

Ethics and Education

Self-with-Other in Teacher Practice: --Manuscript Draft--

Full Title:	Self-with-Other in Teacher Practice:
Manuscript Number:	
Article Type:	Special Issue
Keywords:	Care, Virtue, Ethics
Manuscript Classifications:	Training and Education
Abstract:	<p>Many teacher candidates experience life as a full-time teacher in their practicums, during which they confront a host of challenges, pedagogical and ethical. Because ethics is fundamental to the connection between teachers and students, teacher-candidates are required to negotiate dilemmas in ways that keep with the ethical ideals espoused both by the professional body and the community at large. Presenting the case of a teacher-candidate who finds herself emotionally depleted, we look to the ethics of care and virtue, two luminary paradigms, for clarifying insights. Care ethics extols inter-subjectivity and reciprocity, while virtue ethics enjoins commitment to a noble ideal for its own sake; both perspectives offer useful insights for our case. We argue that the perspectives and practices of contemplative traditions can facilitate the integration of care and virtue ethics, mitigating the risk of disruption in caring relations while minimizing the possibility of a personal preoccupation with virtue. Drawing on the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism, we posit a "practice of self-with-other" as a way to enlarge a teacher's relational capacity, thus apprehending reciprocity and virtue as an interpenetrating mutuality. We conclude with reflections on how contemplative perspectives might inform the teaching of ethics in teacher education programs.</p>

**Self-with-Other in Teacher Practice: a Case Study through Care, Aristotelian
Virtue and Buddhist Ethics.**

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Article Submitted to *Ethics and Education* Special Issue: Ethics in Professional Education
September 4th, 2015

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Abstract

Many teacher candidates get their first taste of life as a full-time teacher in their practicums, during which they confront a host of challenges, pedagogical and ethical. Because ethics is fundamental to the connection between teachers and students, teacher-candidates are often required to negotiate dilemmas in ways that keep with the ethical ideals espoused both by the professional body and the community at large. Presenting the case of a teacher-candidate who finds herself emotionally depleted in her devotion to students, we look to the ethics of care and virtue, two luminary paradigms, for clarifying insights. Care ethics extols inter-subjectivity and reciprocity, while virtue ethics enjoins commitment to a noble ideal for its own sake; both perspectives offer useful insights for our case. We argue that the perspectives and practices of contemplative traditions can facilitate the integration of care and virtue ethics, mitigating the risk of disruption in caring relations while minimizing the possibility of a personal preoccupation with virtue. Drawing on the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism, we posit a “practice of self-with-other” as a way to enlarge a teacher’s relational capacity, thus apprehending reciprocity and virtue as an interpenetrating mutuality. We conclude with reflections on how contemplative perspectives might inform the teaching of ethics in teacher education programs.

Keywords: Care, Noddings, Virtue, Aristotle, Mahayana, Buddhism, Ethics, Teacher Education, Practice, Teacher Candidates, Relationship.

Introduction

The teaching practicum is one of the most demanding components of teacher-education. School and faculty supervisors expect teacher candidates (TCs) not only to apply current pedagogical theories to their classroom practice, but also to meet the academic and emotional needs of their students. These complex layers of responsibilities portend the experience of a career in education; the practicum is an immersive trial in which the teacher candidates' competencies are forged and tested. This baptism by fire can prove overwhelming for some, and is challenging even for those who emerge successfully on the other end.

The practicum illustrates a constellation of factors that make teaching such a challenging profession. First, current pedagogical theories have advanced instructional and assessment approaches that emphasize ongoing teacher feedback and guidance in promoting student learning (Chappuis et al., 2011). Many teachers are now providing several opportunities for students to work toward mastery, supplying guidance and direction at every stage of practice. Many teachers and teacher candidates that we have encountered report an increase in workload as a result of adopting this new approach to instruction. Secondly, urban demographics, at least here in British Columbia, are increasingly diverse – classrooms today see students from many cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Further, students with unique social, developmental, emotional

and intellectual needs are increasingly part of the mainstream classroom. While the diversity in the composition of classrooms has enriched the learning experiences of many students, it also requires greater skill and knowledge from the teacher as she navigates the complex terrain of intersecting demands. Changes in governments' funding policies here in British Columbia, have also eroded resources and supports at the school level, leaving many teachers toiling in isolation (Fallon & Poole, 2014). These compounding factors exact an increasing toll on teachers, who must now work harder and longer to help students meet desired educational ends.

While teacher burn-out has always been a troubling phenomenon (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999), the increasingly adverse conditions that compel otherwise caring and conscientious individuals to leave the task of nurturing children raise a series of ethical problems. *What do we require of teachers in their efforts to educate students? How much do we expect teachers to give? What ethical insights can we provide teachers in a system that often depletes a teacher's psychological, emotional and physical resources in the pursuit of worthy educational goals?* With this nexus of questions in mind, we present in the next section a case of an exhausted teacher candidate at the end of her emotional resources. We then consult care and virtue ethics for direction, since both ethical traditions engender a situational awareness that tends to the particulars of each ethical problem. While each paradigm offers perspicuous insights into our case, the process of examination also highlights alleged tensions that we believe merit attention. Because care ethics require a two-way relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for, student indifference leaves the teacher working without any affirmatory response, thus suspending the caring relationship. From an Aristotelian perspective, the lack of

response from student does not diminish the moral value of a teacher's efforts because steady attention and diligent effort are all intrinsically meritorious. A teacher who strives to exemplify this ideal does not require external affirmation to validate her work, nor should she consider her efforts wasted when students do not respond in kind. However, a focus on self-cultivation risks the absence of responsiveness and sensitivity inherent in the relational ethic that we believe essential to teaching. Thus, both care and virtue ethics have their respective strengths and limitations. Our paper attempts to combine these strengths while ameliorating their limitations with a contemplative perspective based on Mahayana Buddhism, which has the potential to fill the gap between care and virtue ethics by altering our conception of *self*.

The Case

Like many in her cohort, Sara entered the teacher education program with alacrity, led by a bright vision of making a difference in the lives of students. She took to her duties with steady diligence, researching instructional strategies and planning lessons with meticulous attention. Under the mentorship of an experienced school supervisor, Sara created many learning opportunities in which students explored and discussed salient themes from a variety of literary texts. She applied imaginative lesson ideas to great effect, drawing from pop-culture, anime and graphic novels. Both faculty and school supervisors were impressed by Sara's inventiveness and the engaging learning experiences she designed for students. Indeed, her performance exceeded what is expected of teacher candidates. Furthermore, Sara implemented principles of formative assessment and provided timely qualitative feedback to her students' work. When

assignments did not meet expectations, Sara gave students opportunities to re-submit without penalty. However, the ongoing support she provided to students meant countless hours of marking – a thankless labour that took a toll on her mental and emotional well-being. The relentless effort culminated in an emotional moment at a mid-term meeting with her supervisors.

“I don’t know if I can keep doing this,” Sara confessed through teary eyes.

“Last weekend, I spent all of Saturday marking their responses to the novel. I didn’t go to sleep until 2am on Saturday night. Then, I got up early on Sunday morning and marked another six hours before spending the rest of the day preparing lessons for the week. When I got back on Monday, I handed back the assignments and gave them an opportunity to redo the assignment at lunch. Nobody came. For the entire week, nobody came! It’s like they didn’t even look at my comments. I really want them to do well, and I’ve put my heart and soul into teaching them, but they don’t appreciate it. They don’t know how much work I’ve put into this.”¹.

Although both supervisors can relate to her frustrations, they find themselves searching for words. Through their own experience, they have learned to moderate their expectations of students; however, protective of Sara’s outlook as a nascent educator,

¹ Some educational theorists may want to examine the pedagogical merits of Sara’s work, including the design of her curriculum and her assessment practices. Indeed, the absence of student engagement can often be explained in part by teaching practices that do not sufficiently appeal to the students’ imaginations, life experiences, and existing frames of reference. However, in order to highlight the ethical issues that emerge from the life of the TC, we have decided to put aside pedagogical considerations, focusing instead on the ethical dilemmas in the teacher-student relationship. The case assumes that Sara’s teaching and assessment practices are sound, and her assignments relevant and interesting. While some may argue that innovative and engaging teaching designs eliminate the possibility of apathy, we have gathered through experience, both as teachers and teacher educators, that a host of factors affect levels of engagement, many of which lie outside the teacher’s sphere of control. Even the most compelling educators can be met with indifference. Our case study, therefore, examines what happens when a teacher’s good efforts do not produce satisfying results.

they are reluctant to assuage Sara's frustrations by lowering her expectations. What substantive guidance could they offer beyond platitudinous comforts (*It's okay, you'll get there . . . give yourself more time*)?

The Ethics of Care

Since its publication in 1984, Nel Noddings' *Care: a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* has garnered widespread attention and exerted considerable influence on the education community. Noddings' enduring contribution lies in her advancement of caring relations as a laudable ethical paradigm worthy of its place alongside vaunted moral traditions within western philosophy. In so far as western philosophical traditions have privileged the discernment of action based on the exercise of reason by a moral agent, the emphasis on a relational conception of ethicality, and the elevation in moral status of one who receives an ethical act, remains Noddings' salient contribution to moral philosophy.

Starting from the connection between mother and child, Noddings begins with relationship as the founding premise of her moral schema:

Taking relation as ontologically basic simply means that we recognize human encounter and affective response as a basic fact of human existence. As we examine what it means to care and be cared for, we shall see that both parties contribute to the relation; my caring must be somehow completed in the other if the relation is to be described as caring. (1984, p.4)

This characterization of relational constituency defines Noddings' theory; there can be no ethic of care without the acknowledgement of interpersonal connection as an immanent

feature of ethical theory and practice. Upon analysis, however, we see that Noddings' characterization of relation within the ethic of care entwines two propositions: first, she posits the nature of human interaction, stating the fact of relatedness. At the same time, she sets up a requirement for caring relations – in order for care to stand, there must be a relationship of reciprocity that *completes* the caring dynamic. Thus, Noddings' affirmation of the moral status of the caring relationship serves both as a description and an injunction: care both *is* and *must* be relational. While the descriptive aspect of her characterization has provoked less dispute, injunctive side of Noddings' position has incited a wider debate, to which Noddings' has devoted much of her exegesis in the ensuing years.

By requiring relational reciprocity in a caring relationship, Noddings in effect sets up a criterion for assessing an interaction as genuinely caring or not. The *one-caring* and the *one-cared-for* designate two sides of a transaction that cannot be completed without requisite action from both. Reciprocity, in this context, does not denote a conventional *quid-pro-quo*, as if the cared-for requites the one-caring with a response commensurate with the initial caring act. Rather, the cared-for responds to the one-caring in ways that acknowledge the care-giver, thus securing the caring relationship – a toddler is pacified and lulled to sleep in her mother's soothing caress; an ailing patient smiles at his nurse when she massages his aching joints. These responses, though perhaps considered trivial compared to the caring act, satisfy the motivations of the one-caring and completes the bidirectional transaction of reciprocity in caring relationships.

However, the requirement of reciprocity sets up the possibility of breach, when the lack of an appropriate or expected response from the cared-for poses a challenge to

the caring relation. Noddings believes that a disruption in the relation renders the care ethic incomplete, wherein the one-caring is left to labour without satisfactory response from the cared-for:

But if the cared-for does not complete my caring by receiving and acknowledging it, I may examine myself and ask, “Do I really care?” In some cases, an affirmative answer comes through clearly and honestly. I do care. I shall always care. The situation may be such that I just have to wait for my caring to be completed in the other and, if it never is, I see clearly that the attempt to care will nonetheless go on. (p. 37)

Clearly, the one-caring may continue to care, but her efforts do not satisfy Noddings’s ideal of care practice; her labour, one sided as it is, likely deteriorates into an “attempt to care” rather than “care” proper. This rupture in reciprocity constitutes what Noddings deems a “diminution of ethical ideals” (1984, p. 113), relegating the one-caring to the more daunting task of working in the absence or paucity of response that sustains her caring motivation.

By advancing reciprocity as a way to elevate the moral status of a care ethic, Noddings inadvertently implies the degradation of moral ideals when reciprocity is absent. Caring, according to Noddings, is stalled and the one-caring is left laboring in futility or scrambling to restore the conditions in which reciprocity is possible. This unfortunate consequence of Noddings’ otherwise profound theory has troubling implications for our beleaguered TC: as we saw in the case presented, the lack of response from her students leaves her discouraged and uncertain how to proceed]. Her

own efforts do not affect a sufficient response to meet the requirements of an ethic of care; rather than a caring teacher, she becomes a teacher *trying to care*.

What would Noddings say to our emotionally depleted TC? Faced with the question of apathetic students who inadvertently stall the caring relationship, Noddings steers clear of any response that deals specifically with a break-down of reciprocity and instead points to the institutional conditions that are inhospitable to caring relations, enjoining us to a reconceptualization of the school as a social institution:

What I am recommending is that schools and teaching be redesigned so that caring has a chance to be initiated in the one-caring and completed in the cared-for. Sacrifices in economies of scale and even in programs might be called for. . . . A school cannot be engrossed in anyone or anything. But a school can be deliberately designed to support caring and caring individuals, and this is what an ethic of caring suggests should be done. (p. 182)

In essence, Nodding's response to indifferent students is to find fault, not with the aspirations of care ethics, but with school and social conditions that place obstacles in the road of care. Accordingly, she urges reforms lies not in the revision of her conception of care ethics, but in the critique of institutions that are hostile to care ethics and urges reforms that create structures in which care and nurture thrive in ways otherwise impossible within the current establishment. We stand with Noddings in her critiques of institutional designs that make caring relations difficult. Indeed, the TC should not blame herself for breakdowns in caring relations due to institutional and cultural limitations beyond her control. Since comprehensive school reform lies outside the parameters of

possibility for our scenario, we remain in search of practical guidance that will help our TC to proceed.

The importance of institutional reform notwithstanding, our TC must deal with the immediate situation as it stands, and the lack of an incisive response from care ethics can be construed as a problematic equivocation. While the ethics of care has done much to affirm the importance of responsiveness and reciprocity, it leaves us uncertain how to proceed when reciprocity is disrupted. The teacher must continue to teach; the show (and the caring) must go on. How might we recommend that she proceed without diminishing the value of her work while sustaining her own resources in her professional dedication?

Ethics of Virtue

Aristotelian virtue ethics has long propounded moral action as a manifestation of a foundational moral disposition cultivated through virtuous activity (Aristotle, 1999). Happiness, according to Aristotle, is experienced through the practice of virtuous acts that are intrinsically “noble and fine” (Vokey, 2001), and ought to be valued regardless of ensuing consequences. Aristotle’s use of the word *kalon* to denote that which is noble and fine evokes the related term *kalos*, that which is beautiful, something that needs no further justification of merit outside itself (Owen, as cited in Vokey 2001). Virtue, like beauty, is inherently compelling and thus requires no external affirmation in the form of positive outcomes – we find fulfillment when we undertake virtuous action and the merit of our efforts remain independent of consequences.

One contemporary elaboration of Aristotelian virtue ethics can be found in the work of Michael Slote. After carefully considering Noddings’ work, Slote argues that :

“it makes more sense to base an ethic of caring on the intrinsic moral value or admirability of a caring attitude than on the desirability or value (for participants or in general) of caring relationships” (Slote, 1999, p. 33). The devoted daughter who cares for an aging parent with Alzheimer’s and the tutor who works with a child with significant developmental challenges may never experience the reciprocity envisioned by Noddings, nor will they ever see their care “completed” in the reciprocity moral that defines caring relations. The *cared-fors* in these cases may never enjoy the benefit of knowing they are cared for, nor would they respond in any way that counts as sufficient reciprocity. This lamentable reality, however, does not reduce the moral value of the action undertaken by the one-caring. Noddings’ estimation of care, according to Slote, depends too much on “the accidental or unpredictable consequences of such caring” (1999, p. 33). Slote argues that the care-giver who persists in her devotion despite the lack of requisite response for the cared-for remains morally admirable by virtue of her devotion; the moral value of her labour is undiminished by the absence of positive outcomes. The lack of caring reciprocity, in other words, does not constitute a diminution of ethical ideals, as Noddings would have it; rather, it underscores the importance of care as a virtue practiced by an individual. To be rapt in the well-being of another and to muster the efforts to serve the good of another is itself morally worthy, even if the other cannot recognize the beneficence of such action.

In her later commentary on the ethics of care, Noddings acknowledged the critiques raised about her work, but refrained from endorsing the caring as a virtuous attitude that imparts moral merit on the one-caring (Noddings, 1999, 2003). Her reticence is understandable, of course. Having argued the moral contribution of the

cared-for and highlighted the relational ties that form the preconditions of ethical action, she should hardly concede ground once again to virtue ethics, which sees more merit on the side of the one-caring. To admit the exception is to undermine the heart of her ethical vision.

Slote points out, however, that care differs from traditional conceptions of virtue – it is one “that reaches out toward the other and in a psychological sense . . . involves connection with other people” (Slote, 1999, p. 34). Noddings does not seem entirely averse to the conception of care as a virtue, having already considered care as a virtue in the earliest iterations of her work:

When we discuss the ethical ideal, we shall be talking about “virtue,” but we shall not let “virtue dissipate into “the virtues” described in abstract categories. . . the virtue described by the ethical ideal of one-caring is built up in relation. It reaches out to the other and grows in response to the other.

Because we detect in this passage a close affinity between care ethics and Aristotelian virtue ethics, perhaps a commitment to excellence in caring for its own sake can properly motivate caring activity when the completion of care relations is not possible. In this sense, a caring virtue is not *merely* personal, but has everything to do with the other. Sensitivity and responsiveness to the other, Slote might say, inheres in care as a virtue and operates according to the other-directedness that Noddings so esteems in her conception of the caring relationship.

Although Slote’s theoretical argument for care *as a* virtue appears to resolve the tensions that unfurl from Nodding’s care ethics, the practical question of how such a virtue plays out in our case, or how such a virtue can best be cultivated in the first place,

remains unclear. Might our exhausted TC find comfort in knowing her efforts are admirable even if no student acknowledges or responds to her efforts? Would we enjoin her to continue in devoting endless hours of marking, knowing that students will not take heed of her comments? We find it hard to issue such an exhortation, consigning the TC to arduous labour at this tender stage of her career. In practice, the inherent happiness of virtues does not play out easily in the classroom, where the teacher and the student are bound in an inextricable relationship. There is no virtue solely one's own, no moral action entirely independent of the other, despite the complications that can arise as a result of such involvement. If we insist in the teeth of hard reality that virtuous conduct ought to persist despite the lack of appreciation, then virtue ethics is no more than a personal practice that serves private ends, entirely separate from the relational cords that thread the web of a classroom community. A teacher who insists on carrying out a noble work even though she evokes no response from students is caught in a fragmented picture of education. Slote's characterization of a "virtue that reaches out in community" may very well be a theoretical gloss that leaves a thorny practical dilemma unresolved. For, if a teacher is only a teacher in the presence of students, any virtue appropriate to the teaching professional must by definition include students; there is no teacherly virtue apart from the virtues that arise in the connection with pupils. In light of this definition, Slote's assertion becomes an unintended truism that amalgamates care and virtue in an act of theoretical conflation – the practical question of how to care in a virtuous way within the inextricable teacher-student relationship remains unclear.

Contemplative Perspectives: Learning from the Bodhisattva Ideal

Both Noddings and Slote have pondered the possibility of care as a relational virtue, a responsive intention that reaches out and grows in the presence of the other. This relational virtue bears notable resemblance to the ideal of the Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism – a tradition that we are familiar with and from which we have drawn inspiration, personal and professional. Whereas the earliest forms of Buddhism emphasized individual liberation from the cycle of suffering and rebirth via ethical conduct and meditative practice, the Mahayana tradition expands the notion of “self” and revises the previous understanding of “personal liberation” to include the liberation of all beings. In the foundational tenets of co-dependent origination (*pratitya samutpada*) and emptiness (*sunyata*), Mahayana teachings deconstruct conceptions of a fixed and independent self, thus eschewing the notion of individual liberation while other beings brew in suffering. In its detailed and meticulous treatment of metaphysics and ontology, the Mahayana tradition explicates the fundamental unity that underlies all phenomena, beyond all apparent dualisms. We turn now to two seminal texts, the *Mulamadhyamakarika* (Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way) and the *Bodhicaryavatara* (Path of the Bodhisattva), for supplementary insights to help us address the limitations of care and Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Nagarjuna, prominent Buddhist philosopher and founder of the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism in the second century C.E., provided a systematic articulation of Buddhist metaphysics that has informed Mahayana thought throughout the ensuing centuries (Edelglass & Garfield, 2009). He argued that although entities *appears* distinct and separate, they do not exist independently; reality is interdependent, woven from a complex web of mutual causation. Most western discourse on ethics, however, proceed

from the premise of independence. For example, the connection between the one-caring and the cared-for is made possible by the involvement between two distinct alterities. As we have seen, this relational involvement can be disrupted – but what if the one-caring and the one cared-for are bound on an ontological level, where the ties between the two lie not in caring reciprocity as conceived by Noddings, but rather in their mutual ontic involvement, having arisen from a co-dependent set of conditions, as proposed in Buddhist thought?

In the *Mulamadhymakakarika*, Nagarjuna introduces the tenets of Buddhist metaphysics (Edelglass & Garfield, 2009). Emptiness (*sunyata*) refers to the absence of a fundamental, fixed and irreducible essence that constitute rudimentary reality; every phenomenon arises and subsides according to myriads of causes and conditions. If a fundamental, irreducible and fixed essence existed, logically such an essence would require no conditions and causes for its existence, since by definition that which is fixed is fully sufficient as its own condition and cause. Because all phenomena course in the river of impermanence, there cannot be any final essence that underlies reality. The causal forces that lead to the appearance and dissipation of a phenomenon preclude the possibility of any definite essence, since such an essence does not require preceding conditions for its existence. The lack of a definite essence that undergirds reality is thus deemed *emptiness*.

Because phenomena do not possess a final essence that qualifies as a sufficient, fixed and self-sufficient ontology, they are dependent on causes and cannot exist apart from the conditions from which they arise (*pratitya-samutpada*). For example, in order for a wooden pencil to exist, there must first be a tree, which requires soil, moisture,

carbon, and organic nutrients. These in turn require hospitable conditions afforded by a flourishing biosphere, a suitable climate produced by a life-sustaining planet, itself a child of the cosmos and the stellar forces that churn the universe. The more we trace the causal origins of a single phenomenon, the more we realize that we are embroiled in a cosmic web. Everything is implicated. Thomas Merton once remarked: “I love beer and by that very fact, the world” (Merton & Cunningham, 1992, p. 377). In this sense, beer is not *merely* beer – it manifests the immeasurable conditions that furnish its creation. The beer cannot be adequately ascribed to handful of conditions – rather, the entire universe is actualized in the beer. Reality resists attempts to pin its ontology to any definite, linear line of causation. Attempts to identify cause and effect runs into insuperable problems. Ours is a world of mutual causality (Macy, 1991).

If all things are co-dependent and co-involved, there cannot be any personal liberation apart from the liberation of all beings. According to Buddhist teachings, a Bodhisattva is one who works unceasingly to alleviate the suffering of others. One salient passage for the *Bodhicaryavivara* poignantly illustrates the Bodhisattva aspiration:

For all those ailing in the world,
Until their every sickness has been healed,
May I myself become for them
The doctor, nurse, the medicine itself.
Raining down a flood of food and drink,
May I dispel the ills of thirst and famine.
And in the ages marked by scarcity and want,
May I myself appear as drink and sustenance

For sentient beings, poor and destitute,
May I become a treasure ever plentiful,
And lie before them closely in their reach,
A varied source of all they might need
(Shantideva, 1997, p. 50)

The commitment of the Bodhisattva shares much affinity with care and virtue ethics; her concern for others should appeal to adherents of care ethics, and her dedication to a noble cause exemplifies the core of Aristotelian virtue ethics. However, the Bodhisattva contributes to our discussion by qualifying the levels of involvement and soothing the frictions that can arise when theoretical delineations run against each other. Buddhist metaphysics affirms co-dependence at an ontological level, such that a Bodhisattva recognizes her co-involvement with the students on an ontic basis. A Bodhisattva, then, recognizes that we are bound to others in a way that is not contingent upon the responses of the cared-for to the one-caring. Accordingly, the Buddhist teaching on *threefold purity* asserts that the generosity of the Bodhisattva recognizes the inseparability of the giver, the receiver and the act (Chökyi, 1994). Applied to care ethics, we might say that the one-caring is inseparable from the cared-for; to work for the benefit of oneself is to work for the benefit of all beings. A Bodhisattva is therefore less prone to frustration when the cared-for does not reciprocate in ways that affirm the caring relationship. Conversely, the aspirational nature of a Bodhisattva's vow, recalls Aristotelian virtue ethics, enjoining the pursuit of noble ideals; for the Bodhisattva, however, the virtue in question is inherently relational and, given the realization of dependent-origination, must by definition be responsive to the other in continuous mutuality.

The Case Revisited and Implications for Teacher Education

How might ideals associated with the Mahayana Buddhism help our beleaguered TC? We can begin by admitting that our conception of caring relation is precarious and vulnerable to disappointment if the one-caring and the cared-for are only understood as distinct monads. A more stable foundation of ethical action is found when caring proceeds from the understanding of “self-and-other” as a continuity, which informs a “eudaimonic view of morality that aims at mutual harmony and flourishing amongst all beings whose existence is perceived to be interdependent and co-emergent” (Bai, 1999, p.7). This ethical orientation, acknowledging the ontological co-involvement of all beings, operates from the realization of “ontology” as a hallmark of moral development (Bai, 1999). Ontology, coined by Raimon Panikkar (1991), denotes a moral orientation informed by the realization of interconnectedness, wherein the self and the other become one ontological unit (Bai, 1999). The realization of interconnectedness disposes us toward ethical action that is responsive and spontaneous; we are not ruled by ethical injunctions, nor are the merits of our actions contingent upon reciprocity or the completion of the caring relationship. In this sense, caring no longer requires consequential objectives, such as happiness, peace or the recognition of benevolent intentions (Bai, 1999). Just as we instinctively and reflexively reaches out to catch a falling teacup, without conscious adherence to abstract injunctions, a Bodhisattva, awakened to the reality of interdependence, naturally and instinctively reaches out in embrace of all beings in love and compassion. Given inter-dependence, a Bodhisattva will likely see care as an immanent feature of one’s involvement with the world. While

the lack of response from the cared-for may pose practical challenges for the Bodhisattva at the level of conventional reality, the quality of care at the deeper level of ontology remains unscathed.

For our TC, her efforts can be understood as a patient labour that actualizes her co-involvement with the students; the fruits of her toil are already ripe. The students' indifference does not suspend or frustrate her care; rather, it is merely part of the ebb and flow of her relational immersion. No ethical ideal is diminished. The ongoing effort of promoting the students' well-being through education inevitably meets formidable challenges, but the teacher is able to face them as a form of self-cultivation, except in this case the "self" includes the other. Learning becomes a collaborative project of collective well-being rather than a dialectic between two distinct monads encased in a circle of reciprocity. The fact of a teacher's caring involvement and engagement in the lives of students is itself a rudiment of ethical relations; this basic ethicality remains intact regardless of whether the classroom experience is brimming with joy or rife with heartbreak. The moral act of teaching is bigger and more resolute than the varied attitudes and tendencies that students may bring to the classroom.

We are not recommending an overt treatment of obscure Buddhist metaphysics within a larger program of ethics education for teacher education. In this paper, we travelled through Buddhist metaphysics and ontology as a way to point out an aspect of relationality that is often left out in Western discourse: that the self is continually formed and reformed in the cauldron of mutual causality. Prevailing modes of discourse within teacher education tend to see ethics as the interaction between teacher and students, each affecting the other in a linear or reciprocal line of exchange; recommendations for ethical

action often proceed from these premises. A contemplative perspective via Buddhist metaphysics suggests a co-emergent and co-incidental view of ethical relations. The teacher and the students are creating together, moment to moment, a host of ethical possibilities. Each classroom situation, due to the co-involvement of teacher and student, is a manifestation of new challenges that shape the collective humanity emanating from the classroom. For the teacher's part, this co-emergent view of ethics requires a view of teaching as a form of self-cultivation wherein 'self' implies 'self-with-other,' a way of expanding the capacities of patience, attention, discernment, and responsiveness. In this way, teaching becomes a form of contemplative practice (Falkenberg, 2012) that hones a teacher's humanity by challenging and shaping her inner life. Again, this is not to say that the teacher's growth is entirely personal – there is no teacher without the student, no teacher development without student involvement.

With this co-emergent and co-incidental view of ethics, we can see ethics as a practice of “readiness-for-action” (Varela, 1999, p. 9), something formed in the immediacy of a given situation. While we infuse our relationships with caring intentions, we are not bound by expectations of reciprocity. Aspiring to work for the well-being of students, we devote ourselves to their flourishing, but we do not strive for any sense of a pure, austere ideal, or a even sense of “mastery” as implied in Aristotelian virtue ethics. Our ethical efforts are always in keeping with where the students are and what they strive for as a part of their own ontogeny.

So where does this leave us with Sara, our weary TC? We might suggest that she review and revise what it means to commit to students. We might emphasize that care does not demand toilsome labour from the teacher, neither do non-responsive students

disrupt the caring ethic. Instead, she is forging an ethical collaboration in this shared space of mutual human development, the process of which sees her own development along side the changes in her students. Seen in this light, ethics is less about *doing what is right* and more about than *being responsive in the moment*, and finding encouragement in mutuality rather than getting the efficacious results that follow deliberate effort. When she realizes this, she may not feel so daunted by the students' current disengagement and may be able to refresh her attention to the students' present state and return with new approaches. Such an effort would constitute a vibrant ethical framework that we believe is more sustainable and humane, both to the teacher and the student.

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