit of truth 'for its own sake'. As he explains, the central aim of education for Peters is the pursuit of truth not for instrumental reasons. Elsewhere, White (1982: ch.2) specifies that intrinsic aims of education are those desirable for their own sake. According to such an 'intrinsic theory', for example knowledge or creativeness, as an aim of education could be justified on those grounds – that is for being considered an intrinsic good. White takes as examples, some views of Dewey and McIntyre. For Dewey, the education is those activities 'whose ends are not outside themselves'. An example of such activity is 'intellectual enquiry'. Apart from criticism of these views as theories of education, what concerns us here is a closer look at this 'action for its own sake'.

One problem is that we have to question what was Peters, Dewey's and McIntyre's ultimate concern when choosing knowledge, growth or intellectual enquiry, as the object of 'action for its own sake'? If we remain with the answer that the ultimate reason is because they are to be exercised as only 'for their own sake', we can put the following question: why not then select as intrinsic goals grass-blade-counting or push-pin, since they can be actions also carried out just for their own sake? But such actions don't seem to be reasonable as aims of education. Perhaps what those authors have in mind as a final end is not those items, but what they represent for the good of the person. Therefore what they have in mind, finally, is the good life. But maybe this is not the good life seen only as a life of intellectual activity or knowledge. That is not enough. What we can see brought into central focus is the way to achieve the good life. The way to do it is the most important, and that has to be done through the 'action for its own sake'.

In Peters the centrality of 'disinterest' or the 'disinterested pursuit of what is worthwhile' (Harris, 1998: 309), comes together with the pursuit 'for its own sake'. In his *Ethics and Education*, Peters (1966) focuses repeatedly on the issue by mentioning for example that: different disinterested pursuits foster 'moral sensitivity' (Ibid. 64); the capacity for the 'disinterested attitude' is presupposed in the capacity to deal with the central question of ethics (Ibid. 154); education needs both cognition and disinterested pursuit of what is worthwhile. Although, as we have seen before, Peters' main argument was for knowledge as a central aim of education, we can

enhance a second aspect. We must underline here disinterestedness, as a central focus of this philosophy of education. But should we give some different interpretation to this 'disinterestedness' from the one that I have been characterizing here? Consider another passage in Peters, where he makes a direct reference to the classification by Hume of moral emotions as 'disinterested passions' (Ibid 111).

Even if this 'disinterestedness' emphasised by Peters was in the area of impartiality, as for example in the case of a judge, that would be simply a particular case of disinterestedness as an essence of the 'action for its own sake'. I think that for a judge to be in disinterest in the sense of impartiality is just a particular case of this more general 'disinterestedness'. To be impartial the judge must maintain undisturbed an important alone-interest that resists to be overridden by the other many complex interests around a case together with his personal interests. The impartial judge must maintain a disinterest towards the contenders by keeping an alone-interest towards justice itself. In this sense it is the love of justice that makes an impartial judge in disinterest. Even if Peters was formulating things apparently in a slightly different way, I have reasons to believe that also here we have a broader issue that encompasses the English 'disinterest with no specific interest'. This can be seen in the study of mathematics just for its own sake and because it is worthwhile. Is it not this 'passion' in 'alone-interest' to study mathematics just 'for its own sake' the one required by the 'Japanese archer' or the judge? I think it is and I have enough argument to carry on with my view that sees this tradition of philosophy of education coming together with this broader Levinasian 'disinterest'

What I think we have here is something important for education. My question is: Is it possible to say that we can pursue with more passion or disinterestedness mathematics than carpentry, or poetry than gardening, or physics than masonry or, in general, the more 'intellectualized' activities than those which are more 'vocational'? What is it that we mean when we speak of liberal education? If we mean education to free the person from illusions, where can we make such distinctions? But there is here an important second consequence in the centrality of this disinterestedness. Such consequence is that the dominating trend of reward and punishment is hurting performance and economic output. I venture to say that at this historical moment, where a certain poor and shallow economics is so important in school systems

policies which correlate ‘interest’ with ‘performance’, such a second conclusion is of the highest importance for economics itself. As we know, currently, ‘interest’ in schools and the work-place is intensely stimulated through what I called the form of disorder of corruption, via the ever-present use of reward and punishment. We said above that the ‘alone-interest’ is the one that entails an ‘effortless mind’ or the mind operating in the minimum entropy. This is what I designated by a mind in true passion. As in the case of the ‘Japanese archer’, this is the mind that can apply the highest performance.

I look next at views on love by Harry Frankfurt. Harry Frankfurt (1999; 2004) seems to be an essentialist who is squarely looking at a conception of love with ‘disinterest’ in the center. He notes that though ‘strong feelings and beliefs’ may be involved, the ‘heart of love’ is not affective or cognitive, but volitional (Frankfurt, 1999: 129). The sense of Frankfurt in this initial quotation is that for him a big issue about love is its volitional nature. Afterwards it starts to assert that love is non-volitional (we don’t love what we want, it just comes to us or happens). This is so because love is not a choice. In his own words Frankfurt connects the main concepts in the following way: ‘In active love³⁷, the lover cares selflessly about his beloved. It is important to him for its own sake that the object of his love flourish; he is disinterestedly devoted to the other’s interests and ends. Now this is not the only essential constitutive feature of active love. Another of its defining characteristics is that the unconditional importance to the lover of what he loves is not a voluntary matter. The lover cannot help being selflessly devoted to his beloved. In this respect he is not free. On the contrary, he is in the very nature of the case *captivated* by his beloved and by his love’ (Ibid. 135).

Now in this relatively long quotation, I think we have the essential of the position of Frankfurt. Its virtues, and what I take to be the main vices that deserve to be criticized because as I see it, he drifts away, in the end, from a true essentialist position. In the first part of the quotation one can see the virtues of his view: First, he highlights that love is ‘active’, and therefore is an action – or the potential to originate an action - towards an object. Second, love entails selflessness because

³⁷ Frankfurt distinguishes here between ‘passive’ and ‘active’ love, depending or not of the involvement of self-interest.

‘We can keep our interests, as long as they are disinterested’. Third, in the center of the concept of love, he places the action for its own sake, and disinterest. Fourth, love is directed to the ‘flourishing’ of its object – therefore love is for the good of its object. Fifth, love is non-volitional. These are the areas where apparently there are no problems. Now let’s look at what I take to be the problems.

In order to proceed I think its better to consider an example which is also mentioned by Frankfurt (Ibid. 134). Consider the love of a parent for a son – child or teenager. Such problems can start even in the first part of the quotation, and then we have: Six, the lover is said to be ‘devoted to it’s [the beloved] interests and ends’. If before we could interpret Frankfurt as saying that the object of love is the good of the object, here seems to be a shift to the interests and ends of the beloved. Such shift I think is critical and the position needs to be clarified. Are we positing a conception of love (active love) that, in line with Plato and his philosophy of love in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, is solely directed to the good of the object? Or are we positing a conception of love that can be directed together with the good, also to something else? If I have the dispositions that originate the active love towards my son, I might not be directing such action necessarily in coincidence with what interested my son. In fact, parents often don’t do that. If a son tries to take drugs, parents that care about him simply attempt to redirect him to what they see as good, and help him to avoid those drugs. Seven, for Frankfurt the lover is not free. For him the non-volitional aspect of love because is out of the (conscious) willingness, entails un-freedom.

The practical aspects of the action can be appraised and willed. The most important aspects that originate the action like the freedom of the mind from opportunistic overriding interests and the resulting selflessness cannot. I think I can appraise and choose the best actions to keep a son away from drugs. I freely study alternative courses of action. What I cannot do by will, is to implant in myself the dispositions of having so strong a concern for my son as to override my interest in going to play golf or whatever else. Or, more importantly, override any concern for my future peace of mind and life convenience. I’m truly acting just for the sake of the good of my son. I’m not acting in any way for myself, and therefore I’m in a state of selflessness.

Finally let me look at how Frankfurt could help me to provide an answer for my sceptic student. How can I prove to him that it is not self-interest that in the end moves the world? I think that Frankfurt's position, for this purpose, can be conveniently revealed through the following passage: 'The appearance of conflict between pursuing one's own interest and being selflessly devoted to the interest of another is dispelled once we appreciate that what serves the self-interest of the lover is nothing other than his selflessness' (Ibid. 61). What Frankfurt seems to be saying here is that 'it is in our interest not to act in our interest'. But I can try to say to my student that this is just a way of wording things. Since selflessness is non-volitional and it is entailed by the active love in disinterest, it means that self-interest is removed. But I can hear him coming back to me to ask: 'how can you guarantee that there is such a thing as selflessness? Isn't that just another word for disinterestedness?' I don't think I yet have an answer for that. I propose to move on with the enquiry in the next section, by looking at some ideas in Simone Weil, Levinas and Derrida.

6.3 Education and 'When is to Give Really to Give'

I start by bringing out some views in Simone Weil. More particularly, the book that here I look into, is her *Gravity and Grace* (2004). The style of this work is both aphoristic and often close to the boundaries of a mystical discourse. In reality I think that it is far from that. I will try to decode what I take to be just some of the many valuable insights that it contains, in order to connect them with the wording and the ideas of the argument that I'm presenting here. As an example, in all that follows the word God stands for Good. From the introduction to the work by Gustave Thibon, the editor, I wish to underline a few general aspects of Weil's philosophy that seem to coincide with some basic views that I've been trying to support. This will form the background to better understand her other ideas, and the correspondences that I'm trying to establish. In the title of the book there is the general idea that gravity as 'the force which above all others draw us from God' can be counteracted only by 'grace'. These are two forces, which rule the world (Ibid. 1).

First Weil criticizes the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Sartre when she considers ‘absurd’ that the existence of ‘evil’ be taken as proof that the world is of a low value.. Explaining through the etymology of the word to exist – to be placed outside – that we may be outside of the Good in order to recognize it, Weil emphasizes an ‘absence’ or ‘void’ which is the ‘absence of God’ that is shown through God’s presence (Ibid.xx, xxi). To me, such ‘existence’ implies the ‘nobility of imperfection’ which is to be outside of ‘order’ that can be shown or have a manifestation through the absence of disorder or the ‘void of disorder’. Secondly the removal from the inner life of illusions like the one of the immortality of the self that is served by ‘consolation of religion’ or others is central for Weil (Ibid. xxi).

I have been referring to this as the unresolved fear of death that brings about what usually philosophy designates as ‘anxiety’. Such ‘anxiety’ is compensated by the aspiration to ‘podiums’ that serve the illusory longing for eternity through some sort of perfectionism. Thirdly, Weil clearly concentrates her attention, as I do, on the *via negativa* when she says: ‘There are people for whom everything is salutary here below which brings God nearer; for me it is everything that keeps him at distance’ (Ibid. xxxiv). Or in another passage it is said that vacuum is what grace needs to come to us (Ibid. xxiv). Fourthly, she specifically mentions the law and the concept of entropy at least with two purposes: one, to attack the idea of ‘indefinite perfection of humanity’ and to accommodate an idea of history contra the view of an ‘unlimited progress’ (Ibid. xxxvii); two, to illustrate and give an image of something that involves God and is so transcendental or supernatural, that it reaches the point of negating the law of entropy (Ibid. 10).

To the first use of entropy I have been supporting the idea that perfectionism entails an increase of disorder or entropy. On the second use of the concept entropy, we can see the active love as the vehicle to a general slowing down or even temporal nullification, of the entropic process. Fifth, more specifically on our central topic here, in Weil also love happens together with selflessness – in her wording love destroys the self – and love is the vehicle to the good. But the good being a ‘... nothingness, since there is no thing that is good’ is not unreal (Ibid. xxiii, 13). This I designated ‘absence of disorder’. Such is the background to look into some other insights of Simone Weil, as follows below.

Central to Simone Weil's view I see her relation of necessity and giving, that I relate with active love. Maybe it is interesting at this stage to try to situate more why my central question 'when is to give really to give?' is so important. Giving seems to be an important and frequent act in human life. We may say that we give life to future generations, we give love, we give gifts of all sorts, we give affection, and we give help and support. We also can say that we give a lesson, we give a talk, and we give to the poor (charity). Maybe in total distraction we give a handshake, we give a kiss, we give smiles, we give way to someone else by saying 'after you sir', and we give a nice stroke to an animal. It seems that there is a lot going on for human life, in this 'giving'. Such important aspects of 'giving' can be appreciated from different perspectives – including the economical and sociological – in a collection of papers that includes one by Derrida, edited by Schrift (1997) and with the interesting title: *The Logic of the Gift – Towards an Ethic of Generosity*. It seems then that this 'giving' may have a role in helping us to disclose important aspects of morality. Going back to Weil we can perceive also a great relevance in 'giving'. After asserting that 'Of the links between God and man love is the greatest' she refers: 'God gives himself to men either as powerful or as perfect – it is for them to choose.' (Weil 2004: 90, 91).

For Weil needing to receive a reward equivalent to what was given disturbs the necessary 'void or vacuum' required for the 'supernatural reward' to happen. This means that whatever is the dynamics of give-and-take in the relationship it has to be transcended. Such going beyond the give-and-take, happens in a state of disinterestedness. The Weilean 'void' I relate in two ways with the view I'm supporting. On the one hand there is the absence of disorder that may originate the active love. On the other hand, such action conveys absence of disorder through preserving the other, via disinterestedness. Such disinterestedness is also a 'void' or absence of opportunistic interests. But, very importantly, how is it that such a supernatural event comes about?

On this she writes: 'Man only escapes from the laws of the world in lightning flashes. Instants when everything stands still, instants of contemplation, of pure intuition, of mental void, of acceptance of the moral void. It is through such instants that he is capable of the supernatural' (Ibid . 10-1). These 'lightning flashes' are

not permanent states or continuants, but occurrences. Such occurrences are non-volitional since they bring about selflessness by 'pure intuition'. Finally, selflessness is implicated in the 'mental void' which is disinterest that is capable of the 'supernatural' or the transcendental of active love. Next Weil mentions what I think is one of the critical aspects of the active love, when she says: 'If we love God while thinking that he does not exist, he will manifest his existence' (Ibid. 15). Here is where I think we can truly identify an 'unsayable'. I don't see a definition of the good as an 'unsayable'. Though through a negative way or an absence, I have tried to give to the good a form and I believe that we can elaborate around such form or make it more convenient.

But where I see the 'unsayable' is here when the active love takes place originated in the good and carrying it towards an object. Then one can not 'say or think' about the good, because that thought in itself is an opportunistic interest. That is, we cannot think about it or mention it as the main motivation. If this is so, the active love is corrupted. The active love is towards the good, but the absence of such thought in total disinterest makes good to become present. It makes the active love to be truly for its own sake. That is just for the sake of the good of the object. In this sense, the presence of God is revealed by its absence. A transcendence or going beyond may take place and overcome even one of the most formidable natural laws - the law of entropy. It is also in this sense that in another apparent paradox, Weil says that the void is the supreme fullness but we cannot be aware or know it because then it would be no longer a void (Ibid. 23). In a very bare or naked example of the relation of life circumstances and the good, right next she mentions an example of a simple handshake between friends. Not noticing even any sensation of pleasure or pain in the touch, one just feels the presence of the real other out of a quiet mind within disinterest.

Weil declares also that God created by hiding himself, otherwise there would be nothing but him (Ibid. 38). This hiding of God I take it to be 'imperfection' that as the nobility of allowing us to be as the humans we are. But the subordination to God brings about an economy of energy (Ibid. 42). What I think we have here is the economy of energy brought by absent-disorder that slows the build up of entropy and favors active love. These are the minimum levels of disorder or entropy build up,

that I assigned to the effortless mind brought by the alone-interest. I move now to look at some brief views in Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, But before that, I would like to underline that on the central question ‘When is to give really to give?’, Weil brought what I see as some progress. This progress is in the relation of necessity and giving. The void or absence implied by disinterest in active love requires transcendence of all sorts of reward - inward rewards included – for active love to take place. But perhaps my student can come back to me and say that maybe in the world there is no such thing as an ultimate active love. How can I prove the contrary? With this, we have to move on.

In Levinas, I can read similar views to those of Simone Weil. He underlines that death for Bergson is entropy (Levinas, 2000: 68). Also he is explicit in saying that the transcendence of God cannot be said or thought (Levinas, 1998: 77). Such is the ‘unsayable’ that I identified above. But at the base of the philosophy of Levinas seems to be the concept of ‘disinterestedness’ that is recurrent in his writings. For example he can talk about disinterest as a ‘Desire without end, from beyond Being: *dis-interestedness*³⁸, transcendence – desire for the Good’. Further on he mentions that love can happen only through the idea of ‘infinite’. For Levinas time is primarily posited not as the finitude of being, as in Heidegger, but as the relation with ‘infinity’ that transcends time (Levinas, 2000: 19). Time and ‘infinity’ being opposites, are in the same movement. But ‘transcendence to the point of absence’ as disinterestedness to be possible as ‘Desire for the Infinite’, the ‘Desirable or God, must remain separated in the Desire’ (Levinas, 1998: 67-69). As in Weil, the good cannot be a corrupter of the action just for the sake of the object of that action. Being so, then the good happens and the movement of interestedness /disinterestedness goes beyond the being.

Also remarkable is that after Plato, Levinas seems to take the view that what is important in the relationship or social practice is what goes on the ‘the way to say or do’ or ‘the way that it is said or done’. He uses the words ‘Saying’ and ‘Said’ to denote what I have been designating by the “the way to say or do” and the ‘substance’ of the transaction, as follows: ‘As witnessing, Saying precedes every

³⁸ Due to its importance I transcribe the translator note on the etymology of disinterestedness: ‘[With this term Levinas underscores the etymological sense of “inter”, or among, and “esse”, or being. *Dis-interestedness* [dés-intéressement] or away from, out of, our engagement with beings. – Trans.]

Said. Before uttering a Said, the Saying is already a bearing witness of responsibility (and even the Saying of a Said is a bearing witness, insofar as the approach of the other is a responsibility for him). Saying is thus a way of signifying prior to any experience' (Ibid. 74). The Saying before the Said, I take to be the presentation of the Face, by itself a responsibility, which in Levinas (2003: Sec. III) *Totality and Infinity*, receives extensive attention. Somewhere else he says that perception plays a role in the presentation of the Face but what is specific to it cannot be reduced to that. If by need, in discourse, the Saying bears necessarily a Said, then 'the Saying is a way of greeting'.

Face and discourse are tied (Levinas 1985: 85-8). It seems that there is an inescapable final sincerity in the presentation of the face. Such sincerity is manifested through 'the way of doing or saying'. Then perhaps we can say that through active love in 'the way of doing or saying', transcendence may take place. The finite being is capable of reaching 'infinity'. Such is the paradoxical structure of the presence of infinite in a finite act, as he says. Very clearly and significantly he declares that he mistrusts the word 'love' (Ibid. 52). As we saw in Frankfurt, this movement goes beyond the possible as 'love is not reducible to knowledge mixed with affective elements', says Levinas (2003: 261). But out of love and with it, there is enjoyment as something that surpasses being. Such joy is better than *ataraxy*³⁹, and it is based on a felt 'emptiness' (Ibid. 144-5). Starting to narrow down into our fundamental problem that deals with the proof or demonstration that such transcendence happens, we may start to look with Levinas (2000: 223) to his following question: But how does it happen this transcendence of infinity, expressed by the word "Good"? His answer starts by pointing out that disinterestedness in the desirable (or God) – or desire of self-transcendence – must be separated but remaining within desire. It is different but near, which is the meaning of the word 'holy'. Such disposition directing us to '*the other person*' is what he calls 'love without eros'. Within this movement the 'goodness of the Good' is oriented toward the other, and only in that way toward the Good. The dispositions of desire compel me to 'goodness, better than the good to be received'. Any longing for

³⁹ *Ataraxy* or peace of mind. P.63 Honderich, T. (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

compensation is absent. Therefore Levinas concludes: 'To be good is a deficit ...' (Ibid.). Such 'deficit' is in my view, the absence of disorder.

Very interestingly, Levinas attempts to uncover a new first base, or primordial fundamental essence, to the human condition. This is the essence where everything else will be rooted. He proposes 'disinterestedness' to replace in this role the 'intentionality' of the *conatus*. What is the importance of such a movement? Well, succeeding in such an enterprise is to uproot the possibility of selfishness in that primordial ground. With such success we give substance to the response to my sceptic student. This is also the substance of the answer to Griffin's proposal that I mentioned above, by looking for the possibility of 'finding a place for morality inside the self' and relating that finding to personal well-being. What is the nature of Levinas's proposal? He questions if the source of all affectivity really is in the anxiety that the *conatus* perceives in death or nothingness. He looks as an example to Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*. The dialogue on Socrates' death, attempts to go beyond the anxiety of death through the 'discourse of knowledge and theory'. This would show, in death, Socrates' splendor of being. But affection is nevertheless present in Socrates and, even in excess, through the tears of Apollodorus. 'What is the meaning of these tears and affectivity?' asks Levinas. He proposes, contra Heidegger, that we question if the humanity of man is the having-to-be that produces the anxiety of death.

Then the primordial role of intentionality is questioned. The ontological meaning of affection being not in anxiety, we don't have 'to maintain that intentionality is the ultimate secret of the psyche' (Ibid. 18). Where then is the ultimate secret of the psyche, as posited by Levinas? He asserts that: 'Intentionality is not the secret of the human. The human *esse*, or existing, is not a *conatus* but disinterestedness and *adieu*⁴⁰' (Ibid. 15). Can we expand this idea and look further for ways of confirmation? Or simply look for further scaffolding? It is exactly this passage of Levinas that Derrida (1995: 47) in his *The Gift of Death* transcribes and points to, when thinking about going beyond the-give-and-take. Derrida's title of this chapter is enlightening: 'Beyond: Giving for the Taking, Teaching and

⁴⁰ 'Adieu' or the definitive 'farewell', as clarified by the translator.

Learning to Give, Death (Au-delà: donner à prendre, apprendre à donner – la mort)’. There is here a centrality that I want to underline immediately, which is in ‘to Give’.

Also in Levinas is mentioned ‘to give’ when we present the face to the Other and make ourselves responsible for him and available by saying ‘here I am’. More specifically, he mentions gratuity ‘as the absolute distraction of a game without trace or memory’ (Levinas, 2000: 179). What is here underlined is forgetfulness or absence of memory. In putting stress on the act of giving, in my view, Derrida deals directly with the question ‘When is to give really to give?’ Also in my view, he produces a correct answer to this question. An inadequate answer states: giving is when one does not want anything in return from those to whom we gave or anyone else. What is it then that Derrida brings into the picture? The important concept that Derrida brings in, is ‘forgetfulness’. He can for example, write: ‘An event gives the gift that transforms the Good into a Goodness that is forgetful of itself, into a love that renounces itself’ (Ibid. 40). And next he clarifies that this gift of goodness does not only forget about itself, but also its ‘source remains inaccessible to the donee’.

This last part we have seen before: that is the reference to the absence of good in order to be present. The new important thing is that the gift of goodness also has to obey a second condition or imperative. It is the imperative of forgetfulness. What Derrida is saying here is that, we give, really give, when we ‘forgot’ that we gave. And then maybe ‘infinite love’ takes place. The ‘calculation’ that is the permanent movement of comparison in the pure selfishness can therefore be by-passed. This is done within the ‘death’ of the self that allows the ‘responsible subject’ conscious of ‘myself’. Let me just quote Derrida once more to better clarify his view, when he says: ‘On what conditions does goodness exist beyond all calculation? On the condition that goodness forget itself, that the movement be a movement of the gift that renounces itself, hence a movement of infinite love’. The calculation entailed by comparison, which is the root operation of it, is here enhanced by Derrida together with forgetfulness. Is it possible for the ‘rational selfish’ to give with forgetfulness? How could he? How could he go beyond comparison and calculation?

It seems that we have reached a proper answer for my fundamental question. As a first formulation of that answer, I can put it as follows: we really give when in disinterest we definitely or permanently forget that we gave. But can’t we really

give something that in spite of remaining in our memory does so in a special way? A memory that remains there untouchable and completely inert? This inert state is in a sense that in spite of being a source of joy, it is also the impossibility or total final renunciation of claims. I believe this is the case. I believe that there is such possibility and that it happens often. In trying to give a better formulation to my fundamental answer, I see that also in Weil this is a preoccupation. A preoccupation with ‘forgetfulness’ is implicit. Interestingly she says: ‘Thus in love there is chastity or the lack of chastity according to whether the desire is or is not directed towards the future’ (Weil, 2004: 66). When is it then that love is ‘chaste’? Love is ‘chaste’ when the desire that carries goodness ends completely and for ever, with the action for its own sake. When there is no possibility whatsoever, of future claims. I will borrow the term ‘chaste’ from Simone Weil in order to give a final formulation to my answer.

In asking the question ‘When is to give really to give?’ I answer that: to give is really to give when in disinterest we chastely forget that we gave⁴¹. What is it that I need more to complete my answer to my sceptic student? I think that my task is facilitated now. Why? I think that, in accord with the fundamental answer, I just have to provide an example of giving that is within the conditions of the answer itself. In looking for such example I could think about of the relationship of parents and sons. Say, a mother breastfeeding a baby. Such is the option of some authors (e.g. Singer and Frankfurt) when mentioning a paradigm of a more simple case of love. And indeed I think that it is easy to accept as an imposing example that the action of most mothers breastfeeding their babies is done for its own sake, in disinterest and with chaste forgetfulness. But I prefer to give you another example. Why is that? It is not at all easy to prove that a mother is not feeding the baby in order to have someone to take care of her when she gets old. Another objection may be that the mother acts in such a way simply to feel herself good. Those would be the objections of my student.

I’m also committed to expose what I called the frantic huge metaphorical discourses or Wittgensteinian language games (Wittgenstein, 2000) that blind us from

⁴¹ For such remembrance to be chaste is, in paradox, forgetful of itself. Such memory remains inert in a way that definitely renounces any future claims.

the essence of love. Remember that my task is to expose the essential essence of active love. Or the more naked or bare form of love, that comes in Weilean flashes. The example of parental active love is enormously loaded with affections. Such affections may act as a thick curtain over the essence or the thing itself. In the example that I offer is not as simple as the Weilean handshake or the Levinasian 'after you sir' (Levinas, 1985: 89), but it is simple enough, I believe, to try to make the case to my student. The example is as follows. It has happened to me often, like most of us, to be visiting a new town and ask someone for directions. Very often I have found extremely helpful people who stop what they are doing and sometimes even walk with me a while and do their best to help me. Now the thing is, would the rational selfish person ever engage in such an action of help? The rational selfish person would 'compare' the alternatives, helping and not helping, and would 'calculate' necessarily that help is not an option for him.

He knows I'm a stranger in a big town and therefore he has no chance of meeting me again in the future, and hoping for some sort of reward. Therefore the rational selfish person would not waste his time with me. The rational selfish person doesn't even stop at my interpellation because he is a 'calculable man' and he has already done such calculations. What about the others? Do they use the action as an inward reward? But you see the interpellation is unexpected – a flash – that is responded to also in a flash. But are those who helped me not going to remember it? To collect the inward rewards afterwards? We all have to appeal to our own experience now. The action is so simple that it has happened to me already several times, and I believe to all of us, to be on the side of helping the tourist or the stranger in town. But can I remember all those times that I helped someone in giving directions? I definitely don't. I believe that such is the case of most people in such situations. I may be very busy, and immediately after I helped someone, get on with my affairs.

To make my case to my student I don't have to prove that all helpers in all those situations, (all) truly forgot the action. I just have to prove that some helpers truly forgot about some of those situations. And this I believe that maybe you can agree with me, is the case. Being so, such action can be taken to be performed for its own sake conveying goodness, in disinterest, and in 'chaste forgetfulness'. Therefore I

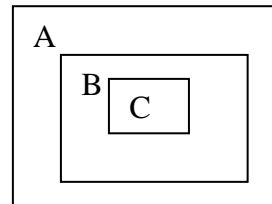
think that I can conclude that such action is an active love in its true essence⁴². As I said before, if this is a convincing answer to my sceptic student or in what extent it accomplishes that task, if any, it is up to you to judge.

Finally we can depict the encapsulated entities of what was decanted as the essential essence of active love, as follows:

A – Action for its own sake with goodness.

B – Disinterestedness.

C – Chaste Forgetfulness.



Let me conclude and refer again to the problem of the relation between the prudential and the moral aspects of personal well-being. It seems to me that with the above picture it is difficult or perhaps misleading to try to say that the moral is rooted in the prudential or vice versa. Maybe we can't make that sharp distinction. If absence of disorder may favour 'absence of interest' and if 'disinterest' is the 'secret' of what is to be a human, is something that it seems to me has to remain undecided. Undecided seems to remain also the role of the concept of entropy as a bridge between the natural and the ethical worlds. I hope nevertheless to have made some sort of modest contribution in arguing in favour of such a view. But if there is some sort of special action here, maybe, I suggest, this is the educational action that involved persistently those students, mentioned in chapter one, that were deeply 'touched' by certain teachers. In real life, perhaps even 'Mafia bosses' and 'rational egoists' – necessarily with some sort of socialization and family - wouldn't survive without this special action. As theoretical characters, they seem to be prone to a fast and less than prudential entropy or disorder build up. But to show this clearly to them is something that I don't believe I am able to do.

⁴² Let me just expose, by way of contrast, the colloquial metaphorical discourse on love and its dominance. Colloquially, of course, it sounds ridiculous to say something like: 'I was just now loved by someone that gave me directions in the street'. Conversely, it would sound very strange for a husband or wife to say to the partner: 'I don't love you darling, but I have the correct or complex affections or dispositions that favour immensely the possibility for me to engage in actions-love, having you as an object'. Nevertheless we can say of the first: 'what a lovely person!' As we can say of the second: 'he/she is more than a lover to me, he/she is a true friend'.

In order to expand and better illustrate the views on ‘disinterestedness’, we move now to the final section. Trying to take advantage again of Rortyan variations of discourse, I look particularly into some aspects of analytic psychology, of Wittgensteinian inspiration, and psychoanalysis.

6.4 ‘Disinterest’ in action

Let me open this section by stressing that we should have always present in our mind that any attempt of describing ‘disinterest’ in action will look poor compared with the enormous importance of what may really be going on here. Please be aware that, as Wittgenstein so well put it: ‘The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one’s eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless *that* fact has at sometime struck him. – And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful’ (PI 129).

I intend to keep supporting and stressing the idea that what social practices need are good persons and not ‘perfect’, or ‘brilliant’, or ‘talented’ persons. Good persons and their ‘nobility of imperfection’ are the central concern of education. There is an important fallacy and illusion in perfectionist Social-Darwinism. It consists in striving at any cost, by comparison and competition, to single out and develop the gifted ones. This process itself may cause distress and therefore poorer results. I have argued that in this process the means are the ends. Development of better performances comes with true alone-interest that is in the movement of the effortless mind. This is the passionate mind. Comparison and competition is within a movement of multi-opportunistic interests. These can only bring useless effort of unnecessary expending of energy and building up of disorder or entropy. What best serves giftedness of all kinds, is a concern for education towards the good person.

Such good persons live in some way in most of us – common people - that exist in the anonymity of daily life and are the ones that make life bearable through unnoticed ‘disinterestedness’. I present some examples of ‘disinterest’ in action

trying to show how it can happen. 'Disinterest' occurs also enshrined in practical daily life and experiences. It is common and occurs entangled with other attitudes. The illumination of 'disinterest' can also be attempted by looking at the action in absence of love, or the unlovely-action. But for a start let's look to some interesting views of analytic or discursive social psychology of Wittgensteinian inspiration, about such trivial unnoticed daily life. Discursive psychology aims at the knowledge of psychological states through the analysis of discourse.

Michael Billig (1997) explores possible connections between psychoanalytic theory and discursive psychology. Billig argues that the notions of 'dialogic unconscious' and 'repression' in the latter, can help to enhance the understanding not only of the 'presences' but also the 'absences' in discourse, that is the analytic object of the former. What is here designated by 'dialogic unconscious' are the utterances that due to repression remain 'absent' from discourse, but could as well be present (Ibid. 141). What I'm interested in here is that analytical psychology focuses the attention on common everyday life utterances and their 'intricate structure'. In doing this, it points out the interesting fact that in a conversation there is 'preference for agreement' that facilitates corresponding expressions of agreement. By default, there are fewer dispositions towards and correspondent expressions of outright disagreement. In general, the collaborative, friendly, mode of discourse is here referred to as 'politeness'.

Such 'politeness' is framed as follows: 'Politeness formulations are universal and pervasive in everyday intercourse largely conventionalised and often benign. The preferred response is reciprocal politeness' (Ibid. 147). Billig warns us that what we are dealing with is not mere 'codes of etiquette'. In the root, he says, 'the codes of conversation and politeness are codes of morality' (Ibid.). The way I see it, is that 'etiquette' is the poor part of the form of a transaction or conversation that concerns the style. Looking for what goes on the important 'the way to do or say' is what this discursive analysis attempts. But the important thing is the way that it tries to reach the goal. It considers the 'micro-processes' of daily life. The detailed look goes even to pauses and inflexions that may be of moral relevance. The focus is not the morality of great standards of ethics, but the practical morality of daily routine. In opposition to 'politeness' we find 'rudeness', or immoral conversation.

Through ‘a thousand’ conversational devices, says Billig, we can show moral politeness, and repress moral rudeness from conscious awareness (Ibid. 151). In conclusion, Billig sees the concept of dialogical unconscious as offering new possibilities to discursive psychology. Such a conceptual framework allows for a view of ordinary conversations as having a greater psychological charge, than they usually do (Ibid. 156). From this very brief overview, I will stress a few points: ordinary conversation shows a preference for ‘politeness’; ‘politeness’ and ‘rudeness’, are codes of morality. Such ordinary conversation has an intricate structure with ‘thousands’ of conversational devices absences in the conversation are seen as important, and analysed as such; it focuses on the micro-processes of daily life.

This brief overview gives another point of view to appreciate situations that are in themselves very simple. But being simple, such situations are not less important. Already mentioned was the Weilian handshake. A second example of simplicity in daily conversation is the one offered by Levinas. Admitting that the encounter with the Other can involve violence, hate and disdain, he claims nevertheless that there is something more basic. That is something that is presupposed in all human relationships. That is the responsibility and subjection to the Other. As for example when approaching an open door, we say ‘After you sir!’ If there was not a primordial or basic ground of disinterestedness, how could we say an original ‘After you sir!’?, asks Levinas (1985: 89). This responsibility, he points out, is without measure, like a debt one could never discharge because one is never paid up (Levinas 2000: 138). It seems then, that we have here a situation in disinterestedness that goes beyond the accountancy of give-and-take. Something we gave but is always forgotten or in chaste forgetfulness. This is perhaps a simple but maybe powerful manifestation of active love.

We can say that is something that can come in a Weilian flash. Can this be mere hollow etiquette? Sometimes it might. The important aspect is what goes on the inescapable sincerity of the ‘way to do or say’. But discursive psychology and Levinas, warn us that it might be something much more important than etiquette. It may contain in its simplicity the basic structure of what in fact might be very important for sustaining life. If we look now at the economic market as another

example, what is the final common ground? We can say that the economic market has a common ground which is profit. Profit gives it its ultimate meaning. But it is economic meaning. Is there not necessarily another primordial common ground? Since the market is made after all of human relationships it would be impossible not to find there 'politeness'. One may concede that sometimes there is a deficit of such 'politeness'. The balance may be in favour of 'rudeness'. But then that's when we start hearing the usual complaints of stress and deep discomfort for those that participate in certain areas of work that are characterized by such social practices. That's when we start hearing expressions like 'the rat race' and other things that go in 'the jungle out there'. In such a 'jungle' the build up of disorder or entropy maybe gets accelerated, sometimes putting lives in danger. The problem perhaps is that we are not human beings at home and inhuman beings at work. We simply are what we are all the time.

Predominance of 'rudeness' I see as predominance of opportunistic interests. Or we can say, if you wish, too much absence of actions in alone-interest. And this is to say an absence of 'disinterest'. Let me nevertheless point out that in some quarters of management this as already been understood. Intelligent management has also been responsible for many great successes in the comfort of our daily lives. It has understood correctly that the ethical environment in corporate relationships is crucial. Crucial for the well-being of everyone involved: clients, employees, suppliers, management, official entities and so on. It seems that the quality of such an ethical environment affects performances positively, and so the possibility of better profits too. It seems also that we are far from understanding this in schooling systems.

Looking for other examples I focus first, not on active love but on un-lovely actions, by way of contrast. I don't intend to describe the cases fully. They are too complex, to aim at that. What is relevant is what goes in the 'the way to do or say'. When governments introduce legislation to protect children and youngsters, from adult violence we can see in the press a typical debate. For some the actions are clear and there is a case for protective laws, even against parents. For others, things are more complicated. Sometimes a mere glimpse of the eyes can convey a lot of hate. In some others, a mere, candid, soft slap in the face can be an action in

‘disinterest’. We know it is like this. There is not a general rule and complexities may be present in each case. So it is clear that the following examples deal with real presence of forms of disorder in ‘the way to do or say’.

Let’s look at a first situation. Maybe it is not uncommon that sometimes parents act in a way that they show to their sons, that they are making, or they made in the past, sacrifices for them. This can come in direct declarations or many ‘thousands’ of indirect signs. Affirmations like, ‘we worked a lot to keep you studying so time will come for you to give to us in return’. Or, ‘we are making, or made, a lot of sacrifices for you that affected our lives’, etc. Note that exactly the same words can mean affection – and frequently they are used in that way – so what counts is the inescapable sincerity of the ‘the way to do or say’. Such ‘rudeness’ can be repetitive and become highly violent. It can disrupt the inner self. In Weillian terms, it can destroy the self from the exterior. Why is this? Why are these parents so unlovely? What it seems is that they are assuming is that they ‘gave’ but they have not ‘forgotten’ that they gave. Now they are collecting whatever they gave. Sometimes they do this endlessly. They are not really interested in repayment but in creating dependence. Sons and daughters were born in a family that they didn’t choose. Also at younger ages, they were not consulted or had no other choices. What it seems that must result out of this is impotence to repair the relationship. Out of such impotence, what may come is a deep anxiety.

In a second example I’m thinking about the adoption of children. What would be my saying to those that are candidates for adopting a child? I would say that the name of the game is asymmetry. It is just giving. No receiving whatsoever. It can’t be simulated. If it is really giving, then maybe something else will happen. Sometimes adoptions are even done – among other things in the bag of intentions - for the sake of showing a sort of social responsibility. Collecting the correspondent ‘respect’ may be the goal. This may turn out to be a very un-lovely action. It can be a violent ‘rudeness’ to the Other.

Let me try to expand now the example that I used in the above section, of giving directions, with a real case. I once took a bus to go to the Vortex Jazz Club in North London. I’m aware that bus drivers work long hours and come into touch with too many people everyday. Some of those people are more, and some are less friendly.

So I avoid giving them extra work, by asking for directions. But this time I was in a hurry, and I did it. The lady driver returned immediately a ‘certainly Sir!’ The interesting thing is that I positioned myself in the corridor, in a way that she could see my face through the mirror and vice-versa. We keep in mind what is the importance of the ‘presentation of the face’ and the responsibility for the other. Let me quickly try to show the importance of eye contact. When we cross a pedestrian strip on a road and a car approaches, what is the main security measure? I would say that apart from the fact of checking that the car is slowing down, it is eye contact with the driver. He may very slightly nod the head. But it is common that they don’t even do that. The message through eye contact is one of security. Not having eye contact would mean the opposite.

Now, inside the bus, at each bus stop, the driver would simply make a gentle eye contact with me. This was done with people going in and out and in parallel with her usual work of checking tickets and so on. What was the message(s) in such eye contact? The multiple messages were at least: ‘I haven’t forgotten about you’; ‘I don’t abdicate from my responsibility for you’; ‘I’m preserving your well-being from disorder, don’t get anxious’; ‘I will give you a particular sign when appropriate’; ‘this is not yet the right stop’. This is indeed a very trivial event in our daily life. But any of my attempts at describing it, even if in a more detailed way, will make it seem very poor. What was going on there was much more than I could put it in a few words. When I got out of the bus, I said to myself: ‘What a lovely person’.

‘Lovely persons’ were certainly those teachers that deeply moved some ex-students that I came across. These are the ex-students that I mentioned previously, that confessed having had their lives deeply touched by one of their teachers. What was then so important in those long contact hours in the classroom? What was going on there was a certain ‘politeness’ so transcendental that in spite of assessments and all the rest, it went beyond all that. What I think was going in these classrooms was a repetitive exposure of those students to the ‘disinterested’ action. That is, the action for its own sake, encapsulating disinterest and chaste forgetfulness. Maybe we can say that these students were involved in a sort of ethical environment dominated by the educational action.

It is interesting to show that 'disinterest' is present in everyone since it is 'what it is to be human'. Therefore, can a Mafia-boss be capable of engaging in 'disinterest'? Take for example our not uncommon experience as movie-goers that we end up by sympathising with the bad guys. Some of those movies even have as a central character (the hero), a bad guy. The question is how is it that directors and screenplay writers do the trick? How is it that Hollywood goes into our inside and turns it upside-down? Consider for example the saga of Bonnie & Clyde, as bank robbers. Aren't they lovely? What a charming couple. We don't even notice the many bank employees, about whose personal lives nothing is said, that are shot violently in those robberies. They just seem unnoticed collateral damage.

I think that the trick can be done, essentially, in two movements. First, and this is not the most important indispensable one, can be a focus on the character's past life. What an unhappy childhood and youth, and so on. Therefore, the bad actions aren't entirely their fault. But most of all, the powerful move is that they depict the character engaging in 'disinterest'. Isn't it touching the Mafia-boss returning home and being sincerely worried about his daughter who has cancer? Here, he can be seen giving endlessly in forgetfulness. One can see him simply caressing the daughter. Or, very powerfully, one can see him talking, privately and in secrecy, to the doctor and offering himself as a donor of an organ for transplant. How could we movie goers, as the Same recognizing the Other, escape from being deeply touched by these moving actions? It is here that we maybe feel our skin hotter, and eventually at a subconscious level we realize to ourselves, 'Ah! After all he is also only human'. Without such poignant scenes, only looking at the bad side we would keep our classification of such a person as 'inhuman', wouldn't we? But somehow we have changed haven't we? Can anyone think of a more powerful way of doing this trick?

As a final example, let me introduce you to a short story that maybe can give a (pale) vision of persistent selflessness in action. Let's keep in mind that the complexities of human relations are non-synthesizable (Levinas, 1985: 77). When discussing with a friend about team work and cooperation, he told me that the issue was simple to him. 'It doesn't need much theory' - he said. It just needs sincerity and 'low-profile', as he put it. He told me that when he was project manager in a

certain construction job, they held the usual weekly meetings to coordinate and monitor the job. Among other activities a big excavation was taking place, and this was planned to go on for about a year. In one meeting he turned to the field foremen and made a proposal for a new way of making the excavation: ‘would you like to consider the possibility of testing this other way of having accesses for trucks and dumpers?’ In the next meeting he came back to the subject – ‘what about that idea of new accesses for the excavation site? Is there anything new?’ A foreman replied that they had been very busy but he thought of a few adaptations to the original proposal, and maybe they would have some time for testing next week. The next week, the project manager, among many other problems, asked again: ‘Any tests on that idea of yours on the accesses for the excavation?’ etc. When the chief executive officer and the production manager met with the team on the site, my friend pointed out the good new ideas for the excavation that the team and especially the foremen, had. You see, he told-me, ‘cooperation and team work is just simple sincere low-profile’. Maybe we can point out here that perhaps such ideas originally ‘given’ by the project manager were really a ‘gift’.

To close this section I add some more brief considerations on Iris Murdoch’s contrast of the ‘Socratic examined life’ with the life of a peasant. What we seem to have here is the expression of a fundamental confrontation about the view of what it is to be human. What goes in the root or primary ground of the human condition? What moves the world? I take it that it is especially important in education for us to be clear about these views. Murdoch (2001: 2) notes that, against the usual connection between consciousness and virtue, it should be possible to do justice also to the unexamined life of the peasant. Concerned in this essay with the relation of freedom and love, Murdoch underlines that these are found in the triviality of our daily life, when she writes that the exercise of freedom and the continuous moral life: ‘... is a small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded and important moments (Ibid. 36). Finally she also points out that, in relation to Plato’s simile of the cave, the virtuous peasant got out of the cave without noticing the fire.

Therefore ‘ordinary people’ as well as experts, must be able to do some sort of contemplation of the good (Ibid. 98-9). Down-playing of knowledge and

consciousness, is what is here assumed. Levinas holds the central view on human nature that I have been trying to support. For him, at the base of human nature lies 'the secret' of disinterestedness. This is something beyond knowledge. It's 'thinking more thoughtful than knowing' (Levinas, 2000: 142). For Levinas, disinterestedness is previous to everything that has been put into conscious through consciousness (Ibid. 173). Responsibility for the 'Other' is not knowledge. Responsibility does not have cognitive character. (Ibid. 186). As noted by the editor of this work of Levinas, here he departs from the Western Greek tradition (Ibid. 267). What is his concern is the investigation of this 'passivity' or disinterestedness that transcends intentionality and knowledge. These remarks on knowledge bring us back to Paul Hirst and his theory of education through social practices. For Hirst, to be a human is mainly to be in relationship. As for theoretical knowledge and academic disciplines, these are seen as of only indirect significance for the good life (Hirst, 1999a: 127-131). And these, I think, are the relevant conclusions for education and schooling systems. Maybe we have come across a possible real educational action, the one that goes many times undetected in social practices – the action in 'disinterest'.

Other examples of 'disinterestedness' could be worked out. Some more simple and others more sophisticated. Plato (1997: 470) through the speech of Pausanias in the Symposium, emphasizes that love is not only the attraction towards 'human beauty'. For him love is so important that it is posited as some sort of a vital and universal force in animals, plants and the natural world. Love is everywhere in the universe, he mentions. But, as said, the descriptions of actions in 'disinterest' are always poor. Also as mentioned by Levinas (1985: 91) there is a disproportion between the act and what comes out of it. But out of these, I think that maybe we can put into question that a 'pure rational selfish person' or 'free rider' would be able to survive or help others to do it. Without 'disinterestedness', it seems that life would be unbearable. Just think about how many strokes and smiles there were that in forgetfulness were given to us when we were babies. Or, the many smiles we have given in forgetfulness, not only to babies. Can you remember the simple smiles you have given during your life? What about last week? Is it possible that such smiles weren't really given? What is it that goes on here in the inescapable sincerity of the 'the way to do or say'?

I suggest, finally, that this action in ‘disinterest’ is maybe a very important educational action. If this Levinasian ‘disinterest’ is the secret of what it is to be a human, I also suggest that the way to protect it and to enhance it is to remove or mitigate the many ways of operation of the forms of disorder. Maybe then the gap between prudent ‘self-interest’ and moral ‘disinterest’ can be bridged. Maybe we can go beyond the desire satisfaction model of well-being represented in ‘self-interest’. How could we say that it is in our ‘interest’ that we act in ‘disinterest’? In Levinas, the quest was not for some sort of intellectual construction. The quest was for ‘what is’. But to prove such ‘reality’ it has to remain, I think, opened to question.

It’s time to come to a closure and draw some conclusions to this work. This is accompanied by a short annex containing a summary of some recommendations for the school system. Such are the recommendations that I see, in the light of my view of well-being as absent disorder. Also here included are some brief suggestions on empirical research and teacher training, motivated by such recommendations.

Conclusion

I have inquired into a notion of well-being of the person, in the *via negativa*, based on the concept of absence of disorder. This concept of absence of disorder was posited as the central aim of education, and was supported in a list of forms of disorder with the following items: *Comparison* in itself and as competition, envy, jealousy, vanity, prestige, inferior and superior relationships (winner and loser, successful and unsuccessful), comparing physical and intellectual capacities; *Corruption* of intention and material; *Dependency* of, substances, persons, objects, organizations and traditions; *Division* by ‘race’, nationalities, regional ties, languages, professions, social class, religions, gender, sexual orientation and ethnic tribalism, able and disabled persons, old and young persons; *Fear* of death, violence, the unknown, comparison, authority, public opinion, failure, humiliation, shame etc.; *Self-disintegration* of mind and body through lack of health, food, shelter and clothing; *Violence* by indifference, domination, power, exploitation, greed, anger, punishment, humiliation, shame, blackmail, vindictiveness and physical aggression. In parallel with this fundamental enquiry, a second one was carried out on what is to be seen as at the root of human beings. The idea was to picture and test the harmony or coherence of well-being as absence of disorder, with the most basic nature of the self. From such matching, we can evaluate or draw conclusions about the possibility of success in the educational process implied by these views.

On the problem of integration of well-being and morality, I addressed the question ‘Is to live well necessarily to be a good person?’ This is to address the

tensions between prudential and moral values, or self-interest and public interest. I agree with the view that the discussion of personal well-being does not require any framework exterior to the one that is constituted by the problems of human beings as such. In trying to picture absence of disorder as a view of well-being, I compared it with hedonistic, desire-satisfaction and objective list theories. I argued that happiness is not adequate as a conception of well-being. I also argued for the importance of 'imperfection' in living a life in well-being. I saw 'imperfection' as noble and a part of well-being on the following grounds: 'imperfection' is what allows us to recognize non-error; it belongs to what is to be a human; it frees us from perfectionism; it rescues us from guilt; errors can be building blocks for learning; disclosure of mistakes to the other is affirming and sharing a common dependent human condition; it is the unavoidable human entropy.

I pictured well-being as absence of disorder as a formal theory circumstantially supported by a non-exhaustive list of items. The form of this view is given by the concept of absence of disorder, structured through a list of forms of disorder. I also saw this view of well-being as subjectivist embracing the agent's sovereignty claim. Such a view gives each person the final decision about what is good for her. On the integration of well-being and morality, I asserted that absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection may be initially rooted in informed desire satisfaction via the concept of entropy. The informed desire of an agent is that it aims at a low build up of entropy or disorder. But entropy seems to remain a concept that we push into the ethical world, with important limitations when pressed to help in the final reconciliation of the prudent and the moral. This is due to the fact that the ethical world seems to be much more complex than the natural world. Out of these difficulties the research developed in the directions of the concepts of 'disinterest' and love. This second move followed a remark by James Griffin: we should look for a place in the self for morality in order to show that morality is not alien to self-interest. Also absence of disorder as a 'way to do or say' in conducting social practices, is a sparing or preservation of the other. Finally I stressed what seems to be the fact that absence of disorder as a negative virtue is one that makes no show. Therefore absence of disorder is not configured - as perfectionism is - to praising or punishment.

On the description of the forms of disorder, I started by stressing that such forms of disorder are a power in many ways exerted from us to others, from others to us and from us upon ourselves. Such power is socially constructed, namely by going through the compulsory schooling system, for many years and in a very critical period of our lives. Thus, we hardly imagine ourselves or our sons in a schooling system without grading or compulsory attendance in classes, for example. I looked at comparison as the root operation of perfectionism and social-Darwinism. I asserted that comparison through psychological superiority (inflated egos) is a manifestation of psychological inferiority. The opposite of these manifestations of inferiority is a self-confidence which dispenses with comparison. Such comparison evolves and strives permanently around an asymptotic movement towards quasi-inhuman standards. Corruption as dislocation of the right motive can operate unnoticed and ingrained in our daily lives. Reward and punishment as corrupters, are intensely used in schools and society at large.

Dependency was seen in a context of the double human condition of independent practical reasoners and dependent animals. Irrational psychological attachments to substances, persons, objects, organizations and traditions, can be a cause of suffering and unethical disturbances. Division with its many forms is correlated with dependency through the pattern of psychological attachment and affiliation. I argued that the root of such division is a particular heteronymous state of insecurity. The feeling of insecurity, or incapacity for autonomous a-lone-ness, drives us into a special kind of dangerous participation in groups. It is a participation characterized by psychological irrational attachment. Out of this irrational attachment, division – ‘us’ and ‘them’ – is created. Out of such division an antagonism is created that brings in the possibility of confrontation. As a result, heteronomy creates the end result that it was seeking to avoid. Autonomy deriving from ‘absence of disorder’ was seen mainly at an intrinsic psychological level. Therefore autonomy is what can overcome the fear that we called insecurity. Autonomy then, is what I saw as the means to overcome the important form of disorder that is division.

Courage is the virtue that deals with disorder caused by fear. But courage is seen here as natural, not forced, enabling dispositions that are built up through habit via the educational process. Self-disintegration of mind and body, I related to

formation of a good psychology which is the centre of education. I said that this type of education needs to be in harmony with our earthly human condition. A human condition that is not in harmony seeks refuge from the inevitability of final death. The human condition reflected by absence of disorder is a condition that rejects the illusions of longing for eternity through perfectionism. Also it rejects the striving for quasi-inhumane standards, which cause psychological self-disintegration. Finally about violence as a form of disorder, in a way, we can affirm that all the other forms of disorder can assume forms of violence. Nevertheless, I think it is worthwhile to underline those forms of oppression and domination that can take place in classrooms and in the family. These can be seen through the many fears related to schools.

In attempting to characterize an education aiming at absence of disorder, I dealt with the question ‘What are education and the educated person?’ My answer was in line with the one given by the liberal tradition of philosophy of education. Education is the process of learning how to live the good life. The desirable outcome of such a process is an ethical autonomous person. As a view of the good life or personal well-being, I suggested the concept of ‘absence of disorder’ supported by a list of seven main forms of disorder. I also underlined the distinction between instrumental knowledge and character formation. Education is then the learning process that aims at well-being as absence of disorder. Such learning process should be carried on by removing, avoiding or mitigating the forms of disorder, by focusing on ‘the way we say or do’ things through social practices. The goal is to preserve the possibility for the ‘action for its own sake’ to take place. This non-volitional ‘disinterested’ action can aim at the good of the person herself, the ‘other’, or an exterior object. By aiming at the good, such action can be seen as active love. This action is expected to be in harmony with what more deeply lies in the human self - disinterestedness. It is then in the interest of the person (self-interest) to live a life that respects and preserves the most important part of his or her self. By being not alien to self-interest, morality is posited as making part of prudential well-being. Transcendence of the self – selflessness, in disinterest and chaste forgetfulness – can then take place. Selflessness is the vehicle that transcends the paradox that is to say that the person is self-interested in disinterest. Finally, perhaps we can state that education aiming at absence of disorder is the process of learning to live the good life

through active love. The desirable result is the educated person or the autonomous ethical person.

Conducting transactions, relationships, interactions, social practices, in absence of disorder is taken therefore as the educational vehicle to create the habit in the learner of conducting himself and enjoying also a state of absence of disorder. I recognized also that ‘imperfection’ – insufficiency, mistake, uncertainty, incompleteness, illusion, doubt, – is inescapable and a noble part of what it is to be a human. Thus the aim of education is absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection. I analysed the content of a social practice in substance and form. The substantive part is constituted by what is said or done. This substance of the social practice is the concern of the narrow process of instruction or information transmission. The formal part of the social practice, is concerned with ‘the way to do or say’. On the other hand, ‘the way to do or say’ is concerned with the presence or absence of the forms of disorder. This inescapable sincerity of what goes into ‘the way to do or say’ is what I take to be at the centre of the educational process.

Finally, a second move was made in an effort to look for a possible harmonization and integration of the prudential aspects of well-being and morality. Central to this quest were the concepts of ‘action for its own sake’ and disinterest. Intrinsic autonomy was seen as more important than extrinsic autonomy. I have researched the existence of a possible important educational action. Through this research process I have dealt with the question ‘When is to give really to give?’ In this analysis, I devised two sides designated by ‘essentialism’ and ‘romantic descriptivism’. I argued that descriptivism is misleading in trying to explain love through description of the many complex emotions and inner dispositions that maybe related to it. I argued in favour of an essentialist approach that seeks to identify the central structure or the essence of ‘the action for its own sake’. I looked for the essential essence of such special action. That is to say, I looked for what is necessary and at the same time sufficient, for ‘the action for its own sake’ to take place. In doing so, I argued that such action is non-volitional. I also saw the attitude/action in ‘disinterest’ as the vehicle for the good.

In particular ‘disinterestedness’ conveys goodness exclusively for the sake of the good of the object of such action. The experience of an uncorrupted single interest –

resulting from disinterest in everything else –can bring about an effortless state of mind. This is a mind free from opportunistic interests, the intrinsically autonomous mind. Opportunistic interests were seen as increasing the rate of entropy build up. They block passion that may stem from the active love that instantaneously, eventually, nullifies disorder or entropy. This is passion that incidentally favours the best economic, cultural and intellectual output. I'm claiming that with a predominantly disinterested action/attitude, there are fewer possible conflicts of interests. This state of affairs would entail less effort or stress, and consequently less entropy build-up. Also I argued that 'disinterest' equates with selflessness, and is not something rare but it happens daily in a trivial unnoticed way.

Selflessness and 'disinterestedness' happen to us commoners and not only to some special monks or springing from any sort of meditative techniques. Further on I asserted that the good or the good life can be approached by words and thought. Where I identified an 'unsayable' and non-thinkable was in the way – 'the way to do or say' - 'disinterest' is carried out. In 'the action for its own sake' carried just for the sake of an object and aiming at its good, we cannot say or think that it is for the sake of good. If doing so, we corrupt the action because it ceases to be just for the sake of the object. Such 'disinterest' may come in flashes, and then the good may become present. I answered the fundamental question 'When is to give really to give?' by saying that to give is really to give when in disinterest we chastely forget that we gave. Finally I identified as the essential essence of 'the action for its own sake' towards an object and aiming at its good, disinterest and chaste forgetfulness.

I said above that one of the main preoccupations in carrying out this whole enquiry was to look for a natural harmony between education aiming at well-being as absence of disorder and what it is to be a human being. The intention was clearly to exclude any construction of idealizations. The quest was for the reality of things – what is 'what is'. It is this very same basic idea that I see in Levinas attempting to disclose ethics and not to engage in some sort of constructed ethics. The effort rather is in trying to uncover how things are and what is stopping or damaging them from being as they are. Such effort is rooted in a respect for reality. But in many ways we know that such reality is concealed through illusions and all sorts of preconceptions. The ancient Greeks recognized slavery as disgrace at a personal

level, but they couldn't imagine a world without it (Williams, 1993: 112 - 117). Slavery was seen as an unavoidable necessity.

Also in our days we have situations similar to that Greek view on slavery (Ibid 125). These are situations, as Bernard Williams shows, in which there are also in contemporary societies '... arbitrary brutal ways in which people are handled by society, ways that are conditioned, often, by no more than exposure to luck' (Ibid). I tried to make a case that in our societies the schooling system, the perfectionist drive of families and the state that surrounds it, is one of such arbitrary and brutal systems rooted in such an exposure to luck. This is an arbitrary brutal system that is based on no more than the natural mechanical talent that is due to such luck. It is an arbitrary brutal system; we seem unable to imagine a world without it. But if the ancient Greeks were at a stage that recognized slavery as an unavoidable disgrace, apparently we are some steps backwards. We seem not to be yet at the stage of recognizing the disgrace, which is the first step to start to look for the necessary remedy.

Is well-being as absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection, in harmony or disharmony with the most basic way of what it is to be a human being? With Emmanuel Levinas I saw that what is at the base of human condition is 'disinterest'. The source of all affectivity is not the having to be, the intentionality, of the *conatus*. The 'having to be' that brings the anxiety of the unresolved fear of death. On the fundamental confrontation of 'disinterest' and selfishness, and the role of entropy in the ethical environment, I recognize that I could not produce a decisive *a priori* argument in favour of 'disinterest' or the ultimate uncorrupted action. I ended up appealing to our common experience via examples. I took refuge in the empirical arena. I rely then on your agreement in this.

If I have that agreement, then what we have at a first level of being a human being is not intention or knowledge, but 'disinterest'. Or, better say, the natural capacity for action for its own sake encapsulating disinterest and chaste forgetfulness. Then maybe you can also agree that what these late-modern societies and their school systems are attacking is the heart of what it is to be a human being. What I attempted to uncover was this attack as a more fundamental source of distress that spreads through these societies. If so, finally, maybe you also agree that the epithets 'arbitrary' and 'cruel' used above are justly used. Also, maybe I can conclude that an

education aiming for absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection in ‘the way to do or say’ in social practices, is in harmony with this picture of what it is to be human.

Perhaps as a final main conclusion one can say that I could not find a decisive argument in favour of the roles in the educational process, of entropy and disinterest. I don’t know how to determinedly convince anyone about their importance for a life in well-being. The same can be said about my claim that ‘absence of disorder with the nobility of imperfection’ may favour absence of interest or ‘disinterest’, in our social practices. But perhaps what I can claim is that maybe there is an accumulation of signs that makes us believe that it is worthwhile to pursue these paths of research further.

Finally let me once more stress the urgency that I see in such educational and philosophical research. Levinas (2000: 104) quotes Ionesco when this play writer says that real love is so important that then ‘death withdraws’. To this I referred as the possibility of nullification of disorder or entropy build up, through ‘disinterestedness’. But in our concern for education, this reference to Ionesco can only bring to mind that other well known play of his, which is *The Lesson* (Ionesco, 2000). Such thoughts by contrast take us to the actual present crude situation. In this play, in the genre ‘theatre of the absurd’, we are confronted with an outcry that in my view attempts to expose two major scandals. Maybe the second scandal is the more impressive one. As we know in the play a teacher ends up by systematically killing students by means of his lessons. But this is just the first scandal. The second scandal is exposed towards the end of the play when the teacher shows fear that someone may raise questions, about so many coffins that he and his helping maid are transporting. Here the teacher’s maid replies: ‘Don’t go making trouble for yourself. We’ll say they’re empty. Besides, no one will ask any questions. They’re used to it’.

Annex

A – Some general examples of recommendations for the school system following from an education aiming at absence of disorder.

A.1 - Assessment centres.

These are indispensable in implementing the view that the teacher should be reinstated as a friend and the school as a place of discussion at leisure.

In the instrumental knowledge-based society, some assessment has to be made. This should be kept to a minimum. As a general rule all the procedures are designed to reduce or mitigate the stress connected with assessment. Some of the rules to be implemented would be: the teacher who teaches does not assess; teachers can rotate between the activities of teaching in class or serving in centres; students can use the centre whenever they want and the number of times they want; there is no time limit for the assessment sessions; no grading, final reports will state only if the student is ready to progress; final report is qualitative giving helpful guidelines.

Under this view, the formative assessment for learning – mock exams, etc. – can be kept in the class. The summative assessment of learning – accountability – is reserved for the centres.

- Some empirical research questions: what are the economic implications? How should the centres be managed? What is the best use of data bases and information

technologies? How to handle the problems of students with special needs? At what stage will it be best for children to start to attend the centres? What are the areas with specific problems – e.g. arts and music, science laboratories – and how can they be overcome? How to follow the success of implementation of centres?

A.2 – Home-work is forbidden

Only recommendations of activities or suggestions of readings should be given by teachers. Students should have the final word on how to spend their leisure time.

A.3 – Grading systems are abolished.

Practical problems like job or university entrance selections can be creatively approached. This is already done in some countries via selection procedures. One of the possibilities already in use is for example universities to accept all the candidates and proceed with selection during the first year of studies. Again this requires also some empirical studies.

A.4 – Compulsion to attend classes is forbidden (e.g. like in Summerhill school).

- Some empirical research questions: when is the best age for students to be left unattended and be given this responsibility? What are the implications at their safety level? What facilities and alternatives to class attendance should be provided in schools? As is the case now at Summerhill school.

A.5 – Compulsory curriculum is reduced in half, both in time and extent.

Subjects and class time should be reduced by half. The reduction in subjects can be in number and in extent of content. The idea is to free time from the unnecessary instrumental knowledge pile up, to other activities in leisure.

Again extensive empirical research is needed here, since this implies a complete redesign of the compulsory curriculum. A credit system and a system of options open to the students look interesting, in order to meet the practical needs.

Also at the level of internal organisation of schools, there will have to be studies of the best proposals for students to use their extra free time in leisure.

A.6 – Number of students per class is reduced in half.

This recommendation follows from the previous one. Resources will be in place to make this possible: availability of teachers, classrooms, and so on.

We teachers know how important this is. Fewer students in class, means more possibility of better quality in human relationships among everyone. This is very important for the ongoing dialogue.

A-7 – Head teachers and school democracy

Head teachers should be elected by the school community for periods of, for example two years with no possibility of re-election in the next term. The entire functioning of schools should be democratic, based on collegial legislative bodies and executive bodies. This is done in the framework of a national compulsory curriculum. Such school democracy has been in place in Portuguese schools for more than three decades now. This makes also a positive difference in the hidden curriculum. Such procedures can be also found in Spain.

The basic idea here is to keep in force two basic (Popperian) democratic rules, with special emphasis on the second one. First, all the ruling bodies are elected. Second, it must be a guarantee of the effective possibility of removal of anyone in the ruling bodies that acts in disrespect for regulations and persons

A-8 – Teacher training

Teacher trainees should not be subject to assessment. They should be subject only to attendance. Teacher trainees have all spent thousands of hours in classrooms, and are very well aware of what is going on in there. Specifically, when they start to engage with real classes of students during their training, supervisors that also attend those classes should be seen only as helping friends.

When it is argued that some of these teacher trainees are not competent for the job, we should bear in mind the following: these cases are a miniscule minority; but even in these cases we cannot be sure that they will not develop to be competent teachers. The less fit for the job are the ‘free riders’ but there is no assessment that can spot them; the damage of one more stressful course with assessment that will affect all the teacher trainees by far outweighs the possible benefits. What is at stake here is a very strong message that must be passed to teacher trainees and there is no other way of doing it – the assessment is not all.

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