

Education and moral minimalism

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Summary of articles

■ RUWEN OGIEN

The minimal morality at the school

All the plans for the reintroduction of moral instruction at school have mixed up the question of the fair with one of the good. The first one concerns our relationships : to what extent are we respectful, fair, etc. ? The second one is to know what are we do of ourselves : the lifestyle that we want to lead, the kind of person that we must be, the ingredients of "good" or "happy" life. Must be a reasonable saver or a big-time gambler? An early riser than tries to do as much as possible or a late riser than tries to do as less as possible? The moralism consists of favouring one of those views of personal good, and all school programs that claim to impose one view of personal good on pupils to the detriment of others is moralist. The minimalist plan tries, as possible, to avoid the moralism at school. It rests on the next principles. In democratic, laic and pluralist school, it's legitimate to establish the civics, which the purpose is to teach the political institution's functioning, and to make pupils aware of fair norm, that is, among other things, of the coexistence between persons who have divergent philosophies of life. But, the legitimacy of a compulsory moral education, which the ambition would insert pupils into a "good" or "happy" life, or to pass a certain view of good, or some "values" on to them would be as questionable as education program of a particular religion.

■ EIRICK PRAIRAT

Deontology and minimalism

This paper offers some thoughts concerning a professional code of ethics in teaching. More specifically, it will defend the view that a form of deontology has become desirable. The impulse behind this deontological argument is not some moral aspiration. Rather it is a clear-sighted response to the changes that have occurred in society and within the more specific domain of teaching practices. This paper will primarily seek to define the idea of deontological minimalism by means of a tripartite characterization, and will demonstrate that it is likely to be the only form of regulation that is compatible with the pluralism of contemporary professions.

■ GUILLAUME DURAND & GERARD DABOUIS

What is a minimalist medical ethics ?

The central position which is occupied today by autonomy of patient in relation of care seems to lead naturally clinical ethics in moral minimalism. But what's the meaning exactly of "to be minimalist" in relation of care ? Is it possible and legitimate to reduce principles of medical ethics to only one ? In particular, to the harm principle which require to be not harmful to the patient. And what does "not harmful" mean ?

■ **JEAN-PASCAL ALCANTARA**

Is a Minimalistic Ethics Compatible with Education

Within the educational world, the mainstream moral philosophy originates in Kantian even Levinassian roots. As an alternative way, Ruwen Ogien's minimalist ethics just begins to rise. Denouncing each failure of the liberal state to respect its obligation of axiological neutrality, such a project doesn't particularly seem to be suited for the educators' use. Indeed it is not obvious whether its leading principles (no harm, equal consideration, neutrality) are likely to determine a strong enough morality convenient with the finalities of education. However, in the following, a minimalistic outlook might turn out to be no less compatible with an overriding clause about education than Mill's utilitarianism. Given a context of democratic pluralism, a citizenship education, understood from the less we can share, doesn't look as a nonsensical idea. Further we reply to some objections in order to succeed in harmonizing moral commitments (even minimalistic) with the main outcomes of the political thought drawn from the theory of justice.

■ **ROGER MONJO**

No one should have to complain that they have been excluded

It may be beneficial to adopt an approach inspired from moral minimalism in order to design a school ethics adapted to the current conditions of pedagogical action. Indeed, the prevailing discourse in that matter is steeped in paternalistic and moralistic injunctions. However, one may wonder about the benefits to be expected from such an approach insofar as the content of moral minimalism is itself minimalist. «No one should have to complain that they have been excluded» expresses Condorcet's opposition to compulsory school attendance, a striking anticipation of the central rule of minimalist ethics («do not harm others»). Nevertheless, by reducing Condorcet's phrase to this strict negativity, one may run the risk of losing sight of his more solid moral intuitions, which could still inspire the ethics of teaching today. That is the reason why we will also discuss how alternative approaches (such as the theories of care or of recognition) might contribute to the development of such an ethics.

■ **DIDIER MOREAU**

Ethics and pedagogy at the school : the way to the moral improvement

The new teaching of morality in school arouses a debate against metaphysical positions. This paper realizes a critical review of them, from their epistemological presuppositions, to propose a way of ethical training of oneself, according to the stoic practice of the spiritual exercises as far as possible of any transcendence. It is possible, in school, to conduce pedagogical practices opening the way of self ethical construction, by the share of values and experiencing. These practices are opened and turned to the horizon of improvement, because they are not subordinate to an institution of salvation which detains the Truth.

■ **MICHEL FABRE**

John Dewey's Moral Minimalism and Ethics Minimalism

John Dewey's Ethics is a paradoxical thought, both secularizing Moral theory and keeping a requirement of Ethics of Grown. On the one hand Dewey against Eudaemonism, utilitarianism and kantism, refuses any moral principles a priori. He advises an free analysis of problematic situations characterized by conflicting values. In such a contextualism, principles become mere tools of intelligibility and resolution of a problematic situation in which the actors are involved. Dewey also refuses the dualisms of moral tradition: the Hume's rule, the gap between ends and means. Rejecting any idea of Moral Consciousness or Practical Reason as separate faculties, but also ethical Emotivism, he advises ethical debate, an act of common intelligence applied to live together. On the other hand, from Emerson's tradition, he takes, through all his writings, that life is education, grown, moral perfection. The requirement of grown'ethics is, for him, a counterweight to the secularization of morality. What about this articulation between moral minimalism and maximalism of ethics?

■ **PIERRE BILLOUET**

Minimalism and discourse ethics

The moral Minimalism and the Discourse ethics dispute the paternalism of the authorities which claim to do good of subordinates without asking them to anything. But the precise examination of their principles, on one hand, and the understanding of the theory of Kohlberg of the moral development on the other hand, allows to show that there is a profound difference between both approaches. The concept of the autonomy is the touchstone allowing to decide between both ethics, the educational and political consequences of which cannot be identified.

■ **VINCENT LORUIS**

Educating in a pluralistic world: moral minimalism to rescue the Republican school?

The moral minimalism is characterized primarily by its reference to a no harm principle (OGIEN, 2007). Is this moral option which seems inherently incompatible with the education, still mobilized in school educational practices? If it is, is it a problem in terms of republican school's objectives and the role that educators should have? Enlightened by a current survey, we can propose some arguments in favor of a positive answer to the first question and negative to the second one. By pressing us on interviews with some professionals of school education, we actually try to show that they mobilize, in their practises, a variety of moral compass, of which some are from minimalism. Then, We can argue that, to educate in a pluralistic world, education stakeholders need to be themselves pluralistic, individually and practically. So, the question that arises is not to know whether minimalism can be a barrier in education, but is to know how could we characterize its specific interest to contribute to a republican education's project.