

Fritz Oser · Karin Heinrichs  
Johannes Bauer · Terence Lovat *Editors*

# The International Handbook of Teacher Ethos

Strengthening Teachers, Supporting  
Learners

 Springer

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Johannes Bauer • Terence Lovat  
Editors


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Strengthening Teachers, Supporting Learners

 Springer

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# **Part I**

## **Editorial**



# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Volume



Karin Heinrichs, Johannes Bauer, and Terence Lovat

### How This Book Came to Be ...

This handbook has come a long way with quite a number of potholes and obstacles along the road. It probably would not be in the hands of readers without its mastermind, Fritz Oser, and his exceptional energy and driving force. It is a tragedy that Fritz did not live to see it printed. As the remaining editors, we felt obliged to continue working to realize his vision. We believe that he would have been delighted to see the volume on your desks, in bookshelves, and libraries.

Fritz Oser had already developed his idea that teacher ethos is important in his early years as a teacher. In this role, he chose unconventional methods to foster children's confidence even if he had to stand or fight against institutional barriers or was expected to implement an authoritative educational style or strong hierarchical teacher-student relations. As Fritz Oser became a researcher, he stuck to the conviction that education is a matter of both effectiveness and responsibility for one's students. In accordance with these beliefs, he studied religious and moral development under Lawrence Kohlberg and went on to edit a book in the area, together with Andreas Dick and Jean-Luc Patry. It was titled, *Effective and responsible teaching: the new synthesis*, published in 1992.

After more than 20 years, Fritz engaged in a revision of this earlier discussion. Echoing the theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial EARLI Conference for Research on Learning

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and Instruction in 2013 at the Technical University of Munich, namely, *Responsible Teaching and Sustainable Learning*, Fritz encouraged Manfred Prenzel, the conference president, to organize an EARLI invited symposium, titled, *The Ethos of the Teacher*: “Manfred, we have to make a big invited symposium on teacher ethos!” This symposium constituted a major step in the development of this handbook.

The symposium aimed at pushing forward understanding of teachers’ professional ethos by bringing together different theoretical and empirical perspectives. The lineup featured contributions from several internationally renowned scholars, among them several authors of chapters in this volume. Lee Shulman presented an educational philosophy perspective comparing the concept of ethos in a number of professions, such as law, medicine, the clergy, and engineering, using his concept of signature pedagogies as an analytical framework. Fritz Oser and his co-workers, Sarah Heinzer and Horst Biedermann, presented an empirical study on measuring vocational trainers’ ethos using a scenario-based approach that drew on his understanding of ethos as procedural professional morality. Tina Seidel and Richard Shavelson took another perspective, analyzing classroom videos to investigate responsible teaching in terms of teachers’ micro-level interactions with students who tended to underestimate their abilities. Finally, Manfred Prenzel and Johannes Bauer presented an approach to investigating ethos in a large-scale panel study focusing on preservice teachers’ educational goals as an indicator of their professional values.

Overall, the symposium was received with great interest from the conference attendants. At the same time, its contributions testified to the vast heterogeneity of perspectives and ideas on what constitutes the professional ethos of teachers. The following discussions both within the symposium – Tina Hascher being an astute discussant – and among the presenters afterwards in a sidewalk café circled around the obvious rifts and gaps between the presented conceptions of ethos. Everybody agreed that ethos was a cornerstone of teachers’ professionalism. Everybody acknowledged the mutual contributions as valuable for deepening understanding of the subject. Common theoretical or empirical approaches or, at least, consensus on a clear definition were not in sight. “So,” Fritz concluded in his unique and energetic allure, “we have to make a big international handbook of this and include all the great authors!”

In 2015, at the EARLI conference in Cyprus, Fritz attended a paper given by Terence Lovat, titled, *Developing teacher ethos in initial teacher education: A values pedagogical approach*. Afterwards, he invited Terry and Karin Heinrichs to discuss the idea over lunch. The three had already edited an earlier handbook on moral motivation. The resolution was to go away, think about the shape it might take and the authors who should be involved and to have a plan ready for the following biennial conference.

This vision, again, took a while to mature. A crucial next step was a small especially dedicated conference hosted by Karin at the University of Bamberg in 2016. This meeting brought together a broader array of scholars, mainly from the German-speaking countries. In an inspiring workshop atmosphere, the attendants struggled with the question of what a shared perspective on teachers’ ethos might look like.

As before, everybody agreed on the importance of teachers' professional ethos. Nonetheless, with every attempt to grasp the concept more firmly in theoretical or empirical terms, the notion seemed to become more elusive.

At this point, many others would have discarded the plan for a handbook because of the lack of a coherent topic. Of course, it was not in Fritz's nature to give up easily. He engaged even more vigorously together with Karin to push things forward. In the spring of 2017, together with Terence Lovat and Johannes Bauer, the editorial team formed and we started inviting contributors from all over the world. With many authors responding positively and the book proposal being accepted for Springer's International Handbook series, our confidence grew that the project would eventually turn out successfully.

Furthermore, Fritz continued to discuss the topic of teacher ethos with many scholars and teachers. One of the results of this was the emergence of different attempts to consolidate the field by editing books, at least in German. Thus, Fritz's scholar, Michael Zutavern, coedited a German book on teacher ethos with Schärer & Zutavern, in 2018.

Furthermore, Fritz met Martin Drahmman, a young researcher with clear potential. Drahmman studied teacher ethos empirically and was keen on contributing to theoretical progress in the field. He initiated a workshop at the University of Tübingen with invited researchers from German-speaking countries, some of whom had joined the workshop in Bamberg beforehand, while some of them joined in Tübingen for the first time. Drahmman also published an edited book on teacher ethos in German. Tragically, he died suddenly in January 2019 at the age of 35, while studying in the US. Finally, Fritz Oser stepped in as a coeditor of this German book on teacher ethos, Cramer and Oser (2019).

The volume herein represents therefore one further step in fulfilling Fritz's vision and hope for the field of teacher ethos. It extends on all earlier work by drawing on a wider array of international scholars, illustrating well the relevance of the issue and the diversity of facets and approaches to studying it. We are very grateful to all the authors who have contributed in any way, all the way from the book on effective and responsible teaching in 1992, to the various EARLI symposia, to the workshops in Bamberg and Tübingen, and, finally, to all who have given their time and expertise to the publication of this handbook.

As we were approaching the final stages of the editing process, Fritz passed-away, sadly. Even in the last and difficult period of his life, he was fully dedicated to the topic and to completing the project. He also struggled intensively on the topic he intended to contribute: "What would happen if a teacher does not have any ethos?". The volume that readers now have in hand is a tangible tribute to Fritz Oser, both as a scholar and as a person. It is no exaggeration to say that Fritz was the leading scholar in research on teacher ethos. Readers will find evidence for this in the many references to his and his co-workers seminal works in many of the chapters as well as in other literature on the topic. At the same time, the volume transcends his work by bringing together authors from all the different stages of the discussion, all the diverse international perspectives and approaches even though – as readers will recognize – they do not yet form a coherent field of research. Maybe, however,

uniting this heterogeneity in one volume is the best feature of the book. It is our hope that it will contribute to setting the stage for future research on teacher ethos. It is up to us, the researchers, now to work to answer Fritz's question: "What is a teacher without ethos?"

**Part II**  
**Historical Perspectives of Teacher Ethos**

# Chapter 2

## Historical Perspective on the Moral Character of Teachers



Richard D. Osguthorpe

### Introduction

It has long been held that teacher ethos is important; that teachers need to be of good moral character. “If there is a truism in education, it is that good teaching requires a teacher to be knowledgeable in content, skilled in method, and moral in character” (Osguthorpe, 2008, p. 288). Teachers need to know their subject matter and have the pedagogical expertise to convey that subject matter in differentiated ways so that all students can learn, but they also need to embody an ethos and moral character that reflects the highest position of public trust in society. In this way, teachers can be both effective and responsible (Oser et al., 1992) in carrying out their influential role and respected function.

The rationale for this claim has most often had some connection to the potential impact that teacher ethos (henceforth the moral character of teachers) might have on the moral development of students, and it has evolved in important ways over time and given rise to robust programs of research and scholarly lines of inquiry. These lines of inquiry that provide historical perspective on the role of moral character in teaching point to important perennial questions that do not have definitive answers but continue to point up the importance of moral character in teaching. From the “moral principles” espoused by Dewey (1909) to the “moral dimensions” articulated by Goodlad et al. (1990), philosophers have studied the importance of teacher ethos and its connection to the moral education of children in schools and the moral and ethical base for teacher professionalism (Sokkett, 1993; Strike & Ternasky, 1993). Some primary questions that emerge from this scholarship include: Why do we need teachers of good moral character? And how morally good do teachers need to be in order to carry out their educative and ethical responsibilities? (see Osguthorpe, 2008).

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Drawing on this body of scholarship, this chapter examines these questions with particular emphasis on providing historical perspective on the importance of the moral character of teachers. The first section examines claims of the importance of moral character of teachers in: philosophical and historical analyses; studies of teaching connected to the social and behavioral sciences; and programmatic approaches to moral education in schools. The second section connects this importance of moral character to its practical manifestation in the preparation of teachers—namely attending to the moral character and dispositions of teacher candidates in teacher education programs. In conclusion, connection is made to the principles of quality teaching that rely on the moral character of teachers, as well as a fundamental distinction that illuminates the way in which the moral character of teachers informs every activity of teaching.

## **The Importance of Teachers' Moral Character**

Claims of the importance of the moral character of teachers are often connected to the possible relationship between moral character of teachers and the moral development of students. Following the Aristotelian tradition, the primary assumption of these claims is that the moral character of teachers is “picked-up” or “caught” by a student, such that who a teacher is morally has an effect on who a student becomes morally. However appealing these types of claims may be, there is little empirical evidence to show that this relationship obtains between teacher and student—particularly in schools (Osguthorpe, 2008; see also Sirotnik, 1990). Instead of empirical evidence that confirms a relationship, these types of claims rest on philosophical tradition and historical presupposition, as well as a general lack of disconfirming empirical evidence. Together, these factors help explain the pervasiveness and staying power of this claim, and they also highlight the intuitive appeal of any suggestion that teachers should be of good moral character.

## **Philosophical and Historical Perspective**

This notion of the significance of teachers' moral character is evident in some of the most prominent education theories (see Dewey, 1909), and in much of the theoretical scholarship related to the moral work of teaching that grew out of seminal studies in the 1990s (see Campbell, 1997, 2003; Fenstermacher, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2002; Goodlad et al., 1990; Hansen, 1993, 1998, 2001a, b; Nash, 1997; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Sockett, 1993; Strike, 1990, 1999; Strike & Soltis, 1992; Tom, 1984). These scholars describe a variety of different (sometimes competing) perspectives on the moral nature of teachers' work in school classrooms, but they all emphasize the importance of teachers' moral character given its potential impact on the moral development of students (see Osguthorpe, 2009).

**The Moral Dimensions of Teaching** Of particular note are those scholars who contributed to the edited volume on the moral dimensions of teaching (Goodlad et al., 1990). The book contains multiple accounts that emphasize the importance of the moral character of the teacher. In his chapter, Fenstermacher (1990) suggests:

The morality of the teacher may have a considerable impact on the morality of the student. The teacher is a model for the students, such that the particular and concrete meaning of such traits as honesty, fair play, consideration of others, tolerance, and sharing are “picked up,” as it were, by observing, imitating, and discussing what teachers do in classrooms. (p. 133)

Fenstermacher places great weight on the ways in which the moral character of the teacher informs every activity of teaching. Similarly, Strike (1990) proposes a connection between the moral character of teachers and their legal and ethical responsibilities in classrooms. He suggests that “the ethics of teaching should be connected directly with a set of desired educational outcomes. The assumption is that teacher character or behavior has some effect on student character or behavior” (p. 205). And in summarizing several of the contributions, Sirotnik (1990) describes additional claims of the importance of moral character:

Sockett suggest that educators-to-be acquire a sense of personal and collegial accountability, a desire for creating climates of caring and trust, a habit of reflective practice, and a sense of community. The virtues of honesty, responsibility, and respect argues Clark, must be ingrained in the beginning teachers lest they resort to the temptations of nonmoral behavior in the heat of pedagogical struggle...Finally, Thomas reminds us that moral character and responsibility must be recognized in...a moral learning community...and that teachers must be prepared to break through the culture of isolation and act on moral obligation to collaborate.

These latter contributors to this seminal work suggest some reasons for wanting teachers of good moral character that go beyond outcomes associated with developing the moral character of students, but they all place preeminent import on the moral character of teachers.

## Theories of Moral Character and Education

Scholarly work related to the moral dimensions of teaching coincided with the development of multiple theories of moral education and development that highlighted the importance of the moral character of teachers, including related theories based on justice (Kohlberg, 1981) and care (Noddings, 1984). For example, from the theoretical position of care ethics, Noddings (1992) argues for the importance of moral character, given the teacher’s role as the “carer” or “one-caring.” Teachers have the opportunity to establish caring relationships with students that result in the transmission of moral character from teacher to student: “children who are properly cared for by people who genuinely model social and ethical virtues are likely to develop those virtues themselves” (Noddings, 2002, p. 1).



This same type of claim is also prevalent in other theories of moral education. For example, Sichel (1988) argues that a teacher's moral character has the most significant impact on the moral education that occurs in the classroom:

In an important way, teacher morality and the moral character of teachers influence the moral education that students receive. Teachers are not just facilitators or leaders of moral discussions or Socratic midwives, but serve as models for students...Teachers influence student morality by the persons they are, how they act, how they relate to a student, what they say, how and what they teach, and what student behavior and achievement they expect. (p. 225)

Sichel's philosophy of moral education demonstrates several commonly held beliefs concerning the moral impact of teaching and teachers. First among these is that teachers have an impact on the moral development of students "by the persons they are." This claim is suffused through the philosophical literature on moral education and the moral dimensions of teaching.

## History of Moral Character and Education

Finally, the importance of moral character is also evident from an historical perspective. Although histories of moral education are scarce (Vinovskis, 1995), they offer important insight into the significance of teachers' moral character in schools. McClellan (1999) argues that one of the primary purposes for the creation of the public school in America was to subject students to intense moral education (particularly children of lower classes and immigrants), on the assumption that it would bring harmony and order to the burgeoning republic. The approach to moral education in the home, which relied primarily on the mother "exhibiting constant Christian virtue" (p. 20), became the prototype for moral education in the school. Thus paramount to this approach was a teacher's moral character; an ability to engage in the moral development of students by setting a good example that corresponded to that of the mother in the home.

For this reason, single women in particular were sought as teachers. McClellan (1999) argues that these women carried a responsibility to be moral exemplars in the classroom and also in their everyday lives:

What qualified particular women for teaching positions was their character and reputation rather than any special training or even their general level of education.... The primary task of the female teacher in the classroom was to exercise strong moral influence on the child, reinforcing the lessons of the mother both by serving as a model and by eliciting proper behavior from the child...Like the mother herself, the teacher of the nineteenth century carried a heavy burden of moral responsibility.... As models, teachers were expected to exhibit virtue both in and outside the classroom. Always subject to a severe public scrutiny, they had little privacy and virtually no latitude for mistakes in moral judgment. (p. 24)

Thus historical perspective on the importance of moral character mirrors the philosophical claims that the moral character of teachers is directly connected to the moral development of students.

## The Social and Behavioral Sciences Research

Those who have empirically studied the processes of moral education and moral development in schools have also made a case for teachers to be of good moral character, even when they call into question other methods of moral and character education. These studies have rarely focused solely on moral character, but it has often been explored in relation to studies of moral education and moral development writ large. And although little empirical evidence is used to substantiate the importance of moral character, it nonetheless remains a prevalent assumption in this body of literature that moral character is a critical component of teaching.

### Character Education Inquiry

For example, the landmark study conducted by Hartshorne and May in the 1920s, found no evidence to suggest that direct instruction in the virtues had any positive effect on the moral development of students. However, in what they called the “Character Education Inquiry”, they often suggest that the moral character or personality of a teacher has an important influence. Hartshorne and May (1928-1930) contend that teachers who are respectful would certainly have a more positive effect on their students:

It is not possible, with the data at hand, to distinguish between the influence of the teacher's personality and that of her method. The personality factors could be objectively studied if time permitted and would doubtless resolve themselves into particular manners and skills, most of which could be controlled. Some of these manners and skills would be found to be included in the general theory underlying the more advanced schools, such as respect for the pupil's personality. Many teachers, quite untouched by modern movements in educational practice, show genuine respect for their pupils in educational practice, show genuine respect for their pupils in their contacts with them, so that even formal classroom procedures have, under their guidance, a quite different moral effect from what is found when such respect is lacking. (p. 324)

Hartshorne and May admit that their data set does not necessarily support these conclusions, but believe that the truth of these claims is self-evident.

When Hartshorne and May attempted to account for the differences in scores (on morality tests) between classrooms, they determined that the most important factor was the character and personality of the teacher:

Certainly we find extreme differences in the deceptiveness of classrooms that may be accounted for in part, at least, by reference to some such difference among teachers in personality and attitude. (pp. 324–325)

In a further attempt to substantiate these findings, Hartshorne and May conducted another test of the schools in their study. They concluded that not only was the teacher-student relation influential, but that individual differences in character and personality among teachers might account for some of the differences between the

levels of deceit in classrooms within the same school. As Hartshorne and May (1928-1930) state,

By all these observed facts we felt confirmed in our assumption that the critical influence had been exerted by the teacher who had had the pupils the previous year....The hypothesis may be entertained, then, that a subtle difference between teachers, exists, even when all are working consciously and skillfully along progressive lines, and that this difference is occasionally large enough to account for wide differences in deceptive behavior. In further investigations it should be borne in mind, however, that even here variations in home background and in the character of particular children may account for a particular teacher's success or failure in any given year by introducing thus into any brief record a large element of chance. (pp. 327-329)

This influential study is often cited as an argument against the usefulness of certain methods of moral education. However, in the absence of confirming evidence of the various methods they studied, Hartshorne and May still assert the potential strong influence of a teacher's moral character, personality, and attitude on students in their charge.

## The Moral Character Study

Another study of moral education, which looked more broadly at moral development and employed the "new methods" of social anthropology, followed closely on the heels of Hartshorne and May's (although it was not concluded for nearly 30 years). As part of their longitudinal "Moral Character Study," Peck and Havighurst (1960) explored possible influences for "character change." They found that none of the children in their study experienced a change in moral character (from their baseline measurement at the beginning of the study). They argue that "it seldom seems to happen that a child of ten—or even younger, perhaps—who is living with his parents, forms as deeply penetrating or profoundly influential relatedness with anyone outside his home" (p. 161). When participants in their study did form relationships of this sort, they served only as reinforcements for earlier character formation:

Even such a new influence, probably as effectual as the child was likely to encounter, seemed on the whole to bring out and intensify his or her already-existing feelings, more than it produced change in those deepest-held habits and attitudes which constitute the child's "personality" or "character structure." (p. 161)

In effect, Peck and Havighurst maintain that character development takes place primarily in the home and that schools have little influence:

The influence of the child's home is so paramount that it is difficult to find later-exerted forces which may have much effect in changing it....By the age of ten—indeed, perhaps much earlier—whatever character the child has, he is likely to have for life, in most cases.... It is important to note that the methods of didactic teaching, "reform" schools, and preaching, used by themselves, are apt to have little practical effect. At their best, such methods, seem to be mildly ameliorative, and discouraging results can be expected more often than not. (p. 162)

Peck and Havighurst maintain that outside influences, such as teachers, have little chance of having an effect on the moral character of the child, because “later influences seldom are intensively enough and personally enough exerted...to make any noteworthy change in the character of its children, for good or for ill” (p. 186). While they go to great lengths to dispel any notion that teachers (or other extra-family forces) have any impact on the moral development of students via direct methods of instruction, Peck and Havighurst believe that teachers do have an indirect influence on moral development.

For example, Peck and Havighurst (1960) also argue that character reformation will only take place in schools where teachers take on the role of parent in one-on-one situations, and that this interaction “requires that the ‘teacher’ of character personally possess genuinely mature feelings, attitudes and ethical behavior, or no success can be expected” (p. 190). For Peck and Havighurst, this finding demonstrates the importance of teachers’ moral character, and has important implications for practice:

It appears that if character is really as important to us Americans as we say it is, then there should be rigorous, alert recruiting and selection of teachers and other youth leaders on grounds of *maturity of personality and character*. Their own natures are going to influence children much more than any verbal information they convey. (p. 191, emphasis in original)

In sum, despite finding no causal connection between forces for character formation and actual moral development, Peck and Havighurst place great emphasis on the moral character of the teacher. And, while acknowledging a lack of empirical evidence, claim that the moral character of a teacher has an impact on the moral development of students.

## The Moral Life of Schools Project

Other scholars have taken a less quantitative and longitudinal approach to exploring the importance of the moral character of a teacher. Some have taken a more ethnographic approach (see Jackson et al., 1993), while others have combined philosophical and empirical modes of inquiry (see Campbell, 2003; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001). And although each study comes to different conclusions (and arrives at these conclusions in different ways), the significance of teachers’ moral character is central to each study. For example, Jackson et al. (1993) set out to “investigate the ways in which moral considerations permeate the everyday life of schools and classrooms” (Jackson et al., 1993, p. xiv). Of the many moral influences they identified, the importance of the moral character of the teacher is captured in the category they describe as “expressive morality in the classroom.” This category suggests that the moral character of the teacher is the content of moral instruction in the classroom (citing Emerson): “We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by their

overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment” (Jackson et al., 1993, p. 34).

## The Ethical Teacher

An example of a study that combines conceptual and qualitative inquiry is Campbell’s research, which culminated in the publication of *The Ethical Teacher*. In it, Campbell (2003) describes how students acquire moral character from their interactions with teachers:

Students learn lessons about morality through their experiences with teachers. They can sense when teachers genuinely care about them; they can sniff out hypocrisy in a flash; and they are alert to differences between the supercilious and the authentic. Ultimately, the moral impact on students of what they see and hear around them is significant. (p. 24)

This impact is the direct result of the teacher’s moral character, which Campbell believes is naturally picked-up on by students.

Based on interviews and observations in teachers’ classrooms, Campbell contends that teaching is a moral endeavor and that morality is ever-present in the classroom:

Moral messages abound in classrooms and schools where teachers’ actions and attitudes towards others, most notably students, demonstrate varying levels of sensitivity to a range of moral and ethical principles.... In this respect, the curriculum choices teachers make in structuring lessons, the pedagogical decisions they take, their casual social exchanges with students as well as their more formalized approaches to discipline and classroom management, their method of evaluation, and many other discretionary aspects of their work all have the potential to influence others in profound moral and ethical ways. (p. 26)

Campbell makes the connection here between the moral character of teachers, the moral activities of teaching, and the moral impact on students. Again, the relationship that is believed to obtain between the moral character of teachers and the moral development of students, is prevalent in the social and behavioral sciences literature, as well as research that combines multiple methods and modes of inquiry.

## The “Programmatic” Literature

Most foundational practitioners of moral education—particularly those who have created programs of moral and character education in schools—claim that the teacher’s example is an important component of moral education, and that without good moral character, a teacher’s moral instruction is not effective (for some of the earliest programmatic arguments, see Bennett, 1992, 1995, 1998; Benninga, 1991; Deroche & Williams, 1998; Kilpatrick, 1992; Lickona, 1991; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Wynne & Ryan, 1997). Proponents of moral education programs often argue that a

teacher's moral character, and the example that results, is more important than the program itself. Such claims are based on the importance of modeling and are often an extrapolation of the impact of modeling in the parenting literature (see Wentzel, 2002; see also Berkowitz & Grych, 1998, 2000). Two examples of researchers who have emphasized the importance of modeling are included below, but the claims are ubiquitous in the character education program literature.

## Building Character in Schools

Kevin Ryan played a primary role in the rise in prominence of character education programs in U.S. schools during the 1990s, and those programs have remained a fixture in many schools for the past several decades. Along with many others, he made a case for the direct instruction of virtue that relied on the moral character of the teacher to be effective. This approach is captured in the six *Es* of character education that serve as the foundation for any attempt to engage in developing character in students. The most important element of this approach is the example of the teacher: "ultimately, it is the *person*, not the teacher, who makes a lasting impression on his or her students...The examples provided by parents, teachers, and all the adults who are closest to children are the most powerful moral educators" (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, p. 142).

## The Science of Character Education

In their continued work to catalog effective practices in character education and develop a science of character education, Berkowitz et al. (2017) provide a systematic review of what works in classrooms to promote moral character (see also Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, 2007, 2014). They describe effective practices according to a six component framework and draw conclusions from their analysis that connect best practices in character education to those that also increase academic achievement. Of note, in their framework, they emphasize the importance of modeling moral character, suggesting:

All adults who exist in the school environment need to model what they want students to be and do. Students need to also be exposed to other role models, especially including exemplars and covering all aspects of good character—performance, civic, intellectual, civic and moral character. (p. 40)

In their analysis, the importance of the moral character of teachers in effective character education practices is a product of the modeling that occurs in everyday classroom life and instruction.

In summary, these examples provide but a few of the many descriptions in the scholarly literature that argue for the importance of the moral character of a teacher.

These arguments are found in philosophical and historical accounts, as well as in the social and behavioral sciences research and in programmatic approaches to character education. Almost all of these claims of importance of teachers' moral character are couched in the possible relationship between the moral character of a teacher and the development of moral character in students. This review shows that it is a claim that cuts across disciplines, methodologies, and approaches, but evidence for these claims is lacking and suggests other reasons for wanting teachers of good moral character.

## **Attending to the Moral Character of Teachers in Teacher Education**

Practical attention to the moral character of teachers has focused primarily on assessing and developing the moral character or dispositions of those preparing to be teachers. These efforts are based on the same truism stated earlier—that teachers need to understand their subject matter (knowledge), develop the necessary methods to convey that subject matter to students (skills), and think, feel, and act according to high moral and ethical standards (dispositions). This tripartite distinction has commandeered a prominent role in the discussion of teachers' moral character. And the turn to dispositions, character, and ethos has opened up additional avenues for examining why we want teachers of good moral character in the first place. For some teacher educators, those reasons are directly connected to the developing moral character in students and, for others, those reasons are connected to the ways in which moral character informs pedagogy.

## **Dispositions and Developing Moral Character in Students**

For some teacher educators, the reasons for wanting teachers of high moral character is directly connected to their possible influence on the moral development of students. For example, Weber (1998) contends that good teacher preparation programs should, first and foremost, foster the moral development of teacher candidates in order to prepare them to do the same with their future students:

It is my belief that an effective teacher education program must begin with the personal ethical/moral development of the prospective teacher and, further, that the college or university bears responsibility for fostering such development in all of its students. If our future teachers are to guide others toward moral maturity, they must possess a certain level of moral maturity and be capable of making choices based on moral principles. We would not even consider the possibility that teachers who have not been prepared in math, science, or social studies should attempt to teach these subjects. Similarly, if we expect teachers to provide character education to children and youth, we should provide them with a background that includes an understanding of moral principles and experiences in ethical reasoning. (p. 87)

Weber wants teacher education programs to focus on the moral character of teacher candidates, as well as prepare them in the content of morality (moral principles and moral reasoning) in the same way that such programs attend to the development of knowledge in a specific content area and skill in instructional methods.

Likewise, Watson (1998) maintains, “If teachers are to foster the development of their students’ character, they will themselves need to be moral, caring, and socially skilled so that they can demonstrate important skills and understandings in word and deed” (p. 65). She also suggests that teacher education programs must *select* teacher candidates of good moral character, if they want those teacher candidates to have an impact on the moral development of their future students.

In order to contribute to children’s character development in schools, teacher preparation programs must begin by selecting candidates who appear to be principled, caring, and responsible people...(pp. 8–9)

Thus Watson wants teacher education programs to attend to the moral character of a teacher because of the possible influence it might have on the moral development of future students. She emphasizes that this attention should include both selecting teacher candidates of good moral character and the helping students to develop their moral character in connection with their pedagogy. This presumed relationship is typically the justification put forth for wanting teachers of good moral character. In other words, teacher education programs want to prepare teachers of good moral character because they want students of good moral character and they want teachers to teach morality. Given the prominence of the claim that the moral character of teachers influences the moral development of students, it is difficult to argue against this orientation for valuing the moral character of teachers.

## Dispositions and Improving Pedagogy

Watson’s connection to pedagogy, specifically her approach to creating caring classroom communities through developmental discipline (Watson & Ecken, 2019) highlights the importance of both selecting and developing dispositions of teacher candidates because of the potential impact on the moral development of students, but it also implies other reasons for focusing on the moral character of the teacher. That is, there are additional reasons for wanting teachers of good moral character and disposition that go beyond the moral development of students. And these reasons focus on the multiple ways that teacher dispositions inform every activity of teaching. In many countries, the emphasis on dispositions, character traits, ethos, etc. was initially driven by accrediting bodies that required teacher education programs to develop and assess the elements of teaching practice that go beyond knowledge of subject matter and methodological skills. For example, in the United States, the accrediting body during the early 2000s defined dispositions as:

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and



development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 56)

These beliefs, commitments, values, attitudes, etc. comprise the moral character and dispositions of teachers, and they highlight how dispositions connect to the everyday practice of teaching.

The accreditation purpose of assessing dispositions did not connect to the possible influence that the moral character of teachers might have on the development of moral character in students. Instead, the purpose focused on how the dispositions of teachers might influence their pedagogy. For example, a commitment to fairness and equity might dispose a teacher to design a lesson that attends to the learning needs of all students; or an attitude of caring might dispose a teacher to act with compassion towards a struggling student; or a value of responsibility might dispose a teacher to provide timely feedback on a test.

This connection between moral dispositions and pedagogy is captured in the scholarly literature that identifies tensions related to teacher ethos and dispositions (Diez, 2006, 2007), makes a case for "teaching as a moral practice" (Murrell et al., 2010), and argues for the primacy of teacher ethos as dispositions (Sockett, 2012). For example, Murrell et al. (2010) argue that teaching is inherently a moral activity and, thereby, attending to the moral dispositions of teachers is paramount to adequately preparing them for inhabiting the role of teacher. Likewise, Sockett (2012) provides an extensive elaboration of a dispositions-as-virtues approach, as well as an articulation of how such an approach might be implemented and assessed in a teacher education program. Additionally, he makes a case for the moral being epistemologically primary and paramount in educational inquiry and describes how this alternative conception differs from others who have championed the moral "dimensions" of teaching. His work underscores the importance of moral character in teaching and sets it apart from simple moral education.

Work on moral dispositions in teacher education has not been accomplished without tensions and problems (see Diez, 2007). However, regardless of theoretical perspective and orientation, it is certainly agreed that the moral character and disposition of teachers is of primary importance, if only because most problems in the preparation of teachers are directly connected to issues of moral character. That is, teacher candidates who exhibit a lack of moral character in the classroom present real challenges for teacher educators—typically more difficult challenges than result from a lack of content knowledge or methodological skill (see Osguthorpe, 2013).

Moreover, the primacy of moral character (dispositions) in teacher education is a reflection of scholarship that has continued to emphasize the moral work of teaching and explore conceptions of teaching that do not reduce teaching to merely technical work. This attention to dispositions also provides insight into the ways that moral character not only contributes to the development of moral character in students, but also improves the pedagogy of teachers. And this accentuation of pedagogy underscores the need to continue to examine the ways that moral character influences

every activity of teaching, calling to mind the distinction between teaching morally and teaching morality (see Fenstermacher et al., 2009). In this sense, it might be said that teachers teach in ways that align with their moral character, and they also teach moral character. Such a distinction provides additional substance for the importance of the moral character of teachers.

## Conclusion

This chapter provided some historical, philosophical, and practical (via moral education and teacher education) perspective on the importance of the moral character of teachers. This perspective is predicated on the notion that knowledge, skills, and character (or disposition) are critical elements of teaching, and this same perspective is heavily influenced by claims that the moral character of teachers is connected to the development of moral character in students. As evidenced in this chapter, most of the claims of the importance of moral character are connected to the teacher as moral exemplar and model. And, although seminal empirical studies do not substantiate such claims, it is still widely held that the moral character of teachers is important—both in the selection and development of teachers.

The contemporary practical manifestation of moral character in schools is most apparent in the attention to dispositions of teacher candidates in teacher education programs. The reasons for attending to moral dispositions range from simply avoiding cases of teacher moral turpitude to wanting teachers to model moral character for students. However, these reasons often overlook the more powerful claim that teaching must be morally good for it to be quality teaching (see Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005). In other words, without attention to the moral character of the teacher and the moral goodness of the pedagogy, teaching might still be effective (in a technical sense), but it will never be of any quality. Thus the importance of the moral character of the teacher is directly connected to the outcome of quality teaching that is both effective and responsible.

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## Chapter 3

# Teacher Ethos in Islam and the Pre-Islamic East



Terence Lovat

## Introduction

The most routine account in Western scholarship of Islamic ideas on education and teaching suggests that they emanate essentially from the world of the Greeks, filtered by Judaism and Christianity and then borrowed in some fashion by Islam. Some accounts will acknowledge a distinctive contribution by Islam in preserving elements of Greek scholarship, especially Aristotelianism that might otherwise have been lost to the West. Even these more generous accounts fail however to escape an inevitable Western colonizing of these ideas, taking insufficient account of the vast influence on Islam of cultures far older than that of the Greeks and indeed quite likely ones that influenced the Greeks. Through studying some of these alternative lines of Islamic heritage, we may gain more penetrating insight into a past that sheds a different light on Islam's contributions to ideas on education and teaching as well as into lines of influence that have contributed to the West in ways insufficiently acknowledged.

The issue at the centre of this handbook, namely teacher ethos, offers an opportunity to explore these alternative lines and the point of connection may be found in the life and work of Pythagoras (569–475 BCE). In the Western colonizing discourse referred to above, Pythagoras is normally cast as Greek, pure and simple, and as the progenitor of the great Hellenistic philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and therefore of the Athenian ideas that would go on to revolutionize Western civilization and, in turn, influence medieval Islam. Pythagoras is therefore cast as a kind of godfather of all things Western, with Islam little more than a grateful recipient. Samos, the island of Pythagoras's birth, however, was a land far closer to modern-day Turkey than Greece, with a heritage more mixed than simply Greek and with a distinctive dialect that was arguably more Dorian than Greek. Furthermore, when he

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left Samos, he travelled extensively in the Arabic and Persian worlds, places where it would seem many of his most distinctive ideas were formed. In that sense, he offers at least as much insight into the East as the West and his influence on Islam might well be more direct than most Western scholarship would convey.

## Pythagoras

As suggested, the life and influence of Pythagoras is a useful place to begin a probe into the foundations of the teacher ethos to be found in the pre-Islamic to Islamic East. Pythagoras serves as a bridge between the East and the West, born as he was on Samos and having travelled, worked and pondered much throughout Egypt, Babylon, Persia, India and other Eastern ports before settling in Southern Italy and going on to influence what would become the cradle of both Western and Eastern civilizations. Antisthenes (445–365 BCE) is reputed to have said of his educational wisdom that he possessed a certain genius in being able to tailor his teaching to the needs of each individual. For Antisthenes, this was true educational wisdom, just as it was educational stupidity to impose the same teaching means and style on everyone, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses (Horky, 2013).

Antisthenes's caricature, written a century or so after Pythagoras's death, bespeaks an important element of the latter's educational legacy and is especially pertinent to our exploration of his ethos as a teacher. The testimony suggests that Pythagoras understood well what modern educational theorists might refer to as 'individual differences', that the best kind of learning occurs not in a context of standardized expectations and testing but one in which the strengths, weaknesses, interests and dispositions of the individual student are taken into account and catered for. According to the definitive biography of Pythagoras by the sixteenth century Thomas Stanley (2016), this educational belief emanated essentially from his wider world belief that each individual, man and woman (for women were welcome in the Pythagorean academies), had potential to transcend their human existence and reach a god-like state of being. The key to achieving this ultimate goal for any individual was education, well-crafted and tailored to that individual. In this sense, Pythagoras's teaching ethos rested on a profound respect for the individuals in his care. For him, teaching was tantamount to a divine task; the teacher was effectively charged by the gods with responsibility to get to know his/her students so as to fit them out for an education that would facilitate them reaching their full potential.

In the introduction to Stanley (2016), Henry Drake says of Pythagoras that he "... sought to produce an advanced type of human being – the insightful, creative man (sic!) of character, inquiring mind, depth of feeling, thoughtful disposition, practical understanding and, above all, spiritual sensitivity ... each individual has within his basic nature certain qualities which, when cultivated under proper instruction, make it possible for him (sic!) to mature into the likeness of a divine being." (p. 21). We see in this a view of teaching as a powerful function but also a deeply moral and (in his case) spiritual one, a view that impelled a profound respect for

each individual and an allied need for the teacher to model whatever it is that was ultimately hoped for of the student. According to Stanley, this view led to a holism in pedagogical awareness that has often evaded teachers and teaching theory in the many years since, one that understood the need for a balanced curriculum, in Pythagoras's case between his beloved mathematics and philosophy and the creative arts, and to the need to cater to students' overall wellbeing. For Pythagoras, there were three elements in each individual that had to be catered for in any effective education, namely, intelligence, reason and passion. Catering to these required a comprehensive and holistic approach to curriculum and pedagogy.

In a word, we have in this ancient exemplar, the kinds of ideals for the teaching role of which John Dewey (1964), Richard S. Peters (1981) and David Carr (2006, 2007), among many other moral educators, have proposed. We also have a live model for the kind of holistic teaching proffered in many more modern moral education, character education and values education programs (Arthur, 2003; Benninga et al., 2006; Nucci & Narvaez, 2008; Lovat, 2019a; Lovat et al., 2011).

So, are these ideas original ones or did Pythagoras learn about them from his many travels, especially to the East and Middle East? We will never know for sure exactly what he learned where but we are able to surmise it from what we know of some of the places he visited and where he resided, was tutored and worked before returning to the West.

## Learning from the East

Pythagoras's first venture was to study with the priests of Egypt in around 535 BCE, a region with a particularly sophisticated educational tradition (Bakhshween, 2013) that had been well in place for thousands of years before Pythagoras arrived there. The heart of such education was to be found in its concentration on a balance between the academic, the moral and the practical. Ultimately, it was designed to equip the individual with the intellectual, ethical and pragmatic skills necessary to playing an empowered and useful role in society. The key to its success was in its being tailored to the individual and the balance between staged and personal expectations. This is the educational environment into which Pythagoras would have stepped.

Ten years later, Egypt was invaded by Persia and, as a result, Pythagoras found himself influenced by the cultures of Babylon and Persia. Babylon had been invaded by the Persians under Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE and, as a result, became one of the cultural centres of the ancient world, with education (albeit largely of an elite kind) a high priority. In Babylon, it seems Pythagoras entered into the world of the Chaldaeans, a philosophical group especially concerned with astronomy. He would there have been exposed to the many centuries of astronomical discoveries that surpassed all others in the ancient world (Hunger & Pingree, 1999), no doubt accounting for one of Pythagoras's abiding passions in astronomy (Stanley, 2016).



Farhang et al. (2012) offer a comprehensive coverage of education in ancient Persia, including in its Zoroastrian influences. Ancient Persia possessed one of the most organized and integrated education structures of the ancient world. While remaining essentially elitist, nonetheless, it did move over time to include wider layers of society by providing forms of state-sponsored education for those who would not otherwise have been in a position to fund their own education. One example of this was military education. While the breaking down of elitism in education would have to wait for the influence of Islam (Dorrani, 1997; Zamiri, 1998), Pythagoras would have learned a number of things that would have formed his own teaching ethos. These include that: education was a vital means for individual and societal development; it was a holistic quest encompassing everything from basic communicative skills through to scientific and historical knowledge; and, furthermore, it was designed to prepare young people for practical engagement in their societies. Importantly, he would also have learned that the role of the teacher was a revered one. In Persia, the teacher role was akin to that of a priest, effectively standing for the gods before the young person, responsible for modelling the maturity and holiness that the gods willed for the individual, as well as providing the content and pedagogy that would be most effective in achieving such a lofty goal (Hekmat, 1971). On the Day of Resurrection, it was said that the good teacher would be especially honoured for the work performed in preparing so many other souls for Paradise (Sediq, 1975).

By the time Pythagoras returned to the Graeco-Roman West, he would have been exposed to a raft of sophisticated educational ideas and structures, including lofty ideals around teacher ethos. One sees clearly in Stanley's (2016) account of his life how these ideas and ideals played out in the Pythagorean academies and how they went onto influence the Western education tradition, especially through the Hellenistic Period and the foundational philosophers of the West from the Sophists to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. What is less understood in the West is that Pythagoras had a similar influence on the Eastern and Middle Eastern worlds, the very ones wherein he had learned much of his teaching craft. The idea that this influence was a 'one-way street' from Hellenism down does little justice to the likelihood that much of what Pythagoras contributed to the East was actually learned from the East.

## Pythagoras and Islamic Views on Teacher Ethos

We cannot know what influence Pythagoras or any of the preceding cultures had on the origins of Islam, the so-called 'revelation era', but we do know that the conception of Muhammad as a teacher of extraordinary capacity was central to the legend surrounding that era (Ghuddah, 2010). In contrast, we have a welter of evidence of Pythagorean and allied cultural influence on the development of Islam across the first few centuries, including on its remarkable cultural, scientific and educational achievements across the Middle East and Southern Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

Pythagoras's influence on Islamic scholarship would appear to have been profound, ranging from the use of his famous geometrical theorem in the development of medicine and psychology by Abu Sahn Hassan al-Tabari (838–870 CE), a renowned Persian medical practitioner, theologian and philosopher (Sami et al., 2017). Of some interest to this work is al-Tabari's early ponderings on the virtues proper to the healer in order to be successful and esteemed, in both human and God's eyes: "... all physicians had to possess *alrifq* (leniency and kindness), *ra-mah* (mercy and compassion), *qanii'ah* (contentedness and gratification), and '*afif* (chastity with simplicity)." (Sami et al., p. 930) These virtues bear a remarkable similarity to Pythagoras's sentiments about the virtues of the teacher, referred to in this book as teacher ethos.

We know that the great polymath, al-Farabi (870–951 CE) was fascinated by some of Pythagoras's musical theories (Haluska, 2003) but more prominent is his direct influence in bringing the works of Plato and Aristotle to the Muslim world. Granted the influence of Pythagoras on these giants of Hellenistic philosophy and their abiding impact on educational theory and the role of the teacher, we can surmise that Pythagoras's influence was present, at the very least in indirect fashion. Al-Talbi (1993) sums up al-Farabi's educational theory in a way that clearly replicates that of Pythagoras: "... the whole activity of education, in al-Farabi's view, can be summed up as the acquisition of values, knowledge and practical skills by the individual, within a particular period and a particular culture. The goal of education is to lead the individual to perfection since the human being was created for this purpose, and the goal of humanity's existence in this world is to attain happiness, which is the highest perfection—the absolute good." (p. 356).

Al-Talbi cites al-Farabi's reference to the virtues that signal success in education as being both rational and ethical, virtues that must be instilled through balanced curriculum and pedagogy aimed at the individual's needs and dispositions, rather than through standardized means. For al-Farabi, education was for all citizens, appropriate to their talents and station. Al-Farabi's philosophy of the teacher role also reflects that of Pythagoras. It is a role akin to that of the priest or, in this case, the imam. 'Imam', in Arabic, connotes one who is well-regarded and whose example, or modelling, is followed. The teacher role is a divine one; the teacher stands before the student in the place of God. The teacher in Islam follows in the footsteps of the Prophet, the human being who most unswervingly stood in the place of God, whose instructions were most wise and who provided the supreme model for all Muslims to follow.

Interestingly, Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, also addressed Pythagoras directly in relation to his music and music education theory (Shehida, 1995). Like al-Farabi, he differed with the Islamic Pythagoreans of his day but not necessarily with Pythagoras himself. As with al-Farabi, one finds eerie similarities to Pythagoras in Avicenna's educational thinking but, in his case, the focus is more overtly on method (Nowrozi et al., 2013). Avicenna shares the same high-minded view of education and teaching as Pythagoras and al-Farabi. Teaching is a divine quest designed to bring the human to fulfilment as potentiated by God. He stresses the ethical nature of it and the lofty responsibilities on the teacher to model the goals being set.

Avicenna's ideas about methods are therefore premised on this quest and its associated goals. Methods are not just those with pragmatic ends in mind but with education's ethical and godly ends. In a word, educational method is imbued with ethical and divine overtones.

Hence, again, we find, along with Dewey and others already mentioned, that true education is essentially moral education; the two cannot be separated. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Avicenna's list of methods begins with ethical training. It is through ethical purification that the positive dispositions and good habits associated with educability will be stimulated. Again, reminiscent of Pythagoras, Avicenna labours the importance of addressing emotional as well as pure intellectual needs in students and of devising methods that are tailor-made to individual needs in this regard. Even when addressing issues of cooperative learning, his focus is on the positive effect this can have on the individual, rather than on the measurement and ranking implicit in standardized learning. When expostulating on the importance of training in observation and experimentation, he speaks of the benefits in terms of individual stimulation and 'happiness' (avoidance of boredom) rather than on the intellectual outcomes as such. He speaks of the importance of play in stimulating imagination and of instilling self-discipline rather than imposing punishment. This approach to teaching speaks strongly to the teacher ethos advocated by Avicenna, one that is summarized best in his words about the need for love and kindness. He refers to love and kindness in the context of educational method; for him, this is not a marginal option among teaching methods – it is at the heart of efficacious method: "Thus, the trainability of a child depends on the level to which he or she feels loved as a human and counts as a member of the school family." (Nowrozi et al., p. 174).

On the cover of his book, *Averroes: His Life and Influence*, Majid Fakhry (2001) includes a photo of Raphael's Vatican fresco, *The School of Athens*, showing the Muslim scholar, Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroes, looking over the shoulder of Pythagoras. The fresco summarizes rather well the role that Pythagoras played in influencing Averroes and, as already illustrated, influencing all the foremost scholars of Islam's so-called 'Golden Age'. Equally interesting is the fact that Plato and Aristotle are seen walking together in a completely separate part of the fresco, seeming to suggest that Pythagoras's influence on Islam was a direct one, not necessarily filtered through the Western philosophical tradition, as often supposed!

Averroes shares the high-minded notions of education with Pythagoras and his fellow Muslim scholars. He emphasizes especially the idea of the growth of virtue as the centrepiece of education, a divine and supremely moral enterprise. The main concern in education is how to develop in the young the essential virtues and how to eradicate those dispositions which would hinder their growth. Averroes stresses that the development of knowledge is only useful if it results in practical application. To know is to do, and this is where the teacher as model becomes crucial. The teacher must show the pupil what practical application of knowledge looks like. In Averroes, we see a clear move towards endorsing Qur'anic knowledge, especially as represented in Shari'a Law, as the perfect application of the kind of knowledge that conforms to the essential virtues. In a sense, these virtues are never better represented than by the Five Pillars of Islam.

In the work of Abu al-Ghazali, we see an even closer tying of knowledge to the Islamic ideals conveyed in Islamic lore. Al-Ghazali's opposition to much of the Hellenistic influence on Islam, including from Pythagoras, has been much heralded, an opposition that in turn became an object of critique from Averroes. This points to ongoing debates about the distinctions between philosophy and theology and, in this case, whether Islam is more behoving to one than the other. Beyond all of this, however, there persists a lingering issue over whether Pythagoras is best understood as a progenitor of Hellenistic thought or as an archetype of Islam. It is possible that even some of medieval Islamic scholarship is a little uncertain in this regard. Regardless, what is almost beyond dispute is that the central Pythagorean tenets of education as an essentially divine and profoundly moral enterprise, along with a sensitivity to the individual needs of pupils and the further need for the teacher to model the objects of education as the only efficacious means of education, are found most clearly in al-Ghazali.

Al-Ghazali's magnum opus, *Revival of Religious Sciences*, "... is one of the most comprehensive and influential essays on ethics and education in medieval Islamic culture." (Gil'adi, 2017, p. 45) While al-Ghazali includes Pythagoras among those 'Greek philosophers' whose works must be modified if not rejected in order to fully understand the distinctiveness of Islam, in many ways his educational philosophy is the clearest re-statement of what might be regarded as Pythagoras's 'educational theology' to be found anywhere in Islam or beyond. Al-Ghazali's philosophy is well regarded as a theology as he inserts into his educational thought an overt mystical element, yet one that is, at the same time, aimed at the most practical application. It is centrally about the formation of character, instilling good behaviour and teaching pupils how to avoid the kind of bad behaviour that could result in their immortal loss (Attaran, 1987).

Al-Ghazali wrote at length about early childhood education, displaying a sensitivity to this developmental stage that has often been lacking among those with more updated educational psychology in their training (Gil'adi, 2017). He eschewed rote learning and memorization as ineffective, favouring stimulation of imagination and creative reasoning. This led naturally to his ideas on the essential element in teacher ethos being in mentoring and guiding the child towards those dispositions necessary to such reasoning. He wrote of the need for a balanced curriculum, especially noting the importance of music, and explicitly singing, in the development of imagination and creative reasoning. On behaviour management, he rejected fear and punishment in favour of kindness and encouragement (Orak, 2016). The teacher stood at the one time as a representative of God and *in loco parentis*. The teacher's ethos had to conform to the love and kindness proper to both.

## Teacher Ethos in Islam Today

There is no shortage of literature dealing with updated perspectives on Islamic education today (Al-Attas, 1979; Al-Zeera, 2001; Halstead, 2004; Nasr, 2010; Sultana, 2012; Faryadi, 2015). In each, we gain a sense that the perspectives on teacher ethos

persistently seen above have been retained in modern Islam. Al-Attas (1979) writes in the wake of a large gathering of Muslim educationists in Saudi Arabia in 1977, confronting the dilemma facing Muslim education everywhere, namely that Muslims, including in most Muslim countries, were at risk of losing the essence of Islamic education. This was owing to the dominance of Western education, one regarded as secularized and narrowly geared towards academic and skills-based ends, rather than holistic ones. Al-Attas specifies this difference in terms with which we have become familiar in this exploration of teacher ethos in Islam. He speaks of the need for balance between the intellectual and the spiritual, the pragmatic ends and those pertaining to holistic human achievement according to God's plan, the need for individualized learning and the over-arching importance of the relationship between the teacher and the student. Success in teaching relies on a close, personal and loving relationship between the teacher and each student.

Al-Zeera (2001) also challenges the kind of education most prominent in the West, one that focusses principally on the intellectual and physical aspects of human development. She compares this with what she describes as the methodological aim and structure of Islamic education where the centrality of spiritual and religious factors, along with scholarly ones, are aimed at forming a 'whole and holy' human being. Al-Zeera's teacher ethos seems to rest on the teacher's capacity to utilize 'transformative methodology', modelling and guiding the student in the kind of learning acquisition that leads to such formation: "For a student to be able to think holistically, she or he must be trained and equipped with methods that both develop the mind and discipline the soul." (p. xxvii) She criticizes the narrow intellectual focus of much education: "By so doing, they create unbalanced human beings that have advanced intellectual abilities, yet spiritually are poor and weak." (p. xxvii) The teacher ethos is directed centrally to ensuring balance in this regard, along with the modelling and care that must accompany such a practice. In many ways echoing al-Zeera, Halstead (2004) characterizes the distinctiveness of Islamic education as residing in its focus on individual development, and social and moral education, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge.

Nasr (2010) speaks to the misconception in the modern world about Islamic education that it is oriented to fundamentalism, with special reference to the stereotype in the West about the *madrasah* (Islamic school) being a tool of radical Islam. Nasr outlines how in fact the *madrasah* of early and medieval Islam actually influenced much of Western education, especially in relation to dealing with other religious traditions through dialogue and debate. He speaks of the emphasis in Islam on the balanced and comprehensive curriculum and the revered role of teaching, especially in facilitating philosophical understanding. The teacher ethos is centrally around drawing out of students the innate potential planted there by God. Sultana (2012) also draws a contrast between education typically found in the West, one that concentrates on intellectual accretion, with the main goal to be found in Islamic tradition, namely the fulfilment of the whole person. Interestingly, Sultana draws on the work of Dewey as representative of the Islamic rather than typical Western approach.

Faryadi (2015) sums up the essence of Islamic education as:

... based on values and character development. As educators, we are duty bound to be attentive to the needs of students and to help develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills so that they can shape their future meaningfully. Muslim instructors must understand the true meaning of how students learn. What are the processes involved in meaningful teaching and learning? What is the process of moral development in our classrooms? (p. 51).

Immediately, one can see the repetitive themes coming through of education as a moral enterprise, of holism and of a focus on the needs and dispositions of the individual, as against standardized learning. In other places, Faryadi (2015) reiterates the central theme of education as a tool that allows for the divine plan for each individual to be realized. He speaks of a teacher ethos that is about equality between teacher and student, a mutual regard and respect between them, a collaboration rather than an instruction from the one who knows to the one who needs to know:

Islamic philosophy of education stresses that both the teacher and student are equally responsible for the teaching-learning process... It is a complete code of conduct and a collective system of learning and teaching, and also based on the system of justice and brotherhood. (p. 56)

## Conclusion

The main perspective on education and the ethos of teaching in Islam are clear. Education is a profoundly godly as well as human task. It is for the advancement of the individual and the principal advancement is towards human fulfilment in a comprehensive sense, intellectually, socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually, encased necessarily by a broad-based, comprehensive and balanced curriculum underpinned by an equally comprehensive and balanced pedagogy. The teacher role is therefore a profoundly revered one; the teacher stands for God, in a sense, as well as being a stand-in parent while the student is in the teacher's care. The responsibilities resting on the shoulders of the teacher are huge. Because the most successful form of education is one directed to the individual, guided by the individual's needs, wants and dispositions, the successful teacher will be one who forms relations marked by significant levels of care, kindness and, indeed, love.

The proposition in this chapter is that these ideas on education have not come to Islam as a result of a direct line of influence from the Greeks, Judaism and Christianity. Indeed, it is precisely the kind of Western education that has emanated from those influences that is consistently the object of critique by many Muslim education scholars. Islam's educational philosophies, including around the role and ethos of the teacher, are distinctive and would seem to have resulted from a different line of influence, one we see clearly in those ancient Persian and Arabic civilizations that so influenced Pythagoras. Pythagoras's influence on Islamic education and teacher ethos would seem to be more direct than much Western scholarship allows for.



Furthermore, the cultural and philosophical influences on Pythagoras would seem to have come from the same Arabic and Persian worlds that are the main homes of Islam. In this sense, Islamic ideas on education and, in this case, especially on teacher ethos, are distinctive and have potential to contribute to our ongoing consideration of how teachers might best conceive of their role and enact it. Furthermore, one can draw directly on the inspiration of Islamic education in arguing for the cogency of these perspectives as being those that lie at the heart of any effective education (Lovat, 2019b, c).

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# Chapter 4

## Overcoming *Ethos*-ethics in Teacher Education? *Ethos*-ethics as the Unfulfilled Project of Modern Pedagogy



Martin Harant and Felix Schreiber

### Introduction

Consider the following situation with eight graders, one that could be considered quite common, at least in Western classrooms: It is math class on a hot summer's day at the end of the term, and the students have already spent 5 h studying other subjects. The teacher enters the classroom and starts a conversation with them to create a good working atmosphere. In reply, the students complain about the heat and suggest having an ice cream since it is the end of the term. They express their fatigue and present further arguments to convince the teacher that rather than studying math it would be better to talk about school-related issues such as the organization of a charity event while enjoying a refreshing ice cream. The teacher faces a dilemma. On the one hand, he or she thinks that a good rapport between him or her and the students is paramount in motivating them to study math. Hence, it might strengthen their relationship and enhance the students' motivation to once in a while follow his or her suggestion about how to spend class time. This might be a more strategic deliberation. As a pedagogue, he or she also supports allowing students to make their own choices based on rational decision-making and is therefore cautious of forcing them to obey him or her just because he or she holds the authority and because they, as students, have to abide by rules that have been imposed on them. Furthermore, he or she values their social engagement, even though he or she is suspicious about the probably hedonic motives that may underlie their wish to discuss non-subject related issues while enjoying an ice cream. As a teacher, he or she feels responsible for advising the students not to step onto the so-called hedonic treadmill. The teacher eventually decides to stop the conversation and turns to the blackboard with the comment: "No, it's math class now. You can have your ice

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cream during the midday break. We need to continue with calculus. That's why we're here."

The teacher might have been right to continue with subject-related issues in the classroom. He or she may also have had good arguments to do otherwise. He or she made a decision between closeness and distance with the students on an antinomic scale (Helsper, 2014). He or she might, through their experience as a teacher, have acquired a kind of educational tact (Herbart, 1908) that guides his or her actions intuitively without further deliberation. It might therefore be appropriate to say that the teacher's action is an expression of his or her acquired teacher ethos (Drahmann & Cramer, 2019). Why can this scene nonetheless reflect the problem of the unfulfilled and unfulfillable ethos-ethics of modern pedagogy if it is very unlikely that moral deliberation would have changed the way the teacher actually acted? To understand the problem, we first need to revisit modern pedagogy's attempt to overcome *ethos-ethics* (section "[Modern pedagogy's problematization of ethos](#)").

In his article *Bildsamkeit and Determination*, in which he refers to the modern condition of pedagogical practice, the German philosopher of education Dietrich Benner opined, "Modern ethics, which is substantially influenced by Kant, can no longer be conceived as *ethos-ethics*" (1995, p. 157, emphasis added). The term *bildsamkeit*, which was coined by Herbart and is misleadingly translated as "the human *ability to learn*" (Benner & English, 2004, p. 410), refers to the particularly modern idea that human beings need to discover their own determination and chart their own futures through the educational process. Modern pedagogues like Rousseau, Herbart and Benner hold that *every* individual is "by nature" undetermined. Paradoxically, their nature is to be *beyond* nature. A fixed setup of behavioral patterns handed down from the past or provided by the environment and emulated in the educational process contradicts the human predicament (Benner, 2015, p. 28). Instead of pursuing conditioning, pedagogues in Kant's tradition favor the self-determined participation of students as protagonists in their educational process from its very beginning, aided by the appropriate support of educators.

Ethics is seen to provide this process with universal and uncontestable guidelines in order to hold teacher-student interaction reasonably accountable. Ethos, if it is not understood as a process model of professional pedagogical agency (Oser, 1998, p. 10f.), but instead, according to a predominant understanding, comprises mores, customs and their pre-reflective conditioning or "habituation" (Funke, 2007, pp. 812–815; Trembl, 2000, p. 228), does not fit the universalistic claims of ethics. To return to our introductory example: it is conceivable that the students and the teacher are following habitual patterns without fully realizing it, even though they may have the impression that they are acting deliberately and reasonably. Ethos's lack of universality eventually leads to its rejection as being particularistic and to its habituation as circumventing ethical judgement (cf. Trembl, 2000, p. 228). Modern pedagogy holds that ethos and its habituation is something to be overcome by universalistic principles in pedagogical action.

This modern pedagogical project is highly contested for several reasons: the philosophical core problem of universal principles lies in the attempt to develop rational foundations of universally valid ethics that are not themselves based on

historical or societal contingencies. Furthermore, it can be surmised that the *pathos formula* (Rieger-Ladich, 2002) of undetermined human subjects is itself a subtle form of habituation, namely subjectivation in the very sense of to be subject “to someone else by control and dependence” (Foucault, Summer, 1982, p. 781). This is how postmodern philosophers challenge the modern paradigm. By referring to the postmodern critique of subjectivation processes, we will closely examine one of modern pedagogy’s most controversial topics: the problem of education’s underlying power structure and the attempt to theoretically find a way to justifiably and properly deal with it by circumventing it entirely. To underpin this critique, we will show how postmodern thinking is appropriate for deconstructing the attempt to overcome ethos through ethics (section “[Post-modern problematization of ethics](#)”). Finally, we will lay out why it is a misunderstanding to think that ethos, even an ethos of modernity, can be replaced by ethics (section “[Walking the line between ethos and ethics](#)”). Furthermore, we will argue that the alternative to abandoning the endeavors of modern pedagogy altogether, as envisaged by its critics, is itself problematic and should be balanced by an ethos-ethics as the unfulfilled (and unfulfillable) project of modern pedagogy.

## Modern Pedagogy’s Problematization of Ethos

### *Revisiting Rousseau’s Emile*

Rousseau’s *Emile* certainly counts as one of modern pedagogy’s masterpieces, even though its fictional and mostly speculative character can easily be criticized for lacking empirical value. That said, Rousseau’s highly hypothetical thought experiments on Emile’s education nonetheless give rise to fundamental questions that are asked when education is seen as an endeavor which travels beyond societal adjustment to an environment that students do not choose for themselves. The students would probably not have chosen such an education if they had been able to challenge its claims to rightness by using their not yet fully developed capacity to reason or think things through. Rousseau holds that “in the social order where all positions are determined, each man ought to be raised for his” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 41). In the modern predicament, this can no longer be the case once the idea that the student’s vocation will mirror his or her parents’ vocations is questioned. Education thus loses its “sure goal” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 41). If the student’s destination cannot simply be derived from their familial or social background and thus becomes unclear, as it does in modern society, *proper* education needs to be discerned from socialization. It has to focus solely on the unfolding of human nature, which transcends the adaption to given mores or to a given ethos by means of reasoning. To unfold human capacities means to “become more capable of using our senses and more enlightened; but constrained by our habits, they are more or less corrupted by our opinions” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 39).

According to Rousseau, *affirmative* education or cultivation (i.e., the inculcation of societal norms and their underlying ethos) in general and instruction in particular run the risk of impeding the unfolding of human nature instead of encouraging it to bloom. As Rousseau puts it: “Plants are shaped by cultivation, and men by education” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 38). According to Rousseau, human beings have three different educators—nature, things or objects, and other humans—which he calls “three kinds of masters” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 38). He holds that if these three masters are at odds, trouble will result. He further claims that the only master who can bring the interplay of the educational “agents” into disarray are humans themselves.

To understand his claim, we need to observe what these three agents stand for and in what respects they differ. To put it succinctly: Rousseau holds that nature and things simply are what they are. Nature stands for an unfolding process which transpires according to laws and even if we try to manipulate it, as we do in scientific studies, “[n]ature is only conquered by obedience,” as Bacon put it ([1620] 2000, p. 33). We do not “decide” to grow up or grow strong deliberately. “The internal development of our faculties and our organs is the education of nature” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 38). No matter how we are nurtured, we cannot decide *not* to grow up and strong. Any scientist knows that wishful thinking is unlikely to influence nature’s response to their questions. Similarly, any child that decides it is able to take off and fly will not change the laws of nature. Nature educates us by being non-corruptible. The same holds true for things or objects according to Rousseau. The stone that gets in our way will not move aside because we want it to get out of the way. The hot stove will not decide *not* to burn the child’s hand if it touches it. Hungry and lost in the forest of Montmorency, Emile’s teacher simply comments: “Crying isn’t what has to be done” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 181). Here we become aware of the difference between nature, objects and humans: The latter *can* change their behavior, they *can* act inconsistently or irrationally, and they *can* be influenced by crying or complaining. Rousseau puts it this way:

A child cries at birth; the first part of his childhood is spent crying. At one time we bustle about, we caress him in order to pacify him; at another, we threaten him, we strike him in order to make him keep quiet. Either we do what pleases him, or we exact from him what pleases us. Either we submit to his whims, or we submit him to ours. No middle ground; he must give orders or receive them. Thus, his first ideas are those of domination and servitude. Before knowing how to speak, he commands; before being able to act, he obeys... (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 48)

In the human realm, as in the realm of things, Rousseau’s basic claim is that command and obedience are inappropriate alike: “It is important to accustom him early not to give orders either to men, for he is not their master, or to things, for they do not hear him” (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 66). In the case of human-human relationships, this claim means that there is no justification for being forced to satisfy the desires of others just because someone wants their desires to be satisfied or has the power to enforce their particular will upon others, both of which circumvent proper *reasoning*. The underlying premise is that reason does not have to be enforced. It guides actions in an understandable and therefore appropriate way for all involved

in an interaction. An outcome reached by reason signals that, all things considered, no good arguments were found for deciding to act otherwise.

Rousseau, though, assumes that affirmative education fails with respect to reason. In his novel, he provides several educational examples to corroborate his assumption that the ways we often learn are not founded in reason; instead, we are forced or receive reinforcement in learning by processes that reach far beyond the interactions of the two subjects involved. Education has grown to a societal scale: "All our wisdom consists in servile prejudices. All our practices are only subjection, impediment, and constraint .... So long as he keeps his human shape, he is enchained by our institutions" (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 43). Rousseau assumes that educational processes are by and large the institutionalization of learning to do what others want us to do, not for good reason but for the operation of an inappropriate program of command and obedience for its own sake, even though the authorities might not even be aware of their role in perpetuating the institution. One striking example Rousseau gives is tasking students with saying things they do not understand. But to fulfill the proper meaning of language the "child who wants to speak should hear only words he can understand and say only those he can articulate" (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 73). This is why Rousseau criticizes the practice of catechism instruction:

If I had to depict sorry stupidity, I would depict a pedant teaching the catechism to children. If I wanted to make a child go mad, I would oblige him to explain what he says in saying his catechism ... The faith of children and of many men is a question of geography. Are they to be recompensed for being born in Rome rather than in Mecca? One is told that Mohammed is God's prophet, and he says that Mohammed is God's prophet. The other is told that Mohammed is a deceiver, and he says that Mohammed is a deceiver. Each of the two would have affirmed what the other affirms if they had happened to be transposed. (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, pp. 257–258)

Rousseau's description of catechism instruction might be a distorted simplification, but it likely reflects the practices of his time. Instead of letting habit be our guide, as in the example, Rousseau tries to show what would happen if we used the capacity to generalize and draw inferences: It would be harder to find good reasons to act affirmatively in education. This is what Rousseau's critique of affirmative education and its underlying power structure aims for in general: Rousseau holds that it is possible to make students learn and express things they would supposedly not have learned and expressed on their own. They would not have done so because of a lack of intrinsic value or because they were unable to grasp any value in doing so. They did so only by being forced to or by receiving reinforcement through educational action. What students learn through affirmative education by and large, as Rousseau holds, is the following: Those who have the power to enforce the agenda are right to do so, and it is wise to comply if you are in the weaker position. The pervasiveness of this structure can still be shown by referring to contemporary examples: the habit to draw on notions that are not entirely clear (as in Rousseau's catechism example), to use them inappropriately, and to receive reinforcement by doing so can still play a role in educational processes, even in education departments. This will be the case if, e.g., teacher students are instructed to *observe* the

acquisition of competencies of students, which cannot be observed by definition, or in general if students are required to draw on vocabulary that reflects the paradigmatic preferences of certain scholars and departments.

If we return to our introductory example, we might come to the conclusion that Rousseau's critique of affirmative education does not apply to it for the very reason that it is about the enforcement of a math class and that math does not fit the critique of inculcating culturally arbitrary or unclear contents because of its logical structure. However, in his example of appropriate instruction on the course of the sun, Rousseau's problematization of affirmative education goes even further. This can be shown when the student interrupts the teacher and asks why he should deal with this content in the first place (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 180). Rousseau develops a thought experiment: what would happen if the teacher were to make a "fine speech" on the utility of travel and the use of the calendar or astronomy (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 180):

When I have finished, I shall have made a true pedant's display of which he will have understood not a single idea. He will have a great longing to ask me, as before, what is the use of getting one's bearings, but he does not dare for fear that I will get angry. He finds it more to his advantage to feign understanding of what he has been forced to hear. That is the way fine educations are given. (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 180)

Instead of giving his speech, Rousseau's fictional teacher decides to respond differently:

"You are right," I say to him, "we must think about it at our leisure, and if we find that this work is good for nothing, we won't pick it up again, for we have no lack of useful entertainments." (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 180)

The next morning, instead of forcing his student to comply, the teacher arranges a situation where they get lost and hungry in the forest of Montmorency. The reason for learning about the course of the sun imposes itself on the crying student, who finally concludes: "Astronomy is good for something" (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 181). It was the student's subjectivity, according to Rousseau, which arrived at that insight.

Rousseau's critique of "fine education" aims at what he calls, if the purpose and the value of the educational endeavor is not grasped by the students themselves, "barbarous education which sacrifices the present to an uncertain future" (Rousseau, [1762] 1979, p. 79). Notwithstanding that Rousseau's examples can themselves be criticized, they are used to try to solve the underlying problem of education's power structure by stressing the importance of the student's insight into the rationale of *being* educated. From this point of view, the teacher in the introductory example failed by simply imposing math study instead of following the students' suggestions. This is the case because the students did not conclude on their own that there was a rationale in accepting the teacher's prerogative. If we follow Rousseau's argument, the teacher is sacrificing the students' present to the imposition of his or her will. This does by no means implicate that the math class is held for disposal. On the contrary, a teacher following Rousseau's admonitions would justifiably change the environmental arrangements so that the students felt the urge to practice math.

However, he or she would not feel the urge to reveal his or her strategic planning. His or her conviction that it is reasonable to learn math would be unshaken; the only question would be the didactical problem of persuading the students to feel the same way by creating the right circumstances. The force of reason has to replace the force of arbitrary impositions or, to be more precise, instead of being confronted with arbitrary impositions, students should feel they are gaining insights into educational processes. A teacher taking Rousseau's cue would have no problem in using strategic means to persuade his or her students that studying math should be their first priority.

## ***Herbart***

Rousseau's *Emile* can be regarded as the fictional beginning of modern pedagogy's grand narrative, which tends to problematize *ethos*-ethics. To show why this is the case, we will draw on Johann Friedrich Herbart's more systematic pedagogical notions, which underpin the modern turn of thought.

In contrast to Rousseau, Herbart would have had trouble approving of strategic action to persuade the students that learning math should be given priority over their articulated alternatives. Instead, Herbart would probably have referred to the pedagogical notion of *bildsamkeit* and the practical-philosophical idea of "Inner Freedom" (Herbart, 1908, p. 210), which align with his ideas of "Perfection," "Goodness" and "Rectitude" (Herbart, 1908, p. 210). The term *bildsamkeit* (Herbart, 1908, p. 103) refers to the particularly modern idea that human beings are essentially undetermined and need to create their own determination through the educational process. Inner freedom reflects the assumed capacity of human beings to be able to distance themselves from their thoughts and to follow their personal judgment when it comes to acting on them. The combination of the pedagogical term *bildsamkeit* and the philosophical idea inner freedom constitutes the modern subject, which is conceived as being the deliberative author of its own actions. Following Herbart, pedagogical action always has to be directed towards the students's *bildsamkeit* and not towards preconscious motivations or volitions that bypass inner freedom and the students's (potential) judgment. To act upon motivational or volitional structures directly is only admissible if the students are not responsive because it signifies that direct power is being exerted over them and that they are being deprived of their subjectivity. Herbart calls this action the "government of children" (Herbart, 1908, p. 94), which is only appropriate "before any trace of a true will is manifested in the child. The principles of practical philosophy require this" (Herbart, 1908, p. 95).

Herbart's reference to practical philosophy is not a matter of chance. It is underpinned by the conviction that practical philosophical ideas are in and of themselves plausible, are not dependent on any particular *ethos* or historical context, and are therefore incontestable. Accordingly, the imposition of these ideas is by no means an act of power. Unlike context dependent *ethos* structures and habituations,