381

The Care of the Self: poststructuralist questions about moral education and gender

JILL GOLDEN

Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT *The relationship between poststructuralist theory and ethics or values in education is a complex and relatively unexplored one, yet in classrooms the ethical implications of theory are lived out daily in the relations between teachers and children. Teachers who are interested in bringing the insights of poststructuralist theory into their work with children still tend to refer back (consciously or otherwise) to the ethics of versions of liberal humanism in making value judgements. The incongruence which results can undermine changes that a teacher wants to bring about. One approach to this dilemma can be through narrative. Narrative, or story, is one of the "technologies of the self" most available to teachers and children for the construction, regulation and care of selves (as knowers, as learners and as moral agents), including the ongoing construction of values associated with feminine and masculine gender identities. Deconstruction of children's classroom and lived narratives can make this process visible. This paper will explore the specific and differing values made visible in one story told by five children.*

Introduction

Questions of morals, or ethics, or values, are always present in classrooms—whether spoken or silent. "To be positioned and to take up a position (even if this involves sitting on the fence) is a question of ethics" (Diprose, 1991b, p. 65). Ethical expectations placed on teachers are high:

> In ever changing practical situations it is constantly required of teachers that they distinguish instantly and yet thoughtfully what is appropriate from what is less appropriate, what is good from what is not good in their interactions with children (Van Manen, 1994, p. 140).

Liberal humanism is still the dominant discourse of western culture. In most schools one version or another of liberal humanism (whether secular or religious) is the basis of both the teachers' and children's taken-for-granted ethical or moral understandings, and also of the intellectual assumptions underlying the teaching and learning that takes place. It is based on a "commonsense" understanding of the individual as a unified, rational being—one who has an "essential" self that is

unique, fixed and coherent. Liberal humanism is deeply rooted in the binary logic that organises western thought into hierarchical and oppositional dualisms.

In this century, the move towards structuralism in many disciplines has been a (secular) seeking out of hidden rules that regulate human behaviour. Structuralist approaches challenge the humanist concept of the self as an autonomous agent by laying bare the extent to which its apparently free choices are predetermined.

Poststructuralist theory both derives from and challenges structuralism. It takes a radical step outside of liberal humanism by directly confronting liberal humanist ideas about the "essential self". Instead, the self is seen as "precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1987, p. 33). Selfhood can be seen as "a question of aesthetic creation rather than of the expressive liberation of some personal essence" (Macey, 1993, p. 418). Poststructuralist theory suggests that knowledge or meaning is constructed not through fixed underlying structures within human minds or societies, but through multiple discourses circulating in language and culture. These form "storylines" within which people are positioned or position themselves in a variety of ways and through which they come to understand the world and their place in it.

Poststructuralist theory has challenged the taken-for-granted intellectual grounds of the discourse of liberal humanism. It has been taken up by some teachers who want to bring new understandings of questions about gender, race and class to their work. But poststructuralist theory offers teachers (and others) an intellectual strategy rather than an ethical system.

Teachers of English have become particularly aware of some of the ethical dilemmas that occur when they try to bring the insights of poststructuralist theory to their students' reading and writing practices. Poststructuralist theory (especially, I would argue, feminist poststructuralist theory) can give them a sharp understanding of questions about identity, power, agency and knowledge. Using these understandings, English teachers can introduce their students to the idea, for example, that meaning is not fixed in or by a text; or that texts are sites for the production of multiple meanings. At the same time, many English teachers want to hold on to value positions (such as anti-sexism or anti-racism) which in western culture are usually based on liberal humanist understandings of identity or the person: so they are faced with a dilemma. This is partly a theoretical dilemma, but it is also a question of ethics. Some of these questions have been raised recently by Mellor and Patterson (1993, 1994), Gore (1992), Davies and Harré (1991) and Gilbert and Taylor (1991). Several articles in the September 1994 issue of *English in Australia (POST Poststructuralism)* raise questions about ethical issues. In particular, Pride (1994) notes the "turn toward the ethical" in literary studies and begins what he calls a rethinking of the ethics of poststructuralism in relation to the teaching of English.

Poststructuralist theorists have been relatively silent about questions of ethics. They have at this point not taken on the task of providing an ethical guide appropriate to their intellectual understandings. Developing such a guide will be a long process, and it is one which teachers need to be part of, if only because (as I

suggested above) in classrooms the ethical implications of theory are lived out daily in the relations between teachers and children. Reliance on the *values* of liberal humanism makes it easy for teachers to slip back (consciously or otherwise) into the "commonsense" of the dominant discourse in their classroom practices. A rethinking and articulation of values and their sources is an important step for teachers to undertake.

One approach to this dilemma can be through a close scrutiny of narrative (stories) as a "technology of the self". The phrase "technology of the self" was used by Foucault to refer to all the procedures and social practices "proposed or prescribed for individuals in order to fix, maintain or transform their identity in accordance with a certain number of goals" (Foucault, in Macey, 1993, p. 417). Narrative is one of the "technologies of the self" most available to teachers and children—for the construction, regulation and care of selves (as knowers, as learners and as moral agents)—including the ongoing construction of values associated with feminine and masculine gender identities.

I want to contribute to this process by discussing some of the ideas about ethics—in particular about the "care of the self"—that occur in Foucault's later and less well-known work. First, I will show where Foucault located the ethical practice of "care of the self" in relation to other areas of morals or philosophy. (He set out the parameter of what he called a "genealogy of ethics", and it is this work that I will use here.) Secondly, I will explore what Foucault understood by "care of the self". Thirdly, I will discuss the insights that such an approach to ethics makes possible, through an analysis of five children's retellings of a story that their teacher had previously told them in class. My analysis makes two processes visible: first, how narrative is used as a "technology of the self" in the ongoing construction of these children's selves; and secondly, how the children take themselves up as moral agents through the stories. Finally, this will lead to reflection on teachers' involvement and interventions in classroom situations. As Gilbert points out:

> The first step for teachers is consciousness. The second step is intervention. Consciousness brings about the possibility of change... The issue of how to intervene, however, is complex and requires teachers who are willing to deconstruct their own practices (Gilbert, 1993, p. 53).

It also requires teachers who are willing to scrutinise and reflect on the ethical implications of their actions. (It is my intention here to stimulate discussion of these questions, but not to offer answers.)

Foucault's "Genealogy of Ethics"

Where is the "Care of the Self" Placed in Relation to Other Areas of Morals or Philosophy?

Foucault divided the study of morals into three areas: a study of people's actual behaviour (a sociology of morals); a study of moral codes or prescriptions (moral philosophy); and a study of ethics, or the self's relation to itself—"how the individual is supposed to constitute him [or her] self as a moral subject of his [or her] own

actions" (Foucault, 1984, p. 352). It is the last of these that Foucault takes up in his *History of Sexuality, vol. 3* (his last published work) and that I want to take up here. (The study of the sociology of morals, and of moral philosophy, might of course also be of value to teachers.)

Foucault then subdivides this area of ethics into four parts. The first part (which he calls "ethical substance") is concerned with the question: "Which is the aspect or the part of myself or my behaviour which is concerned with moral conduct?" In different historical times, Foucault suggests, it could be intentions, or desires, or feelings that are thought to be the substance of ethical enquiry.

The second part of ethics (which Foucault calls the "mode of subjection") is concerned with the question: "How are people invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations?" In different historical times, Foucault suggests, it could be through an appeal to divine law, or to natural law, or to rational rule, or to an aesthetics of existence.

Foucault's fourth subdivision within ethics (I will return to the third subdivision shortly) deals with the question: "What is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way?" In different historical times people might aspire, for example, towards purity, or immortality; to be free, or to be masters of themselves.

Foucault's third subdivision within ethics is what he calls "self-forming activity". It is concerned with the question: "What are the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects?" It is the exploration of this question that seems to me to be particularly relevant to teachers, especially to English teachers. It is the point at which poststructuralist theory, education and ethics most visibly come together.

Whereas much discussion about morality is exclusively focused on the level of the moral code, or on one's duty, Foucault shows another productive way to go: "By showing how to embed our relations to ourselves in a grid of ethical intelligibility, Foucault has helped to articulate the kind of complexity these relations actually embody" (Davidson, 1986, p. 232). Although Foucault pays little attention to gender in his study of the care of the self in Classical times, his genealogy of ethics lends itself particularly well to a focus on the construction and care for specifically gendered moral selves, which is my interest here.

The Care of the Self

What does Foucault Mean by the Phrase the "Care of the Self?"

Foucault explores this idea by describing in some detail the practice of the culti-vation of the self in ancient Rome, and certain shifts in that practice over several centuries. The "care of the self", he says is an art of living that sets out criteria for an ethical and aesthetically pleasing existence. It is an experience of one's self that involves both self-mastery and pleasure in oneself:

> This application to oneself does not simply require a general attitude, an unfocused attention... It takes time... This time is not empty; it is filled with exercises, practical task, various activities. Taking care of oneself is not

a rest cure. There is the care of the body to consider, health regimens, physical exercises without overexertion, the carefully measured satisfaction of needs... Around the care of the self, there developed an entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and com-munication with others were linked together.

    Here we touch on one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice (Foucault, 1988, pp. 50-51).

As he explores classical understandings of the "care of the self", Foucault draws out the sometimes subtle distinctions between Roman ethical practices, and ethical practices based on, for example, Christianity. Discussing Seneca's practices of self-examination to gain self-knowledge, Foucault writes:

> The purpose of the examination is not therefore to discover one's own guilt, down to its most trifling form and its most tenuous roots. If "one conceals nothing from oneself", if one "omits nothing", it is in order to commit to memory, so as to have them present in one's mind, legitimate ends, but also rules of conduct that enable one to achieve these ends through the choice of appropriate means. The fault is not reactivated by the examination in order to determine a culpability or stimulate a feeling of remorse, but in order to strengthen, on the basis of the recapitulated and reconsidered verification of a failure, the rational equipment that ensures a wise behaviour (Foucault, 1988, p. 62).

The formation of an ethical self is understood as requiring knowledge of oneself—"the truth concerning what one is, what one does, and what one is capable of doing"—which leads to self-mastery; but also an enjoyment of the self "without desire and without disturbance" (Foucault, 1988, p. 68).

    Foucault's project in *The Care of the Self* is an historical one. He shows that the ways in which people live, the relations that individuals maintain in society, the concepts by which they organise their thoughts and feelings—including their sexuality and gender—are all the results of very precise historical circumstances. They are not "natural" but constructed and therefore open to the possibility of change. Foucault shows such change as it evolves in Roman thought. (Roman ideas about the "care of the self" were, of course, only available to a small number of free male citizens, not to women, children or slaves.) The concepts and practices that organise present-day construction of selves—and in particular the interface between caring for and regulating the self—are similarly open to analysis and change.

    Practices relating to gender form one part both of regulation and of care of the self. Narrative is one of the technologies by means of which this gendered self is articulated—by which it is linked to other selves, to discourses about gender and to social institutions. Deconstruction can make this narrative work more visible: "so that we actually see and are seen differently" (Probyn, 1993, p. 132).

    The idea of "the care of the self" forms a link between knowledge and values. It links poststructuralist theoretical knowledge about subjectivity to a consideration

of an ethical formation and practice of the self. The idea of "the care of the self" offers a position from which educators (whose work always involves both knowledge and values in relation to the children they teach) might rethink (gendered) practices in schools. Such a rethinking might lead to a more complex understanding of "technologies of the self" as they are routinely expected, encouraged and imposed in classrooms.

Children Telling Stories

Analysis of Stories

I will now turn to stories told by five 7-year-old children, to make visible some of the aspects of both caring and regulating the self that are made available in them. The five children (individually) tell the story to me as visitor/researcher, and I am the one (not the teacher) who analyses their tellings. The teacher's concern is with the children's maths learning and values learning, from their (basically) liberal humanist position. He has a strong commitment to treating the girls and boys equally. My deconstruction of the children's tellings makes visible some of the complexities of *their* meanings (especially in relation to gender) which sometimes contradict "commonsense" liberal humanist assumptions about identity or values.

Number gnome stories have a special place in this classroom. Through them the teacher (whom I will call Jonathon) teaches the four basic processes in maths of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The gnome stories are ephemeral in the sense that they are told, not read; but the characters have continuity over a 2-year period. Jonathon deliberately weaves in details of plot and character which teach values (such as observation and conservation of the natural world, helpfulness and honesty). That is, the stories are designed specifically to shape the children's sense of themselves (or, more accurately, to provide the resources through which they can construct their own selves), as successful learners and as moral agents. "Caring for the self" for these children, in this situation, includes knowing themselves as competent learners—practising the sums and being able to get the right answers—and knowing themselves as people who understand correct ethical behaviour in relation to certain moral choices. It also means taking pleasure in the self that is being constructed—enjoying the self that is experienced as knowledgeable and successful.

Central to Jonathon's teaching method is the intention to offer *desirable* positions for the children to take up—positions which of course always have implications for gender. (I am particularly aware here that in focusing on narrative I am paying scant attention to other "technologies of the self" relating to care of the self, concerned with bodily practices in the physical world, or to symbol systems other than language, such as music or art. I need to remind myself constantly that these very significant "technologies", by which meaning is made, are also always present in the classroom.)

The number gnomes—Finder, Loser, Stacker and Sharer—are the heroes (all male) of Jonathon's ongoing mathematics story. Finder (who personifies addition) is

a gnome, a little on the chubby side, who wears green and is somewhat phlegmatic in his disposition. He loves finding stones or seeds and adding them to his collection, even if they really belong to someone else. Loser (subtraction) is a tall, lean and bent gnome, rather melancholy, who wears blue and always finds that he has fewer stones or seeds than he expects—he does not realise that he has a hole in his collecting bag. (Finder, of course, is the one who picks them up.) Sharer (division) is the smallest but strongest of the four gnomes. He wears red, is rather "fiery" in temperament, and is concerned that things are "shared" or divided evenly among the four brothers. Stacker (multiplication) is the quickest, sprightliest and most sanguine of the gnomes; he wears yellow, and can collect many "times" what his brothers bring home. The gnomes are small, invisible to humans and are presented by Jonathon as child-like in their thoughts and feelings. As well as learning maths they have adventures with little creatures such as birds and worms, play practical jokes on human beings and report on their work to the king of the gnomes. The stories lead mostly into number work with the four processes.

Details of any stories, including these, connect to the wider discursive framework and values in ways that are often invisible because so "obvious", so some of the qualities given to Loser and Stacker reflect, probably unintentionally, the values of capitalism: to have less is to be sad, to have more is to be happy. (In a Buddhist story, the reverse might be the case.) Early in his stories, Jonathon had the gnomes collecting precious stones such as rubies. Feeling uncomfortable with the moral implications of these riches, he changed the plot in subsequent stories to their collecting seeds. Still, some seeds were seen as more precious than others, because of their rarity (a blue seed) or beauty (a star-shaped seed). Similarly, the use of the king in this as in other stories reflects a taken-for-granted acceptance of male hierarchical authority as proper. (The use of a collective or non-hierarchical or female agent, for example, Gaia, as the "repository" of the seeds, might interrupt this discursive construction.) In addition, the fact that the four gnomes are male means that male is continually re-established as the norm, the unmarked category in the male/female dualism against which "female" is "other".

These stories can be seen as "technologies of the self" (although Jonathon would not use the term) supplied by one person (the teacher) deliberately to influence others (each child). For the children in Jonathon's class the stories are part of the discursive framework that forms "the conditions of possibility for certain selves" (Probyn, 1993, p. 168). Like all stories, they are taken up in different ways by different children. The "primacy of gendered experience" (Probyn, 1993, p. 165) in the construction of a self is as evident in these stories as in others.

Jonathon also makes up some number gnome stories specifically to speak, in an indirect way, to a moral or ethical issue that has arisen in the class, such as lying or stealing. The story about Gobbles the Goblin that the five children tell is in this category. The plot is simple—Gobbles steals seeds from the gnomes, lies about the theft, is found out and is punished. Of all the stories told in the class, these "moral" stories are the most intentionally directed by Jonathon and taken up by some children as a technology for the *care* of the self (constructing themselves as a certain kind of admirable person, to be enjoyed and valued); but also as intended by

Jonathon and taken up by some children as a means of *regulating* the self (focusing on guilt, remorse and punishment). This double articulation makes it particularly interesting to see how different children position themselves in their telling of the Gobbles story, and how this relates to the construction of themselves as female or male people.

Gobbles the Goblin—Miranda, Ruth, Alan, Hugh, Philip

Jonathon's story about Gobbles the Goblin is given a very different emphasis by each of the five children (Miranda, Ruth, Alan, Hugh and Philip) who tells it to me. It seems to have impressed them all, but their positionings in this storyline show that the meanings they take from it depend on the other "storylines" they are also living.

Miranda tells a story about Loser who was *"coming back from a hard day's work underground waking up seeds"*. An *"ugly goblin" ("I can't remember his name, but I know that it were a goblin!")* stole one of Loser's seeds. The next day when they had to show the king what they had brought, they thought *"because the king was really angry, they thought he would be really cross with them"*. Miranda seems to position herself here with the gnomes as children who *expect* to get into trouble with an adult/authority figure, even though what has happened is not their fault. Miranda mimes the way they walk: the gnomes *"came down with their heads down like this—to the king"*. The king speaks *"in a pretty angry voice"* asking *"Why are you crying, Loser?"* He is not kind or nurturing, but Miranda tries to give a reason for this: *"cause he thought something might have happened bad."* She seems to be trying to justify or understand the behaviour of an authority figure even when he seems harsh and unfair. Once the king has heard Loser's story, he is *"really angry"* and *"really cranky"* with the right person (the goblin) but behaves with measured justice. He gives the goblin four chances before punishing him by tying him up in a bag *`for days and days!"* The end of Miranda's story is brief *("I always get mixed up!");* its emotional centre is the image of a tearful and fearful Loser coming before the angry king.

Ruth tells the same story about Loser with a different emphasis.

> *Once Loser, he was looking for seeds, and he found a nice white bean seed under the ground, and he took it back to the castle, and he thought that he was the last one of the fairy folk to return, and he put his bag down there and he—and they went outside the door and talked about the seed, Loser talked about it to Sharer. And when they went to bed that night the last one was actually a little gnome called Gobbles, to come, and he heard them talking, and looked into Loser's bag and stole the seed. And then the next day Sharer found a star, a little star seed—and the same thing happened, Sharer and Loser were talking about it, they thought they were the last ones to come back, but Gobbles again was, and he stole the star-shaped seed. And* **um,** *the king of the gnomes—they told the king of the gnomes and he looked in every bag and he found it in Gobbles' bag, and he had to go away until— until he could do somethink nice. Then he could come back.*

Ruth positions herself with the gnomes as "child"—but as a very "adult" child, as someone who knows the right way to behave and has authority on her side. The number gnomes are partly responsible for the loss of the seeds by their careless talk. They report the theft to the king and expect (and receive) justice. In Ruth's telling, Gobbles is not a goblin but another gnome (not "Other" but one of them); he will be able to rejoin them when he can do something "nice". He is like a naughty child who is temporarily excluded from the family but who will learn to behave properly and be brought back within it.

Alan also tells about Loser finding a white seed which is stolen by Gobbles the goblin. Alan positions himself with the gnomes: Loser *"got really upset"*. Sharer's seed is described as if it is special: *"a star seed, a blue one".* In Alan's telling it is Stacker who makes the sensible suggestion of looking in all the bags, and all the gnomes say: *"Gobbles, did you take the seeds?"* Gobbles says *"No I didn't"*—he is directly confronted and gives a direct lie which is absent from the girls' tellings. Only when the gnomes have tried and failed to solve the problem themselves does the king assert his authority and enforce it to protect their property: *"And the king said `Are you sure?' And then the king looked in Gobbles' bag and then he found a white seed, and um a blue star seed."* Alan, with the gnomes, is comfortably positioned as good/male/ child; he does not show much interest in Gobbles' naughtiness (compared with Philip and Hugh whose stories follow); but neither does he emphasise the punishment (as Miranda does). He simply says, *"He got punished".*

For Philip, this story (*"um, here's a good one too"*) is about both Stacker and Gobbles, but he seems most excited by Gobbles—he begins his telling with *"There's a goblin".* Stacker finds a nice seed, *"a really nice one he likes";* there are four of them, but he only takes one. Stacker goes "there" (that is, to the king's palace) and *"the goblin was the last one to come. Gobbles."* Gobbles steals the seed from the bag: *"He came and looked in Stacker's bag and he saw it and took it, and he just put it in his bag. And the—he was really excited."* Stacker complains to the king, Gobbles says he found the seed himself, and the king finds out the truth by putting his hand on Gobbles' heart which is beating fast: *"And the king touched his heart and it was beating."* The main interest for Philip in his story seems to be the conflicting positions available within the binary pairs honest/dishonest (or good/bad). Philip seems to slip between the first (Stacker as a "good" child who finds a "really nice" seed that he "likes" and takes only one) and the second (Gobbles as "bad" child who "just put it in his bag", who is "really excited", and whose heart beats fast when he is found out). Alongside the honest/dishonest dualism is the "adult/child" dualism. Both Stacker and Gobbles are positioned as "child" in relation to the king, and Philip is positioned with them both. The (adult male) king is the authority figure and judge, possessor of ways to find the truth from children and wrong-doers. Philip's use of the phrase *"And the king touched his heart"* is curiously double. The king literally put his hand on Gobbles' body; but the words also carry the implication that he touched Gobbles' feelings so that he became remorseful. This is not borne out by Philip's telling of the story, but anticipates the fact that later in the term the teacher does bring about a "change of heart" in Gobbles.

Hugh tells the story about the one gnome (first he calls him Stacker, then

decides it was really Loser) who found a spikey seed. When he got home Loser checked that it was still in his bag, put his bag beside the others, and went to bed. In the morning he was *"really happy",* but he went to his bag, and the seed was not there. He told the king. All the number gnomes looked in their bags, except for Gobbles (the goblin). The king asked Gobbles, and Gobbles said, *"I found one of those too".* When they looked in his bag, there it was. (Gobbles does not simply deny that he stole the seed; he is accounting for the fact that the seed *will be found* in his bag.) *"So the king put his hand on Gobbles' heart, and it was beating really fast."* (The heart of the liar beats fast; he gives himself away; the king has ways of finding out the truth, from the very body of the offender.) *"So Gobbles had to give it back. And Gobbles had to leave the that place and go to another one."* Hugh positions himself with Loser (he was *"really happy "*) but also with Gobbles in making up an alibi for the seed in his bag, and imagining his fast-beating heart.

These five retellings show the power of the narrative form for constructing meaning. At the same time they show how differently each child has understood the story and positioned themselves within it. For Miranda, the story centres on the child in relation to adult male authority—being a victim of theft seems to make Loser feel guilty (not angry); the punishment for the theft is specified and severe. (I think of the innumerable women who have spoken about feeling *guilty* for being victims of violence or rape, as if they somehow caused it, and who feel intimidated by male authority.) Miranda's story shows her as concerned with regulating the self (through guilt, shame and punishment) rather than caring for the self. For Ruth, Gobbles is a naughty child being appropriately dealt with within a family-like situation. She is minimally concerned with blaming, and most concerned with Gobbles learning to do *"somethink nice "*—to construct and care for a worthy self. In the tellings of both girls, the problem is dealt with indirectly, in a way which does not confront the offender with the offence—a "feminine" way of mediation. Alan also is not much concerned about punishment; sensible children attempt to solve their own problems before resorting to (trustworthy) adult authority. For Philip and Hugh, on the other hand, the idea of theft is exciting and leads inevitably to lying. Deliberate lying is experienced in the body with a racing heartbeat—the excitement of danger and risk-taking that is so often part of the construction of masculinity. Caring for the self as properly male seems to mean testing the boundaries of regulation rather than accepting them as one's own. (Being properly male is perhaps understood as more important and pleasurable than being good.)

Frigga Haug argues that "like human beings, morality is bisexual" (Haug, 1984, p. 58). That is, she says, human beings are not assigned different moral qualities from birth, on the basis of their sex (that women are caring, for example, or men brave). Rather, the same moral value is given a different meaning for each sex, and this meaning is expressed in different practices. The differences between the understandings shown by Ruth and Alan, in particular, seem related to the differences between "connected" and "separate" knowing discussed by Belenky *et al.* in *Women's ways of Knowing.* "Connected" knowing, they argue, is based on empathy and works towards a truth that is "personal, particular and grounded in firsthand experience" (Belenky *et al.,* 1986, p. 112); it is non-judgemental. Women, they say,

often feel most comfortable with this kind of knowing. This "connected" knowing can also perhaps be linked with an attitude of caring for the self (of oneself and others), as Ruth does. "Separate" knowing is based on doubting, being rational and objective, and trying to remove the self and its feelings from the act of critical judgement. This is the knowing traditionally valued by men in western culture, and by academic and other institutions. It can be linked with an attitude of regulating the self (of oneself and others), of attributing blame and meting out punishment—a "masculine" way of justice. The tellings of Alan, Philip and Hugh seem closer to this "separate" way of knowing. However, the two ways of knowing need not be understood as belonging *essentially* to one or other gender, nor as necessarily mutually exclusive. Miranda in particular seems to have strong elements of both regulation and personal connectedness in her story.

The Gobbles story is taken up differently by the girls and by the boys, in ways that are linked with dominant (liberal humanist) discursive constructions of gender. The most observable difference with this particular story seems to be in what is taken to be the appropriate attitude towards, or relationship with, authority. This includes Alan, Philip and Hugh's style of handling conflict with a direct verbal challenge rather than negotiation; Philip and Hugh's excited ambivalence about rule-breaking; Miranda's fearfulness; and Ruth's nurturing stance. These differences illuminate the ways in which the same story demands a different response from girls and boys as they make it a part of their moral "selves". Although Jonathon wants to treat the girls and the boys in his classroom "the same" (with a commitment to the liberal humanist value of "equality") one effect of this story is to reconstitute "proper" or stereotypical gendered ways of being.

Conclusion

Because schools have been assigned a significant part of the task of preparing children for adult life, they are often sites of conflict, tension and negotiation of meanings for the individuals who inhabit them. A knowledge of poststructuralist theory can provide for educators:

> a set of analytic tools that makes it possible to examine teaching-as-usual and its constitutive effects... it opens up the opportunity, in thinking quite differently about what we do, to develop a new set of practices that disrupt old authorities and certainties, that rid us of stereotypical thinking and open up the possibility of creating something new (Davies, 1994, p. 82).

For many teachers poststructuralist theory itself is still a challenge. However, teachers who appreciate the insight it gives them into the construction of gender, or race, or class, need access to an ethical or values system which is explicitly congruent with poststructuralist understandings of the human being. A clarification of where those values might also be congruent with humanist values, and where they are not, will make it easier for a teacher to bring poststructuralist theory to a classroom

without slipping back into the "commonsense" of the dominant discourse.

Some writers have viewed poststructuralism or postmodernism as morally bankrupt. Kenneth Gergen, by contrast, is very positive. He suggests that:

> it is possible to locate within the postmodern outlook a way of proceeding that has enormous potential for humankind—provided one is open to this view of potential. There are no foundations of value to be located here, no progressive program. But there are possibilities opened that may, within a given perspective, both enrich and sustain human life. (Gergen, 1991, p. 231)

He critiques the western idea of progress, for example, to show some of the alternative stories and possibilities made visible when its hierarchical and oppositional grand narrative is pushed aside. Similarly, he points out the possibilities for tolerance of diversity and difference opened up by postmodern theory:

> Convictions that people do (or do not) possess an unconscious mind, soul, intrinsic worth, inherent rationality, sincerity, personality traits, and so on, turn strange. These are, after all, *ways of talking,* not reflections of the actual nature of persons (Gergen, 1991, p. 247; my italics).

Some of the ethical directions that Gergen sees as implicit in poststructuralist theory include: openness to a multiplicity of cultural forms; a sense of self which emphasises relatedness to wider human communities; and new ways of understanding and resolving conflict.

The similarities and differences between these values, and the values of versions of liberal humanism found in a particular school or classroom, remain to be explored. Teachers need to be part of this exploratory process. When they are, they will have better resources with which to understand contradiction and change. They will gain a more complex understanding of the ways narrative is taken up as a "technology of the self"; and they will have a wider perspective from which to make the myriad of choices and interventions they have to make every day, in relation to the children in their classes.

REFERENCES

BELENKY, M.F., CLINCHY, B.M., GOLDBERGER, N.R. & TARULE, J.M. (1986) *Women's Ways of Knowing. Development of self, voice and mind* (New York, Basic Books Inc.).

DAVIDSON, A.I. (1986) Archaeology, genealogy, ethics, in: D. C. HOY (Ed.) *Foucault: a critical reader* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell).

DAVIES, B. (1994) *Poststructuralist Theory and Classroom Practice* (Victoria, Deakin University Press).

DAVIES, B. & MARRÉ, R. (1991/1992) Contradictions in lived and told narratives, *Research on Language and Social Interaction,* 25, pp. 1-35.

DIPROSE, R. (1991) A genethics that makes sense, in: R. DIPROSE & R. FARRELL (Eds). *Cartographies. Poststructuralism and the mapping of bodies and spaces,* pp. 65-76. (Australia, Allen & Unwin).

FOUCAULT, M. (1984) On the genealogy of ethics, in: P. RABINOW (Ed.) *The Foucault Reader,* pp. 348-351 (Middlesex, UK, Penguin).

FOUCAULT, M. (1988) *The Care of the Self. Volume 3, The history of sexuality* (Great Britain, Allen Lane, Penguin).

GERGEN, K.J. (1991) *The Saturated Self Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life* (USA, Basic Books).

GILBERT, P. (1993) *Gender Stories and the Language Classroom* (Geelong, Vic., Deakin University).

GILBERT, P. & TAYLOR, S. (1991) *Fashioning the Feminine: Girls, Popular Culture and Schooling* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin).

GORE, J. (1992) What we can do for you! What *can* `we' do for `you'? Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy, in: C. LUKE & J. GORE (Eds) *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (Great Britain, Routledge, Chapman and Hall).

HAUG, F. (1984) Morals also have two genders, *New Left Review,* 143, pp. 51-67.

MACEY, D. (1993) *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London, Hutchinson).

MELLOR, B. & PATTERSON, A. (1993) Teaching readings, in: J. RIVALLAND (Ed.) *Reading in the Primary School* (Australia, Primary English Teachers' Association, NSW).

MELLOR, B. & PATTERSON, A. (1994) Producing readings: freedom versus normativity, *English in Australia,* 109, pp. 42-56.

PROBYN, E. (1993) *Sexing the Self Gendered positions in cultural studies* (London, Routledge).

PRIDE, A. (1994) Ethics, criticism and creativity in a post-post-structuralist classroom, *English in Australia,* 109, pp. 57-75.

VAN MANEN, M. (1994) Pedagogy, virtue and narrative identity in teaching, *Curriculum Inquiry,* 24, pp. 135-170.

WEEDON, C. (1987) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford, Blackwell).