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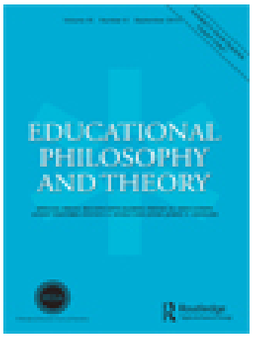

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Philosophy of education in a new key: Constraints and possibilities in present times with regard to dignity

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Introduction

Klas Roth, Stockholm University

Human beings as imperfect rational beings face continuous challenges, one of them has to do with the lack of recognizing and respecting our inner dignity in present times. In this collective paper, we address the overall theme—Philosophy of Education in a New Key (see Peters et al., 2020) from various perspectives related to dignity. We address in particular some of the constraints and possibilities with regard to this issue in various settings such as education and society at large. Klas Roth discusses, for example, that it is not uncommon that the value of human beings has to do with their price in, inter alia, their social, cultural, political and economic settings throughout the world. He argues that such a focus does not necessarily draw attention to the inner dignity of human beings, but that human beings ought to do so in education and society at large. Lia Mollvik discusses views of inner and outer dignity, and argues that there needs to be a balance in between them, and that the balance ought to be acknowledged in education. Rama Alshoufani discusses the classification of human beings in terms of various diagnoses related to the asserted dysfunction of the brain, and she argues that such classification does paradoxically not necessarily respect people with such diagnoses as ends in themselves. On the contrary, she argues that their inner dignity is not respected, but that it should be. Other such failures are due to the lack of inner dignity when it comes to Children's rights as discussed by Rebecca Adami, and to the lack of recognition of human beings' vulnerability as discussed by Katy Dineen. Fariba Majlesi criticizes a too strong emphasis on substantive notions of humanist education, which seem to hinder new ways of thinking; she argues that it is necessary to acknowledge the latter in and through education in order to preserve the dignity of human beings. Dignity, it is argued throughout the paper, has an inner moral worth, and is beyond price.

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Price and dignity – why it is important to also maintain the latter in and through education

Klas Roth, Stockholm University

Price seems to be recognized in education and society at large in terms of how well one is doing in education and society, but not necessarily dignity. So, the question becomes the following: Can education also maintain the inner dignity of human beings, apart from their price, and what would that be (see Lia Mollvik below for a discussion on outer and inner dignity)? It is not uncommon in policy in many places throughout the world if not in most or all, that education recognize the price of children and young people through policy and practice by making it possible for them to cultivate their capacities to read, write and count, and to learn facts about, inter alia, the world, societies, universe and possible also themselves in order for them to become, inter alia, employable and efficacious on the job market. It is not either uncommon that their price is recognized in terms of the extent to which they submit to the values, norms of action related to specific narratives, practices and traditions in specific societies, but what exactly is it that they are supposed to confer a price on? Their price with regard to the extent to which they submit to their social, cultural, political or religious affiliation, their gender or sexuality, their diagnoses (see Rama Alshoufani below for a discussion on this latter theme), or their age (see Rebecca Adami below for a discussion on this issue)? Should their freedom to act upon their inclinations or submit to the circumstances of whatever kind, be that which should be given a price? Or that which conforms with their taste? Or is it their social skills, wit, imagination and humour that should be priced? Should any or all of that mentioned above be that which should be given a price? Or is it something else that ought to be respected, something of inner worth? And what would that be? And should that be recognized and maintained in and through education, other than that which is given a price of whatever kind in specific societies?

It is, as said, not uncommon that some or many if not most or all of that which is mentioned above is given a price, that is, valued either positively or negatively, in societies, and that education is used as a means to cultivate valued capacities and reproduce that which is found to have a positive value such as, inter alia, specific facts, values and norms of action. If, however, any of the above are that which is given a value or price, it seems that people will be affected to come to learn that they too have a price as a means to some further end. That is, it seems that they can be inclined to come to learn that they are valued and given a price when they submit to any of the above. That in turn suggests that they will also at some point come to recognize that anyone can be replaced by someone else and its equivalent at some point (Kant, 2011, 4:434). They would then as an effect of this not necessarily come to recognize and respect the inherent value or dignity of persons, but merely the price to that which they submit and the extent to which they maintain it. Some would perhaps then say that this is what it should be like, and that it is up to each and every one to submit to any of the above and make oneself valuable in the sense given, while others would perhaps say that we cannot as human beings just be used as mere means to some further end whether in political, religious, administrative, economical or any other term. And they would perhaps point to Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 (UNDHR, 1948) claiming that it righteously expresses the value of the inner dignity of human beings as a reflection of the loss of it during the horrible experiences of the Second World War and in particular Holocaust.

If that which has a price can be criticized, since it does not necessarily respect the other or ourselves as ends in ourselves, nor human beings' vulnerability (see Katy Dineen and Fariba Majlesi below for discussions on this issue), but merely as means to some further end, would that suggest that the only reasonable candidate for dignity and the worthiness of dignity would be something inner? But what then is the inner dignity of human beings, and that which ought to be valued in itself and not as a mere means to some further end? Some would perhaps say that a reasonable candidate is an inherent metaphysical property of human

beings, something each and every one ought to cherish, such as reason and the capacity to use reason, for example. Others would perhaps say that a reasonable candidate is a religious one referring to the idea of being created in the image of G-d, while others would say that it just has to do with one's rank in the world. The latter, however, refers not uncommonly to just a few—an elite of some kind, which are ascribed certain powers, privileges and duties beyond the critique of laymen; the focus would, however, in the latter case be on the extent a human being would behave appropriately with regard to one's rank or position, and not on the inner value of the person upholding any of it, which suggests that persons upholding these positions could be replaced by someone else, as seen from above. If, however, nothing metaphysical nor one's rank or position in the world would be beyond critique for an account of the inner dignity of persons, what then could it be? What would be a legitimate candidate for an account of inner dignity?

One possibility is the one Immanuel Kant suggested (see for example Sensen, 2011). Kant opposes himself to that which has been mentioned above, that is, to that which is given a price. He talks instead about dignity as something "unconditional" (Kant, 2011, 4:436), which has "an absolute inner worth" (Kant, 2006, 6:435), and that it is through that which he or she raises him- or herself above his or her animality and civility, that is, his or her animal nature as well as his or her rank in society and become moral beings. He recognizes, of course, that people are given a price, but argues that human beings should not merely recognize each other in terms of price (they would then, according to him, just be used as mere means to some further end, and hence be replaced by its equivalent); Kant argues that they should also and always recognize each other as ends in themselves and not merely as means to some further end (Kant, 2011, 4:429; Kant, 2006, 6:462). Hence, it is not human beings' capacity to act upon their animality, nor their capacity to become disciplined or civilized in specific societies that have dignity. It is instead their freedom and capacity to act morally, which should be respected among human beings, according to Kant (Kant, 2011, 4:435). In his own words:

> What … is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity [And he continues]: What is related to general human inclinations and needs has a market price; that which, even without presupposing a need, conforms with a certain taste, that is, with delight in the mere purposeless play or our mental powers, has a fancy price, but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself has not merely a relative worth, that is, a price, but an inner worth, that is, dignity. … Now morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself … Hence, morality, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity. (Kant, 2011, 4:434-435)

Morality can, however, easily be corrupted at its roots by, for example, rationalizing against it, and even cast doubt about it, by making policy and practice "better suited to our wishes and inclinations" (Kant, 2011, 4:405), on the one hand, or by merely emphasizing our usefulness on the work market through education, on the other. Education should not, however, merely recognize that which is given a price in society; it should also make it possible for those concerned to respect the inner dignity of human beings as ends in themselves. Such a candidate suggests that human beings should be respected not merely for the price which is given to the actuality of their actions; they should also be respected for their potentiality and actuality to set and pursue morally permissible ends. The latter is or so it seems to be a reasonable candidate for education and society at large to respect and maintain (see also Roth, 2018).

The "paradox" of inner and outer dignity

Lia Mollvik, Stockholm University

Human dignity is a moral concept that can be seen to play a central role in the foundation and moral justification of global human rights. The Declaration of Human Rights from 1948,

which has become international customary law, states in its preamble: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (UNDHR, 1948, preamble). Since the end of the Second World War and the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the formulation of different conventions on human rights, and on human rights education have emerged. For example, The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states in article 28 b that education among other things should be directed toward: "The development of respect for human rights and the fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations" (UNCRC, 1989, article 28 b). Therefore, human dignity, human rights and education are bound together in international law. However, human rights documents and national policy documents are not explicit about how to understand the relationship of this bond. For an exploration of this, one must turn to philosophy. Klas Roth has shown above that different philosophical conceptions of human dignity could have consequences for education and learning relationships, and has discussed the distinction between dignity and price. Here I wish to discuss another distinction between what I call *inner* and *outer* dignity.

In his work *Kant on Human Dignity* (2011), Oliver Sensen distinguishes between what he calls a *contemporary* versus a *traditional* conception of dignity. Sensen argues that the contemporary view is reflected in international human rights documents as those mentioned above, and that this view defines human dignity as an intrinsic value of every human being, that we all have equally, that we cannot lose, and that in turn creates entitlements. (Sensen, 2011, pp. 149-151) The traditional view, by contrast, according to Sensen, does not define dignity as an a priori value, but instead sees human dignity as an elevated place, or status, that human beings have in nature relative to other species, because of the human capacity for rationality and autonomy. These capacities can be realized to a greater or lesser extent, and therefore our "initial" dignity, as Sensen calls it, can be lost, or found again and again, according to the traditional view. A third difference between the traditional view and the contemporary one is that the traditional one focuses more on duties rather than entitlements, which is due to the moral perfectionism of this way of thought (Sensen, 2011: pp. 162-164).

Sensen continues to discuss how Kant's use of the word "dignity" is often claimed to be supporting the contemporary view, while he argues that Kant should rather be understood as voicing the traditional view. (Sensen, 2011, Chapters 4 and 5) He concludes by stating that the Kantian and the contemporary conception of dignity do converge on the point that one should respect other human beings, yet they have different justifications for this (Sensen, 2011, p. 203). In Sensen's reading of Kant, we should respect others because it is our duty, following from the Categorical Imperative of the Formula of Humanity, which provides that we must treat others as ends in themselves and not as means to any further end. Kant's metaphysics, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to Sensen, does not consent to it being possible to make any statements about any a priori and absolute moral value (such as dignity) conferred to finite human beings. Instead we must have a metaphysics of morals, in the search to formulate a priori *principles*. Sensen writes: "One should respect others because it is commanded by the Categorical Imperative in the Formula of Humanity. It is in virtue of the moral law – and not because of an inner worth of human beings – that one should respect them" (Sensen, 2011, p. 189). It is not my purpose to either argue for or against Sensen's understanding of Kant here, but rather to highlight the convergence between different views on dignity. I will argue that the convergence lies in recognizing both the "inner" and "outer" forms of dignity, seeing these as interrelated facets of dignity which do not necessarily need to be in contradiction with each other. Instead, I will propose that one should strive to balance them.

Many authors on dignity have distinguished between two different types of dignity in a similar way as Sensen. Formosa and Mackenzie, for instance, define what they call *status dignity*, which is an (almost) permanent, inherent, respect-worthy status of a person as a human

being, and *achievement dignity*, which has to do with the "respect-worthy status of a person's beings and doings" (Formosa & Mackenzie, 2014. p. 877). This would correspond to Sensen's "initial" dignity and "realized" dignity in the traditional framework. Important to note is that both Sensen as well as Formosa and Mackenzie, understand this to be two *aspects* of dignity, rather than two opposing conceptions of dignity. One aspect, which I here call the *inner* aspect, is that we recognize that there is a moral realm within all human beings, that is inherent and inalienable (even though we might not agree on the metaphysical grounding for this faith), and the other aspect, which I here call *outer,* is that we recognize this realm within ourselves and commit ourselves to living in alignment with it through the exercising of our free will towards moral action. Thus, there seems to be agreement that what we want to achieve with human rights documents, human rights education, a conception of dignity, or even with the categorical imperative (even though we shouldn't *use* the categorical imperative in this way, since then, per definition, it wouldn't be categorical anymore) is that all human beings should be treated with equal respect, and that each person individually should take this commitment to the dignity of morality within very seriously and not see it as something that one should, or even can, opt out of.

When it comes to balancing these two aspects of dignity then, there are potential pitfalls with each of them. The danger that I see with an overemphasis on inner dignity, would perhaps be that one could become too entitled: "My dignity needs to be protected from your potentially violating acts." However, a similar danger can be found in over-emphasizing the outer aspect of dignity as well: "Because *I* am such a morally realized being, using my capacity for reason in such an excellent way, I am worthy of more respect than a villain, and most certainly more than an animal." Clearly, Kant was aware of both dangers and therefore emphasized duties, rather than entitlements, while at the same time recognizing the moral law as existing within each person, and as having "unconditional" and "incomparable" worth. (Kant, 2011, 4:436). Kant labelled the first danger as ingratitude and the second one as arrogance, both of which he saw as *aggravated vices* as they are a convolution of the moral law (Moran, 2019).

In education then, dignity, rather than price, should be emphasized and one must dance in the paradox of inner and outer dignity. To do this is to transcend social roles. As Kant saw the use of inspiring examples as a way for us to educate ourselves in living in alignment with the moral law (Kant, 2011, 4:411, footnote), a way to envision such an education would be that educators commit to a practice of "switching channels" between different planes of consciousness (Ram Dass, How Different It Is., Ep. 166, *Here and Now Podcast*, 2020-07-31). On one plane, we are learning skills that are or might be valuable (that is, have a price, see Roth above) in society; on another plane, we are practicing our "moral muscles" by continually seeing each other as ends and not as means (see Adami, Alshoufani and Dineen below); and on yet another plane, we are all just hanging out together being perfectly imperfect. In an education such as this one, we play out our social roles and model them, we strive to act morally, yet we also remember not to take any of this so seriously that we forget to recognize the inner realm where we are all one with the moral law.

The example of neurodiverse learners

Rama Alshoufani, Stockholm University

Discussing issues of education and dignity could allude to two ideas. One related to whether education systems teach us to respect the dignity of others, and the other is related to whether these systems themselves treat us with dignity when we go through them. Yet, one can argue that these two ideas, although can exist separately, are interweaved to a certain extent. A system that values the dignity of learners could set an example for them to value the dignity of others.

After all, educational institutions, like schools, universities and others, create a sub-society of learners, which is part of society as a whole. So, when the education system that governs these sub-societies establishes a norm, this norm can echo to other aspects of our lives. This idea could be better explained through discussing the example of learners with neurodiversities. This example possesses high importance due to its subtlety and nuance. It is based on the claim that the foundation of the way we teach and plan education seems to be cognitively and socially designed to accommodate students with a typical way of learning, which leaves learners with brain-based diversities behind (Lollini, 2018). It is not possible to put the millions of people who fit the label of neurodiversity and have a wide range of neurodevelopmental and learning differences under a single category. However, one common trait that could be of concern here is that neurodiverse individuals tend to learn and socialize differently from the usual way education systems demand of them (Lollini, 2018). What makes this more interesting is that many people go through education without knowing that they have a neurodiverse brain. They may feel different within educational institutions and realize that they are not fulfilling their potential. They could also have a complicated relationship with the social aspect of education without knowing why. That could make their experience with education difficult and plagued with self-doubt (Able et al., 2007; Russell et al., 2005). So, to circle back to the idea of maintaining the dignity of human beings apart from their price in education, we could benefit from discussing this example.

Based on Kantian ethics, what education needs to provide us with is a way to work on developing our agency along with acquiring social and technical skills to build our character and become efficacious and autonomous (Roth, 2011). Education in that sense is constant work towards moral perfection and respect for the moral law (Morse, 1997; Roth, 2011). However, in an education that is mainly based on a recognition and appreciation of price, learners can easily become means to achieving a specific predetermined set of ends. Thus, they are not treated as ends in themselves within the system that ought to teach them to see themselves and others as ends in themselves. This issue is magnified when it comes to neurodiverse learners as they can be less likely to achieve an education's predetermined set of ends. They could struggle with routine practices like strict deadlines, timed examinations, compulsory attendance or group activities. Additionally, they could struggle with exhibiting the social skills that are deemed acceptable or normal and necessary in a learning atmosphere (Able et al., 2007; Russell et al., 2005). Consequently, they are likely to not meet an education's fixed set of ends and fall behind their peers. So, in an education that is focused on price, specifically one that is conferred to the ability of reaching these predetermined ends, it is unlikely that the dignity of neurodiverse learners is respected.

One could argue that neurodiverse learners are simply individuals with cognitive disorders or learning disabilities who belong in special education classes. Their dignity is much appreciated in the sense that they are disabled and should not be asked to compete with neurotypical individuals. However, many neurodiverse people disagree with this notion, and could even take offense at it. The last few decades witnessed a "neurodiversity movement" that refuses labels like "disabled", "special needs" or "disorder". This movement raises the idea that neurodiverse brains are simply "wired differently". It questions whether psychiatric labels actually portray a scientific fact or a product of a stubborn and outdated psychiatric tradition. Some neurodiverse people go to the extent of referring to themselves as "survivors", which refers to surviving the mistreatment and stigma within systems like psychiatry and education (Dyck & Russell, 2020). This probably emanates from the idea that although many neurodiverse individuals do suffer from learning difficulties, many others can be exceptionally intelligent, creative and healthy, but they acquire knowledge in a manner that does not fit into the ways we go about education.

What neurodiverse learners seem to demand is not respect for their dignity based on a label, but a universal respect for the different ways that people learn. This alludes to the Kantian idea of treating people as ends in themselves and not as mere means to a further end (Kant, 2011, 4:429). So, a good education is one that respects dignity as much as it recognizes price, which means that it confers value to the potentiality as well as the actuality of a learner's agency. This

should apply to all aspects of education including its social aspect. In that, a good education also respects the freedom of learners to become efficacious and autonomous beings who set and pursue morally permissible ends (Roth, 2011). Consequently, such education renders them aware and respectful of the inner aspect of their dignity by recognizing their inherent value as equal humans. In addition to that, it also renders them aware and respectful of the outer aspect of their dignity by committing to acting from duty in respect for the moral law. From a Kantian perspective, it is this kind of education that we need to pursue.

The moral failure of a discourse on children's rights

Rebecca Adami, Stockholm University

The social realization of human rights demands corresponding duties on everyone toward others rights and freedoms, a duty generally not imposed on children—children may be seen as subject to moral claims but generally not regarded as moral subjects in themselves. Following this logic, children have been excluded from a large part of the human rights discourse that presupposes rights bearers as having corresponding duties. The moral basis of human dignity and thus for human rights has been argued as "our capacity for moral behavior" that Luigi Caranti (2018, p. 605) equates, as Kant, with autonomy. In Caranti's reading of Kant, humans have dignity because we can act under self-imposed moral constraints, so autonomy is here read as capacity for moral agency (Caranti, 2018, p. 600). Children are given less, or sometimes more, rights depending on how adult's view their rational capacities and "their potentiality for reaching full autonomous status" (Caranti, 2018, p. 608). In Caranti's reading we are left without an answer to the question of how to articulate a moral foundation for human rights in dignity drawing on Kant's conception of human autonomy and moral capacity when it comes to small children who might not possess "the capacity to set ends according to reason" (Caranti, 2018, p. 609).

> The problem concerns people with what I call temporarily or permanently impaired autonomy. If, with Kant, we let human dignity depend on our capacity for autonomous behaviour, it seems that we are forced to the counterintuitive (and rather devastating) conclusion that children … have neither dignity nor human rights. (Caranti, 2018, p. 599)

Even if a Kantian reading of autonomy as a moral capacity to set ends would not ascribe dignity (and human rights) to children we may through Kant reach a better understanding of the moral duty that adults and parents *as moral agents* have toward children, to treat their ends as one's own. The idea of human rights, traditionally dealt with in the public realm as rights of the individual in relation to the state, has evolved into human rights claims in the private sphere, including violence against children, as violations of rights. Children's rights (to life, freedom from torture, to food and security, to health and to education) presuppose the duty of parental and guardian responsibility for children in the private sphere. This parental duty in the private sphere for children's rights extends into their rights in the public. The child can be denied the right to education if the parent wishes to keep the child at home without schooling, the right to healthcare denied if parents refrain from taking a child in need to the hospital, or in instances where a child suffers from mental illness withdraws their consent to undergo child therapy. What is at the core here is the asymmetrical power relation between parent-child. The realization of the rights of the child—by which adults are responsible for the implementation of international law such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, legal enforcement of children's rights through national legislation and appliance thereof, and political and social realization of children's rights through proper societal institutions—rest on ideal notions of adult moral conduct. In the best of worlds, children are supposed to be listened to and cared for, and their emotional and physical needs met without this having to be formulated as rights claims. The moment we need to

formulate children's basic human needs connected to dignity as rights claims point to moral failure in adult-child relations.

> While we have minor *status* we are dependent for our survival on others who, unlike us, can effectively exercise their autonomy to serve both their own needs and the needs of some others. (Castro, 2014, p. 594)

If adults are sole duty bearers in regard to children's rights, then how and when do we distinguish a parent-child relation to be morally questionable? Susan Castro (2014) revives Kant's concept of status relations to determine when parent-child relations are to be viewed as morally questionable while already constituting asymmetric relations of unequal autonomy.

> Though we cherish freedom and equality, we nevertheless generally accept the asymmetry of autonomy involved in some kinds of relations, protesting only in specific cases that something has gone morally wrong. (Castro, 2014, p. 594)

If parents are moral subjects with human rights—with a human capacity resting on a certain form of autonomy—then within the asymmetric relation where children do not have equal autonomy, parents become *the* moral subject with a capacity for responsibility of both. When these symmetric relations—not having been entered into freely by children but which constitute a social condition for their existence—become morally problematic; as when the parents do not take the moral responsibility to treat the child's ends as their own, then we need discourses on children's rights.

Regardless of how adult's view children's moral subjectivity, they are still subject to moral rights claims. In Castro's reading of Kant 'the major party is obliged to act *as if* the minor's end were her own' (Castro, 2014, p. 601). This further assumes an ideal situation in which the child's physical, cognitive and emotional development that affects how they communicate and relate to the world and how they can move around physically and conceptually is not used by adults as motivating degrading and humiliating discourses and treatment of children. While drawing on Kant, Castro discusses the parent-child relation as one of rightful possession which entails the non-interference of third parties, the obedience of the child to the parent's will, if and when we can presume the parent as acting in obligation to the minor's ends. Castro's reading cements the idea that parent-child relations—although asymmetric and although only based on the major party's autonomy—should be exceptions to ideas of equality if and when the major party acts as if the needs of the child are one's own. This criteria for when the unequal autonomy of parent-child relations can become morally questionable—and when the interference of a third part is motivated—could turn many such relations into instances in need of moral scrutiny. One of the main challenges with the discourse on the rights of the child is how parental interests and wishes are being reformulated into a discourse of "bests interests" of the child, and how parental duties and responsibilities toward children are reformulated as freedom of choice and autonomy in child-rearing, even if this freedom and autonomy limits the rights of the child. Parental autonomy and family right to privacy hinder—in instances of non-ideal parent-child relations—third parties from protecting a child from violence and abuse. What I have thus tried to bring to the fore in this text is the way in which the birth of the discourse on the rights of the child marks the failure of a Kantian moral ideal of adult-child relations, which assumes all guardians capable of acting *as if* the child's ends were their own.

The usefulness of a humanist education

Katy Dineen, University College Cork

The final lines of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human rights advocates for every individual and institution within all societies to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms" (United Nations, 1948). Given the sorts of issues covered

by the Declaration (for example, Article 4 covering slavery and Article 5 covering torture, cruelty and inhumane treatment), it is not surprising that education aimed at facilitating this respect is often humanistic in focus (see for example, Council of Europe, 2002). At issue here is the idea that to torture or enslave another implies a process of dehumanization; thus, education towards the recognition of all human beings as worthy of respect goes some way to addressing these mistreatments.

Recently humanism has come under attack. Those sceptical of the "dehumanization" paradigm argue that much abuse of human beings depends on recognizing them as such (Appiah, 2006, 2008; Gopnik, 2006). For example, Kate Manne (2018) offered a variation of this argument against humanism, in the context of addressing misogyny. Humanism is a failure, according to Manne; it doesn't even succeed in explaining the cases it was designed to address (genocide, mass rape etc). For Manne, not only can we sensibly conceive of another as human, while simultaneously abusing them (torture, enslave, rape); but some forms of abuse may actually depend on our "sense of the humanity one shares with them" (ibid, 153). Whereas non-human animals are conceived as prey or game, it is our fellow human beings that can be thought of as enemy, rival, usurper, insubordinate, traitor, etc. Thus, if the sorts of acts covered by Article 4 and 5 depend on a recognition of shared humanity, then an education that aims at facilitating this recognition may be utterly pointless. The education may succeed in showing us that we share humanity with all others while going no distance towards preventing future torture, enslavement and rape.

Thankfully for humanist educators (in particular, Kantian humanist educators), we can allow that a recognition of human agency may be a prerequisite for abuse, while still maintaining our ground on the value of a humanist education in preventing such abuse. Moreover, the linchpin of this strategy (acknowledgement of humanity can be necessary for man's inhumanity to man, while also remaining the best strategy for overcoming it) is the idea of a simultaneous respect for human dignity in the presence of human vulnerability.

In Kantian ethics, the centrality of human dignity, and the respect that dignity merits, is mirrored by an acknowledgement of human vulnerability. As Paul Formosa writes, the picture of human beings that emerges from Kant's writings is that of a "frail, impure and perverse agent", capable of acts motivated by "revenge, hatred, envy, malice, ideology, and a desire for power" (Formosa, 2009, 2014). We are, on the Kantian scheme, inescapably mutually vulnerable. Abusers are vulnerable to a frailty of the will, debasing their own outer dignity (see Lia Mollvik above) through acts which victimize others; while victims of abuse are vulnerable to the sort of abusive acts that constitute a disrespect of their inner human dignity. As Onora O'Neill puts it (pre-empting Manne's point on humanism above), "if human beings were not vulnerable and needy they could not damage, destroy, coerce and deceive so successfully (or perhaps at all), and the need for justice would be gone" (2000, p. 138). Yet our vulnerability to dominate, and be dominated, is combined with a capacity for action in accordance with the moral law; and thereby with self-respect and respect for others (see Klas Roth above on the unconditionality of dignity and its inner worth).

Interestingly, Kant allows that respect may be a "feeling", albeit a feeling different in kind from all other feelings that are produced by external objects (for example the feeling of happiness upon seeing one's work published). Respect is "self-produced by means of a rational concept" (1993, p. 402, ft note 14). Respect cannot be produced through inclination or fear. Respect is produced through recognizing the moral law "immediately as a law for me"; respect is "the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences upon my senses". In short, respect is "the representation of a worth that thwarts my self-love". When we respect ourselves, it is the feeling we experience on determining our will in accordance with the moral law. Self-respect is a representation of an inner worth, or in other words it is a feeling brought about by a contemplation or experience of our dignity. When we respect others, it is the feeling we experience on finding others are capable of determining their will in

accordance with the moral law. We may phrase our respect in the particular ("I respect Joseph"), yet Joseph is only an exemplar of the respect I truly feel for other beings' dignity.

With these thoughts on mutual vulnerability and respect for dignity in mind, it is possible to "save" (Kantian) humanist education from the charge of uselessness. As one such educator, I can allow that when abusers dominate others (for example through torture, enslavement, rape) they may, in some sense, recognize their victim's humanity. After all, it is our human vulnerability that leaves us open to such coercion. Yet, it is possible, on the Kantian scheme, to hold that the abuser both recognizes their victim as human ("all too human"); while simultaneously failing to recognize their own (outer) dignity and the respect due to another human being. Through engaging in torture, enslavement and rape, the abuser is failing to recognize the moral law as a law for them, and therefore failing to foster their worth or dignity. The abuser is dehumanizing themselves. As such, they are unworthy of self-respect. Given the coercion and domination involved, the abuser is preventing the victim from acting in a way that recognizes the moral law within themselves and therefore is denied the respect of the abuser. The abuser fails to acknowledge the victim as an end in themselves, the victim (from the point of view of the abuser) is "arbitrarily" used "merely as a means" (Kant, 1993, p. 428). While the victim never loses their inner worth, their dignity and their capacity for self-respect; the abuser (perhaps temporarily) fails to have the self-respect necessary to act appropriately towards another dignified being. Thus, from the abuser's point of view, the victim is both "humanized" (an enemy, a rival etc) while also "dehumanized" (used arbitrarily merely as a means, denied the respect due to a being with inner worth).

The role of the educator is to facilitate reflection on *both* aspects of humanity (our vulnerability and our inner worth). A Kantian educator can help students understand the duties incurred through our own humanity (see Rama Alshoufani on educating for building character above) and the relationship between vulnerability and dignity. If, as O'Neill states, it is the combination of agency and vulnerability that constitutes the circumstances of justice (2000, 138), then the circumstances of education will be a facilitation of reflection on the intertwining of vulnerability and dignity.

An ambivalent humanism

Fariba Majlesi, Stockholm University

On the face of it, humanism, or what it means to be a human subject in the philosophical tradition of the West, is about ""human nature" and human beings' natural endowments" (Bauman, 2003, p. 127). Embedded in this conviction lies the idea that separates ""human" from "inhuman", (or, more to the point, from "inept at being human," "undeserving to be human," or "bound to be humanized")" (p. 127). Such division allows for the rendition of some human beings as worthier of and more entitled to certain rights and others as simply *not just yet*—some lives in this view deserve safeguarding and protecting and some not. Humanist arrogance then capacitates some human beings/political communities to justify acts of horrorism and terrorism under the banner of civilization, religion, faith, etc., and to slaughter and destruct other human populations and infrastructures whose mere existence, each opposing body postulates, is threatening to all that is human. The problematic logic of humanism undermines that which it claims it holds so esteemed, i.e., the human, by ostracizing some humans based upon the rationality/irrationality dichotomy. The humanist project has also failed to recognize the rights of the nonhuman animals, the physically and mentally less abled, and the stateless, among others, on account of the grotesque discourse on costs and benefits. So, if the recognition of human dignity is the beacon of our humanist thought (see Rama Alshoufani on a critique of non-inclusive educations that disregard the rights and dignity of the neurodiverse above; see Rebecca Adami on an analysis of

the failure of moral discourses in connection to child-adult relationships above), humanism in this stubborn form needs a revolutionary retreatment.

In light of the abovementioned and in what ostensibly seems to be a howl of protest to humanism and perhaps even an advocacy of the erasure of the human, I would like to echo a sentiment that has equally been prevalent in deconstructionism, feminism and postcolonialism, that is to say, criticizing a system from *inside* of it. Therefore, I would like to emphasize, a critical theory of humanist thought/education is only possible from within the discourse. Moreover, as "inheritors" of any "injunction", must we *not* criticize and re-treat?

> An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the injunction to reaffirm by choosing. … One must filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion … [for] if the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. (Derrida, 1994: p. 18)

Humanism can then be heralded for that which is found useful in it (see Katy Dineen for an opposing view in alignment with the usefulness of a humanist education) and redefined and re-treated so as to include that which it has been dismissive of, namely, the recognition of a world that has been *always already* co-inhabited and co-built by human beings' nonhuman animal counterparts (moving toward posthumanism), as well as the validation of seeing all human beings as "ends in themselves". (See Klas Roth and Lia Mollvik for a fuller interpretation and implication of the phrase above). In accordance with this thought, it is noteworthy to quote Katherine Hayles, a postmodernist, who cogently reminds humanists that a shift toward posthumanism is not frightening but reassuring:

> [T]he posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice. What is lethal is not the posthuman as such but the grafting of the posthuman onto a liberal humanist view of the self. (Hayles, 1999, p. 286)

An additional aim I will be cautiously and cursorily pursuing here is looking at the notion of human dignity vis-à-vis human vulnerability, not in terms of powerlessness but of an axiomatic (human and nonhuman) state/condition. Here I draw heavily upon Judith Butler's explication of vulnerability in *Precarious Life*. Butler points out that although the "human condition" is yet to be "universally shared", it is still possible "to appeal to a we" (2004, p. 20) through loss and grief and through mutual vulnerability. Loss after all "has made a tenuous "we" of us all" (p. 20). A recognition of (mutual) vulnerability can hence go a long way in supplying us with a new humanism that furthermore allows for new pedagogical possibilities. Yet, what is significant is the fact that vulnerability does not imply helplessness. It simply points to our being "socially constituted bodies, attached to others, … exposed to others, … [and] at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (p. 20). Narratives of suffering, "pathetic" images of cruelty, exposure to the atrocities committed to human beings through history and the barbarisms still in place throughout the world, all have a potential to thrust us into abysses of compassion, which can, in turn, through education, get realized into action. The recognition of vulnerability, I will stress, is valuable in relation to the notion of dignity.

In *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt asserts that "antisemitism," "imperialism," and "totalitarianism," as materialized in the terror of the Nazi concentration camps, destabilized human dignity to a degree that "human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity" (1958, p. ix). In 1948, the international response to the atrocities of the post-war period and the infringement of human dignity was in the form of a UN Declaration of Human Rights with a great emphasis on respect and on preserving and restoring the integrity of our fellow-men as subjects, or as Arendt puts it, as "builders of worlds or co-builders of a

common world" (ibid, p. 458). Nonetheless, dignity as a basis for human beings' commitment to human rights has not been capable of instilling in us a sense of a "rejection of inequality" (Sangiovanni, 2017, p. 3). Human dignity in all the aforementioned, as I have been trying to demonstrate, is manifest in its *denial* and *disavowal* rather than in its *deference* and *estimation*.

Postscript: recognizing the lack and value of inner dignity in present times

Klas Roth, Stockholm University

Is it possible to not recognize the inner dignity of human beings, and if so how would that manifest itself? In this joint endeavour we have tried to acknowledge the value of inner dignity and what it would look like if and when it is being or not being recognized among human beings. One such concern has to do with the emphasis on our price in various settings such as education and workplaces of various kinds in which the value of human beings is related to their usefulness. Such an emphasis which does not necessarily acknowledge the inner dignity of human beings does not recognize them as ends in themselves, but merely as means to some further end. Whenever that happens, and it does, we want to draw attention to both the lack, but also the value of inner dignity, since the latter can have us recognize each and every one of us not just as mere means to some further end, but also and always as ends in ourselves, which the former does not do. The latter also requires that each and every one takes their responsibility for their responsibility to recognize each other in practice as ends in ourselves, demanding moral/ethical considerations. It also requires that we strive to find a balance between our inner and outer dignity in practice, which in turn requires sensitivity and good judgment with regard to the extent to which this actually happens among people in practice in various settings. Such a pursuit of good judgment may be dissonant with classifications of people in accordance with the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) by which persons are valued as dysfunctional in order to receive any kind of acknowledgment, respect for their rights and educational help. As we have seen such a classification does not necessarily recognize those concerned as ends in themselves, which seems to put us in a moral dilemma, namely the following: in order to receive help you first have to become the subject of such scientific classification as mentally disordered. But why would one—because one is perceived as different—have to the subject of such classification in order to receive help? But perhaps such a dilemma can be resolved by engaging morally in a pursuit of trying to recognize each other as ends in ourselves. We have also seen that children are not necessarily recognized as ends in themselves, nor that our vulnerability as imperfect rational beings is recognized in practice. Acknowledgement of human imperfections may lead to social shame and feelings of guilt in such ways that pull people down into darkness; such experiences can instead be taken as reminders of our imperfections, on the one hand, and that we as imperfect rational beings inevitably have to strive to find our way again, over and over again, on the other. Even substantive notions of humanist education can, as have been shown, go against the value and need of making it possible for new ways of thinking, which would require that we do not just classify objects or even subjects under already given classifications; it can also require that we start from particulars and search for new concepts or ways of thinking. Such a pursuit can be seen as an expression of the inner dignity of us as human beings. And as such this moral pursuit has to be recognized in education of society at large. It suggests that we do not just take things as they stand, but engage in the pursuit of finding new ways of thinking, that are consistent with the freedom of any other to engage in the same or similar pursuit made possible in the world. If and when this happens we can have a glimpse of light.

Philosophy of education in a new key: dignity - constraints and possibilities in present times (open review)

Michael A Peters, Beijing Normal University

This collection by six scholars all from the Department of Education at Stockholm University, except for Katy Dineen from University College Cork, focuses on the theme of dignity which the paper summises has "an inner moral worth". Klas Roth inquires how education can maintain the inner dignity of human beings, over and above considerations of price and, following Kant's prescription, maintaining "respect the other or ourselves as ends in ourselves" rather than merely as a means to some other end. Indeed, for Kant, as Roth explains, dignity is "unconditional" that has "an absolute inner worth" and corresponds to the freedom of human beings and their capacity to act morally. This theme is then developed by the other authors. Lia Mollvik, follows Sensen, in distinguishing between dignity in a priori terms with entitlements, as against Kant's more traditional view—two related aspects ("inner" and "outer") rather than opposing views, each with their own pitfalls, that requires balance. Rama Alshoufani investigates dignity in relation to neurodiversity of learners such as those suffering learning disabilities or cognitive disorders. What is required is "universal respect for the different ways that people learn" rather than assimilation to the parameters of a system. Rebecca Adami examines "The Moral Failure of a Discourse on Children's Rights" especially where "children may be seen as subject to moral claims but generally not regarded as moral subjects in themselves". There are problems of "asymmetric relations of unequal autonomy" between children and adults and difficulties surrounding the Kantian moral ideal of adult-child relations that obliges the parent to act as if the minor's end were her own. Katy Dineen examines "The Usefulness of a Humanist Education" by reviewing recent criticisms scpetical of the work education can do to address dehumanization. Kantian humanist educators can promote reflection on the respect for human dignity within the presence of human vulnerability. Fariba Majlesi in "An Ambivalent Humanism" makes the case for a critical theory of humanist education that "is only possible from within the discourse" and follows Butler in withdrawing from trying to graft posthumanist constructions onto the "liberal humanist view of the self". This collection has thematic depth that perhaps surprisingly also has the capacity to develop arguments within a condensed space while not sacrificing their complexity.

Questioning dignity in contemporary times (open review)

Marek Tesar, The University of Auckland

Roth's *Philosophy of Education in a New Key* presents us with yet another take on what collective writing utilising the methodologies of Peters' et al can generate. So far, this series of collective writing papers focused on Philosophy of Education in a New Key has produced many discussions responding to current concerns across multiple geographical locations (Hung, 2020; Jackson et al., 2020; Jandric et al., 2020; Kato et al., 2020; Orchard et al., 2020; Papastephanou et al., 2020; Waghid, 2020). In this writing, the focus remains largely located within a geographical - predominantly Swedish – environment. However, at the same time from this locality the collective focuses on broader imagining of the wider world.

The topic of dignity of human subjects is fundamentally linked with the idea "of inner values" or "inner worth", as the six writers have provided and demonstrated in this collective exercise. Their writing is exciting and strong; signposting meaningful and deep messages which provide readers with idiosyncratic yet connected narratives. Roth works with Kant's argument to make the claim that people "should be respected not merely for the price which is given to the actuality of their actions; they should also be respected for their potentiality and actuality to set and pursue morally permissible ends". It is this argument that permeates throughout this collective writing. Following is Mollvik who uses Sensen's reading of Kant to argue his point that dignity in education really "should be emphasized and one must dance in the paradox of inner and outer dignity". It is a beautifully crafted piece that truly challenges us to see the idea of dignity but at

the same time acts as a bridge between diverse parts of this collective writing. Alshoufani then discusses what kind of education we should pursue. Building on Roth's reading of Kant, she argues that debating education and dignity are two notions; "one related to whether education systems teach us to respect the dignity of others, and the other is related to whether these systems themselves treat us with dignity when we go through them". Alshoufani follows this interesting debate with her focus on neurodiverse learners, asking when their dignity is present and what agency neurodiverse learners have in relation to thinking to the universality of learners' needs or the labels used, which may determine the form of dignity. Adami's clever use of Caranti's reading of Kant is superb. What is particularly interesting in her section is Castro's reading of Kant in relation to child development and parenting. As Adami argues, "the birth of the discourse on the rights of the child marks the failure of a Kantian moral ideal of adult-child relations, which assumes all guardians capable of acting *as if* the child's ends were their own". Dineen further enriches the debates with her take on the UNCRC, the child and Kantian ethics. Following from that is her debate around victim, abuser and dignity, settling on the role of the educator: "to facilitate reflection on *both* aspects of humanity (our vulnerability and our inner worth)". And finally, Majlesi leaves us with the following quote: "Human dignity in all the aforementioned, as I have been trying to demonstrate, is manifest in its *denial* and *disavowal* rather than in its *deference* and *estimation*". What a wonderful, superb ride is present through this close reading of Kantian philosophy in this collective work, and it is some of the most critical and exciting arguments that one can found on this topic.

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