

# Teaching Being Ethical

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Abstract: Teaching ethics at the university level in the Western tradition tends to focus on teaching ethical theories, or—in the case of applied ethics—applying theories. Success in ethics courses is occasioned by the ability to articulate, and in some cases apply, ethical theories. Ratiocination about ethics is the focus. I contend that in so far as one of the goals of ethical education is becoming more ethical, current pedagogical models leave much to be desired. This paper makes a case for teaching *being* ethical. I recommend developing the skill sets required for enacting ethical behavior. Problems with historical methods of testing ethical development are assessed, and methods for testing ethical behavior are considered. I explore fertile sites for research and practice regarding the intersection of moral education and moral behavior. In particular I focus on the role of emotion, active learning techniques, moral exemplars, and addressing the relevance of self-concept.

## Introduction

I read a paper a number of years ago that illuminated what I believe to be a vital and understudied dimension of teaching philosophical ethics. In “Teaching Goodness: Moral Development Theory and the Teaching of Ethics,” Robert Halliday and Linnéa Franits wonder whether people who take a philosophical ethics course become more ethical citizens or professionals (Halliday and Franits 2006: 81).<sup>1</sup> The focus of Halliday and Franits’s testing was on increased moral reasoning skills as opposed to changed behavior. Part of the justification presented for this focus was 1) philosophy courses teach moral reasoning rather than behavior, and 2) there are reliable and valid assessment tools to measure moral reasoning but not for measuring moral behavior (Halliday and Franits 2006: 85). Such considerations prompted, for me, serious concern about *why* most Western philosophy courses teach moral reasoning rather than moral behavior. Why don’t philosophy courses facilitate both critical thinking skills *and* the associated tools for behavior change—behavior that reflects the results of that critical thinking? Moreover, why aren’t there reliable and valid assessment tools to measure moral behavior? If there were, what would they look like?

That we should be concerned about inspiring ethical behavior, as practitioners of ethics, is to me a foundational premise. As Augusto Blasi suggests, “Few would disagree that morality ultimately lies in action” (Blasi 1980: 1). That it is so obviously relevant to teaching ethics well makes it all the more strange that it does not figure centrally in current, dominant, pedagogy of Western ethics. Perhaps it has to do with Western philosophy often being delegated to the realm of armchair analysis. Of late it may have to do with the neoliberalization of education, which encourages a bank-model of “learning” wherein “right answers” are memorized and regurgitated for credit (Freire 2010: 72). Perhaps it is because for too long the knowledge-attitude-behavior paradigm has been adopted without attending to the fact that increased knowledge does not of necessity lead to changed attitudes, or changed behaviors. Whatever the reason, I will contend that such an approach needs remedy.

Historically, there is precedent in Western ethics that evidences concern with practical behavior. For example, in ancient Greece, Socrates did not limit ethics to theoretical analysis. The goal of ethical contemplation was to enhance the moral quality of lived practice. If ethics as lived practice is adopted as a goal, if our students wish to leave ethics classes not just able to articulate various ethical positions and related arguments but *be* more ethical, then it strikes me as essential that we know when current approaches to teaching philosophical ethics classes result in positive, ethical, behavior change—and when they fail to result in positive behavior shifts. If those findings reveal there is more to be done for ethics class participation to result in engaged moral citizenry, and engaged moral citizenry is taken to be a worthwhile goal, we can then begin to revise courses in ways that enable achieving this goal.

It is important to note at the outset that complete transparency with students regarding pedagogical goals is assumed in my discussion below. Moreover, the moral behaviors to be encouraged are those that the students have identified as being desirable through their own moral contemplation. This is why I speak of the inspiration of moral behavior, not the indoctrination of moral behavior. Without transparency it would be an immoral case of manipulation. With transparency, in contrast, one can provide students with tools for manifesting the behaviors they identify as morally desirable.

In what follows I begin with a brief discussion of the “reliable and valid assessment tools” Halliday and Franits use to measure moral reasoning (Halliday and Franits 2006: 85). The limitations of testing for moral reasoning are explored and I make recommendations for methods of testing moral behavior. I spend the remainder of the paper identifying potential and existing fertile sites for research and practice regarding the intersection of moral education and moral behavior. In particular I focus on the role of emotion, active learning techniques, taking a cue from exemplars, and addressing the relevance of self-concept. If ethical education is meant to inspire not only inspire moral reasoning but also moral action, then much more needs to be done to adequately teach being ethical.

## Testing Moral Reasoning

Halliday and Franits sought to discover whether taking an ethics course had a measurable effect on their students (Halliday and Franits 2006: 81). They found that while a course in philosophical ethics did have a measurable positive effect on the ethical reasoning ability of their students, whether it had an effect on ethical behavior remained opaque (Halliday and Franits 2006: 81). Halliday and Franits, in testing the moral development of students, used an approach following the work of James Rest, who in turn was deeply influenced by Lawrence Kohlberg.<sup>2</sup> Kohlberg proposed a three-level, lexically ordered, theory of moral development which ranged from the pre-conventional (with a focus on the needs of the self), to the conventional (with a focus on society), to the post-conventional (with a focus on universal formulations of the good) (Kohlberg 1984: 174–176; Gilligan 1997: 557).<sup>3</sup> The highest form of moral reasoning involves focusing on considerations pertaining to social contracts and universalizability, which is unsurprising given Kohlberg's affinity for the Neo-Kantian work of John Rawls (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 5; Rawls 1971). Kohlberg concluded that the stages of moral development are both universal and consistent (Halliday and Franits 2006: 82).

Rest advocates what he calls a Neo-Kohlbergian approach.<sup>4</sup> Like Kohlberg's cognitive development approach there is an emphasis on cognition (as opposed to, for example, certain emotions such as empathy and altruism), there is a focus on individuals and their attempt to make sense of their own experience (as opposed to studying wider social influences), there is a belief in development wherein one can chart cognitive advance, and development is characterized as a shift from conventional to postconventional moral thinking (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 2). There are, however, significant differences between Kohlberg and Rest's approaches as well. Rest uses the term "moral schema" to flag his approach wherein development is a matter of changes in the frequency of usage of types of moral reasoning, with shifting distributions as opposed to a staircase model (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 3). Unlike Kohlberg there is no claim that the schemas directly assess cognitive operations; often we are conscious of the content of our mental life but not the process that led there (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 3). Universality is not presumed in that cross-cultural similarity or the lack thereof is an open empirical question (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 3). Kohlberg required subjects to articulate arguments for their moral choices while Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) sought to identify tacit knowledge using a multiple choice method of testing (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 3). The DIT is a device for activating schemas—namely general knowledge structures residing in long-term memory (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 6).

In constructing the various developmental schemas Rest borrows heavily from Kohlberg. The three schemas articulated for moral development are the preconven-

tional personal interest schema, the conventional maintaining norms schema, and the postconventional schema (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 5). Moral obligations on the postconventional schema are based on shared ideals, are fully reciprocal, and are open to robust scrutiny (e.g., demands for logical and experiential consistency) (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 5). Content is less important than the process of moral reasoning for qualifying as a manifestation of the postconventional schema. There are a variety of moral ideals that might be embraced such as feminist, virtue-based, utilitarian, social contract, casuist, and religious (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 5).<sup>5</sup> Rest's DIT is a multiple choice test, usually taken in a classroom, and—like Kohlberg's test—pertains to hypothetical dilemmas. It is a widely used tool for measuring moral development. What particular levels of moral reasoning reveal about behavior, if anything, is another issue.<sup>6</sup>

The most common approach to teaching ethics in North American university settings is to teach ethical theory, or—given developments in applied ethics—to teach the application of ethical theory to a specified subset of problems (for example, with regard to environmental or non-human animal harms) (Blizek 2013: 80). In tests and in papers students are often asked to elucidate the views of philosophers and exercise moral reasoning to assess the success or failure of these theories. Such acts of ratiocination about what often amounts to hypothetical dilemmas would be useful for identifying levels of moral development as articulated by Rest and Kohlberg. However, the pressing question of what it identifies about moral understanding of the sort that generates moral behavior remains unanswered. William Blizek suggests another method for teaching ethics is to do so with the aim of teaching “students how to be better human beings or to be good persons” (Blizek 2013: 81). Insofar as such an approach is desirable, so too is an understanding of the relationships between moral thought, development, and behavior.

## What, If Anything, Does This Reveal About Behavior?

There are extremely divergent theories with regard to how, and if, moral action is related to moral development and thought.<sup>7</sup> Some maintain that moral reasoning is disconnected from moral behavior. S. B. Dreman, for example, emphasizes the unrelatedness of moral judgment and moral action, stating:

Research has shown that *verbal* moral expressions are influenced mainly by cognitive factors . . . while *manifest* moral behavior is mainly a function of social learning. . . . Thus while a relation may be expected between verbal moral judgment scores and justifications for sharing, there is no empirical basis for predicting that a relation will be obtained between verbal moral judgment and manifest donations. (Dreman 1976, in Blasi 1980: 3)

Put simply, saying and doing are two different matters. Dreman's account does serious damage to integrity as a practice because integrity is called into question

when verbal moral expressions of belief and the associated moral behavior are chronically disconnected.

Jonathan Haidt likewise highlights the weakness of the correlation between moral reasoning ability and moral behavior, citing evidence that moral exemplars and non-exemplars had no significant difference in their moral reasoning ability using a Kohlbergian scoring technique (Hart and Fegley 1995, Colby and Damon 1992, in Haidt 2001: 824). Another problem is that some view moral reasoning as an afterthought—as a construction developed after a behavior has occurred. Moral reasoning is viewed by some as a rationalization constructed to fill a need for a coherent account of what we are doing—it is a result of, rather than a preparation for, moral action (Blasi 1980: 3). The relationship between rationality and morality is thus highly problematic, in that conscious reasoning is not taken to play an active role in determining behavior.

In contrast there are those who accept a rational account of morality, wherein moral reasoning is a “response that is derived from understanding and reasons concerning both the fundamental goals of human beings and the means to pursue them” (Blasi 1980: 4). Cognitive processes are recognized, on this view, as playing a central role in stitching together needs and actions and in constructing moral meanings (Blasi 1980: 4). In cognitive developmental theories, judgment is crucial—an action done in the absence of judgment would not have the same moral weight and meaning as an action done with the intent and reflection garnered by moral reasoning (Blasi 1980: 4).

Unlike Kohlberg and Rest’s vision of moral behavior inevitably following moral knowledge (providing an absence of countervailing factors) Roger Bergman takes the empirical evidence to suggest that we must look beyond reasoning to a broader range of motivational factors if we are to more adequately understand the linkage between moral thought and moral action (Kohlberg and Candee 1984, Blasi 1980, in Bergman 2002: 111). In Blasi’s oft cited review of the psychological literature that speaks to bridging moral cognition and action he comes to the conclusion that, “Unfortunately, cognitive-development theory, as articulate as it is in its specific domain, offers only the vaguest guidelines for approaching the relations of cognition and action, simply hypothesizing a positive correlation between the two” (Blasi 1980: 1). Correlation is not, however, causation. Although correlational analysis might beneficially contribute to predictive knowledge it is not capable of illuminating the relationships among the various factors involved (Blasi 1980: 1). More than correlation is needed. Accepting a view of moral phenomena as complex and unified goes beyond searching for mathematical correlations and seeks to identify the roles different elements play in a broader scheme in which moral action is the end product (Blasi 1980: 2). As such it would be advantageous to study moral belief and action from both ends, running in both directions (from action to belief and belief to action), in synergy with additional factors, to best identify the multiple ways in which these relationships develop and are sustained.

## Testing Moral Behavior

How, then, can one set about testing actual moral behavior? Help is to be found in the work of Carol Gilligan. A student of Kohlberg's, Gilligan noticed that women typically scored at the third of six developmental stages of moral reasoning (Gilligan 1997: 552). Gilligan theorized that women were not deficient in their moral judgment, and thus not deserving of a stage three ranking, but instead had a different orientation to morally judging situations—an orientation not captured or valued on Kohlberg's analysis (Gilligan 1997: 549). Generally, although the structural progression from preconventional (egocentric) to conventional (societal) to postconventional (universal) is clearly discernible in women's responses to actual and hypothetical dilemmas, the conventions shaping the nature of those judgments differ between genders (Gilligan 1997: 559). In contrast to the high levels of abstraction required for postconventional moral reasoning on Kohlberg's account, women's moral judgments tend to be "tied to feelings of empathy and compassion and are concerned more with the resolution of 'real-life' as opposed to hypothetical dilemmas" (Haan 1971, Holstein 1976, in Gilligan 1997: 557; Haan 1975, Holstein 1976, in Gilligan 2001: 69). Moral imperatives emerge as injunctions to care and are coupled with a sense of responsibility for identifying and alleviating the real and recognizable trouble in the world (Gilligan 1997: 577).

In Gilligan's pivotal book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (2001) she discusses the studies she used to identify trends within women's moral development. Of particular interest is the abortion study which explored "the relation between experience and thought and the role of conflict in development" (Gilligan 2001: 2–3). As noted, Gilligan's worries about abstraction being prioritized over and above actual moral decision making in tests such as Kohlberg's and the DIT. In contrast, her interviews of women actually grappling with a difficult moral issue in the abortion study appears, at least on the surface, to provide a method of testing moral development that maps significantly onto moral behavior; at least in so far as the women's moral decisions were brought to fruition through their action.<sup>8</sup> I propose that isolating a wide variety of morally challenging situations with observable outcomes and engaging participants in qualitative interviews to identify trends between moral behavior, moral development, and expressions of one's view, would be extremely enlightening for understanding the ways in which articulations of moral belief map, or fail to map, onto action.

Reflection on past behavior would also be beneficial for charting relations between moral thought, development and behavior. For example, in terms of moral development, action, and belief over time, theorists such as Anne Colby and William Damon highlight the importance of tracing actual experience. They maintain that because moral reasoning alone tells little about a person's actual social behavior, and lab experiments cannot replicate the complexity of human morality, it is

methodologically advantageous to interview those who have already accomplished moral deeds in real life and to look for trends throughout lives (rather than solely focus on individual moral decisions in isolation) (Colby and Damon 1992: 6–7). Testing moral behavior, and not just cognitive moral development, may thus be feasible. If students' moral reasoning capacities and performance of associated moral behavior were tested before and after a course in philosophical ethics, then teachers would be able to decipher whether increases in ethical action resulted from increases in moral reasoning capacities.<sup>9</sup> Through comparing a) lecture-style teaching methods with a focus on ethical theory, b) lecture-style teaching methods with a focus on applying ethical theory to problems in specific domains such as bioethics, business ethics, environmental ethics, and so on, and c) teaching methods that broach the recommendations below, I suggest inroads could be made toward identifying what successfully inspires ethical action and what fails to.

## Teaching Being Ethical

If an increase in ethical behavior is desired by both students who take courses in ethics and the professors who teach ethics, then it becomes important to identify methods for bringing the exercise of moral reasoning and the exercise of moral behavior into closer proximity when it comes to theorizing about and teaching ethics. I contend in what follows that addressing the failings of the knowledge-attitude-behavior model of education might help indicate methods for remedying disconnect between moral knowledge and moral behavior. In particular, attending to the role of emotion in ethical education is identified as being both underdeveloped and necessary for inspiring change. I then elucidate the role of active learning for developing ethical behavior. Last, I look to the study of moral exemplars to identify ways in which ethical belief and behavior might be more closely woven in philosophy ethics courses.

## Moral Behavior Change

I take it that testing for moral development *in addition to* moral behavior change will remain desirable given the potential explanatory power contained therein with regard to relationships between articulated theoretical commitments, the exercise of moral reasoning, and complementary moral action or the lack thereof. To return to Blasi's reflection in its fullness:

Few would disagree that morality ultimately lies in action and that the study of moral development should use action as the final criterion. But also few would limit the moral phenomenon to objectively observable behavior. Moral action is seen, implicitly or explicitly, as complex, imbedded in a variety of feelings, questions, doubts, judgments, and decisions. (Blasi 1980: 1)

Thus the constellation of moral reasons, feelings, judgments, and decisions all require tending to in relation to behavior. Moreover, such study needs to be placed in social, political, geographical, and cultural context. The complexity indicated here cannot be used as justification for avoiding the task at hand if one is committed to not only the study of philosophical ethical theory but also to the goal of making the world a more ethical place. Vast increases in moral action are required for a compassionate and humane world. This is where the need for facilitating not just excellence at moral ratiocination but excellence at acting in ways that reflect the results of moral deliberation is made evident. One need only look so far as the current radically inequitable distributions of wealth, education, and health care, the continuation of imperialism and slavery under the umbrella of economic welfare, and the environmental holocaust to recognize how pressingly moral action is needed. Discovering how to inspire students to be active participants in the move toward more ethical ways of being, I hope, will become a central, explicit, publicly recognized goal of those who study and teach ethics. I take it that bridging the space between moral cognition and moral action will be a necessary element for doing so. Part of what is at issue when it comes to a failure to act, despite being educated about moral theory, is the knowledge-attitude-behavior gap.

### Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Gap

Teaching moral reasoning as the sole method for inspiring moral action is doomed to failure given that it is premised on the knowledge-attitude-behavior model of education. The knowledge-attitude-behavior model of education assumes that sharing knowledge inevitably leads to behavior change reflecting the responsibilities attached to the vantage point of this new knowledge. Empirical data repeatedly demonstrates that the assumption is false; as such there is widespread critique of the “knowledge-attitude-behavior” method (Goralnik and Nelson 2011: 183). For a non-exhaustive list of evidence attesting to a disjunction between, for example, environmental knowledge/attitude and reflective environmental behavior see Bickman 1972; Costanzo, Archer, Aronson, and Pettigrew 1986; Finger 1994; Geller 1981; Geller, Erickson, and Buttram 1983; Hsu 2004; Hungerford and Volk 1990; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; McKenzie-Mohr 2000; and Sia, Hungerford, and Tomera 1985/86. Such studies at minimum problematize the more general assumption that moral knowledge will of necessity lead to action reflecting this knowledge.

A related problem is, in fact, so pronounced that Plato gave name to it. Socrates introduces the problem of *akrasia*, which refers to weakness of the will or failing to do what one believes to be right, in Plato’s *Protagoras*. Socrates recognizes that “most people are unwilling to do what is best, even though they know what it is and are able to do it” (352 e) (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve 2005: 171). He believes that people who are overcome by a desire for immediate pleasure have proximal



benefits in sight and remain ignorant of the greater balance of pleasure/good to be achieved by the overarching, long-term benefits of right action; therefore it is ignorance that leads to wrong action (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve 2005: 171–176) (352 e–358d). Unfortunately, the above evidence does not bear this out. The failings of the knowledge-attitude-behavior model of education serve as a modern example of how the problem of *akrasia* remains unresolved (Kretz 2012). We cannot assume knowledge is sufficient to motivate ethical behavior change. Research shows that what *does* tend to motivate behavior change involves emotion.

## Emotion

Empirical evidence supports the claim that a viable account of emotion is mandatory for a viable ethical theory. Lissy Goralnik and Michael Nelson argue that contemporary brain research on the nested cognitive and affective responses to ethical dilemmas reflects an approach to morality wherein both reason and emotion play a necessary role (Goralnik and Nelson 2011: 187). Chrisoula Andreou contends that the “prevailing view among empirically oriented moral philosophers is that morality is grounded in sentiment . . . at least for human beings, the capacity to make genuine moral judgments depends on related emotional capacities” (Andreou 2007: 47). Goralnik and Nelson argue rationality and emotion cannot be disentangled and as such we should “address them as a single entity in education and ethical decision making” (Goralnik and Nelson 2011: 187–188).<sup>10</sup> Resultantly, they employ an ethical framework that assumes “students will neither care about nor retain the knowledge they gain unless they are first emotionally and ethically engaged by place, community, and content” (Goralnik and Nelson 2011: 183). Martin Leever, John Daniels, and Kathleen Zimmerman-Oster (2006) highlight that surely ethics teachers would be disappointed to find their students emerging from ethics courses with complete indifference to justice, “or worse, less committed than when they began the course. *Affective* goals, such as a felt commitment to social justice and a concern for the victims of injustice and misfortune, are equally important, though perhaps more difficult to assess” (Leever, Daniels, and Zimmerman-Oster 2006: 16). If facilitating moral action so that our world is one that reflects basic moral values is a goal, then ethical practitioners must employ theories and practices that reflect how emotion functions in tandem with critical thinking.

Based on the above considerations, I take a partial answer to the question “What is going amiss when knowledge fails to result in changed attitudes and behaviors?” to be a failure to utilize teaching practices that sufficiently ethically engage the emotions of students. Theoretical knowledge is a partial form of knowledge which differs from emotional knowledge. Both are necessary. Adequately attending to emotion might thus serve as one of the methods for beginning to bridge the gap between moral cognition and moral action in ethics courses.

Haidt defends an alternative to rationalist ontology wherein moral knowledge and judgment are achieved primarily by a process of reasoning and reflection (Haidt 2001: 814). On Kohlberg's model, for example, although affect might be considered by reason, it is reasoning that is ultimately responsible for moral decision making (Kohlberg, Levine, and Hower 1983: 69 in Haidt 2001: 816). Alternatively, on Haidt's social intuitionist approach to moral psychology, moral intuitions (which include moral emotions) come first and directly cause moral judgments (Haidt 2001: 814).<sup>11</sup> Haidt is sympathetic to David Hume's view that people have a built-in moral sense, which generates pleasurable feelings of approbation (approval) toward benevolent pro-social acts and generates negative feeling of disapprobation (disapproval) toward acts which are not (Haidt 2001: 815–16; Hume 2012: 304).

Evidence showing that moral action covaries with moral emotions more than it does with moral reasoning provides a decisive challenge to a solely or primarily rationalist approach to morality (Haidt 2001: 815). Two studies (Haidt, Koller, and Dias 1993, Haidt and Hersh 2001) confirmed that affective responses to stories of offensive action were better predictors of moral judgments than were claims about harmful consequences (Haidt 2001: 817). To further substantiate the important link between moral emotions and moral actions Haidt draws from studies of psychopathic persons for whom moral reasoning and moral emotions become dissociated (Haidt 2001: 823–24). Psychopathic persons tend to have an impoverished capacity for major affective responses, especially “those triggered by the suffering of others (remorse, sympathy), condemnation by others (shame, embarrassment) or attachment to others (love, grief)” (Haidt 2001: 824). Without moral emotion to either motivate or constrain psychopathic persons it is unsurprising that adequate concern about the pain caused to other persons is absent (Haidt 2001: 824). Moreover, there is evidence that emotions play a key role in leading to altruism (Haidt 2001: 824). The mechanisms involved in helping are primarily affective and include empathy, reflexive distress, sadness, guilt, and shame (Cialdini 1991 in Haidt 2001: 285). Addressing the role that emotion plays, in relation to both moral reasoning and moral behavior, is thus a key point of departure for inspiring moral behavior in ethics classes.

## Case Studies and Enactment

Given the above analysis, the importance of developing appropriate emotional moral responses and capacities in ethics classrooms becomes clear; two such responses are those of empathy and sympathy. Martin Hoffman's *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* highlights the importance of discovering ways to extend the reach of empathetic response. Hoffman defines empathy as “an affective response more appropriate to another's situation than

one's own" (Hoffman 2001: 4). Sympathy, in contrast, refers to times in which empathy is accompanied by a feeling of compassion and a conscious desire to help (Hoffman 2001: 88). Hoffman argues that both empathy and sympathy show great promise as prosocial emotions that can be cultivated to generate ethical responses to the suffering of others. Attending to the emotional dimensions of ethical learning, then, should include attending to how sympathetic responses function in tandem with practical reasoning about morality.

Deborah Mower discusses how one can create Sympathetic Moral Reasoning (SMR). In her classes she uses a heuristic for moral reasoning with five steps: 1) Moral Question, 2) Script, 3) Perspective, 4) Examine, and 5) Answer (Mower 2008: 2). This heuristic aids students in finding answers to moral dilemmas through helping them to identify a specific moral question and providing a simple and clear process that produces a direct answer to the moral question posed (Mower 2008: 3). Mower holds that there are three general abilities underlying SMR. The first is emotional literacy wherein one is able to accurately and reliably recognize emotions in self and other, the second is contextual literacy wherein one has the ability to imagine hypothetical, morally charged scenarios vividly and realistically, and the third is moral literacy wherein one can adopt first- and third-person roles and perspectives (Mower 2008: 3).

Mower borrows from David Hume the understanding that humans share basic physical and psychological capacities such as sympathy (Mower 2008: 4). She also borrows from him the notion that these basic capacities can be developed and that routine use and practice leads to habit formation (Mower 2008: 4). Through a variety of role-playing exercises, wherein first- and third-person analysis of actions in context are developed, students habituate sympathetic response which is achieved in part through thinking of the impact of one's actions from the perspective of the person harmed. Although the cases are imagined, enactment—rather than the theoretical contemplation of the scenarios in isolation from enactment—facilitates a heightened sense of the embodied experience of moral decision-making in practice. Haidt notes that the most widely discussed method for triggering new intuitions is the practice of role-taking (Selman 1971 in Haidt 2001: 819). Through imagining oneself in another's position "one may instantly feel pain, sympathy or other vicarious emotional responses"; such exercises enable one to see an issue from more than one side (Haidt 2001: 819). The thought experiments common in philosophy courses could be improved upon by designing scripts that involve role-taking wherein students are encouraged to activate embodied, visceral, emotional, ethical responses. Such practices could also be helpful aids for illustrating, for example, the significance of habituation in Aristotle's virtue ethics. The insights derived from role-taking utilizing scripts could be built on through the application of a sympathetic approach to the plight of oppressed groups through selecting real-world action projects to participate in.

## Active Learning, Action Projects

Inculcating the skill of manifesting morally appropriate responses is further enhanced when the opportunity to effect real-world change that makes the world a more just and humane place is afforded. An example I find to be quite exciting pertains to ethical environmental action. Although there is certainly a need for additional study regarding general ethical philosophical education and behavior change, subdisciplines of ethics such as environmental, business, and accounting ethics have made headway into exploring the relations between course participation and action.<sup>12</sup> In a Taiwanese study by Shih-Jang Hsu, an environmental education course was developed which focused on issue investigation-evaluation and action training with an emphasis on fostering empowerment. The first unit, “Ecological Foundation,” helped students acquire environmental awareness and sensitivity while the second unit, “Issue Awareness,” helped students understand present environmental issues in their country (Hsu 2004: 41). “Issue Investigation-Evaluation” was the third unit and students formed groups which investigated an environmental issue they wished to work on (Hsu 2004: 41). During this phase students developed and evaluated solution-driven action plans and then executed them (Hsu 2004: 41).

Significantly, the last unit of the course spoke explicitly to emotional dimensions of ethical activity. The last unit was titled “Hope and Empowerment” and was intended to foster emotions that empower students (Hsu 2004: 41). Brett Johnson (2005) argues that when facing formidable ethical harms such as climate change, or rampant poverty, or any other number of persisting fundamental injustices, there is a legitimate concern that students will feel overwhelmed. Particular to environmental ethical harms, emotional responses of despair, feeling powerless, and feeling overwhelmed are a threat (Jensen and Schnack 1999, Marcinkowski 1991 in Hsu 2004: 41). To counter such disempowering emotions, during the “Hope and Empowerment” unit 1) Taiwanese environmentalists shared experiences with students and 2) stories of those who pursue love and justice, and spend a lifetime devoted to a cause, are highlighted (Hsu 2004: 41). Identifying significant and unresolved problems is thus recognized as having a strong emotional impact. It is an impact I suggest educators ought to pay more attention to. If emotion plays a vital role in ethical practices it stands to reason that addressing and alleviating times in which that emotional response overwhelms will be a pertinent task for facilitators of ethical education.

I have attempted to begin grappling with this issue in my *Introduction to Ethics* courses. When we look at a plethora of daunting current moral issues I’ve heard students lament “This is so depressing.” To counteract the despair that sometimes takes hold when faced with how much requires moral care I use an empowering, solution-focused, service-learning assignment. The nature of the service-learning activity is up to the students, but it has to be with an established not-for-profit

group and it has to morally improve the world in some concrete way. The requirement that it is with an established not-for-profit organization reflects the literature which shows improved hope comes with effective capacity-building through interaction with supportive communities (Kretz 2013). Leever, Daniels, and Zimmerman-Oster argue that students can increase their awareness of social problems and grow their capacities to listen, empathize, and sympathize through service learning (2006: 16). They have students self-evaluate whether there are increases in capacities like empathy, listening, and awareness following service-learning work—and the evidence indicates that there are in fact increases (Leever, Daniels, and Zimmerman-Oster 2006: 20). How service-learning course work in philosophical ethics courses impacts student ethical behavior in the long term, if at all, strikes me as an additionally worthwhile area for further testing.

I am also developing an ethical exemplar exercise wherein students articulate their own discovery of someone who deeply inspires them ethically. Students will bring stories to class of those who serve as evidence that significant positive changes are not only possible but have also already happened, drawing from current and historical examples locally, nationally, and globally. This reflects Hsu's recommendations for the "Hope and Empowerment" unit, but rather than have the professor introduce exemplars the students will.

The results of Hsu's study indicate that the novel pedagogical and curricular approach taken significantly promoted students' responsible environmental behavior, locus of control, environmental responsibility, intention to act, perceived knowledge of environmental issues, and perceived knowledge of/skills in using environmental action strategies (Hsu 2004: 41). The course's success hinged, in part, on students identifying an ecological issue and developing a plan of action to remedy it. Here I take provision of tools for making the jump to political engagement to be imperative if behaviors reflecting beliefs are a goal. So too in general ethics courses students might be provided with tools for identifying and correcting ethical harms, and then aided in identifying and generating communities of support to help actually do the work to correct those harms. Perhaps, like the increase in responsible environmental behavior, there may be a similar increase in responsible ethical behavior when students are comparably empowered in ethics courses. The fact that students themselves are identifying the project they wish to work on encourages action that reflects the student's own moral beliefs/values/growth and is therefore a direct contributor to empowerment.

The question of gauging whether and how positive ethical behavior change occurs following course work remains. In the Hsu study a questionnaire was developed which was used not only during the class (at the beginning and end of term) but also in a two-month follow-up assessment. The validity of self-reporting, however, is highly contentious. In circumstances where observable action must occur, or fail to, tests of behavior are verifiable. Gilligan's abortion study serves as an

example where follow-up regarding the completion of an abortion or the refusal of one, and how that correlated with articulated moral reasoning, are possible. When broad analysis of moral belief, development, emotion, reasoning, and action is being pursued, it strikes me that self-reporting in most cases will remain indispensable despite concerns of verifiability. Given the above analysis of emotion, ensuring that analysis of emotional growth and experience in ethics courses occurs can serve to remedy some of the limitations of existing testing.

When it comes to mapping the success or failure of Western philosophical ethics courses with regard to generating ethical action not only will student beliefs and behaviors need to be explored, teaching practices will also have to be simultaneously identified. Differing pedagogical and curricular approaches will have to be mapped if an adequate analysis of what leads to, or fails to lead to, ethical behavior change following courses in philosophical ethics is to be revealed. Methods of testing, texts covered, style of lecturing, whether there is a service-learning element, whether and what group activity happens in class, whether and what scripts are acted out, what traits the teacher expresses, whether novels and films are used to supplement readings, methods of student empowerment or lack thereof, exploration of plans and tools for concrete action or lack thereof, and so on, will need to be identified.

I wish to be explicit that the findings of empirical testing of the sort described above cannot be used as justification for demanding that specific and limited practices be adopted by ethics teachers if the ideals of liberal education are to be reflected in schools. Rather, such research helpfully serves as a knowledge base to draw from when, for example, professors design courses in ways that complement the pedagogy and curriculum they have come to understand as being the best approach. The intent is not to generate cookie-cutter approaches that fail to reflect contextually relevant differences, challenges, and strengths in each fundamentally unique grouping of teacher-learners. Rather, the intent is to enhance our understanding of how ethical behavior is supported.

## Moral Exemplars and Selfhood

Bergman writes about the relationships between moral reasoning, motivation, action, and identity (Bergman 2002: 104). Using Colby and Damon's book *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment*, and related publications, Bergman draws on data regarding moral development in moral exemplars. I think adopting the move made in positive psychology—interviewing those who excel at or regularly achieve admirable levels of a particular, desirable, behavior—will be an advantageous method for identifying what works and why it works when it comes to those who predictably exhibit moral behaviors.<sup>13</sup> Characteristics used in the Colby and Damon study to identify moral exemplars included a sustained

commitment to moral ideas, a disposition to act in accordance with one's moral ideals (thereby evidencing consistency between one's actions and intentions), a willingness to risk self-interest for one's moral values, and a tendency to be morally inspiring and humble (Colby and Damon 1992: 29).<sup>14</sup> Although they did not define what qualifies as the specific content of moral ideas, ideals, and values, one viable element of morality broadly construed is that morality deals with prosocial beliefs/values/actions.

The moral exemplars studied were most deeply characterized by an exceptionally high degree of unity between self and morality (Bergman 2002: 116). Moral choices were not experienced as self-sacrifice; rather they were manifestations of the exemplar's moral center of their self (Colby and Damon 1992: 300). The problem of *akrasia* was dissolved because of how tightly the self and morality were intertwined (Bergman 2002: 116). Whether someone considers morality to be central or peripheral to their self-identities makes a crucial difference with regard to whether someone lives out their moral beliefs (Damon 1984: 110 in Bergman 2002: 113). When "there is perceived unity between self and morality, judgment and conduct are directly and predictably linked and action choices are made with great certainty" (Colby and Damon 1992: 150 in Bergman 2002: 115). Colby and Damon found that complete unity of the self and morality remain rare (Colby and Damon 1992: 306). More commonly there is a partial integration where morality and self do not consistently converge, which can help explain why most people do not always act according to their moral beliefs (Colby and Damon 1992: 306 in Bergman 2002: 114). As such, attending to the role of self-construct in ethics classrooms is another area showing promise for further research about bridging moral belief and action. For an example of how identity work might be done in the classroom see the work of Mitchell Thomashow.<sup>15</sup>

An interesting complement to this insight about self-construct is found in sociology. With regard to the marked importance of addressing emotion when it comes to self-concept, James Jasper contends that the strength "of an identity comes from its emotional side" (Jasper 1998: 415). He additionally maintains that "Emotions give ideas, ideologies, identities, and even interests their power to motivate" (Jasper 1998: 420). Here again the link between emotion and action is highlighted, but in this particular instance it calls attention to the interplay of moral belief, action, emotion, and self-construct or identity.

Attending to moral exemplars can work in multiple ways. In terms of positive psychology, reproducible behaviors and approaches can be identified and replicated. Additionally advantageous is the way in which stories of exemplars can serve to elicit not only hope and inspiration but also a heartfelt desire to change. Seeing manifestations of elevated, exemplary moral behavior often triggers 1) a distinctive feeling of warmth and expansion in the chest, 2) a desire to become a better person, and 3) an opening of one's heart to both the person who triggered

the feeling and others (Haidt 2002: 863). Being exposed to a highly virtuous person who is dedicated to moral causes can have a powerful influential effect on other's moral behavior (Colby and Damon 1992: 22). Haidt describes elevation as the warm and uplifting feeling people experience when witnessing unexpected acts of human kindness/goodness (Haidt 2000: 2). Importantly, regarding behavior change, elevation makes people *want* to help others and to become better moral persons themselves (Haidt 2000: 2). Elevation therefore has the powerful capacity to spread, like other moral emotions such as hope (Haidt 2000: 4; Kretz 2013).

Mary Beth Armstrong, J. Ketz, and Dwight Owsen discuss accounting ethics and contend there is a need for sustained attention regarding the study of ethical motivation and behavior (2003: 1). They recommend a number of approaches to remedy this deficiency such as using exhortations urging students to practice virtuous behavior, cultivating moral sensitivity, and using moral exemplars (including teachers who model the moral behaviors discussed, case studies, and novels) (Armstrong, Ketz, and Owsen 2003: 9–12). Although Armstrong, Ketz, and Owsen believe that directly enhancing students' ethical behavior is likely beyond the scope of academic accountants, I am making a case for questioning this underlying assumption regarding such limitations as applied to academic ethicists more generally (2003: 13). Too much is riding on successfully educating for ethical behavior not to explore what is in fact possible.

## Invitation

I have looked to psychological literature in the hopes of elucidating some ways in which I, as an ethical educator, might better serve my students and my chosen area of work through facilitating real-world ethical improvement. I fully acknowledge that what is proposed above is simplified, and only grazes the surface in terms of the research available on this topic in moral psychology specifically and psychology generally. Even within the domains of moral philosophy and pedagogy I have sampled only a small subsection of the available research and recommendations for teaching that leads to active practice. Nonetheless I hope to have shown that 1) Western philosophical ethical teaching practices would benefit greatly from a more robust concern with education for moral action and not just moral reasoning and 2) testing whether students exhibit any positive change in moral behaviors following a philosophical ethics course is a worthwhile endeavor.

Through looking at the developmental theoretical and assessment models of Kohlberg, Rest, and Gilligan, with an eye to how fecund they are with regard to predictions of moral behavior, it becomes evident that further tools are necessary. Positions regarding the relationships between moral reasoning and moral behavior are diverse, contentious, and lacking adequate empirical support. The failures of the knowledge-attitude-behavior model of education indicate that knowledge does



not of necessity lead to attitude and behavior change. Increased moral knowledge, including enhanced moral reasoning skills, cannot thus be assumed to lead of necessity to improved moral behavior.

I make the case that emotion helps to bridge the distance between knowledge and behavior that reflects that knowledge. Tending to emotional dimensions of ethical learning in the classroom, such as developing sympathetic moral reasoning, might thus serve as an effective method of facilitating not just moral knowledge but moral action. Moral education involves identifying daunting moral issues, and this has emotional ramifications. Alleviating the negative elements of those emotional impacts through facilitating empowerment is another potential bridge from knowledge (in this case of moral harms) to action (in this case to action against that which is harmful). Looking to those who behave consistently in morally laudable ways is another source of insight for identifying how to successfully encourage moral behavior. The tight knitting of moral belief and self-construct among moral exemplars indicates that exploration of self-construct and its relationship to action is an additional potential avenue for further research. This paper is less about making a case for a particular approach and more of an offering of justification for a particular point of departure. I extend it as an invitation to dialogue more widely about teaching *being* ethical.

## Notes

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1. I take the scope of Halliday and Fanits's question to apply primarily to Western philosophical ethics as taught in the global north. My concerns in what follows should likewise be taken to apply primarily to dominant Western models of philosophical ethical education in the global north.
2. It should be noted that the sample size was quite small, and the test was executed at only one institution. Halliday and Fanits recognize the limitations to the study.
3. Kohlberg continuously revised his position, so much so that Reed (1997) claimed that Kohlberg wasn't particularly concerned with logical consistency among his projects over the years (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 2000: 1). Due to space and scope constraints, I propose, however, to focus only on the three-level theory (which includes six stages).
4. I wish to note that, although for the sake of simplicity I will be referring to Rest as opposed to Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau throughout, his findings were the result of collaborations—please see the References section.
5. With regard to religious faith and ranking in moral development, there is critique of the DIT. Beliefs based on religious authority (rather than, for example, being the result of standards of logical consistency which are in principle applicable to any other person) would

exclude such believers from postconventional moral development (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 1999: 123). Rest answers this challenge by noting many people of faith have postconventional understandings of their religion and its moral meaning for their lives, citing the work of Niebuhr (1943) and Tillich (1957) (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 1999: 123). This does not, however, resolve the issue for faiths wherein moral questions are viewed in terms of “living in harmony with divine law” (Richards and Davidson 1992, 469 in Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau 1999: 123). Thus the inclusion of religion in the above list is not without controversy.

6. Importantly, Kohlberg and Rest did not set out to test moral behavior. What I am calling attention to is the fact that the dominant tests of successful moral development pertain to ratiocination as opposed to behavior and that they are ill-suited for identifying whether people are advanced in terms of their actual moral practices.

7. Variation is also the result of differing philosophies of moral development and expression.

8. Gilligan’s work has been subject to a number of criticisms. She has been criticized for focusing primarily on a privileged subset of the female population for her studies of moral development (Tronto 1993: 81), without attending to race, class, region, and ethnic bias (Moody-Adams 1997). Many theorists—for example, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Carol Stack (1990)—argue that care ethics play a role in African American traditions, inviting theoretical attention along lines of race/ethnicity (Tronto 1993: 83). These critiques are important; however, my main appeal to the strength of Gilligan’s work is with regard to the methods she used which identified moral beliefs/values as they pertained to actual dilemmas experienced by individuals as contrasted with hypothetical dilemmas found in Kohlberg and Rest’s tests.

9. Leever, Daniels, and Zimmerman-Oster (2006) have created a survey wherein students report their leadership capacity prior to, and after, a service-learning experience. Similar tests might be useful for testing changes in ethical behavior following various types of course work.

10. In support, Goralnik and Nelson cite the work of D’Arcangelo (2000); Weiss (2000); Sylwester (1994); and McCuen and Shah (2007) (Goralnik and Nelson 2011: 188).

11. It is worthwhile to note that the contrast of intuition and reason is different than the contrast of emotion and cognition, as Haidt takes intuition, reasoning, and the appraisals contained in emotions to all be forms of cognition (Haidt 2001: 818). The juxtaposition of intuition and reasoning is meant to capture the processes of these cognitions; intuition occurs quickly, effortlessly, automatically, and unconsciously, while reasoning is slower, requires some effort, and involves steps that are available to consciousness (Haidt 2001: 818).

12. For example, in Mary Beth Armstrong, J. Ketz, and Dwight Owsen’s (2003) work, they note a deficiency of work in accounting ethics addressing ethical motivation and behavior, and explore exhortation and the use of moral exemplars to remedy this deficiency.

13. Deciding what a good test of morality and moral development will be is another question. Blasi maintains that further study of the relationship between moral reasoning and

behavior requires clear conceptualizations of moral reasoning, behavior, and cognition, with attention to which actions will be considered moral (Blasi 1980: 5). These concepts, in addition to that of moral emotion, must be robust enough to cross interdisciplinary boundaries and still remain semantically intact. Diverse starting assumptions about what morality is and how morality can be measured must have a viable home within what is, of necessity, a richly interdisciplinary enterprise.

14. Colby and Damon's exemplars are not to be understood as being "gifted" in such a way that their actions are not achievable by the population more generally, rather they are those who excel on a continuum of moral behavior and development which the majority of humans partake in (Colby and Damon 1992: 4, 27).

15. Although Tomashow's book is focused on ecological identity work I find much of his curriculum provides helpful ideas for development of ethical identity work.

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