

# Education is the Art of Making Humanity Ethical\*

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

I take the title of this essay from an addition to §151 in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. It continues:

[Education] begins with pupils whose life is at the instinctive level and shows them the way to a second birth, the way to change their instinctive nature into a second, intellectual, nature, and makes this intellectual level habitual to them. At this point the clash between the natural and the subjective will disappears, the subject's internal struggle dies away. To this extent, habit is part of ethical life as it is of philosophic thought also, since such thought demands that mind be trained against capricious fancies, and that these be destroyed and overcome to leave the way clear for rational thinking. (Hegel 1952, 260)

This remark comes toward the beginning of Part 3 of the *Philosophy of Right*, on The Ethical Life. Hegel uses “ethical life” (*Sittlichkeit*) to refer to modes of

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thinking and acting that are governed by the norms of a historical community. By saying that the ethical life is *governed by* the norms of a historical community I mean that in the ethical life one's thoughts and deeds are evaluated by oneself and others according to various standards held by the members of the community. By calling it a mode of *historical* consciousness, I flag that our ethical lives are irremediably situated in historical contexts whose situations affect our lives in ways that are worth keeping in mind. In Hegel's telling, the ethical life is principally characterized by familial relations, the civic community induced by groups of families living together, and the state as the explicit codification of the norms of the community in a body of law and its institutions.

Hegel distinguished morality from the ethical life, holding (roughly) that the former concerned the subjective stance that the individual takes on what people should and should not do while the latter concerned the objective stance, embodied in the laws and customs of the community, on what people should and should not do. In this regard Hegel thinks of morality and the ethical life as the individual and communal poles along which the abstract idea of a right is developed over history in different communities. On this conception, the educator is tasked with inducting students into the norms of the community in such a way as to help them see that their individual or subjective modes of thought are also (or can be) expressions of the collective identity of the community. In this regard the educator helps communicate that we are each an 'I' that is 'We' and a 'We' that is 'I', as Hegel calls "the experience of what Spirit is" at ¶177 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The ethical life includes more than is conventionally labelled 'ethics', and talk of a people's 'ethos' does better in English. One is not born into an ethical life so much as raised up into it in virtue of the tutelage one receives from others in the community. In German the word '*Bildung*' covers the sort of education responsible for conferring an ethos or *Sittlichkeit* on a person. The process of *Bildung* includes acquiring an appreciation of the aesthetic as well as the moral sentiments of one's community, the sports teams one cheers for and the music one listens to. By this conception, our moral and legal rights and duties are species of a genus that includes conventional norms like professional attire, modes of greeting, the way one grooms one's hair or flies a national flag, etc. The genus of which morality and these other forms of ethical life are species is one of *social planning*. This does not by itself tell us anything interesting about what we ought and may do, either by way of morality or etiquette. But it is to say that, whatever else we are doing when we dispute these subjects, we are triangulating our agency as members of a community around a shared form of life.

Understood in this way, education is indeed an art whose telos is or involves the transformation of the merely natural human life into an ethical life. The edu-

cator, qua executor of that transformation, helps habituate people into the afferent and efferent habits of the society. And in doing that educators are tasked not just with tutelage over their students' cognitive abilities, but also with the public responsibility – a duty they bear to the rest of their community – of shaping the aesthetic and moral sentiments of a people. This is a bold and contentious position to take on education. It frames a unified view of human nature and human society, understood in terms of a development from the mode of life characteristic of the former to that of the latter, and without (yet) presupposing any particulars about what human nature or the social order is or ought to be. It also evokes the totalitarian thinking that dominated so much of the twentieth century. But we can entertain the idea of the educator as a person who habituates her or his students into a shared ethical life without yet committing ourselves to anything specific about what the educator ought to be doing by way of shaping people's sentiments. And so this idea can be profitably examined without having to stake a claim on the socio-political issues it may bring to mind.

### 1. ON THE GROUND OF CULTURE IN HISTORICAL TRADITION

Hegel holds that the complex skein of values, institutions, social activities, and self-understanding taught by culture is generally communicated through different forms of thought and material expression in different periods of human history, with religious traditions having been particularly important for this education. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel characterizes the ancient Greek polis as a setting where the social modes of human life take precedence over a merely natural existence (see Bykova 2019b; Harris 1997, Chapter 3; Williams 2019). The myth of the Olympian gods displacing the Titans marked, he believed, a transition from a conception of the divine as nature-based, and immediately embodying natural powers (e.g. Oceanus) to a conception of the divine as a family of individual moral persons bearing various duties and privileges toward one another, though preserving natural traits (e.g. Poseidon). For Hegel, the supplanting of our merely natural existence with a social one is embodied in burial rituals: by performing burial rites a community overturns the apparent victory that nature has over the human being by establishing that even in death the individual remains a part of the community. The religion of Christianity in turn effected an advance over Greek notions of the divine, Hegel thought, by revealing that via the sacrifices we make concerning what we want as individuals, and which we give up in favor of maintaining the stability of the community, we mirror the divine sacrifice of Christ and thereby take a share in the spirit that suffuses the community upon his resurrection. In this regard Hegel thinks Christianity

is an institution that helps educate us into second nature by communicating in particularly vivid detail that we are indeed an 'I' that is 'We' and a 'We' that is 'I'. From ¶¶784 and 785 on the "Revealed Religion" (emphasis in the original):

The *death* of the divine Man, as *death*, is *abstract* negativity, the immediate result of the movement which ends only in *natural* universality. Death loses this natural meaning in spiritual self-consciousness, i.e. it comes to be its just stated Notion (*Begriff*); death becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of *this particular* individual (*dieses Einzelnen*), into the *universality* of the Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected [...] This self-consciousness [...] does not actually *die*, as the *particular* self-consciousness is *pictured* (*wie der Besondere vorgestellt wird*) as being *actually* dead, but its particularity dies away in its universality [...] (Cf. Hegel 1977, 475-476)

While pre-modern communities developed their notions of the beautiful, the true, and the good through the media of artistic and religious expression, European nations in the modern age were, for Hegel, coming into *sittliche* self-consciousness more and more through the explicit instruction of philosophy<sup>1</sup>. In this regard modernity was for Hegel, as the Enlightenment was for Kant (e.g. 1996), a stage in the emergence of western civilization into a period of autonomy or self-determination: the heteronomous government imposed by political and religious authorities in the pre-modern period was gradually being replaced by institutions governed (putatively) according to principles of autonomy. No longer were people to be expected to simply do and believe as those in positions of authority demanded, as now there was an expectation that people would begin to exercise self-government in deed and thought<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> I have examined the development of Hegel's views on religion – and on the relationship between religion and spirit – in my (2014); Speight examines the development of his views on art and its relationship to spirit. The latter includes an illuminating discussion of how we might "shear off" Hegel's analysis of the different forms of art from the cultural traditions he wedds them to (Speight 2019, 238-42).

<sup>2</sup> Alain de Botton (2014) argues, on the basis of a reading of Hegel, that the news media should carry the torch for education into the current period. But de Botton thinks that journalists should stump for particular narratives directed at Enlightenment (or whatever comes next) and this leads him to say some rather striking things. In writing of the putative need for news organizations to get the public to care about news stories, de Botton recommends that journalists take a cue from literary figures as people who: "[...]understand that falsifications may occasionally need to be committed in the service of a goal higher still than accuracy: the hope of getting important ideas and images across to their impatient and distracted audiences" (de Botton 2014, 82-3). de Botton's book was published in 2014, and with the subsequent advent of 'fake news' it is hard to see how such a news media might be the way forward today.

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ASSOCIATION IN AUTONOMOUS INTENTIONAL COLLECTIVES

Kant and Hegel were prescient concerning the influence that notions of autonomy would have in the coming centuries. In WEIRD societies (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic)<sup>3</sup>, institutions as varied and widespread as the nation-state, parent/teacher associations, city zoning laws, and homeowner's covenants (claim to) operate on the principle that the rules that bind together an association of individuals are made binding on them in virtue of the collective recognition the people give to those rules as binding<sup>4</sup>. This is an ideal, of course, and it is easy for those of us in places like North American and Europe to take it for granted or lose sight of how momentous a change in human livelihood it has wrought for the portion of humanity enjoying it. But in many parts of the world today principles of autonomy are the default commitment for collective organization, and that fact reflects a watershed shift in human history. In its wake we tend to expect that institutions will operate by the exercise of a self-governed collective will, with the determination of the collective will deliberately arrived at via mutually-agreed upon mechanisms for decision making. I will refer to institutions with this structure as *autonomous intentional collectives* or just *autonomous collectives*<sup>5</sup>.

If we draw these two themes together – education as the means of conferring a community's *Sittlichkeit* on its members and modernity as the flourishing of autonomous intentional collectives – then modern education can be thought of (in part) as the inculcation of habits for the reflective exercise of reason. In so far as autonomy characterizes the modern life, the modern educator is one who fosters a reflective stance in students. For only then can an autonomous collective be intelligently governed and so live well as the kind of thing it is. This is not to say that the answer as to what kind of community to constitute will come from reflection in one's study. A community is knit together when its members interact with and understand one another in ways that are characteristic of their time and place. Reason is operative here, but largely in its practical guise. It is also self-fulfilling in a certain sense. Knowing how to get along with and appreciate one's neighbors is a matter of navigating social byways, and this activity not only helps perfect the practical rationality of individual citizens, it also helps weave together the social fabric into one whole. And the fact that people have taken up the task of understanding and collectively identifying with their neighbors is proof that the effort to build a more thorough community is already in the offing. So there is something peculiar about the exercise of practical rationality in the intentional collective: the effort to craft a particular form of life can, simply in vir-

<sup>3</sup> See *supra* the Conclusion of Wolters' contribution to this volume, Chap. 4 . *Ed. note.*

tue of the fact that one has taken up that effort with others of the same mindset, be such as to make it the case, over time, that the form of life in question exists.

We are still without a basis or ground for assessing what the educator in an *autonomous* intentional collective ought to be doing when it comes to shaping the ethical sensibilities of her or his students, however. The rest of this essay is devoted to investigating that ground. At the end of the essay I offer some tentative pedagogical proposals for the contemporary educator.

I should note that this discussion is independent of whether we suppose any autonomous intentional collective has ever existed. If the notion is a goal toward which groups of people can orient themselves, then we can investigate the role of the pedagogue in the autonomous intentional collective. All the same, while this investigation may abstract away from various socio-historical conditions to examine the functional relationship between pedagogy and the ethical life, it is pursued in a particular time and place. Because that time is one in which there are growing socio-political divisions across Europe and North America, with their own determinate problem spaces and relations to the ideas I canvas, I have tried to draw these issues into the discussion where relevant. In doing so I strive to be general enough to speak to different sides of the divide, though of course that cannot be accomplished in every case. These ruminations are framed by events and points of view that have not reached their full development. The seed for a comprehensive understanding of the historical person in the natural world was germinating for centuries before it broke ground and matured in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and I think we are at best half-way through the maturation of the organism that was born in that time. This essay is meant to help shed a bit of sunlight on it today.

Finally, it is worth flagging that much of this discussion is independent of whether the reader endorses notions of modernity that developed in the Enlightenment or rejects them in favor of so-called 'post-modern' deconstructions of the sort offered by a Marx, a Nietzsche, a Freud, or a Foucault. I think a case can be made that some aspects of these reactions to modernity embody the sense of radical freedom and alienation from custom and community that attends the casting-off of pre-modern forms of ethical life at the birth of modern autonomy, so that the term 'post-modern' is a misnomer in so far as these tendencies fall squarely within the orbit of modernity's unfolding. A properly post-modern moment would develop modes of thought and action that overcome this alienation by finding a way to wed a thorough understanding of our authority over the value-laden structures of human society with a recognition of the importance of tradition and community in shaping our institutions and self-conceptions<sup>6</sup>. Though

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<sup>6</sup> This view of modernity, autonomy, and alienation came into shape during my engagement with

I return to this theme at the end of the essay, I will not argue for that position here. Instead, fans of more common notions of ‘post-modernism’ can read this discussion as an investigation into the pedagogical ground for the autonomous intentional collective considered qua her favored analysis. That analysis may lend itself to criticism of the moves made here, but by flagging my commitments outright I hope the investigation remains useful in spite of what may appear to be its perspectival limitations.

### 3. UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND THE ETHICAL LIFE

Given that we are not born angels, there is no doubt that the early-childhood educator has a role to play in shaping the moral sensibilities, as well as the general ethos, of her or his students. The more interesting question is whether and to what extent *higher* education has moral instruction as its aim. For it is one thing to note a causal relationship between education and habituation in the shaping of good citizens (whatever we take that to mean). It is another to suppose that in university instruction an educator has a right or duty to proselytize her or his own moral ‘take’ on the subject matters she or he discusses. Some of the issues educators talk about are settled, but many are not. And, the thought runs, the role of university educators is not one of imparting their own (perception of their culture’s) values on students; rather, their duty is to impart state-of-the-art knowledge concerning whatever subjects they teach. On the other hand, the claim that university educators have a right or duty to promulgate particular ethical precepts resonates with the pedagogies of those concerned with issues of social justice. Among some academics today, it may seem that (properly contextualized) what Hegel says is not only true but of paramount importance for the educational system.

We appear to be left in a state of uncertainty, then. To what extent ought the university educator instill in students the habits of the ethical life of a community? More generally, and in particular to allow for iconoclastic ethical pedagogies, to what extent ought the university educator instill in students the habits of *any* ethical life?

These questions are not ‘academic’ in that pejorative sense that connotes disconnection from the world outside the academy. Academicians train the elites of WEIRD countries, and that training has an impact on the society that university students come to shape as they enter the professional world (Al-Gharbi 2019a, Jaschik 2017). And since the 1990s the American academy has made a marked ideological shift leftward. From Abrams (2016, n.p.):

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Brandom 2019.

[During this period] the professoriate was changing while the electorate as a whole was not. Professors were more liberal than the country in 1990, but only by about 11 percentage points. By 2013, the gap had tripled; it is now more than 30 points. It seems reasonable to conclude that it is academics who shifted, as there is no equivalent movement among the masses whatsoever.

This shift is particularly pronounced in the social sciences and humanities (Bennett 2015, Duarte *et al.* 2015, Langbert *et al.* 2016, and Wilson 2019), and at elite liberal arts colleges (Langbert 2018 and Al-Gharbi 2019a). Statistical over-representation of left-leaning faculty has been found in Britain (Carl 2017a and 2017b) and Canada (Nakhaie & Adam 2008) as well. In recent years these trends have become a topic of some concern (Campbell & Manning 2018, Duarte *et al.* 2015, Haidt 2017, Inbar & Lammers 2012, Jaschik 2012, Wilson 2019, and Woessner 2016). This turn of events has led to a situation in which some disciplines promulgate norms of behaviour and attitude that are out of step with what most of the rest of the public, even the well-educated public, have adopted. It is of real interest, then, to have some understanding of when and why university educators are entitled or obliged to proselytize their take on the ethical life of their communities.

#### 4. THE ETHICAL CODE OF THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATOR

The ethical landscape of the professional/public relationship has been mapped in disciplines like business, engineering, medicine, and law. If education is an art then there are principles that govern its successful practice as well. To frame an initial perspective on the university educator's duties, then, we might begin by looking at professional codes of ethics.

Of particular relevance is the fact that professional ethical codes give paramount importance to doing no harm to the public, serving the interests of one's clients, and abiding by the standards of the profession (see the Appendix to Harris *et al.* 2009). Like other professionals, educators bear a special relation to members of the public that require their expertise. This relationship induces a set of duties educators have to those who make use of their services. What the client is to the lawyer and the patient is to the doctor, the student is to the educator. And just as lawyers must work for and advise their clients in the clients' best interests, without compromising the principles of their profession, so must educators keep in mind their charge to their students as held up against the background of their profession and its place in society.

Support for this conclusion is found in the American Association of University Professors' "Statement on Professional Ethics" (AAUP 1966), published in 1966 and updated in 1987 and 2009. That statement, minus the introduction, consists of five numbered paragraphs, outlining professors' duties to 1) develop their own abilities, 2) educate their students, 3) maintain a collegial environment, 4) support the interests of their institutions of higher learning, and 5) contribute to the well-being of society at large. There is a thread or leitmotif running through these five paragraphs, and it offers a clue to how the AAUP sees the ethics of the profession. In each case the importance of free inquiry is remarked on: professors' scholarly interests "must never seriously hamper or compromise their freedom of inquiry"; in relation to students professors must "encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students"; in their relationships to their colleagues they must "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates"; their duties to their institutions obtain "provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom"; and concerning society we are told that "as citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom".

This leitmotif helps clarify the idea that modernity is characterized by the growth of individual and collective autonomy. For in a modern society the educator has a role to play not only in passing on knowledge and learning; the modern educator is also charged with the task of *criticising* existing shibboleths and opening up new possibilities. This is one reason why academic freedom is so important – it permits that unfettered critical revisionary spirit that is a ground for the flourishing of a free society.

## 5. THE PUBLIC AND THE PROFESSIONAL EXERCISE OF REASON

It does not follow, however, that the university educator's role is to teach students her or his own brand of ethical living. We may suppose that everyone, *qua* individual citizen, has a right or a duty to reflect on her or his community's *Sittlichkeit* and strive to spread certain views. This would be the *public* exercise of one's reason, in the sense Kant appeals to in answering the question "What is Enlightenment?". But in what Kant calls our *private* lives, by which he means our associations within existing institutional structures, we have a duty to abide by the dictates of those institutions (Kant 1996, 18).

The *public* use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among human beings; the *private use* of one's reason may, however, of-

ten be very narrowly restricted without this particularly hindering the progress of enlightenment. But by the public use of one's own reason I understand that use which someone makes of it *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*. What I call the private use of reason is that which one may make of it in a certain *civil* post or office with which he is entrusted.

Much of Kant's discussion about the public and private (or better: professional) uses of reason presupposes a kind of stability in the social order, where the public exercise of reason may call into question some otherwise generally-accepted norm or value without at the same time undermining the professional institutions within which those norms operate. By contrast, obedience to the norms governing the *public* use of one's reason in a *professional* setting will tend to corrode the functioning of that institution (Kant discusses a military officer who may offer a public criticism of a tactical or strategic move in a certain context, but who is obliged to obey his superior's orders when given them).

We have now arrived at the core issue. Even if we grant that education is the art of making humanity ethical, and that modern educators have a duty to uphold principles of free inquiry, it is far from obvious what educators ought to do when it comes to advancing their favored community's particular ideological agenda. Where that agenda is more-or-less shared by the rest of a community, its promulgation will generally be accepted by that community. Where out of step with a community, or out of step with a larger community within which one's more local community is situated, there will be strife. But these are simply descriptive claims, and the question of whether the university educator has a right or a duty to inculcate a set of norms that are at odds with the general trend of society is a question of whether, as educators, we are allowed or obliged to follow the norms governing the public exercise of reason as we work in a professional setting – namely, as we teach our students.

## 6. POLITICAL POLARIZATION EXACERBATES THE PROBLEM OF THE MODERN EDUCATOR'S DUTIES

Owing to growing social discord, this bundle of ideas and questions is all the more pressing. Along a number of social-scientific metrics the peoples of Europe and North America have become more politically and socially divided in the last few decades. The Pew Research Center has been tracking this shift in the United States. Examining changes in political opinions from 1994 to 2014, a report from June of 2014 reads:

Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades. These trends manifest themselves in myriad ways, both in politics and in everyday life. And a new survey of 10,000 adults nationwide finds that these divisions are greatest among those who are the most engaged and active in the political process. (PRC 2014, n.p.)

And from section 2:

Though negative ratings of the other party were common 20 years ago, relatively few Republicans and Democrats had deeply negative opinions. In 1994, when the GOP captured the House and Senate after a bitter midterm campaign, about two-thirds (68%) of Republicans and Republican leaners had an unfavorable opinion of the Democratic Party, but just 17% had a *very* unfavorable opinion. At the same time, though a majority of Democrats and Democratic leaners (57%) viewed the GOP unfavorably, just 16% had a *very* unfavorable view. Today, negative ratings have risen overall (about eight-in-ten of both Republicans and Democrats rate the other party unfavorably), but deeply negative views have more than doubled: 38% of Democrats and 43% of Republicans now view the opposite party in strongly negative terms.

These views became even more pronounced over the course of the 2016 U.S. presidential election and its aftermath: for the first time, in surveys going back to 1992, more than 50% of those who identify as either Democrat or Republican held not only an unfavorable but a *very* unfavorable view of the other party (PRC 2016b). There is also less agreement between Democrats and Republicans over what the nation's top priorities should be (Jones 2019), and a growing consensus that the public discourse on political issues has become too divisive (PRC 2019). Similar trends have been noted in Europe (Andreadis & Stavrakakis 2019, Camas 2019, Groskopf 2016, Lönnqvist *et al.* 2019, and Pisani-Ferry 2015).

College education appears correlated with ideological division as well, at least in the United States. A 2016 study of over 6000 Americans found that among those who have finished college but not gone to graduate school 44% have liberal values and 29% have conservative values. The divide grows among those with some postgraduate education: 54% have liberal values and 24% have conservative values. This is in contrast with the rest of the public:

About a third of those who have some college experience but do not have a bachelor's degree (36%) have consistently liberal or mostly liberal political values, as do just 26% of those with no more than a high school degree. Roughly a quarter in each of these groups (28% of those with some college experience, 26% of those with no more than a high school education) have consistently conservative or mostly conservative values. (PRC 2016a, n.p.)

Correlation is not causation, of course, and we might consider a variety of explanations for the ideological separation that attends university education: perhaps liberals are more likely to enter higher education, perhaps higher education exposes people to viewpoints that lend support to liberal values without any ideological priming on the part of university educators, etc. (see Gross & Simmons 2014). Furthermore, research indicates that while liberal arts colleges lean left the surrounding communities do so as well (Abrams 2019, Al-Gharbi 2019a and 2019b, Sachs 2019). From Sachs (2019, n.p.):

For those concerned by the lack of academic viewpoint diversity, these findings represent both good and bad news. On the one hand, they suggest that the academy itself may not be entirely responsible for its own political imbalance. Discrimination and self-censorship on campus could indeed be important factors, but the academy may be doing less wrong than is commonly thought. On the other hand, this would mean that the problem may also be more intractable than is commonly thought.

For a less optimistic assessment see (Al-Gharbi 2019b). Once again these are not idle questions: concern over the influence of a liberal educated elite, and of higher education in general, led Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to rescind recognition of the Central European University in Budapest, forcing the institution to relocate to Vienna in September of 2019. It is perhaps unsurprising that Hungary is one of the most politically polarized countries in Europe (Vegetti 2019).

These factors complicate the role of the pedagogue in an autonomous intentional collective. Where the collective is undergoing a turbulent period of ethical living there will be a tendency on the part of ideological advocates to exercise reason in its *public* guise while in *professional* settings so as to corrode the influence of those institutions thought to be unjust. At the same time, such individuals may feel duty-bound to use their professional platforms to set up lines of influence and power that foster their favored conception of the ethical life. If we were in a period where the ethical life was more-or-less unified, we might take refuge in the Kantian hope that progress would eventually be equitably effected by the public use of reason alone. But where existing institutions are thought to be corrupt, it would seem that reason's corrosive influence would in fact be liberating. Notice that this conclusion is one that supports the position both of university activists seeking to influence a society's ethical life and those, like Orbán, who would limit the influence of the academy on that life. This is an idea, therefore, whose further consequences can be examined without staking a commitment to either point of view.

## 7. THE NORMAL AND THE REVOLUTIONARY ETHICAL LIFE

Stepping back, we seem to be facing something like Kuhn's contrast between normal science and revolutionary science (Kuhn 2012). In normal science, researchers work within established theoretical frameworks and build up evidence in support of and against various hypotheses drawn within these frameworks. In revolutionary science, the theoretical frameworks that furnish the explanations of a normal scientific program are overturned. There follows a period of instability, with the possibility of making novel discoveries and proposals that are in an important sense discontinuous with the science of the pre-revolutionary period.

We can think correspondingly of normal and revolutionary periods in the ethical life. Derivatively, we can also consider normal and revolutionary attitudes toward the ethical life, normal and revolutionary pedagogy, etc. Normal pedagogy proceeds in areas of the ethical life where the educator treats the debate as settled. In such cases one expects the experts to be of one mind. If the educational system is functioning well, the rest of society will then either share that view or defer to the experts. As a consequence, in a well-functioning normal period of ethical living one can trust that what is generally found beyond the realm of plausibility by anyone will be recognized as such by everyone, with a stable network of deference to experts in other cases. Exceptions admitted, of course, as there will always be disagreement. But paradigmatically the normal ethical life is characterized by a collectively agreed-upon body of social norms (this is not to say that agreement constitutes knowledge, as we may nevertheless discover that the whole community is wrong – Brandom 2019 is good on this point). In a revolutionary period of ethical life, by contrast, individuals are in widespread disagreement over the norms of that life. Here the modern educator, tasked with training the citizens of autonomous intentional collectives and under a duty to help those citizens constitute such a collective, must be careful not to inhibit the free exercise of the cognitive capacities of her or his students.

During a revolutionary period the ethical principles that have been accepted by a community are brought up for public criticism. This may result in an effort by individuals to erode existing institutions as different factions strive to implement their favored agenda. It is true that a revolutionary period in the ethical life *may* be characterized by widespread disagreement over a people's identity *without* their eliding the public/professional distinction in the use of reason. But when that elision occurs different ideologies will compete for pedagogical influence and the resources that attend education – as seen, for instance, in efforts to institute the ideology as a new normal pedagogy and to co-opt existing insti-

tutions in the service of spreading it<sup>7</sup>. This lends itself to certain dysfunctional institutional tendencies. In an essay at *Palladium Magazine* in August of 2019 Natalia Dashan, a graduate of Yale who was present during a recent series of high-profile episodes of student activism there, criticized the administration's response in similar terms:

In effect, a large fraction of the administrators form a revolutionary class within the rest of the university structure. They use both their existing power and new ideological mandates to expand their own domain at the expense of other players. The purpose of the administrators is to shape, tear down, and rebuild the university on the institutional level, which lets them act on ideological goals in a way students and faculty generally cannot. (Dashan 2019, n.p.)

In general these takeovers are most successful when there is little discussion about whether and why they should be happening. That in turn involves shunning competing value-frameworks by branding them beyond the pale of consideration both publicly and within the pedagogical setting. In times of extreme competition this leads to calls for ideological purity and more extreme forms of out-group denigration – our inborn tribalism often contributes at least a provocative murmuring in any event. In this regard polarization itself may become a successful political strategy. And when different ideological factions adopt this stance toward the rest of the community, there will be little ground for common conversation and the triangulation of agency among different points of view.

In periods of group polarization, then, one can expect to see ever more didactic forms of intra-group normal pedagogies coupled with inter-group factionalism over the ethical life. Where there is increased competition for resources, this factionalism may ossify into isolated pockets of ideological conflict. And so there is a danger in revolutionary periods of this sort that we cease to listen to those who disagree with us over issues that remain unsettled. It is for this reason important that educators in a revolutionary period resist the urge to treat their public points of view as normal. Some of the habits of education that are apt for the normal ethical life inhibit intelligent conversation and behaviour during revolutionary periods. And due to the way competition operates in periods of scarce resources, these dysfunctions become strategies for selecting what amounts to the most ruthless competitors in the market for institutional success. It follows

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, something similar may have happened in academic philosophy in the U.S. Katzav and Vaesen (2017) argue that the rise of analytic philosophy in America during the middle of the twentieth century was fueled by a 'journal capture' that replaced formerly pluralist editors at major journals with editors less inclined toward diverse approaches to philosophy: "The reason for the growing dominance of analytic philosophy appears to have been, at least in part, the suppression, by institutional means, of existing diversity and, possibly, the exploitation of American pluralism" (Katzav & Vaesen 2017, 774).

that, as pedagogues, we owe it to our communities to think carefully about when and why to adopt a normal attitude toward one's in-group ethical sentiments, particularly in periods of revolutionary ethical life. Intellectual humility, and the injunction to foster attitudes supporting uncoerced inquiry, require that the university educator resist the tendency toward ideological purity and normalized pedagogy in a revolutionary period.

Of course, I presume to speak to a community that is doing its best to avoid the situation described by Bolshevik intellectual Nikolai Bukharin: "In revolution, he will be victorious who cracks the other's skull" (Cohen 1980, 99). This presumption leaves open that there may be times when the right thing to do is crack skulls (for a recent defense of the duty to uncivil social resistance see Delmas 2018). But I am here examining the duties we have in revolutionary periods marked by civility in the ethical life. Once again, so long as the idea is coherent it may be profitably used as an ideal against which to consider the conditions for its realization *even if* no such period has ever existed.

## 8. PROPOSALS

We need guidelines for pedagogy in revolutionary periods of ethical living, and we might look to different educational contexts for insight into the university educator's duties in these periods. Examples of pedagogical instruction that reach across different value systems include missionary work and foreign exchange programs, and these might be looked to as a basis for specifying some best practices. I do not have anything systematic to say, but it would seem that some protocols are fairly obvious and easily adopted. In an age of increasing distrust in the media, increasingly clever means for people to distort the facts, and the ability to disseminate information quickly, it is important that citizens be given the tools for discerning the good argument from the bad. While there is some reason to doubt the efficacy of critical reasoning courses at the university level (Sesardic 2017), there is good evidence that philosophical instruction in primary school improves students' cognitive and social abilities across a number of metrics, and that these improvements remain years *after* the instruction has ceased (Stovall 2018a). Either way, university educators can endeavor to model this kind of thinking in their courses and public outreach. This need not involve valorizing reason as a cure-all. We require a view of the whole person, and the whole person is not merely a thinking and acting thing – it is also a feeling, sensing, emoting thing, a being whose affective nature is as important to its well-being as its thinking and effective natures (for this reason the study of beauty has long been part of the study of truth and goodness).

As members of a profession, university educators have a task to perform in the service of those who make use of our abilities. The academic also has a role to play in digesting and disseminating ideas to the larger community of scholars and the public. Success in these endeavors requires that we discuss the ideas of those we disagree with, and aim for charity in the interpretation. This may mean listening to people who do not model the kind of discourse we prefer. I return to this in a moment, as it is not obvious just what that requires. But as a general principle it is surely sound. There is no hope for future agreement over what now divides us when we are not interested in understanding other points of view. And as it happens, in research going back decades in the United States, there appears to be more agreement between different political factions than is recognized by the extreme partisans of those factions (Stevens 2019). This presents a live opportunity to help different groups understand one another. One might also hope that courses on ethics in journalism were given a bit more attention by the people we get our news from.

It would seem important for the university educator interested in the ethical life to speak to the public as well. To do so is to help constitute a community containing an educated public. There are a number of new media websites, from across the political spectrum, that now host social commentaries directed at an educated public, and these outlets might be used to foster the conversations we require<sup>8</sup>. In contributing to this end the educator can model the kind of critical, sympathetic, and conciliatory attitudes needed for mutual understanding. This will mean, among other things, helping different ideological communities appreciate the perspectives of those who do not share their ideologies.

Toward clearing a space for that conversation, we should collectively resist calls for professional censure and disinvitation over the expression of *verboten* thoughts, whether from the right or the left<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, there should be room for people to contribute to the public discussion either anonymously or pseudonymously. I know personally of two cases in the last year where colleagues in philosophy – one on the right side of the political spectrum and the other on the left – were pseudonymously taking part in public conversation and were outed by people with an ideological grudge against them. Neither individual had a permanent position, let alone tenure, at the time of the outing. This behaviour is inimical to the open discussion of contentious issues in a period of revolutionary ethical life. At the same time, anonymity and pseudonymity can fuel polarization. It

<sup>8</sup> I have in mind e-places like Aeon, *Civil American*, Medium, UnHerd, The Post-Millennial, Quillette, Salon, Slate, and Vox.

<sup>9</sup> Instances of this trend in recent years are too numerous to cite, but Turning Point USA's 'professor watchlist' (Warner 2018) and the treatment of Lindsey Shephard at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University (Todd 2019) are representative cases from the right and the left, respectively.

is much easier to dehumanize your interlocutor, play loose with the facts, adopt the stance of the fanatic, etc. if you don't have to worry about standing behind what you've said. And so by speaking under our own names we help constitute a community of responsibility. Meanwhile, our willingness to do so fosters open discussion by displaying to others that it is possible.

Some standards of behaviour for the university pedagogue are more difficult to determine, but I propose that during revolutionary periods of ethical living the university educator should generally resist the normal standpoint. If a view is not uncommon among the community within which one is teaching – whether among one's students or other academics – the educator has a (defeasible!) duty not to treat that view as beyond the realm of discussion (so long as it is pedagogically relevant). This may mean engaging with ideas we find morally repugnant. But that is just part of what we owe one another as autonomous beings living together – we must show each other the respect we are owed as part of our common community. This is a rational ideal, and it presumes we are not facing bayonets. But in a community where (e.g.) Nazi philosophy is prevalent there is a need to speak to it, I believe (once again I am assuming that violence is not immanent). I am not claiming that everyone ought to be willing to do this, but a community that does not speak with those who support a rising tide of illiberal political ideology is a community that is failing to sustain a healthy ethical life. Minimally (and defeasibly) if the view is a target of criticism by one's ideological stance, one should be willing to allow those who hold the view to defend it (in an appropriate venue). We owe this to one another as partners in the shared task of constituting a social order *even if* we are morally and affectively repulsed by some of what our partners believe.

Notice that there are grounds, on this view, for the educator to refuse consideration of certain perspectives. In a period of turmoil over our ethical lives we may still collectively agree that some points of view are simply off the table. And we must be thoughtful when determining which venues a polarizing discussion might best be for; not every debate should take place in the classroom. At the same time, we should help students find the right venues for the conversations they want to have, and encourage students to seek out and listen to the views of those they disagree with.

More generally, where the issues are socially and politically contested the educator should strive for a critical rather than an ideological pedagogy. Elsewhere I have characterized these two stances as follows:

[T]he *ideological* stance or attitude deserves special contrast with the *critical*. The ideological stance is characterized by *epistemic certainty*, and it is *brash, monological, and exhortative*. The ideologue knows what she thinks, and she knows what you should think, too. The critical stance is characterized by *epistemic humility*, and it is

*careful, dialogical, and inquisitive.* The critical person sees political conversation as a dialogue, and she is both interested in learning from conversation and willing to change her position on the basis of what she learns. The ideologue is convinced that she is right, however, and conversation can only be an opportunity to convert non-believers to the Truth, to agree with like-minded thinkers about what the Truth is, or to castigate non-believers as Wrong. (Stovall 2017, n.p.)

While the modern educator during a period of revolutionary ethical living should in general avoid the ideological stance over issues of ethical concern, two exceptions are worth noting. First, in the public exercise of reason the educator is as free to be an ideologue as anyone else. But second, there is room for ideology within the pedagogical context as well: specifically, when giving a professional assessment of an issue in a venue dedicated to that activity – e.g. in research publications, at conferences and workshops, and in courses dedicated to the subject. All the same the line of thought in this essay militates against an ideological stance that treats the contested areas of the ethical life as settled, or treats competing views as anathema.

There are signs for hope on this front. One result of the growing recognition of ideological polarization in the academy was the founding of the Heterodox Academy, an organization devoted to increasing viewpoint diversity in higher education, in September of 2015. They currently have a membership of 3,000 with an additional 400 graduate student members, consisting of an ideologically diverse group of scholars across the academy. Members of the Heterodox Academy are actively trying to foster viewpoint diversity and policies that support free inquiry in higher education. The organization hosts conferences, workshops, and essays drawing together research on the issues of ideological monovision facing the academy today. They also engage in public outreach directed at explaining the importance of free inquiry (see the “Press” page of their website) and policy advising (HxA Executive Team 2019).

One final remark. There appears to be a growing sense, perceived by those on the left and by those on the right, that liberalism of the sort that developed in the twentieth century emphasized individual autonomy at the unhealthy expense of community relationships. This has come in the form of various ‘post-liberal’ statements concerning the dual importance of individual liberty and responsibility to a community (Brooks 2019, Franklin 2019, Goodhart 2017, Fukuyama 2018, Papazoglou 2019, Polimédio 2019, Steiner 2019). Whatever the merits of these criticisms of liberalism, they are right to draw attention to the dual poles of rights and duties without which neither makes sense: duties without rights stifle the human spirit, while rights without duties provide it no structure. At the same time, as Hegel emphasizes, there may be an ever-present tension between what the individual takes her or his rights and duties to be and what the community

takes them to be. The specific character of this tension may vary both across communities and within a single community over time, but if this tension is a standing feature of the ethical life then there is a standing need for particular institutional structures, and the agency they afford, sufficient to integrate the individual and the community in the time and place one lives.

Religion once played that role in the life of Spirit, though it is not clear it does so now. I am not convinced that an entirely irreligious culture is desirable, and if the work of Richard Shweder and his collaborators on the universality of the 'three ethics' of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity is correct, then the religious impulse is as important for human well-being as the drives toward individual autonomy and respect for one's community (cf. Shweder *et al.* 1997 and Jensen 2011). Either way, there is the possibility that something much like the religious attitude might play part of the role that religion has historically played in the ethical life. In his 1998 *Achieving Our Country* Richard Rorty argued for a secularisation of the idea that the United States is a work of providence meant to usher in a new age for humankind. This *Ersatz* conception of the U.S. as a 'city on a hill' is one that would see American citizens striving to create a more perfect union, but without the overt religious interpretation of that effort. We should be wary of trivializing notions of the divine and its place in our individual and communal lives, and as I say I'm not convinced that an irreligious culture would be a good thing even if it were possible. But one way of understanding what Matthew Yglesias 2019 has dubbed the 'Great Awakening' of contemporary social justice activism, in a nod toward the Great Awakenings of religious revival that have occurred in American history, is that it embodies the effort to reconcile the individual or subjective sense of right and duty with communal or objective standards. All the same, just as the excesses of liberal individualism distort the relationship between the individual and the community to a point where neither is healthy, so are there excesses in 'woke' social reform that threaten the health of individual and community, though after a different fashion.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The social upheaval and discord that modern citizens face in the twenty-first century indicates that we are in something like a period of revolutionary ethical living. Generally accepted customs for our shared forms of life are fragmenting, and as factions arise and attempt to institute new normal standards across society the university educator bears a special role in helping us navigate this period of transition. The existence of autonomous intentional collectives depends upon the existence of people who are adept at the critical exercise of reason as a

self-governing mode of life. And so the modern educator must foster the capacity for the free exercise of our *geistige* faculties. Given their role in modern society, then, university educators should resist the urge to employ normal pedagogy concerning the issues in the ethical life that are undergoing discussion.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is clear that we are not living in Kant's Enlightened Age, the period he imagined would result from the Age of Enlightenment. Indeed, it is doubtful that we continue to live by the standards that led Kant to characterize his time as an Age of Enlightenment. But it is a feature of practical rationality that where conditions are right its use may make oneself into a thing one would not be without so conceiving oneself. In this sense practical rationality affords persons a kind of self-determination that the non-rational world does not possess. Consequently, in so far as a community of people continues to work at the project that thinkers like Kant and Hegel saw themselves engaged in, the Enlightenment will remain a live option for our collective effort.

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