

How To Be A Compassionate Teacher

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ABSTRACT

The virtue of compassion is neglected in educational discourse. Based on my own teaching experience, and supported by relevant educational literature, a general portrait of conditions, policies, and practices affecting schools is drawn showing how various pressures and directives undermine the likelihood of compassionate responses. Any attempt to remedy this situation requires clarifying the nature of compassion in order to function as a guiding norm. The search for clarity leads to an examination of certain influential philosophical accounts of compassion, starting with Aristotle, moving on to Joseph Butler and a number of contemporary philosophers. The insights gained also help to bring out the value of compassion. This aspect is examined in detail in the writings of the Dalai Lama. His way of life, and practice of compassion, serve to illustrate the way in which this virtue can have a transformative effect on human relationships. The lessons drawn from this critical inquiry into the nature and value of compassion are applied to the question of what would characterize compassionate teaching, what teachers can do to preserve compassion, and how this virtue might change the ways in which schools relate to students.

INTRODUCTION

Beauchamp defines applied ethics as "any use of philosophical methods critically to examine practical moral decisions and to treat moral problems, practices, and policies in the professions, technology, government, and the like" (Beauchamp, 1996, p. 31). Keeping with this definition, this thesis identifies a moral problem in the teaching profession, the way in which conditions, policies, and practices in schools conceal underlying ethical issues and undermine teachers' efforts to address them. One particular ethical norm, namely compassion, is often overlooked in pedagogical practice, and it is argued that attention to the nature and value of compassion could suggest an approach to teaching that reflects this virtue.

In this thesis, it is argued that schools can be improved by valuing this ethical norm. This is done by giving specific examples where teachers can become more compassionate without detriment to other areas in their professional practice. The ethical theory employed is virtue-based. However, a distinction must be made between radical and moderate virtue ethics: "The former approach tends to view teleological and deontological ethical theories as totally misguided; the latter sees them merely as incomplete" (Louden, 1996, p. 584). "[M]oderate virtue ethics seeks to *supplement* standard act approaches with an account of the virtues" (Louden, 1996, p. 584, italics added). As pedagogical practice often has deontological duties and limits set out by public policies, it is impossible for the ethical theory employed here to be one of radical virtue ethics. This could only occur if its scope were far broader by questioning which moral duties a teacher must obey. Instead, a moderate virtue ethical theory is employed that defines a compassionate response as a virtue based on a conceptual definition of compassion from Aristotle onwards. This approach allows for flexibility within the parameters of the moral duties of a teacher - how one ought to fulfil these duties from a compassionate response.

The practical problem presented is that schools are cold. The result of this coldness is that students are growing up in institutions that lack warmth towards them. Coldness is not necessary for children to learn. Furthermore, it teaches children subconsciously that compassion is out of place in public institutions. The moral case for warmth is built on the foundations of Foucauldian analysis of public institutions as well as the Dalai Lama's arguments

for the need for warmth, joy, and affection in a child's life. This warmth helps dissipate anger and conflict both individually and collectively.

In this thesis, the nature and value of compassion is charted out, with special reference to the role of this virtue in teaching. This latter emphasis connects the thesis with philosophy of education which has as one of its concerns questions about the virtues that are important in teaching (Campbell, 2003). The approach used is one of philosophical argument, conceptual clarification, and normative inquiry, with examples and counterexamples. It also incorporates a qualitative, experience-based account of classroom realities and a detailed descriptive analysis of compassionate practice exemplified by the Dalai Lama. It is simply not possible to adhere solely to ethical theory when exploring the particularities of a classroom dynamic. Examples are necessary to help visualize the nature of teaching in the 21st century, and in what ways compassion will inform pedagogical practice.

Part of my motivation to speak for compassion stems from my own evolution as an educator. In my early years, I was focused primarily on being the best teacher I could be by adhering to the rules and policies as closely as possible. Over time, I noted that students tended to respond most meaningfully when my actions came closer to my most compassionate self. This led me to try to work harder in my non-classroom teaching hours to be compassionately ready for students at school (reading, meditation, exercise, visualizing positive interactions). The more I worked on myself in my off-hours to be ready for compassion, the better my teaching went. I wasn't articulating this as compassion, I was thinking of it as being spontaneous, alive, and responsive. Then I stumbled across the dialogues of the Dalai Lama with Dr. Paul Ekman because I had been reading Dr. Ekman on his work on facial emotional microexpressions and their link to a common bond of all humanity. The ability of both thinkers to see things from the other person's point of view, for the sake of global compassion, really emphasized to me the importance of this as a pedagogical practice. But now I had a name for it, which helped me focus even more on this approach in my own practice. I let go of whatever "face" I was still trying to preserve with students and now dedicated myself completely to having as compassionate an approach as was possible, without exhausting myself either. This is still a work in progress, but it is what inspired the thesis itself.

Chapter One: The opening chapter asks, “What makes a school cold?”. It will then present what is currently preventing teachers from creating warm atmospheres. In this chapter, some of the examples given will speak specifically to how a lack of compassion is directly contributing to a cold atmosphere in schools.

Chapter Two: Following the case made of schools being cold, a philosophical description of compassion will be given that draws attention to its main features. Central here will be the work of Aristotle and Butler for key components of a compassionate response. It will also look to refinements from Nussbaum as well as a strong counterexample from Levinas.

Chapter Three: From the Western conceptual definition of compassion, the thesis will look to Buddhist ethics, where compassion is regarded as among the most important virtues. Special attention will be given to the ideas of the Dalai Lama.

Chapter Four: Normative recommendations will be made as to how teachers can become more compassionate, and how this will benefit the overall education of the student.

Chapter One: Schools Are Cold

“Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Introduction

One way to summarize Michel Foucault’s work on institutions is to say that they have a self-serving interest to propagate their own power forward, that the result of this propagation is for the individual to be the subject of this power through continuing forms of categorization, division, and conceptualizing, and that the only way to unharness this institutional power is through the hermeneutical, allowing for reimaginings of coexistence that are currently impossible due to the status quo (Foucault, 1982). Foucault attempts to prove this through his historical analysis of the penal systems, hospitals, psychiatric wards, as well as more general archeologies of thought and genealogies of Western man’s concept of himself through evolutions of scientific, philosophical, and political thought from Copernicus, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx (Foucault, 1998). Although his rhetorical style largely relies on absolutist claims¹, false dichotomies, and the “catastrophe of the signifier” (Foucault, 1977, p. 82), there exists within his philosophy such a detailed and completely unironic historical analysis of the institutions themselves that his research serves as an excellent template for our purposes of describing public education.

The result of this self-serving nature in public schools is a coldness. This coldness results from what the institution of public education chooses to attend to and what it chooses to ignore. I have taught in public schools in Canada for fourteen years, and throughout my time I have personally felt much institutional pressure and coercion from above to recalibrate what was important in my role as a teacher, oftentimes contrary to my own readings and instincts as to the true priority for the students in front of me.² Without a self-guided initiative to create warmth, an educator can satisfy their conditions of employment in the coldest of manners.

¹ Namely, that the objectification of things (the modes of inquiry) does not have to be only about rendering humans as subjects. It can also result in innovation, such as hygiene, care, and technological developments which have increased lifespans and communication possibilities completely unimaginable before the middle ages.

² And contrary to previous priorities set out by institutions.

Here are some examples from my own experience, which are by no means unique to my school, province, or country:

There is no time for patience and presence. In a famous psychological study by John Darley and Daniel Batson, popularly known as the Good Samaritan study, they found that simply being in a hurry was a major factor in explaining the absence of compassion: “And this is often true of people in a hurry; they hurry because somebody depends on their being somewhere. Conflict, rather than callousness, can explain their failure to stop” (Darley and Batson, 1973, p. 108).

Most teaching days consist of cleaning up the classroom before the students arrive, reviewing individual lesson plans for students on individualized plans, loading up my computer to the attendance page, having my travelling register ready to write on paper the attendance, including attendance in case of fire or lockdowns, checking in with each student during homeroom to see how they are, reviewing staff, parent, and student emails to me, and double-checking that my lessons are ready to go for the day. This is before any teaching happens. In the course of a typical class, I may have to deal with interruptions from the PA system to my particular class or to the school in general, students needing to go to the bathroom, attending to a lack of supplies, conflicts between students that are flaring up, collecting and returning assessments, supervising student movements during class transitions, all of which is outside the particular lesson being taught that day.

At the back of my mind, I will be thinking about how to modify the teaching unit as a whole based on how the particular lesson is going, as well as how to handle bureaucratic paperwork I might need to do regarding students needing separate psychological or educational evaluations for potential learning disabilities or other challenges presented within their learning profile. I will also be tracking any further communications from parents or staff during the day. After school, I will organize my lessons for the next day, make changes to the longer term planning of the unit (based on my observations made during teaching the lesson), review the day overall in terms of my rapport with students and their engagement in their learning, leave notes to myself on which students to follow up with the next day on particulars, and check in with fellow staff about any concerns I have on certain students before modifying

my teaching style or conferring with administration for other solutions.

As these observations demonstrate, if I don't plan for warmth and rapport with my students, then it will be edged out by "the tyranny of the urgent" (Hummel, 1994; Covey, 1989). One may also note that at no point did I cite adding other approaches to my classroom practice based on school board initiatives. If the teacher does not plan for human interaction, it will simply be set aside by these other continually pressing matters. One can easily occupy oneself as a teacher with these urgent matters without once stopping to ask if one is creating warmth through rapport in the classroom. My quotidian outlined above is an example of situational ethics, how the good or the moral can be bumped out due to the perceived pressing urgency of other matters.

Compassion fatigue and a desire for self-care: Charles Figley introduced the notion of compassion fatigue to capture the effects on those who care for people suffering from trauma (Figley, ed., 1995). Françoise Mathieu explains it as follows: "It is characterized by deep emotional and physical exhaustion, symptoms resembling depression and PTSD and by a shift in the helper's sense of hope and optimism about the future and the value of their work... Additionally, helpers may become dispirited and increasingly cynical at work, they may make clinical errors, violate client boundaries, lose a respectful stance towards their clients and contribute to a toxic work environment" (Mathieu, 2007).³ In my own experience, one of the causes of compassion fatigue is the decline in social skills that students have due to their increasing reliance on technology to self-regulate (both at home and at school). The social glue of asking after each other, showing small moments of grace in moments of haphazard conflict, can sometimes be so noticeably absent that I feel that without my own assertion, a class dynamic could reduce itself to a cross between *Brave New World* and *Lord of the Flies*.⁴ Although students have a tremendously primed concept of what constitutes fairness in

³ Joan Halifax addresses many of the main challenges, such as burnout, distress, and trauma, facing physicians in practicing compassionate care. She reports on strategies for contemplation and meditation designed to promote "mindful focused attention" so that physicians do not succumb to "avoidance, abandonment, numbness, or moral outrage" (Halifax, 2011, p. 150). Teachers can profit from such research in caregiving settings, suitably adapted to their own context, in an attempt to offset the danger of compassion fatigue.

⁴ To illustrate the point, my student-teacher wore a shirt with the slogan "Be a Nice Human" to school.

hierarchical dialogues between students and teachers, their conscientiousness towards each other can be vastly more volatile.⁵ Consistent bearings are lacking. What I find to be a high indicator of teacher dissatisfaction with their vocation is continuously being disappointed by students not meeting whatever standard they are setting. It is the failure to meet the expectation that disheartens the teacher. Sadly, once the expectation leaves so can the compassionate response with it, as apathy gains ground in its place. In Chapter Four, we shall look at ways to maintain the compassionate response without losing consistent expectations.

Seeing repeated behaviours as one, adopting a zero-tolerance response approach to them all. Schools are subject to policies from school boards that require teachers to react equivalently to certain offences. The thinking behind this is that by removing the individual judgment of the teacher, one can reduce the likelihood of bias or favouritism from playing a role in the teacher's decision-making. However, one of the results of this approach is that many different behaviours are viewed as belonging to one type of action, with the result that there is no subtlety or casuistry employed in reacting to the situation. The moral conclusion is already drawn. The individual student's values, justifications, and decision-making that led to this behaviour are deemed irrelevant; what matters is erradicating the behaviour itself. Further, the teacher is encouraged to infer a negative subset of values that the student subconsciously endorses that justified to himself his behaviour, even if that student is unable to articulate for himself at all the motivations behind his actions.

This is one way in which the third eye of the teacher, his presence in the moment itself with the student, slowly closes away. His consciousness is reduced to calculating what proscriptive action is required based on the behaviour exhibited. Furthermore, the behaviours that are deemed morally wrong by Provincial or School Board policy change. Students are wise to this. Consequently, they proactively take the role of the victim in order to get another student in trouble because they know the teacher will feel compelled to follow a new policy to the letter, resulting in whichever student claims to be hurt first as being the victor in the

⁵ There is the Zimbabwean expression, "The tree remembers, the axe forgets". Perhaps this can help us understand why students are so much more sensitive to teacher unfairness to students than students towards each other.

outcome.⁶ As Susan Rice says: “In brief, zero tolerance policies lump together and proscribe all sorts of student conduct. All violations of such policies, from clumsy missteps to willful wrongdoing, are equally blameworthy, as judged according to zero tolerance logic” (Rice, 2009, p. 560). The teacher feels compelled to ignore his own compassionate response, as the weight of the policy bears down on him. The student then recognizes intuitively that this is an uncompassionate response, and thus concludes subconsciously that recognizing what are good or bad actions is solely dependent on authority. One author draws the dispiriting conclusion: “Lack of tolerance is a dead-end solution. Tolerance is exactly what our children need - not only to learn and survive, but also thrive” (Brown-Dianis, 2011, p. 27).

The phenomenon of labelling students and behaviours. There are a tremendous number of labels in education. Anecdotally, the amount of initiatives is so great that the mind just tends to push out old ones to make space for the new.⁷ Many of these are labels ascribed to students (disruptive, bullying, hyperactive, dysregulation, redirects). Once a label is affixed, it starts to define the student and create a prejudgment in the teacher's mind. This labelling is counter to a Wittgensteinian approach of sensitive observation, where one restricts one's conclusions or assertions only to the observable “facts”, and not allow oneself to engage in questionable generalization.⁸ This is yet another way in which the teacher's third eye shuts: he or she sees a behaviour that matches something described in a professional day as x behaviour, or appearing as such on a student's cumulative record, and then proceeds to interpret the behaviour as being an instance of the label.⁹

Administrators in my school board have access to incident reports of any misbehaviours involving a student dating back five years earlier. This means that a student who had an incident labelled and tracked in Grade 7 (who would be typically around twelve years old) would still have that on their record during their final year of public education before

⁶ Some examples of this include both students immediately claiming that the other student is bullying them. Or, sometimes students will engage in slapping themselves near another student, making the teacher think the other student was the aggressor.

⁷ For example: SA, PFI, CSI, and SSP have all referred to the same thing in my career. Currently, it's not referred to at all.

⁸ "To repeat: don't think, but look!" (Wittgenstein, 1958, #66).

⁹ Any subtleties, such as facial microexpressions in the student revealing hesitations in being truly antagonistic, are simply ironed out by the label that identifies the overall behaviour as x.

graduating (when they would typically turn eighteen, the age of majority). Let's say that the incident had been labelled as bullying, which could have been alternatively interpreted as a personality conflict between two students. An administrator up to five years later would still see the student labelled as having committed bullying behaviour.¹⁰ This policy is counter to Wittgenstein's advice: "Each morning you have to break through the dead rubble afresh so as to reach the living warm seed" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 2).

A teacher's fear of appearing weak. A teacher can be self-conscious of their power and authority in the classroom. Students also have awareness of their own hermeneutical role in the power dynamics of a classroom,¹¹ and a teacher that overly relies simply on their role power¹² will lose the morale of the class. They will come to see the teacher as the enemy, and will rally around whomever they see in the classroom as being unfairly victimized by the teacher's authority. Nevertheless, teachers are often frightened of appearing vulnerable, weak, or indecisive in front of their students, as this will be indicative of having even less power than they already fear is the case.¹³ Teachers then may falsely associate compassion with weakness, an association philosophers have noted: "Compassion used to be a prized virtue...Today, compassion is difficult to find, even in religious institutions. And, when one is known to be compassionate one is as likely to be viewed as weak, naive, or questionably "liberal," as virtuous" (Cavanagh, 1995, p. 317).¹⁴

Sometimes there can be a particularly pernicious attitude held by a group of students towards only one student, perhaps due to that student's physical appearance or inability to defend themselves assertively. As a result, this passivity in the one student creates an awkward void obliging the teacher to speak up for them. However, if the teacher is also passive, allowing the diminishing of the student to continue, then those in the class who are not chiming in will

¹⁰ Clearly, this can affect the administrator's perception of the student.

¹¹ More so, I believe, than during my own childhood given the increasing challenge to authority figures in recent years.

¹² <https://www.manager-tools.com/forums/role-power-really-least-powerful-form-power>

¹³ Teachers may then pride themselves on not showing warmth to students; a common refrain still cited is "Don't smile until Christmas", as a way of warding off students undermining their authority.

¹⁴ The Stoics drew a certain connection between compassion and weakness: "So far as words then do not be unwilling to show him sympathy, and even if it happens so, to lament with him. But take care that you do not lament internally also" (Epictetus, 1956, #XVI). The point here is that we ourselves may be adversely affected if we are overtaken by compassion.

lose respect for the whole dynamic of the class and the role-modelling virtues of the teacher. However, this example is only one of many that a teacher may see as being a reason for not appearing weak, and I find that even that example has other opportunities for solutions that don't involve merely asserting authoritatively the social requirement of tolerance and respect.¹⁵

It is when a teacher takes pride in blocking their own compassion - "Oh, I really told them!" - that may reveal their false associations between compassion and weakness. I believe that here is where having a clear philosophical definition and framing of compassion can ward off this confusion. It will allow the teacher to be seen as a true source of moral strength and courage in the classroom, not least so that they themselves can stay motivated in the belief that it is a vocation still with inherent worth. Perhaps one other criticism that a teacher may be wary of is coming across as giving some students special treatment over others by showing them compassion. In that regard, it is arguable that being continually compassionate to all students is the only way to ensure that none feel that they lack a compassionate response from the teacher.

A concern that compassion may lead to unethical decisions. Hunter and Clarke note that ethical dilemmas "arise when mark tampering is rationalized by (a) the need for compassion; (b) the intent to teach life lessons; and (c) the desire to provide students with opportunity" (2018, pp. 164-5). If the system itself is considered unjust, and I have cited examples above when the institution is seen as forcing a teacher to go along with ready-made decisions, then perhaps compassion could lead one's ethical decision-making astray.¹⁶ This is where definitional clarity of compassion matters. Well-wishing, generosity, and pity all can lead to actions which demonstrably let one's decision-making become unethical.¹⁷ In my experience, teachers who sense that they need to break certain rules for consequentialist reasons based on deontological disagreements with current systems could benefit from greater creativity in attaining the ends

¹⁵ The teacher can create lessons around this topic, priming students minds for ways to think differently about their behaviour.

¹⁶ For a particularly controversial example, where a teacher marks a student present on compassionate grounds even though he is absent, see Christenbury, 2008. Joan Halifax redirects us to "healthy compassion" which involves "listening with full attention, emotional awareness and self-regulation" (Halifax, 2011, p. 148).

¹⁷ However, we shall see later how both Dr. Ekman's framework for compassion, as well as the Dalai Lama's conception, can lead to more ethically sound decisions, not less.

they seek.¹⁸ The institutional integrity of public education in Nova Scotia, a topic that is itself continually debated, is deontologically based with respect to the Provincial Education Act. Overriding these documents based on consequentialist arguments opens the teacher up to suspension and other disciplinary measures.¹⁹

The beliefs, attitudes, and policies outlined above often serve to quash compassion. They illustrate certain general philosophical traps that result in cold classrooms. Three of these pitfalls are: (i) *missed opportunities*; (ii) *entrapment by language*; (iii) *moral blindness*.

(i) *Missed opportunities*: It is a familiar point in philosophy that if one's energies are consumed by one line of questioning, one may fail to recognize other, more fruitful, lines of inquiry. If, for example, one focuses exclusively on the contrast between consequentialist and deontological accounts of morally right actions, one may overlook a virtues ethics approach that seeks to characterize a morally good person (Louden, 1996). The questions one focuses on can *beg the question*; they assume as settled what needs to be questioned, and in this way interesting possibilities are closed off. Similarly, if the question is whether to respond with compassion or criticism, accepting this false dichotomy, one neglects the possibility of finding a compassionate response that also conveys criticism. If one focuses on whether or not to mark a student present on compassionate grounds, when in fact he is absent, one fails to ask if there is a way to show compassion without violating an ethical duty. Wittgenstein drew attention to the missed opportunity in a memorable image: "A man will be *imprisoned* in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to *pull* rather than push it" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 42).

(ii) *Entrapment by language*: The words, phrases, and slogans embedded in educational discourse influence how teachers see issues, interpret those issues, and consequently how they make decisions. Consider the following examples: "whole language" (versus teaching phonics); and "equal time" (for evolution and creationism). Such phrases wax and wane in popularity and influence, but at times can be very powerful and virtually silence debate. "Zero tolerance" (versus the use of judgment in a particular case), and the use of labels ("troublemaker", "bully")

¹⁸ On the challenges to teachers presented by rules, policies, and standards, see Hostetler, ed. (1997), and Campbell (2003),

¹⁹ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/elementary-school-teacher-who-showed-class-to-kill-a-mockingbird-suspended-1.5380443>

to describe students can generate cold responses from teachers and administrators to issues. Furthermore, the language used in school codes of conduct to describe responses to unacceptable behaviour i.e. "consequences", is unsuited to prime the educator to think compassionately. One doesn't tend to think of compassion as a *consequence*.²⁰ The very word directs us away from the virtue.

A neglected aspect of the influence of language is when an offence is *unnamed*. One will rarely find any reference to *false allegations* (of bullying, harassment, and so on) in a list of unacceptable behaviours. By not being named, they are erased from awareness. As well, "compassion" itself does not typically receive a mention in school documents. With respect to the language we use about education, philosopher of education Gert Biesta remarks that he is in search of a language that is "better than just talking about 'measurement', 'outcomes' and 'effectiveness' – the concepts that continue to dominate the discussion and, as I have tried to argue, are actually undermining meaningful debate about the goods of education" (Biesta, 2020, p. 1024).

(iii) *Moral blindness*: It has been one of the traditional tasks of philosophy to open our eyes to problems that lie just below the surface: problems about what one knows (sense experience), what one can trust (memory), and what one can count on (scientific laws). Once philosophical questions occur, one's ordinary, common sense beliefs are rattled. It is tempting then to put these philosophical doubts aside: "Many people are discomfited, or even outraged, by philosophical questions" (Blackburn, 1999, p. 11). The result is a kind of *wilful blindness* to difficult questions. One turns away from problems that one doesn't know how to deal with. A similar story can be told in ethics, especially when cast in the light of Aristotle's observation that questions about values are particularly recalcitrant (Aristotle, 1966, Book 1, Ch. 3). In the case of teachers, the result may be a decision to simply go along with the prevailing norms and practices ("I'm just trying to get through the school year in one piece") and thus closing one's eyes to nagging ethical questions.²¹

²⁰ School codes of conduct sometimes include recording incidents of unacceptable behaviour even if they were *unintentional*, and this would seem to deter offering compassion to the student accused.

²¹ And neglecting the Dalai Lama's precept: "Do your best and do it according to your own inner standard - call it conscience - not just according to society's knowledge and judgement of your deeds" (Dalai Lama, 2015, p. 30).

There may also be the kind of blindness that results from simply not being able to see that there are ethical issues involved in one's practice. This may be because the teacher has shied away from thinking about such issues and cannot any longer recognize them. The pressure of institutional practices and expectations may also have effectively shut down the teacher's ability to find ways to allow their ethical principles, including a commitment to compassionate response, to guide their practice. The teacher struggles with a conflicted identity as an autonomous individual constrained by institutional norms.²² At this point, teachers no longer challenge themselves to improve their ethical stance: "Resting on your laurels is as dangerous as resting when you are walking in the snow. You doze off and die in your sleep" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 35). The reflections above, drawn on my own experience and supported by the literature cited, illustrate the many ways in which compassion can disappear from schools and classrooms.

A common issue in education is the misappropriation or conflation of terms. Here is an example in regards to critical thinking: "What is critical thinking? Despite widespread recent interest in critical thinking in education, there is no clear agreement concerning the referent of the term. But if that notion is to carry significant weight in our educational thinking and practice, it is essential that it be delineated with some precision, so that we will know what we are talking about when we talk of the desirability of critical thinking, or of educational efforts aimed at improving students' critical thinking ability" (Siegel, 1988, p. 5). Jim Collins also speaks to the fundamental importance of clarity in leadership (Collins, 2001). As this thesis has potential to influence pedagogy, then definitional and normative clarity on the nature and value of compassion is essential. With this in mind, I turn to identify some features of compassion that have been highlighted in Western philosophy.

²² What Foucault describes as a person divided within himself (Foucault, 1982, p. 778).

Chapter Two: A cursory Western Genealogy of Compassion

"A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" --

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

This chapter will examine definitional and genealogical accounts of compassion primarily from the writings of Aristotle (384-322 BC) and Joseph Butler (1692-1752). I begin with Aristotle since his account is so central to philosophical discussion of this notion in Western philosophy: "By far the most influential account of compassion has been that presented by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*" (Crisp, 2008, p. 234). The ongoing attention paid to Aristotle's position in the philosophical literature fully supports this view.

Compassion is a term in common usage. That it is used regularly and assertively may lead one to think that its agreed upon meaning is also common. This may be true. However, as there are many other words in the English language with similar meanings, their overlapping communality can lead to conflation. Let us look at some of these terms:²³

pity: recognizing suffering but maintaining superiority

empathy: entering into and sharing the feelings of another person

sympathy: feeling for another but not necessarily due to serious suffering

well-wishing: lacking vested interest in the changing of circumstances of another²⁴

uplifting: wishing for another's spirits to be raised

concern: close attention, but not necessarily with warmth

care: actively assisting another, but not presupposing suffering

feel for: a degree of separation removed from empathizing

heart goes out to: invoking sentiments of pity but without notions of superiority

²³ These emotional responses, and the distinctions and connections among them, are widely discussed without consensus about connotation. On empathy, see Read (2019); on pity, see Nuyen (1999); on sympathy, see Wispé (1986). On distinctions and connections, see Blum (1980), Darwell (1998), White (2008), and Singer & Klimecki (2014).

²⁴ Even doubting whether the other person is suffering or simply facing everyday challenges.

The subtleties in meaning of these terms may make compassion seem interchangeable with them, as they speak to a benevolent disposition.²⁵ Wittgenstein understood, however, that imprecision did not equate to uncertainty. "If I tell someone 'Stand roughly here' - may not this explanation work perfectly?" (Wittgenstein, 1958, #88). Elsewhere, he advises: "What's ragged should be left ragged" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 45).²⁶ ²⁷ This leads us to embark on a Western genealogical account of compassion, one that I hope will bring a measure of clarity to those "ragged edges", despite in no way being definitive.²⁸ We are in search of "some precision", (Siegel, 1988, p. 5), but how precise we can be is uncertain. To Aristotle then!²⁹

Aristotle's Limiting Conditions on Feeling Pain for Another³⁰

The key to Aristotle's conception of compassion is the feeling of pain for another. His primary focus is on the conditions or factors that evoke compassion. In this way he attempts to identify what is distinctive about this emotion:

"We will now state what things and persons excite pity, and the state of mind of those who feel it. Let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends, and when it seems near" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.8).³¹

²⁵ Hume notes: "The epithets, sociable, good-natured, humane, merciful, grateful, friendly, generous, beneficent, or their equivalents, are known in all languages and universally express the highest merit which human nature is capable of attaining" (Hume, 1957, p. 9). Hume is referring to qualities or virtues that indicate a benevolent attitude.

²⁶ As always, Wittgenstein's assemblage of rhetorical questions, assertions, and general enigmatic *insouciance* borders on the ineffable, and this often leaves traditional philosophers perplexed.

²⁷ In my experience as a teacher "Stand roughly here" translates very well to students in many circumstances, especially if I lack an obvious reason to emphasize an exact spot and the students intuit this as overkill or power abuse.

²⁸ Foucault (1977, p. 139).

²⁹ More than a passing allusion must be granted to Homer, whose account of Achilles and Priam still chills to this day. Homer illustrates compassion via the return of the dead body of Hector, who functions as a metaphor for the futility of warfare and the common suffering that results.

³⁰ Technically, Aristotle classifies pity as a passion: "By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain" (Aristotle, 1996, Book 2, Ch. 5). The connection with virtue is this. Although we are not praised or blamed for the passions we have, we are subject to praise and blame for how we deal with them (Book 2, Ch. 5). The virtuous person seeks the mean between the extremes, "that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect" (Book 2, Ch. 6). Aristotle's analysis of the factors that excite compassion have become quite central to discussions of the virtue in Western philosophy.

³¹ The original Greek reads: "ποια δ'ελεεινα και τινας ελεουσι, και πως αυτοι εχοντες, λεγωμεν. εστω δη ελεος λυπη τις επι φαινομενω κακω φθαρτικω η λυπηρω του αναξιου τυγχανειν, ο καν αυτος προσδοκησειεν αν παθειν η των αυτου τινα, και

According to Aristotle's analysis, the kind of pain that amounts to compassion is determined by three factors, and two of these factors, both discussed by many philosophers subsequently (Blum, 1980; Nussbaum, 1996, 2005), will be considered here.³² I will call these: *a non-responsibility condition*; and *a severity condition*³³ Let us look at each limiting condition in turn:

The *non-responsibility* condition is that compassion presupposes it not be the person's own fault (αναξιου): it "befalls one who does not deserve it". This view influences our current conception of compassion. Are there pleas of compassion for terrorists who injure themselves while committing terrorist acts?³⁴ But there are cases of blame and desert where the refusal of compassion is less categorical. Suppose the person who suffers the misfortune is at fault, but this is due to negligence, and not premeditation: a parent whose infant child suffocates in a car during searing heat conditions.³⁵ The consequence is disproportionate. This harkens back to Aristotle's "one who does not deserve it". Grief and guilt will torment the parent for forgetting. It is not cut and dried that compassion will be ruled out even though the parent was at fault.

The *severity* condition asks for a severe or significant misfortune, one that Aristotle qualifies as "evil, deadly or painful" (κακω φθαρτικω η λυπηρω). This helps distinguish compassion and sympathy; the latter not needing to be in response to a great misfortune. A colleague may not get the teaching assignments they had hoped for, and one can sympathize, but compassion would be out of place. Compassion arises when a parent loses a child, when a painful illness comes on, when a person is left homeless, when an innocent person is convicted. All of these produce immense suffering and a compassionate response is needed.³⁶

τουτο σταν πλησιον φαινεται". The word "ελεος", traditionally translated "pity", is now commonly interpreted as "compassion" (Snow, 1991; Nussbaum, 1996; Crisp, 2008).

³² Aristotle includes in his definition a third condition, namely that compassion arises from seeing "an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends, and when it seems near". There is much philosophical debate about whether one must be able to envision one's own equivalent suffering in order to feel compassion.

³³ Philosophers writing about compassion use different labels for these conditions.

³⁴ The Dalai Lama takes a different view (see Ch. 3).

³⁵ This is also an example of how moral luck plays such a role in our estimation: the parent who forgets their infant and the child survives escapes without sanction. For a discussion of how luck relates to moral appraisal, see Rescher (1995).

³⁶ Perhaps this helps to prevent compassion from being diluted. Consequently, we are able to preserve our compassion reserves. Once again, nevertheless, there are complexities. Who is to decide how significant the distress or misfortune is? If it must rise to a certain level, how is that level to be determined? In particular how far should it be the view of the person who has experienced it rather than the judgment of an outsider looking on?

Both the *non-responsibility* and *severity* conditions draw attention to the role of the onlooker,³⁷ and in particular, the onlooker's assessment. For *non-responsibility*, the sufferer's agency in relation to the causes of suffering is put into question. How much did the sufferer bring this upon themselves? For *severity*, the onlooker may disagree with the sufferer's self-assessment of their condition either by contradicting it and claiming that the sufferer is indeed *actually* suffering, or by denying the sufferer's complaint of suffering by judging it to be trivial.³⁸

One famous example of contradicting the sufferer's self-assessment is found in the work of Adam Smith (1723-90) who refers to compassion for someone suffering from dementia:

"But the poor wretch, who is in it, laughs and sings perhaps, and is altogether insensible of his own misery. The anguish which humanity feels, therefore, at the sight of such an object, cannot be the reflection of any sentiment of the sufferer. The compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation..." (Smith, 2002, p. 15).³⁹

This is a persuasive example but it is not clear that the point can be generalized past self-assessments where the mind is unsound. Let us contrast this with an example where one's mind is sound, but an onlooker's assessment differs from the perceived sufferer. One might be devastated by an injury that makes one a paraplegic, or by a condition that requires the amputation of one's legs. As there already exist role-models of others who have suffered similar injuries and gone on to live fulfilled lives, an onlooker overriding their positive self-assessment would seem irrelevant, if not hubristic.⁴⁰ But when the mind is unsound due to *unawareness*, it presents a particular philosophical problem based on the hermeneutical.

³⁷ I am adopting the terminology used by Nussbaum (1996, p. 32).

³⁸ Nussbaum gives the example of the Roman aristocrat's meal being a disappointment (2005, p. 121).

³⁹ Adam Smith's example is discussed in Nussbaum, 2005, p. 122.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Blum gives the example of a blind person "whose life is generally happy and who does not dwell on what he misses by being blind. Nevertheless, one can also feel compassion for him because his life is deficient and damaged by his blindness" (Blum, 1980, p. 508). This seems to me a case where the onlooker's view is intruding inappropriately. The blind person is not experiencing distress or misery and is indeed "generally happy". Admiration is called for, not compassion. Blum notes that "[i]t is not necessary that the object of compassion be aware of his condition; he might be deceiving himself with regard to it" (p. 508). In the cases cited above of people who live fulfilled lives despite grave injuries, such self-deception is not involved. There is a connection here with the notion of "false consciousness" that I discuss in Chapter Four.

Martha Nussbaum: "[c]ompassion takes up the onlooker's point of view, making the best judgment the onlooker can make about what is really happening to the person, even when that may differ from the judgment of the person herself" (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 122). This wording of "what is *really* (emphasis mine) happening to the person" is a reference, albeit unconsciously I believe, to the hermeneutical and the lack of epistemic awareness of the sufferer. Nussbaum's wording allows that it is *possible* for an onlooker to judge that what is happening to another person is *much worse* than they realize. She gives the example of a woman in rural India who, in spite of the deprivations she suffers, still believes that she is flourishing (Nussbaum, 2005, pp. 121-22).⁴¹ Objectifying the hermeneutical requires the onlooker to be in a static role, that their own awareness isn't also changing, one that is impossible in relation to hermeneutics. Therefore, by definition alone, there is no "really happening" *really* there. There are only continuing debates of what this *really is* based on one's conceptions of the hermeneutical as they pertain to oneself, and then the transfer of this hermeneutical interpretation to others.⁴²

Butler, Compassion, and Action

Whereas Aristotle focused on those conditions that indicate when the painful emotion of compassion is *evoked*, the 18th century philosopher Joseph Butler's focus is on the *value* of compassion, as an incitement to action and as a cause of worthwhile outcomes. Butler's account brings into prominence the normative character of this virtue and stimulates reflection on why it matters. Butler tempers the more restrictive scope of compassion suggested by

⁴¹ John Stuart Mill's appeal to the judgment of those who are "competently acquainted" with higher and lower pleasures (Mill, 1955, p. 370) comes to mind. From Mill: "Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs" (Mill, 1955, pp. 370-71).

⁴² This is in contrast to the Dalai Lama, whose own epistemic awareness of suffering is so simplistic (or perhaps elevated) that he would argue that Nussbaum's interpretation of suffering still brings about unnecessary elements of desire, and so her own assessment is tinged with Western concepts of desire-fulfilment unnecessary for contentment. This point will be investigated further in Chapter Three.

Aristotle, and extends it universally, indicating that people "naturally compassionate *all* in some degree whom they see in distress" (Butler, 2006, p. 72, italics added).⁴³

Since Butler's time, it has become a common feature of accounts of compassion to make explicit a connection with action. Richard White, for example, defines compassion as follows: "Compassion is sorrow for the suffering or misfortune of another and the consequent desire to alleviate that suffering which may (or may not) result in action" (White, 2008, p. 106, definition italicized in original). White argues that compassion "is not passive or just a self-absorbed state" (p. 106) although circumstances and other factors, such as fear, may mean that the person does not take action. Similarly, Blum: "When it is possible for her to relieve another person's suffering without undue demands on her time, energy, and priorities, the compassionate person is disposed to help" (Blum, 1989, p. 513). How then, does compassion connect with action?

We can gain some insight into this from Butler who discusses compassion at some length in his *Fifteen Sermons* (Butler, 2006, Sermons V and VI). Butler thinks of compassion as "an original, distinct, particular affection in human nature" (p. 72) -- distinct and particular because it has a specific aim and purpose that is directed to the relief of distress in others (Butler, 2006, p. 73).

We can label this *the inclination to action* condition. It is essentially the idea from White and Blum above. For Butler, compassion is not simply a feeling or emotion, it "carries us on to assist the distressed" (Butler 2006, p. 73).⁴⁴ He describes it as "a call, a demand of nature, to relieve the unhappy; as hunger is a natural call for food" (Butler, 2006, p. 81). To put the point in concrete terms, it would be incongruent if someone believed that another person was in distress and claimed to feel concern for that person and yet had no inclination to relieve the person's suffering *if they were able to*.⁴⁵ As Butler puts it: "...compassion leads us directly to assist them" (Butler, 2006, p. 73). He says:

⁴³ In this way, there is an anticipation of the universal scope of compassion defended by the Dalai Lama, as we shall see in Chapter Three. Butler's account raises important questions for teachers as they deliberate about compassionate practice, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

⁴⁴ Paul Ekman refers to this as *action compassion* (Ekman, 2021).

⁴⁵ Judith Barad points out that Aquinas also holds that compassion calls for action to bring relief to those who are suffering (Barad, 2007, p. 12).

Thus, to relieve the indigent and distressed; to single out the unhappy, from whom can be expected no returns, either of present entertainment or future service, for the objects of our favours; to esteem a man's being friendless as a recommendation; dejection, and incapacity of struggling through the world, as a motive for assisting him; in a word, to consider these circumstances of disadvantage, which are usually thought a sufficient reason for neglect and overlooking a person, as a motive for helping him forward: this is the course of benevolence, which compassion marks out and directs us to; (Butler, 2008, p. 81).

It will not be enough for a person to simply have an attitude or feeling of concern; to be properly compassionate, they will look for an opportunity to do what they can to relieve the situation. In the absence of this, any claim to be compassionate would seem empty.

Butler believes that our inclination towards compassion may be in part due to mankind being "imperfect creatures", and that this imperfection leads us to "naturally and necessarily depend upon each other" (Butler, 2006, p. 73). Furthermore, "[r]eason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man; but this reason joined with those affections which God has impressed upon his heart...then it is we act suitably to our nature...Neither is affection itself at all a weakness...they belong to our condition of nature, and are what we cannot be without" (Butler, 2006, p. 73). Butler sees our inclination towards compassionate action as stemming partly from the need for compassion for survival, as well as the imprint of affection guiding our natural state of being. This leads Butler to argue that the value of compassion depends in part on its utility, a matter we will take up below.

For Butler, the inclination to compassionate action in the face of suffering reveals a "natural affection", a benevolent disposition. Emmanuel Levinas takes a contrary view.⁴⁶ He says:

⁴⁶ White points out that for Levinas, "suffering is not to be grasped as an act of subjectivity" (White, 2012, p. 112). My understanding of this argument is that since suffering takes us out of being, then our perception of it must also be transcendent in quality. As always with absolutist arguments, one can reduce the absolutism to minimalism to see if the argument still stands. Yes, absolute suffering takes us out of our own identity absolutely, but mild suffering does not. Can one perceive mild

The epiphany of the Absolutely Other is a face by which the Other challenges and commands me through his nakedness, through his destitution. He challenges me from his humility and his height. He sees but remains invisible, thus absolving himself from the relation he enters and remaining absolute. The absolutely Other is the human Other (Autrui). And the putting into question of the Same by the Other is a summons to respond. The I is not simply conscious of this necessity to respond as if it were a matter of an obligation or a duty about which a decision could be made; rather the I is, by its *very position*, responsibility through and through (Levinas, 1996, p. 17).⁴⁷

Levinas eradicates the notion of benevolence, that one *can* help, and with it any notion of being inclined (in the sense of having a natural disposition).⁴⁸ Instead, as Richard White argues, he replaces this with a Kantian duty: "Thus, even though he *refers* to compassion, Levinas's ethics is essentially deontological or *Kantian*, insofar as it is based on responsibility and duty, rather than empathy with the feelings of those whom we take to be sentient like ourselves" (White, 2012, p. 120). The justification is ironically a Judeo-Christian one of self-sacrifice. (I say ironically, as elsewhere Levinas argues that theodicy is "entirely the source of all immorality" (Levinas, 1988, p. 163)):

...the suffering of suffering, the suffering for the useless suffering of the other person, the just suffering in me for the unjustifiable suffering of the Other, opens upon suffering the ethical perspective of the inter-human (Levinas, 1988, p. 159)...Properly speaking, the inter-human lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another (p. 165).

suffering then mildly through subjective interpretation? If so, then one is arguing with Levinas more from definitions of terms of suffering than with provable metaphysical qualities. I am indebted to White for drawing my attention to Levinas' position on compassion.

⁴⁷ In lay terms, Levinas is saying that the very nature of perceiving the Other defines the onlooker's role as an identity of responsibility. In other words, because one can see the suffering means that one is an unjust position that must be remedied through absolute equivalent suffering: there is no question of benevolence about it.

⁴⁸ Compassion requires a separated self in order to recognize interdependence. Without this recognition, there cannot be a compassionate *response*.

It might seem paradoxical to argue that only suffering for another can bring meaning to one's own existence, but this follows from his notion of suffering burning through the hermeneutical identity to the immaterial.⁴⁹

Turning to what Butler sees as the value of compassion, it is clear that he thinks that compassion is good in itself because it shows "that humanity, which is so peculiarly becoming our nature and circumstances in this world" (Butler, 2006, p. 81).⁵⁰ He goes on, however, to spell out in some detail the *utility of compassion* both to the one suffering and to the one who has compassion.⁵¹ Butler says that "even the bare exercise of such affections would itself be for the good and happiness of the world" (Butler, 2006, p. 74). He breaks this down helpfully into several useful consequences:

(i) compassion brings relief to those suffering, including relief from "the additional misery which they would feel from the reflection that no one commiserated their case" (Butler, 2006, p. 74) - the feeling of being abandoned when no one cares;

(ii) compassion acts like "an advocate within us in their behalf, to gain the unhappy admittance and access, to make their case attended to" (Butler, 2006, p. 80). This means that compassion makes it possible for those who are suffering to bring their condition to our attention;⁵²

⁴⁹ This argument by Levinas is particularly tricky for the Western mind, as it removes the feeling of tranquility that Butler argues comes from being compassionate. Instead, for Levinas; there is only immaterial episteme through self-annihilation. This leads one to think that perhaps an adherent of Levinas would argue that the Dalai Lama functions within Western society as an absolver of this compelling blame that Levinas seeks to place on all onlookers. For Levinas, there is no onlooker, only compromised perceivers obligated to suffer in coalescence. One can't be removed. Being removed implies being without responsibility. But there remains at least one counterargument to Levinas, from a Socratic Elenchus perspective. How is *Levinas* able to see both the Other and the compromised perceiver? Whatever allowed him, whether it be his life experience, philosophical readings, literature, to attain this Kantian post-modern metaphysical breakthrough, it ought to be attainable to us as well. He could share how. This is where the Dalai Lama, through perceiving the suffering based on minimal desire-fulfilment, is able to make his perception of the metaphysical attainable to all.

⁵⁰ For Levinas, this "good" within compassion is self-serving to the onlooker in order to maintain a hierarchical relation to the sufferer. In human interactions though, these roles change. Sometimes one is the onlooker, sometimes one is the sufferer. It seems though that Levinas takes these roles as fixed.

⁵¹ Butler is not adopting a utilitarian approach to ethics but he thinks it is important to bring out that compassion is, in fact, useful.

⁵² This is arguably a form of testimonial voice.

(iii) compassion also gives the person who shows compassion "a peculiar calm kind of satisfaction", creating a sense of "tranquility" (Butler, 2006, p. 74).⁵³ In this way, compassion alleviates the pain we feel on witnessing suffering;

(iv) compassion helps to prevent us from becoming callous or cruel (Butler, 2006, p. 75). Without compassion we might end up being indifferent to the condition of others.

With these observations, Butler spells out the extrinsic value of compassion. Bringing relief to others, and persuading us to take notice of the problems others face, shows how compassion belongs among the benevolent emotions. We ourselves also benefit, although we don't engage in compassion to gain these benefits for ourselves; these come as a result of being benevolent.⁵⁴ Of course, none of these potential benefits are guaranteed and various questions arise that will be addressed now.

Contemporary Particularities about Compassion

These four aspects of compassion, drawn from Aristotle and Butler, help to bring it into sharper focus and indicate areas where we will face difficult questions. Now, let's turn to some particularities about compassion:

(i) Michael Cavanagh argues that there can be "incomplete" and "outright destructive" compassion (Cavanagh, 1995, p. 317). How can this be? It is quite thought-provoking. For example, he argues that if someone is only compassionate towards others, and does not allow compassion towards themselves, "...they are always the healers but never need to be healed themselves" (Cavanagh, 1995, p. 323). Such people are using relationships in a hierarchical manner which means "power or superiority...with the compassion-giver always at the top and all others at or near the bottom" (Cavanagh, 1995, p. 323). How can we resolve this given our earlier conceptual clarification of compassion? I would argue that this person is being disingenuous in their approach, that the action impulse is being guided largely by one of self-beneficence, maintenance of status, and not of primarily alleviating the suffering of another.

⁵³ The Dalai Lama calls this being "*wisely* selfish" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 25).

⁵⁴ It is fundamental to Butler's moral philosophy that self-love and benevolence are not opposed to each other (Butler, 2006, p. 114)

This is counter to Butler's emphasis on motive. The misdirected intentionality corrupts the compassionate approach.

A similar example Cavanagh cites is when one's compassion is "conditional" or "pseudo" (pp. 320-21); in both of these cases the judgment of the suffering categorizes or limits the actions taken to alleviate suffering. The pseudo-compassionate person is not genuinely offering to help. Again, I would argue that this corrupts the compassionate approach because the genuine impulse to relieve distress that Butler emphasized is absent.⁵⁵

(ii) Gregory Pence argues that “[c]ompassion is characteristically focused on a particular person or situation, whereas concern for social justice may be very abstract, legalistic, and not involve any particular situation. Social justice characteristically involves problems of equality among humans, whereas compassion is not paradigmatically concerned with these problems and may even be focused on animals” (Pence, 1983, p. 189).⁵⁶ Although the distinction Pence draws between compassion and social justice is of great use, it seems that it cleaves too much separation between the two, leaving areas where larger elements of compassion could still exist.⁵⁷

(iii) Can the one who causes the suffering also experience compassion for the one who suffers? Roger Crisp argues that “an onlooker may repent and then feel compassion” (Crisp, 2008, p. 236, fn. 12). There is nothing within our original definitions of compassion that precludes the suffering stemming from the onlooker. Arguably, though, there must be a separation of causality from the onlooker to the sufferer in order for the compassion to be authentic. And the only way for the onlooker to restore this separation if they are the cause of this suffering is to first repent absolutely. Let us think of some remarkable cases where a murderer and his victim's family come to find some narrative closure through repentance and then communication. In those instances, the murderer may indeed feel compassion now for the

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that Cavanagh perhaps predicted the current wave of testimonial injustice by claiming there can be "depleted compassion" (p. 322). With the greater awareness of the kinds of suffering that can exist, and its specific causes, the corollary is that people also may become desensitized and/or hyperempathic, and these extremes deplete one's natural store of compassion that is available.

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note the contrast here with Blum's account of the compassion being focused on the condition, and not the person (Blum, 1980, p. 508).

⁵⁷ For example, if I know that a whole family is suffering due to the loss of a loved one, then my desire to alleviate their suffering is broader than towards one person. This can be extended even further, when one thinks of a gesture such as singing a personal tribute to someone at their funeral as a way to help alleviate the suffering of the grieving family.

family and wish to help alleviate their suffering, in part by giving greater narrative closure as to why they did what they did. However, again, I would argue that without repentance first, the lack of separation between causality and the feeling of distress for another seems deeply problematic.

Conclusion

This chapter laid out a genealogy for compassion. Through this, some valuable insights have been gained. Four features of compassion were presented to provide clarity. Following Aristotle and Butler, compassion relates to: a severe misfortune, not owing to one's own fault, one that incites action for relief, and has potential utility. Despite the critique of Levinas, the integrity of compassion's genealogy rests intact here, which gives philosophical direction to its use in practice.

The next chapter then will draw on insights from Eastern philosophy, specifically the understanding of compassion found in Buddhist Ethics reflected in the life and writings of the Dalai Lama. Its richly descriptive account of compassion, and what it means to live a life inspired by this virtue, will offer a new perspective that is also capable of informing pedagogical practice.

Chapter Three - The Practice of Compassion

"What is compassion? Compassion is the wish that others be free of suffering"

Dalai Lama, *An Open Heart*

Introduction

Having examined compassion in Western philosophy, it is now time to look at a different account centred in Buddhist philosophy and the beliefs and practice of the Dalai Lama. This approach seeks wisdom in universal, normative values that should guide a person's life: "The Buddha's teaching is predominantly practical in nature" (Cheng, 1996, p. 59). It draws on interpretations of historical texts and expounds the considered views of those who have thought deeply about the purpose of existence and human values; it seeks principles that have universal application and which have a bearing on practical problems that we face in the world.⁵⁸

Buddhist ethics takes the notion of suffering (*dukkha*) to be a central feature of human existence. This idea is captured in the first of the Four Noble Truths (Parattukudi & Wayne, 2019, p. 9). Bertrand Russell, describing a person with wisdom, remarks: "He will feel, like Buddha, that he cannot be completely happy while anybody is miserable" (Russell, 1951, p. 190). In taking the suffering of *all* human beings into account, Buddhist ethics might be regarded as a form of moral cosmopolitanism (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019). Great emphasis is placed on altruism and a concern to relieve suffering, hence the central place given to *karuna* (compassion), and *metta* (loving kindness), two fundamental altruistic virtues that characterize the individual who is living an ethical life.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Excellent accounts of Buddhist ethics can be found in MacKenzie (2018), White (2008), Conway (2001), Swearer (1998), and Whitehill (1994). A brief but valuable account of Buddhism in the context of education appears in Cheng (1996).

⁵⁹ Buddhist ethics includes two further fundamental virtues, *mudita* (sympathetic joy) and *upekka* (equanimity); and qualities such as *ksanti* (patience) (Bommarito, 2014), and *prajna* (wisdom) (MacKenzie, 2018, p. 160). Mackenzie (2018) gives a very full account of Buddhist virtues; and important insights are found in White (2008), and Bommarito, (2014).

A Noble Eightfold Path is prescribed involving "a process of awareness and practice, whereby we strive to become increasingly mindful of how major dimensions of our life -- such as our motivations, the character of our effort, the influence of our language, our values, the effects of our working environment, our sexual attitudes and behavior--diminish or enhance our ego-centeredness" (Conway, 2001, p. 10).⁶⁰ There are also moral precepts - not taking life, not stealing, not committing sexual offences, not lying or gossiping, and not using intoxicating substances - that serve as rules to give more direct guidance (Swearer, 1998, p. 76).

The Dalai Lama believes that such precepts play an important part in the ethical life: "Although he does not reduce ethical practice to mere rule following, the Dalai Lama has a high regard for precepts. Even when he addresses a mainly secular western audience, he speaks about the importance of having a set of basic ethical precepts to guide us in our daily lives" (Vélez de Cea, 2013, p. 515). Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind that these precepts "should not be construed as a conventional rule-based morality" but rather as that which "leads to the attainment of a virtuous disposition" (Swearer, 1998, p. 79).⁶¹ They serve as "steps towards self-realization and attainment of the highest good, that is, *nibbana*" (Swearer, 1998, p. 76).⁶²

It is also important, however, that it is not the action alone that constitutes living ethically. Behaviour must be motivated by ethical concerns. Charles Goodman notes: "Any interpretation of Buddhist ethics must find room for the absolutely crucial role of intention. There are many contexts in which Buddhism seems to emphasize the intention with which an act was performed much more than the benefit or harm that actually resulted" (Goodman, 2021).

Richard White reminds us that in Buddhist ethics "one is encouraged to feel compassion for all creatures, for all sentient beings, humans and animals are capable of suffering, pain, and death" (White, 2008, p. 118). Other commentators concur: "The Buddhist community of virtue is biocentric, far more inclusive of animals and other sentient beings as objects of moral consideration than Western virtues tradition (Whitehill, 1994, p. 11; cf. Barad, 2007). Western

⁶⁰ The eight norms will be set out shortly when we come to the Dalai Lama's views.

⁶¹ cf. "It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced" (Aristotle, 1966, Book 2, Ch. 4).

⁶² Nibbana (Nirvana) is the goal of the Buddhist way of life where suffering and rebirth are extinguished.

philosophy has seen a greatly renewed concern with animal ethics in the past 40 years (Singer, 1975), but the contrast drawn by White, Whitehill, and Barad refers to traditional views about these matters.

All of these ideas are reflected in the writings and teachings of the Dalai Lama. He sees compassion as requiring a certain state of mind involving the calmness and tranquility that is necessary if all the factors involved in making an ethical judgment are to be taken into account: "True compassion has the intensity and spontaneity⁶³ of a loving mother for her suffering baby...Compassion enables us to refrain from thinking in a self-centred way. We experience great joy and never fall to the extreme of simply seeking our own personal happiness and salvation" (Dalai Lama, 2001, pp. 105-6). It is a state of mind that requires such qualities as contentment, tolerance, kindness, patience, and a commitment to non-violent responses (Dalai Lama, 2011). If phenomenology is understood as the study of "conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view" (Smith, 2018), we might say that the Dalai Lama is, in effect, offering a phenomenological account of compassion, a rich description of the outlook, attitudes, and emotional experiences of the person who has compassion.⁶⁴

The Dalai Lama and the practice of compassion

The ideas of the Dalai Lama serve as an excellent introduction to a Buddhist ethical perspective on compassion. His writings have a deceptive simplicity, the result of a lifetime's reflection and meditation. And they are widely seen as having relevance and applicability in different contexts of applied ethics.⁶⁵ Moreover, they are recognizably sincere and authentic, reflecting the beliefs

⁶³ This lack of spontaneity is another example of schools being cold. This also highlights a fundamental conflict in values between Levinas and the Dalai Lama. Levinas says "The event of putting into question is the shame of the I for its naïve spontaneity, for its sovereign coincidence with itself in the identification of the Same" (Levinas, 1996, p. 17). For Levinas, spontaneity is emblematic of ignorance, of justification of superiority. In other words, he wishes for the genuine animation of the human spirit to cease as he sees it as the same engine that drives oppression.

⁶⁴ There are valuable discussions of the Dalai Lama's ethical position in Barad (2007), White (2008), and Velez De Cea (2013).

⁶⁵ Abraham Velez de Cea argues convincingly that the Dalai Lama's ethics are a form of virtue ethics rather than a form of consequentialism (Velez de Cea, 2013). There is, however, considerable scholarly debate about the classification of the Dalai Lama's ethics and I will not be able to enter into this issue in this thesis.

of someone who has exemplified these values in his life and work. It is the Dalai Lama's *practice* in the light of his conception of compassion that will be our chief concern.

In Chapter Two, I sought definitional clarity for compassion. This was due to educational initiatives being subject to redefinition by opponents as a means to diminish their effectiveness.⁶⁶ Instead of discussing the importance of the topic, one redefines the topic to something more easily refuted as a means of avoiding having to engage with the arguments presented. Often, this type of argumentation is referred to as a straw-man (Johnson & Blair, 1993, pp. 82-88). However, since compassion itself is especially susceptible to mocking within Western culture (seen as a form of weakness), I wished to take extra care to defend its definitional integrity.

The Dalai Lama embodies compassionate practice in his way of living.⁶⁷ The result of this tremendous dedication, both consistently over his lifetime, and in his daily approach, is the credibility and respectful attention largely afforded him within Western society to his assertions. This can be problematic for the Applied Ethicist, as we are trained to formulate our arguments primarily from a theoretical basis, and then from these theories justify our normative recommendations.⁶⁸

How is the practice of compassion for the Dalai Lama inseparable from his definitional understanding? In this chapter, I will argue that simply aiming for conceptual clarity risks an awkward transition to normative recommendations for a pedagogical approach.⁶⁹ Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the Dalai Lama's life functions as a role model of compassionate practice, one that will help guide my recommendations for pedagogical compassion in Chapter Four. For the Dalai Lama, the practice of compassion is inseparable from the understanding of compassion, and it is from his practice, and his reflections on practice, that we can see more clearly what he means by compassion.

We saw earlier that Buddhism states that there are four main truths, namely: life is suffering, this suffering comes from desire, the release from desire is the remedy, and that the way to release

⁶⁶ For example, cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987) is negatively redefined as mere rote-learning by those who see it as a threat to critical thinking.

⁶⁷ For insights into the Dalai Lama's practice, see Dalai Lama (2001; 2008; 2011); Dalai Lama and Victor Chan (2012); and Mayank Chhaya (2007).

⁶⁸ I note here that at no time in my Applied Ethics Master's program did our professors emphasize the importance of a congruence between our own lives and values with the reports and projects we deem ourselves worthy to judge. This is a lacuna, and one we sense intuitively the Dalai Lama has filled through the life he has led.

⁶⁹ It is worth recalling, however, that Butler provided some reasons for regarding compassion as having value.

is via the Eightfold Path to Nirvana (Cheng, 1996, p. 59). The Dalai Lama names the eightfold path as right view, thought, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditative stabilization (Dalai Lama, 2008, pp. 39-41). These are assertions.⁷⁰ The anecdotal and sometimes abstruse nature of these truths is partly what gives this approach such an enigmatic appeal to a more argumentative and rational West. Part of this appeal almost certainly comes from the approachability and interchangeability of its parts. They largely lack a linear⁷¹ argumentative development, another consistent characteristic of traditional Western Philosophy. Furthermore, the continuing Cartesian dualism reflected in the theory/practice division in Applied Ethics leaves a gap for this Eastern approach that embraces the spiritual through calm assertions in the realm of the ethical.⁷² The soft power of the compassionate ideal slowly weans its way through the world.

Notwithstanding the somewhat aphoristic formulation of his ideas, it is possible to gain insight into the Dalai Lama's ideas because these are grounded in concrete examples and practices from his own life experience. He has made his whole life a living template of the compassionate approach. This vulnerability, exposing his own reputational status in such a profound way, gives us a narrative for articulating the Dalai Lama's practice of compassion. By focusing on the vulnerable nature of this virtue, looking at how he sees compassion being compromised and overwhelmed by what he calls "afflictive emotions" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 101), we can also see how the Dalai Lama actively nurtures it.⁷³ The following ideas illustrate his understanding and practice:

Compassion can be defeated by anger. "If we allow love and compassion to be dominated by anger, we will sacrifice the best part of human intelligence - wisdom, which is our ability to decide between right and wrong" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 3). Anger creeps into socially accepted customs in many interesting ways. One currently accepted custom is to see anger as the overrider of the coefficient of friction when someone is testifying to a hermeneutical injustice. Activists often summon anger from

⁷⁰ From an Applied Ethics perspective, one could see the Dalai Lama's writings as a mixture of casuistry and virtue ethics as justification.

⁷¹ Part of the charm of this approach is that it allows one to reapply learnings in different combinations, like multiple puzzle pieces with identical exteriors.

⁷² Perhaps this is partly due to the increasingly secular nature of the West, ever since the French Revolution.

⁷³ My interpretation draws primarily on his books *An Open Heart*, 2001, *In My Own Words*, 2008, and *How To Be Compassionate*, 2011. In-text citations simply providing a page number are to this latter book.

participants as a form of motivation to testimony. Miranda Fricker's work on epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) would certainly indicate that these testimonies are useful for informing and reforming institutions. However, the Dalai Lama has also suffered tremendous hermeneutical discrimination. And he has also found a way to make his testimony heard without the cost of sacrificing his own wisdom while doing so. Perhaps the only way one can maintain the pretense of anger's utility is through peer acceptance, otherwise the loss of one's face would prompt contemplation. The person experiencing anger, by its very definition, can only feel a loss of control and rush to judgment that leads almost invariably to feelings of regret and shame. There is a sense with that feeling of regret and shame that one had lost the ability to be compassionate. Anger and compassion are incompatible: "Their outlooks are exactly opposite" (p. 9). I can be happy, sad, even fearful, and also compassionate. I don't have to be compassionate in those states, but nothing precludes one from the other. But by being angry, there is a polarization within oneself which shuts out the compassionate instinct at that same time.

The Dalai Lama advises that we bring to mind an occasion when we gave in to hatred or some other afflictive emotion and try to analyze the process we went through:

"First perceive the object;

Then determine if the object is good or bad;

Then conclude that the object's goodness or badness exists inherently in the object;

Then generate lust or hatred according to whether the object's goodness or badness has been exaggerated." (p. 34).

Such reflection may bring the realization that the badness we thought we perceived was due to our attachment. This insight leads us to the following point.

Compassion requires avoiding precipitate action. "Now you allow yourself to notice the deeper continuum of life that usually goes unnoticed, and to cultivate true concern for others. You gradually refuse to voluntarily rush into what are actually superficial responses to exaggerated appearances, and, instead, you take time to probe what lies beneath the surface" (pp. 63-4). What does it mean to "refuse"? Etymologically, it means to "pour back". One purpose for meditation and reflection is to awaken our prior moments of rushing to judgement, to reflexive responses based on immediate

impressions, and to let what was beneath the surface reveal itself. The Dalai Lama is spontaneous, not reckless. He allows his spirit to speak at all times, but he is also constantly re-informing his spirit through compassionate meditation. One challenge here in Western society is that so many social mores and positions have been codified that delaying a sympathetic response can be perceived as revelatory of antagonistic sentiment. As we have already seen in our definitional clarity of compassion, however, a sympathetic response is not equivalent to a compassionate one. A sympathetic response, however well-intentioned, may not be appropriate. Similarly, a rush to judgment may preclude the compassionate response the situation calls for.

Compassion requires avoiding superficiality. "...when you come under the influence of the illusion of permanence and spend your time on matters that go no deeper than the surface of this life, you sustain great loss" (p. 44). What is it about superficiality that impedes deeper compassion? I think that the "great loss" refers back to the "illusion of permanence". This illusion grants one permission to dedicate great portions of one's life and energy to matters that only change on the surface level. Compassion focuses on the suffering of sentient beings. This is not superficial because the compassion may have an action component which alleviates or ends this suffering. The superficial does not change the amount of suffering in the world, and so one sustains a great loss because one's energy was dissipated where it could have been channeled into alleviating real suffering. Instead, the amount of suffering remains the same, and one's energy has gone. This is the "great loss" sustained in one's life. "The problem is that too much energy is being expended on concern for a level no deeper than the superficial affairs of this life. The profound loses out to the trivial" (p. 33).

Compassion avoids labelling. Labelling allows us to judge without requiring judgement. It can function as a form of prejudice. "When friends are overemphasized, enemies also come to be overemphasized... 'These are my friends,'... 'These are my enemies.'...You affix identities and nicknames to them, and end up practicing the generation of desire for the former and the generation of hatred for the latter. What value is there in this? None." (p. 33) This rhetorical question and answer is a challenge for us here, as the assertion is left unproven. There are many arguments for the importance of loyalty, and the benefit of caution when interacting with a known

threat. But notice that what I have said does not require desire or hatred. That is where the false dichotomy resides. There is no necessity for the generation of desire in order to be friendly to people, and there is no necessity for the generation of hatred in order to be cautious or prudent to threats. The Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, which was a tremendously prudent move, and this did not require him to hate the Chinese in the process. He maintained his compassion for them throughout. There is a frisson that comes with understanding that deep compassion removes unnecessary drama from our lives, and that all that is left is the recognition of true suffering when we witness it. This may open up more profound forms of adventure and fulfillment based on using one's energy to alleviate suffering, as opposed to self-induced suffering from manufactured generations of desire and hatred.

With these threats to compassion in mind, we can turn to the Dalai Lama's thoughts about taking care of the potential for compassion that he believes we all have within us and learning how to develop this potential through daily practice:

Compassion as energy for good, not requiring docility or acquiescence in the face of evil. Jeffrey Hopkins describes the Dalai Lama's view of compassion as "the power to gradually create harmony and peace throughout the world" (Hopkins, 2011, p. viii). Here is an area where there is great potential for a definitional corruption of the concept of compassion. This is because compassion is a source of tremendous energy, and so if it is co-opted for specific ends, or for previous labelling excursions, its moral justification can be used as a defense of disputed ends. For example, one could coin the term "institutional compassion" or "systemic compassion" as a way of arguing that institutions themselves ought to frame their purpose based on compassionate goals. But where is the seat within that institution? Who is the decider of those ends? The Dalai Lama's method has been like the water slowly eroding the rock to create a new path of enlightenment. It is the continuing repetition of meditation and the practice of compassion for all sentient beings that has set the example to us all of the energy within compassion and the harmony that can result.

Compassion and the recognition of interdependence. The Dalai Lama argues from a position of necessity when justifying the existence of interdependence. "Human society exists because it is

impossible to live in complete isolation. We are interdependent by nature, and since we must live together, we should do so with a positive attitude of concern for one another” (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 79). What, then, interferes with our awareness of interdependence, and how does this lack of awareness prevent compassion? The Dalai Lama argues it is the “false appearance” of how we “inflate the goodness or badness of the thing so that it seems *inherently* good or bad, *inherently* attractive or unattractive, *inherently* beautiful or ugly” and that “accepting this false appearance as fact is an act of ignorance that opens the way for lust, hatred, and myriad other counterproductive emotions” (p. 31). Moreover, “[a]s you become more self-centred - *my* this, *my* that, *my* body, *my* wealth - anyone who interferes immediately becomes an object of anger. As long as lust, hatred, attachment, jealousy, or confusion are present, all kinds of harmful actions become possible. Under these circumstances every one of us has the potential to do harm, commit a crime, and even commit murder” (p. 32). Here the Dalai Lama expresses the danger that comes from ignorant self-centredness, and it is especially concerning how willingly he includes all of us as having the potential to commit crimes such as murder if our self-centredness becomes exaggerated.

Further, the Dalai Lama argues that this “[a]ttachment increases desire, without producing any satisfaction” and that there are “two types of desire, unreasonable and reasonable” (p. 100). An example of a reasonable desire is that all sentient beings “should have happiness” and this is “valid because it is unbiased” (p. 100). This is in contrast with bias of the form, “Now it is *my* body, *my* stuff, *my* friend, or *my* car” (p. 31). Interestingly, it is the very solitary nature of our arrival and departure from this world that the Dalai Lama cites to highlight our interdependence: “Although you make much of *my* friends and *my* relatives, they cannot help you at birth, or at death; you come here alone, and you leave alone. If on the day of your death a friend could accompany you, attachment to that friend might make sense, but this cannot be” (p. 32). It is the contrast of these bookends to life that exhibits just how illusory our independence is during our time on earth.

Compassion and self-awareness. The Dalai Lama recommends developing the ability “to watch your thoughts” (p. 71): “The next time you feel hatred, see if you can split off an observer from the main run of your mind to watch the hatred” (p. 73). Here, strikingly, the Dalai Lama argues that “[a]s long as all of your consciousness is steeped in conceptual thinking, it is difficult for thought to observe

thought” (p. 71). There is no brake on hatred within the bounds of conceptual debate; only the brake that one concept coincidentally may have as part of its identity. This is one of the reasons that makes being an educator so difficult. Children haven’t yet learned to let an adult maintain their own delusion of self-awareness. An educator who deceives himself as being compassionate will have no evidence to support this deception from his students - there will be no spontaneous acclaim or recognition of this compassion exhibited because the child will not experience it. It will be a dull career.

Compassion in adversity. The Dalai Lama walks the walk. Citing the examples from his own life almost risks reducing his lifework to a highlight reel. To that narrow, yet deep, abyss I will guide myself through his own words: “My life has not been an altogether happy one; I have had to pass through many difficult times, including losing my country to Chinese communist invaders, and trying to re-establish our culture in countries outside Tibet. Yet, I regard these difficult periods as among the most important times in my life. Through them, I have gained many new experiences and learned many new ideas” (p. 18). He summarizes his approach and advice in the face of these existential crises of cultural identity and survival in the following remark: “Real compassion extends to each and every sentient being, not just to friends, or family, or those in terrible situations. True love and compassion extend even to those who wish to harm you. Try to imagine that your enemies are purposefully making trouble in order to help you accumulate positive forces for shaping the future, what Buddhists call ‘merit,’ by facing them with patience. If your life goes along too easily, you become soft. Trying circumstances help you develop inner strength, and the courage to face difficulty without emotional breakdown. Who teaches this? Not your friend, but your enemy” (p. 21). Of course, inner strength can also be developed from facing natural adversities, but the Dalai Lama makes his point by drawing our attention to the lack of attachment he has to his enemies.

Conclusion

The Dalai Lama’s role-modelling of the practice of compassion has enabled him to win over skeptics, perhaps most famously, Dr. Paul Ekman (Dalai Lama and Chan, 2012, pp. 44-53). Ekman represents a Western ideal of only seeking repeatable, material, examples of emotion in the human condition

through his extensive anthropological study of the various human emotions exhibited in our facial expressions (Ekman, 1970). What Ekman's approach missed, before encountering the Dalai Lama, was the need for connection; and this lack of understanding leads, as Ekman came to realize, to a "third type of suffering...which results from a failure to grasp the interdependence of our existence with the reification of the self's independent and unchanging existence" (Ekman, 2014, p. 14). The cynical corollary of this is cited by White in reference to the Soviet Union and Communist China "where compassion was frequently ridiculed and condemned as a remnant of bourgeois individualism" (White, 2008, p. 121).

The Dalai Lama sensed that Ekman was suffering. This initial meeting of the two, recounted in *The Wisdom of Compassion*, was seen as an opportunity for the Dalai Lama to help resolve Ekman's suffering. He challenged Ekman by saying aloud while looking at him directly, "Is this just going to be for good karma, nice conversation, or is anything going to happen?" (Dalai Lama and Chan, 2012, p. 49). It must be noted that such an expert in recognizing emotion in the faces of others may have neglected being able to see the emotions in his own, and that it took another world expert in reading emotions to present a problem as a solution. This also shows the wisdom in the Dalai Lama's advice that we practice the art of self-awareness.

This chapter has presented the Dalai Lama as a role-model for compassionate practice. I have chosen him as the exemplar of unbiased compassion, and how his life reveals to us that a conceptual understanding alone of compassion lacks the physiological drivers to feel its effect in action. The example of Ekman demonstrates that even the most set-in-his-ways Western anthropological materialist can still find a place in his spirit for compassionate practice. Chapter Four will build on the premise that one can take our conceptual clarity of compassion, alongside its animation through compassionate practice, in order to make normative recommendations for school teachers to consider when reviewing their pedagogical practice.

Chapter Four: The Compassionate Teacher

“The enemy of all religious disciplines is selfishness of mind. For it is just this which causes ignorance, anger and passion, which are at the root of all the troubles of the world.”

Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama's Little Book of Buddhism*

Introduction

In Chapter One, the case was made that schools can be cold. Numerous practices and policies were cited that help to explain the absence of that "loving kindness" the Dalai Lama speaks of (Dalai Lama, 2001, pp. 96-7). Normatively, I made the case that schools ought to be warmer, more welcoming to students, and that the way to do this was via compassion. The normative case was built partly on Foucauldian framing, that the institution of public education can be self-serving in its power structure, and that this preference has led teachers to lose perspective on their practice and students to be disengaged from their educational purpose. This disengagement is a disservice to the opportunity that their childhood affords to guide their open-mindedness and receptivity to new ideas and virtues.

In Chapter Two, we looked at a Western genealogy of compassion. Through it, I sought to demonstrate certain repeatable and consistent aspects of compassion itself: namely the conditions of the onlooker and that of the sufferer. In Chapter Three, the focus shifted to the practice of compassion itself, and through this, how conceptual analysis is not our only manner of understanding compassion. The practice of compassion, and the sustained effort to improve one's compassionate response can help one's non-articulated, phenomenological appreciation of compassion. Finally, Levinas takes a severe view in regards to compassion, emphasizing the effacement of the self through responsibility and duty, which is counter to the Dalai Lama's framing (Levinas, 1996, p. 17).

Despite the different style and approach one finds in the discussion of compassion in Western and Eastern sources, there is a great deal of complementarity with respect to the particular points below. There is a common association of the idea of meditation with the Dalai

Lama but it is less frequently noted that he includes under this what he terms "analytical meditation" which involves "studiously applying your critical faculties" (Dalai Lama, 2001, p. 51). Similarly, while critical analysis of compassion has been the hallmark of philosophical work in the West, philosophers like Butler, and contemporary applied ethicists (Blum, 1980; Nussbaum, 1996; White, 2008) have also attempted to provide us with a rich account of compassion as a value-laden practice. The two approaches are mutually supportive and collectively add to our understanding. The examination of conceptual, normative, and practice-based aspects of compassion in the earlier chapters will guide the discussion of compassion in teaching which will follow.

How a Teacher Can Be Compassionate

It is important to determine what elements are impeding compassionate pedagogy currently in order to find potential solutions. Determining what elements are impeding compassionate pedagogy will help in making recommendations for improvement. I will rely on my own pedagogical experience when describing current impediments, and although these experiences are not generalizable *a priori*, they certainly have already been generalizable in discussions with staff over the years based on their pedagogical experiences, which represents collectively schools and places nationwide. One would expect that contradictions to my observations would have come up during my time as a teacher so far.

Drawing on one's imagination

Philosophers differ about the necessity of imagination for a compassionate response. Blum argues that for a person to have a compassionate response, she "must at least dwell in her imagination on the fact that I am distressed. So some imaginative representation is a necessary condition for compassion, though the degree can be minimal" (Blum, 1980, p. 510). While not directly criticizing Blum, White maintains that "it's not clear that imagination is ever a *necessary* condition for compassion" (White, 2008, p. 108). His argument is that when we see someone suffering, "we are engaged by her suffering and responsive to it" (p. 108), and this compassionate response leads us to enter into that person's condition imaginatively. White's

point holds when we can immediately sense that someone is suffering, but often that will only become evident when we *first* use our imagination to grasp how things appear to the other person.⁷⁴

This is the situation that confronts the teacher. It takes an imaginative leap to see things from the perspective of a teenager and to understand that matters that might be quite trivial to the teacher are very distressing to the student. The teacher may sense that there is *something* wrong but not immediately perceive that the student is in distress. As Blum puts it, "[f]inding another person's experience opaque may well get in the way of compassion" (p. 510).⁷⁵ The challenge for the teacher is to try to imaginatively enter the world from the point of view of his or her students, and this can only grow out of attention, dialogue, and reflection. Pence puts it well when he notes that imaginative understanding requires "trust, honesty, and the time and willingness to listen" (Pence, 1983, p. 189). Does the teacher have the imaginative capacity, and the necessary patience, to try to sense "what is really happening" with the student?

Gauging severity

Reflection on the severity condition discussed in Chapter Two reminds the teacher that the experience of distress is a relative and subjective matter and that the onlooker's assessment is not always paramount. This is one of the thornier problems dealt with in our genealogy of compassion.⁷⁶ What if one is hyperempathic, where "[t]he individual being scrutinized often feels emotionally oppressed and stifled" (Cavanagh, 1995, p. 322). One may attribute a severity to a suffering that the sufferer claims is not there. Conversely, I may downplay the distress, thinking that it is trivial. Either interpretation may lead to testimonial frustration. This is particularly challenging for an educator because we are expected to always be a guide, to

⁷⁴ In referring back to Aristotle's "excited by the sight of evil" (see earlier Chapter Two), one can see a necessity for imagination if the sufferer is not aware of their own suffering yet. Quickly, one can see how a firm understanding of one's relation to the hermeneutical will require one's imaginative capacity to grasp suffering. Again, this is contrary to the Buddhist noble truths of suffering stemming from unnecessary desire-fulfilment.

⁷⁵ In the end, it's not clear how much disagreement remains between Blum's position and White's, since White allows that "those who are unable to think of themselves in any other life situation are probably less capable of compassion because they don't understand the possibility of seeing things from another's point of view" (White, 2008, p. 108)

⁷⁶ See earlier, Chapter Two.

accept that we have a role authority, which inevitably seems to involve assessing how severe the distress is. This may result in hyperempathic responses which are not actually compassionate in the moment itself (or apathetic responses where compassion was needed). One may ask whose benefit this action is for. Is it based on a self-reflective and genuine assessment of the severity of the suffering, or from the onlooker's physiological anxiety that this may result in the greater suffering for the sufferer in the future; the corollary being that one may be casually dismissing a problem that called for greater attention.

This, I believe, is one of the reasons why the Dalai Lama emphasizes so much the restraint in our attachment and emotional responses to things. This restraint, not necessarily Stoic in nature but still measured, enables us to role-model a gauging of severity that the student can model as well. This gauging of severity⁷⁷ is truly an Achilles' heel of the compassionate response within current Western practice, as so much of our current dialogue is based on emphasizing potential hermeneutical injustices that this restraint may be interpreted as repressing future seeds of discontent. The answer is that the epistemic condition is still sought, but the severity is measured always through the gauge of desire-fulfilment or attachment. In other words, the Dalai Lama emphasizes contentment when measuring our needs, and this is hard for the Western mind to entertain as it is counter to our overall culture.

The danger of patronizing

For an educator, there is a particularly tricky variable here in that sometimes they may think that the child is suffering unconsciously, that they are currently living in a false consciousness that what they are experiencing is acceptable, and that later on in life they will look back on this with resentment. With this extra burden on the teacher's mind, they may feel compelled to alleviate future perceptions of suffering of current experience.

This is problematic for several reasons including: students (especially in middle school or later) resent being patronized, and being compassionate to a student's future suffering may be

⁷⁷ Currently, when assessing hermeneutical and testimonial challenges, there exists no rubric as to what is deemed sufficient. Therefore, the gauging of severity is completely dependent on the perceiver, or another perceiver speaking on their behalf.

perceived this way. Secondly, just because some people look back on certain experiences retrospectively as one of suffering, does not mean all do. There is a testimonial bias here: those who do look back and speak negatively of experiences that they did not experience as suffering at the time are presumed to speak for others who have not spoken up. Finally, there is the element that a teacher's compassionate response may reframe an experience that was going to be forgotten, causing it to become dredged up and exaggerated. Guidance counsellors, for example, often have to make the difficult choice of telling students to let certain things go, as otherwise they will end up dwelling on certain events for their whole childhood.

I think that in general, a compassionate response to a future assumption of suffering may confuse the child as to what they are currently experiencing and exhibiting. The compassionate response ought instead to be directed to a potential confusion or ignorance of alternative paths forward. This gives the student the autonomy to still work through the growth of digesting their own experiences authentically, while at the same time cueing their minds for ways to curtail certain repeated or predictable challenges in the future. Certainly, there are many instances where teachers function hyperempathically, and presume that because certain experiences have stuck with them, that this is the case for everyone. For example, some teachers cut off any nickname usage between friends, even though students often use these towards each other as forms of affection and ways of showing close bonding.

The need for practical wisdom

The points just made reveal the difficult decisions and judgments teachers need to make. Practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*) is an intellectual virtue needed when we deliberate about particular situations and problems.⁷⁸ Richard Halverson captures this key feature of practical wisdom when he says that "[t]he aim of phronesis is not to develop rules or techniques true for all circumstances, but to adjust knowledge to the peculiarity of local circumstance" (Halverson, 2004, p.93). It is this kind of wisdom the teacher needs when a compassionate response is called for. Speaking of those in distress, Butler maintains that "...compassion leads us directly to

⁷⁸ "Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only - it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical and practice is concerned with particulars" (Aristotle, 1966, Book 6, Ch. 7).

assist them" (Butler, 2006, p. 73), but the problem immediately arises as to *how* we can and should assist them, *what* will be welcome, and what will be *useful*. Butler anticipates "the relief which the distressed feel from this affection in others towards them" (p. 74), but this outcome very much depends on the teacher knowing what to say, what *not* to say, and being seen as genuinely compassionate in his or her tone, look, and manner. Aristotle reminds us that "practical wisdom issues commands" (Book 6, Ch. 10) and it is in trying to determine what these commands are and how to follow them that the teacher's practical wisdom is tested.

There is no formula or template to follow but certain elements are crucial. First and foremost, teachers must themselves possess the virtue of compassion, otherwise students will quickly detect a lack of authenticity. Enriching one's understanding with an appreciation of exemplars of compassion in the study of historical events, including familiarity with real-life exemplars such as the Dalai Lama, can be the source of excellent guidance. Philosophical reflection on compassion, drawing on historical and contemporary sources, together with a close familiarity with the various examples, false steps, and qualifications philosophers have identified, will be invaluable in providing insights into what compassion involves.⁷⁹ But philosophical reflection is not sufficient. As Aristotle points out with respect to actually practising virtue: "But most people do not do these, but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do" (Aristotle, 1966, Book 2, Ch. 4). Trying to be compassionate, trying to be more compassionate by being less biased in one's compassionate response, putting compassion into practice, and reflecting on those experiences is also vital if being compassionate is to become part of one's character. States of character are not attained in an all-or-nothing manner. It is part of the notion of a virtue that one can continue to improve.

⁷⁹ The need for philosophical clarification is the point emphasized by Socrates in many of the early Platonic dialogues. For example, when Protagoras claims that his students will progress to a "better state", Socrates asks, "Better at what?" (*Protagoras* 318D).

Conveying Compassion

How does one convey a compassionate approach? I think that awkwardly, a teacher can begin by simply telling their students that they are trying to become more compassionate. In my experience, students tend to be supportive of teachers who take risks by being vulnerable about their own weaknesses. Students' memories in this regard are astounding, and they will cue you as the year goes on to moments when you are demonstrating great compassion. Trying to distill a compassionate response based on tone, facial expressions, body language, and so on, can be a rabbit hole. Certainly though, Dr. Paul Ekman has gone to great lengths to capture common elements of humanity, including the contempt expression which *is* counter to a compassionate response, represented in our emotional expressions on the face. I believe that what the Dalai Lama succeeds at best is his focusing during his solitary time via meditation for the end of suffering for all sentient creatures, not just human beings, and that this helps prepare his mind for contemplative spontaneity when speaking with people suffering.

Students' receptivity to compassion versus colleagues

Are students more receptive to compassion compared to colleagues? If so, one cause may be that students feel obligated to be receptive to compassionate practice because the teacher gets to dictate the tone in the classroom. However, this isn't true. There are many styles that simply don't transfer to students, who will rebel passive-aggressively or overtly if they sense they are not being treated fairly. I think though, from a Foucauldian perspective, that a person within an institution is continually subjected to dividing pressures (and so students may not be as divided yet as teachers who have been in the institution longer); the students' third eye is still relatively open as they haven't yet learned to shut it through our Westernized educational system. This third eye, the gateway to higher consciousness through an awareness of their own humanity, remains open with most students as they are still learning, still vulnerable, and thus still receptive to feedback. It is the teacher who ought to learn from the student in this most critical way. This doesn't explain though why many teachers, in my experience, have shut their third eye. My guess is that survival makes us compromise. Survival means engaging in strategies that

work to get the day done, what is satisfying and sufficient. That is why systemic change could encourage teachers to take small steps in re-opening their third eye.

Self-Assessment of One's Compassionate Response

With respect to steps that teachers might take towards renewing a commitment to compassion, it is important to bear in mind that our self-awareness, particularly in regards to our assessment of improvement through our meta-cognition, is not fixed or final. Reading the Dalai Lama, making meditation or mindfulness as part of our practice, opening ourselves up more frequently to feedback from our students and colleagues, can help our ability to self-assess. Most of a teacher's time in the classroom is without any other adult there to give feedback in the moment. Thus, one risks being delusional about one's compassionate response. One may convince oneself that one is being more compassionate than one truly is.

As an example, recently I had a student-teacher conduct her practicum in my classroom. I immediately saw education from a third-person perspective; I could see things she was doing that had great responses and engagement from the students as well as instances where I thought I would do things differently. These observations brought into the open patterns in my own practice where I realized I needed to improve. And as a consequence, I also felt disappointed in my previous practice for having not already implemented these changes. This is always the truly great challenge in education: one improves almost solely from receptivity to feedback and experiences, but it is this very receptivity that can lead us to re-evaluate previous practice with dismay.⁸⁰ This perhaps illustrates the somewhat paradoxical need to have compassion at times towards our former selves.

Finding One's Emotional Centre - Calm Abiding

Chapter One revealed a number of school practices that inhibit compassion. As was highlighted there, the demands on teachers are so varied and at cross-purposes, that often a teacher may choose the path of survival first, and then whichever of the demands is most prominent or

⁸⁰ Philosophically, there is an epistemic challenge here as the conclusions we draw do not necessarily equate with knowledge. Ongoing reflective assessment is necessary.

currently hierarchical in their minds. I feel this as a teacher all the time. After a Professional Development Day or Workshop on a topic, for weeks or months afterwards, administrators and colleagues will follow up on this topic, at the cost sometimes of other priorities. For example, this may be in regards to evaluative practices, or ways of making learning outcomes visible in the classroom via learning targets. How can a teacher adopt a compassionate practice and also fulfil the role requirements of their job? This is not a false dichotomy, as *distractions* can lead to an unfocused emotional centre where "afflictive emotions" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 101) distort benevolent ones.⁸¹

Often in teacher-talk in hallways, the comforting answer is simply that no one expects a teacher to actually do everything that they are expected to do. The general line is that if one actually tried to follow all procedures and policies to the letter, one would burn out within a few years. As well, there is such a danger of trying to do everything in exactly the right way that one may miss something truly important (such as rapport with a student, or general classroom management skills) and end up in conflict with the school administration. The role expected of the teacher then is one that is impossible to fulfil properly, and the result is that teachers are guilty simply by definition.

The Dalai Lama says: "The nature of calm abiding [*shamatha*] is the one-pointed abiding on any object without distraction of mind conjoined with a bliss of physical and mental pliancy" (Dalai Lama, 2008, pp. 98-9).⁸² Elsewhere, he adds: "Most important, we need solitude. By this I mean a mental state free of distractions, not simply time spent alone in a quiet place" (Dalai Lama, 2001, p. 78).⁸³ Tranquility, equanimity, and attention are important, but all extremely hard to achieve in crowded, busy public schools.⁸⁴ Because policy initiatives are never given in a prioritized fashion, every teacher is required to make their own hierarchical assessment of what satisfies the conditions of being an ethical teacher, and what is supererogatory. Although this

⁸¹ Clifford Orwin notes: "When we are moved on our own behalf - be it by pain, fear, anger, greed, desire, revenge, or toothache - there is rarely enough of us left over to enter into the feelings of others" (Orwin, 1980, p. 324).

⁸² "Calm abiding is a heightened state of awareness when your body and mind become especially flexible, receptive and serviceable" (Dalai Lama, 2015, p. 51).

⁸³ Butler's well-known mention of reflecting "in a cool hour" comes to mind (Butler, 2008, p. 117).

⁸⁴ Recently, for example, all lessons developed during the previous 5 to 7 years had to be photocopied and submitted as part of a court-order on potential copyright infringement. Certain schools were chosen nationally, including mine, and one had to do an exhaustive search of all lessons developed, and to categorize them based on subject and year taught.

grants the teacher autonomy, it is not recognized or valued as such since officially the expectation is to do *all* of them. As a result, the teacher can suffer from decision fatigue (Figley, 1995) when deciding what is supererogatory, and this can lead to a mental state filled with distractions. This is a state in which the negative emotions find a breeding ground.

What Impedes the Compassionate Response

Are there vices that impede our compassionate response? Robert Roberts suggests that the *absence* of certain vices can help us understand a virtue, such as humility which he thinks can be usefully characterized in terms of what is *not* present: "The humble person is one who *lacks* some or all of the following vices: snobbishness, vanity, domination (the joy of lording it over others or being an important influence on them), hyper-autonomy (a super-drive for self-sufficiency), pretentiousness, self-righteousness, arrogance, haughtiness, envy, conceit, and possibly others" (Roberts, 2016, p. 185). A remarkably similar point is made by the Dalai Lama: "Changes begin when you first identify and recognize your delusions, such as anger and jealousy...There is no simple way to remove delusions...They have to be recognized, and then...they can be gradually reduced, and then completely eliminated" (Dalai Lama, 2008, p. 21). Other vices and delusions include hatred and hostility.⁸⁵ The insight that emerges is that teachers (and others) can begin to identify the emotions that essentially conflict with compassion and then examine to what extent they themselves succumb to these emotions.

Similarly, one can think of the Aristotelian mean (Aristotle, 1966, Book 2, Ch. 8) as a way of framing compassion, where anger is at one end of the spectrum and apathy at the other. This helps us see both anger and apathy as vices that limit or prevent a compassionate response.

The Dalai Lama says,

"...it is useful to investigate whether or not anger is of value. Sometimes, when we are discouraged by a difficult situation, anger does seem helpful, appearing to bring with it more energy, confidence and determination. Here, though, we must examine our mental state carefully. While it is true that anger brings extra energy, if we explore the nature of

⁸⁵ A related point is made by Nancy Snow "Not feeling compassion when the occasion calls for it might be evidence of moral failings, such as insensitivity to others, failure to take their weal and woe seriously, pride, arrogance, or conceit..." (Snow, 1991, p. 200)

this energy, we discover that it is blind; we cannot be sure whether its result will be positive or negative...So, the energy of anger is almost always unreliable" (Dalai Lama, 2008, p. 13).

The Dalai Lama considers anger to be one of the great threats to compassion as it crushes any incipient benevolent response.⁸⁶ What causes such vices to occur in teachers? What steps can teachers take to check such vices? What changes can be made to improve this? What virtues support compassion? How can the institution of public education be organized to support these virtues in teachers?

Refuelling one's depleted compassion

When one reads of the Dalai Lama's daily practice of meditation, one realizes quite quickly that this is impractical for most of us. Impractical, but not necessarily impossible if one's priorities were to change. How does one refuel one's depleted compassion then, especially in a Western consciousness? Perhaps we can start with what one should not do, which is spend hours daily on social media passively viewing images and messages emphasizing attachment to things and people through jealousy. Perhaps social media, and cellphones overall, pose one of the greatest challenges to preserving the temple of one's mind to a compassionate response. Our depleted compassion can be refuelled via meditation and literature.⁸⁷ This is an individual challenge, but one that administrators could encourage via modelling of compassionate refuelling themselves.

The virtue of inclusivity

Recently, there has been a resurgence in the virtue of inclusivity in education. Previously, this may have been referred to as "equal opportunity" (Peters, 1966, pp. 139-40). However, inclusivity is now used to refer to systemic changes that ensure that groups previously marginalized through hermeneutical injustices will now be fully included within public education. What this notion of inclusivity lacks however is the compassionate response of the

⁸⁶ He does not exclude the use of "strong or harsh words", however, as long as compassion is retained (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 15)

⁸⁷ A recent directive to teachers stated that any reading of a novel at school by teachers would be regarded as fraud (time not dedicated to assessment). There were no allowances given here that this reading might be related to opening one's mind, finding a few moments of tranquility, or perhaps reviewing a novel a student was also reading.

teachers themselves. This systemic change will ensure policies are in place to prevent hermeneutical exclusion, but this does not guarantee a genuine warmth, a compassionate response to all students. It is important to bear in mind that previous generations also considered that they were fully inclusive or supportive of all students, to the best of their abilities at that time. Clearly, this was not true. This gives us greater motivation to support a compassionate practice starting with the teacher, so that other current unknown unknowns can still be mitigated in the classroom itself. Self-assessment here would involve teachers reflecting on how far their response to inclusivity includes compassion.

Individual, Systemic, and Pedagogical Change

A compassionate teacher and their compassionate response could theoretically take place on three levels. These would be (i) Individually within themselves, (ii) Systemically via changes to the expectations of the role of the teacher, and (iii) Pedagogical changes that would teach explicitly compassionate responses to students. What would this look like? Firstly, individual change comes from some of the suggestions made above: emotional centredness, meditative practice, freeing oneself from distractions, honest self-assessment, receptivity to change, and so on. Systemic changes would be ones where the institution of public education would devote time to the educator to allow for the development of a compassionate response. It could include having role models of compassion speak to teachers, or have administrators learn about compassion themselves that they would then model to the teachers. Other changes could include having compassion reminders as part of announcements on the PA system.⁸⁸ Finally, there is a dearth in the list of educational learning outcomes when it comes to recognizing or practicing compassion itself.⁸⁹ Concerning pedagogical changes, this is where the teacher has an opportunity to make overt their attempts to be more compassionate in their practice with their students. A courageous teacher might even ask their students to evaluate them already on how compassionate they are as an educator. Lessons could be framed in regards to compassionate responses, such as having students keep compassion journals where

⁸⁸ Taking care that these do not simply become routine, empty gestures, devoid of significance.

⁸⁹ There are more than 70 individual learning outcomes for French Language Arts, each requiring ongoing evaluation as students progress through the academic year. The development of compassion is not one of them.

they review case studies and then use rubrics to self-evaluate how compassionate they are. For a middle-schooler, and for adults, compassion is often confused with weakness. Thus, referring back to our conceptual understanding of compassion can help students and educators see how compassion does not prevent honesty, in ways that asking for “kindness” may.

"Cultivating an attitude of compassion is a slow process. As you gradually internalize it day by day, and year by year, wild states of mind become less and less frequent. Like a big piece of ice in the water, your mass of problems will gradually melt away. As you transform your mind, you will transform your surroundings, since others will see the benefits of your practice of tolerance and love, and will work at bringing these practices into their own lives" (Dalai Lama, 2011, p. 97).

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to demonstrate that schools need to become more compassionate for the benefit of students. It goes further by explaining how teachers can become more compassionate. What is it to be compassionate? What does compassion look like in pedagogical practice? These questions led to the discussions in the previous chapters of the thesis. First, an inquiry into conditions, policies and practices that obstruct compassionate teaching. Second, a philosophical exploration of the concept of compassion so as to provide some guidance in looking for solutions. Third, an examination of compassion as committed practice in the life of one of the most admired exemplars, the Dalai Lama. Finally, a discussion of what is needed if compassion is to characterize pedagogical practice.

The approach followed was determined by the kind of question at issue. In answering the question about present conditions, the thesis employs a qualitative and reflective method drawing on personal experience and educational literature. The conceptual question about compassion requires the tools of philosophical analysis and a critical examination of the arguments put forward by philosophers who have discussed this concept. The question about the Dalai Lama's practice called for a careful reading of several books he has written, and an attempt to distill the main ideas and practices he advocates and to organize these under major themes. The final question required drawing on the insights gained in the earlier discussions to advance normative recommendations aimed at restoring compassion in teaching.

A word about limitations. I have not claimed that the description of current practice would apply in every jurisdiction. Such a generalization would be dubious. What is presented is an honest description of the conditions I have encountered in my own 14 year career. I have also found that the educational literature tends to confirm my assessment. A second limitation is that the Dalai Lama has written well over 100 books and it has only been possible to study a number of these. The ones studied, however, present a consistent picture that I have tried to capture, and published articles about the Dalai Lama do not take a position contrary to my interpretation. Finally, there is an extensive literature on compassion in philosophy and the

thesis has carefully examined many of the main contributions. It has not been possible to read everything in the literature and no doubt there are insights that might yet be incorporated.

Writing this thesis has increased my own awareness of the many ways in which compassion is undermined in contemporary education. It is for all professional educators -- teachers, school administrators, curriculum supervisors, and school board officials -- who may be stimulated to take compassion seriously as a virtue.

I hope it will prompt a fresh, critical look at various policies and practices that are taken for granted but which may be doing more harm than good. It may also lead to a review of educational documents, guides, and codes of conduct to see where the virtue of compassion might be introduced and clarified. Of note, there is no reference to compassion in the typical Code of Conduct for schools where responses to inappropriate behavior are outlined (e.g. Nova Scotia: *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*). In addition, the topic of compassion has never come up for discussion at professional development workshops in my 14 year career.

Philosophers have done heavy lifting in explaining the nature of compassion and the complex questions it gives rise to, and to show how valuable and useful it can be both to the person who is suffering and to the person who shows compassion. The insights gained here will help to guide the critical review mentioned above.

The ideas and strategies suggested here have come from detailed journals and investigations from my own career. Their purpose is to help avoid the pitfalls that undermine compassion, and for finding a way forward that makes progress towards compassionate teaching possible.

Here are a few final recommendations for all to consider:

-- Identify conditions in one's own teaching, including tendencies in one's own behaviour and attitudes, that undermine or distort a compassionate response;

-- Ask how authentic a definition of compassion one currently employs about one's practice. Can one justify a different definition than that presented in this thesis?

-- Review the writings and practice of the Dalai Lama, to understand why and how the virtue of compassion is central to his way of life;

-- Look for examples of compassionate action in history, biography, and literature, and in present day life, so as to to gain a fuller sense of the ethical significance of this virtue;

-- Identify ways in which one's own teaching practice, and one's own school, can become more compassionate; and engage in ongoing reflection on one's teaching experience.

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The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism



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entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.

Name: Stephen Hare

Student number: 5967320

Date and signature: June 17th, 2021. Stephen Hare
