

Education's Love Triangle

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It has been acknowledged that education includes 'a love of what one teaches and a love of those whom one teaches' (Hogan 2010: 81), but two traditions of writing in philosophy of education—concerning love for student and love for subject—have rarely been brought together. This paper considers the extent to which the 'triangular' relationship of teacher, student and subject matter runs the risk of the rivalry, jealousy and strife that are characteristic of 'tragic' love triangles, or entails undesirable consequences such as transference from one intended object of love to another. It argues that this faultline in the literature of educational love corresponds to education's 'divided heart'. The implication of this exploration of education's triangular relationship is that we cannot ignore the 'dark of love', nor can we address it simply by asserting that educational love must be of a more honourable sort than romantic love. These tensions can be reconciled through the loving recourse of 'ceasing to strive' and the possibility of sublimating the two originary loves into a higher 'love of truth'.

INTRODUCTION

In a paper presentation to the London Branch of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, I heard John White (2017) discuss what it might mean for a student to come to love a subject. White was quite scrupulous, when pushed, to avoid any suggestion of the possibility of love between teacher and student, either as a condition or constituent of the fostering of this love for subject. He acknowledged a significant debt to Ray Elliott's inspiring article, 'Education, Love of Subject, and Love of Truth', in which we are told that 'Teachers who love their subject and can communicate their delight in it can hardly avoid creating the sort of interest which creates new devotees' (1974, p. 138). A teacher who loves a subject or discipline models this for his or her students, who 'catch' some sort of similar love. The relationship between teacher and student is here one of exemplarity and not in itself love. Compare Kal Alston's paper 'Teaching, Philosophy and Eros: Love as a Relation to Truth', in which she argues that love (specifically eros) between teacher and student 'is precisely the kind of relationship that is required to coalesce the social and moral demands of teaching with

the epistemic ones' (1991, p. 386). Alston's paper, conversely, says little directly about the love of the specific discipline that is the teacher's potential gift to the student.

Padraig Hogan has argued that education includes 'a love of what one teaches and a love of those whom one teaches, or more precisely, a creative combination of both' and that 'This much is uncontroversial' (2010, p. 81). Uncontroversial as it might appear to Hogan, the two strands have largely been kept separate in the educational literature. This is surprising, I contend, given the much-discussed triangular relation of teacher, student and their shared subject. I propose in this article to explore the educational implications of transposing considerations of love into the model of the pedagogical or instructional triangle. Once the literary theme of the 'love triangle' has therefore suggested itself (and some work has been done to justify an emphasis on the *romantic* notion of love as courtship or wooing that sustains this image in educational contexts) it proves particularly useful for resolving some of the talking at cross purposes that goes on in different discussions of which forms of love are and are not appropriate to pedagogical situations, whether there is a specifically 'educational' love, and whether it is appropriate to speak of love at all in education.

I want to argue that a love of two particular objects originates and sustains the pedagogical endeavour, and that there is, therefore, in educational situations (and particularly in those institutional educational situations increasingly characterised by specialism and fragmentation), a risk of the rivalry, jealousy and strife that is familiar to the triangular love situations that I will characterise as 'tragic'. I also discuss triangular situations that I will refer to as instances of 'wooing by proxy', in which there is often the risk (or, some have argued, the necessity) of a transference or substitution from one intended object of love to another. The implication of my exploration of education's triangular relation is that we cannot ignore the 'dark of love' (Steiner, 2003, p. 28), nor can we address it simply by asserting that there are more or less honourable forms of love, and that educational love must be of the more honourable sort. I argue that there is a faultline in the literature of educational love that corresponds to education's 'divided heart'. If these loves can be reconciled, I hope to demonstrate, it will be through the loving recourse of 'ceasing to strive', and the possibility of the sublimation of the two originary loves into a higher 'love of truth' (a possibility that both Elliott and Alston, although setting off from different destinations, are journeying towards).

IN PLACE OF A HERMENEUTICS, AN EROTICS ...

Various philosophers of education have explored what might be called the hermeneutical significance of the pedagogical (also called 'instructional') triangle (Aldridge, 2015; Gallagher, 1992; Higgins, 2010; Standish, 2014). Shaun Gallagher insightfully suggests that, rather than dialogue or reading, as is often contended in the literature, education (or more specifically, the pedagogical triangle) is the paradigmatic model for the hermeneutical event of understanding (see Gallagher, 1992, p. 74; Aldridge, 2015, pp. 115–125).

Gallagher expands upon Gadamer's insight that in understanding we come into dialogue with the text or other as a student to a teacher. To understand is to be transformed by a text or interlocutor; this transformation requires that one takes seriously the other's claim to truth and is prepared to 'risk' one's biases or prejudices in this encounter. The implication, Gallagher contends, is that understanding always involves learning about some shared subject matter which is at issue (which *matters*) to both parties in the encounter. This subject matter emerges because it is not known in advance of the encounter but is the achievement of mutual understanding.

Phenomenological hermeneutics finds in the pedagogical triangle a map of the intentionality of the educational event or encounter. It describes the related orientation or directedness of the participants towards the subject matter they come to share. A connection with love already suggests itself in Gadamer's insight that understanding is not an achievement of either party but rather 'befalls' us, as it were, 'over above our wanting and doing' (Gadamer, 2004, xxvi). Parties remain in dialogue to the extent that the shared subject matter continues to *matter* to each. It is not a conscious decision for a subject matter to cease to 'matter'; rather interlocutors might begin over time to talk at cross-purposes, or drift apart. Iain Thomson, writing of the 'pedagogical truth event', offers love as the 'paradigm case' of the more general phenomenological insight that 'what we most care about is in fact not entirely up to us, not simply within our power to control, and this is a crucial part of what makes it so important' (2015, p. 185).

The title of this section references Susan Sontag's claim that 'In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art' (1964, p. 10). Whether or not Sontag is right to set 'erotics' up in opposition to hermeneutics, she is certainly right that many approaches to interpretation and understanding have taken 'the sensory experience of the work of art for granted' (p. 9). As in art, I suggest, so there is a need to 'reveal the sensuous surface' (p. 9) of education. A starting point for an 'erotics' of education might be to acknowledge, as Richard Kearney and others have urged in other contexts, the 'carnal' elements of educational understanding (Kearney, 2015; Kearney and Treanor, 2015). This is akin to Thomson's insight that if, according to the Derridean insight, intelligibility is indeed composed of 'texts', then, following Heidegger, 'we need to learn to recognize and respond to the *texture* of these ubiquitous texts' (2015, p. 187). The language of phenomenology, with its emphasis on biases, prejudices, interests and inclinations, renders understanding in its *ontological* rather than more limited *epistemological* significance. Intentionality in its originary form, as Heidegger reminds us in a characteristic etymological excavation, describes the hand reaching out to grasp or touch 'with tendons tautening purposefully' (Heidegger, 2002, p. 42). To acknowledge that texts have a texture is to acknowledge that they affect or feel to the one who understands in a particular way. Texts have a grain, which can of course be read against. What we read can give us goosebumps, make our hackles rise, our flesh crawl or our hairs stand up. What is read or encountered as an object of learning can inspire, frustrate, hearten, sadden, repulse or (maybe most frequently in schooling) bore stiff. If we wished, following Gadamer and Heidegger, to think of the intentionality of

the educational event as ‘belonging’ to a shared subject matter (Aldridge, 2015, pp. 106–129; Caputo, 1983), then there is a role for love (in the broadest sense, for the time being) as the attractive force in such a relationship. As Michel Boulous Walker argues in her discussion of the event of reading, eros acts as a necessary mediator or bridge builder: love is ‘the passion that connects us and places us in relation with the other’ (2017, xxi).

This account of educational love emphasises what is left out by a pedagogical focus on the science of cognition. Teaching must ‘engage the passions and ignite desires’ (Alston, 1991, p. 385). But it might be responded that the observations I have made so far could be accommodated by making room for embodiment or affect in our account of the pedagogical relation; the specific language of love does not seem necessary. Indeed, some educational invocations of ‘eros’ seem to have used the term more or less as a synonym for motivation; this is perhaps largely what is going on in Joseph Schwab’s (1954) relatively early use of the term, which I discuss below. But note that we have so far only emphasised the educational nature of the hermeneutical situation. We have not yet dealt with the triangular relation that emerges in a more self-consciously pedagogical context. That is to say, the triangle we have modelled so far accounts for those situations when an interpreter approaches a text, or two interlocutors engage in a mutually enlightening dialogue about some object of shared interest. These situations are, we might say, educational only in the sense of self-education.

Another relationship is implied when a teacher seeks explicitly to teach some student about some subject (Aldridge, 2015). This is ‘subject’ not in the sense of the shared concern that emerges in dialogue (Gadamer’s *die Sache*)—although this remains essential to our account of educational intentionality—but in the sense that Elliott (1974) intends it: ‘subject’ as some academic or other tradition or discipline (where a love for subject, Elliott expands, would include a love not only for its methods and practices but also for those particular aspects of the world that this tradition or discipline picks out and cherishes). In this more explicitly *pedagogical* triangle, the dialogic situations are multiplied in the three-sided hermeneutical relation of teacher-student, teacher-subject and student-subject. In this situation, it is insufficient to say that there is a shared subject matter as long as there is a shared interest. The *interest* on the teacher’s part needs to incorporate not only the subject, but also the student.

Both White and Elliott present teaching as an eventual stage or natural outpouring of love for a subject. This claim is easy to understand in a context of academia where those who are held to exemplify perhaps the most refined kind of love for a subject are also responsible for its teaching—where the professor is one who *professes*. But it is worth considering that a love for a subject does not seem to entail necessarily that one would also want to teach it. It is reasonable, for example, that one might want to devote one’s time more fully to the study of the beloved subject. In schooling, in particular, some element of sacrifice might be acknowledged in those cases where the art or science teacher, for example, feels a conflict between their identity as teacher and their identity as artist or scientist. There are different ways that this conflict can be interpreted. One is in terms of competence—those lovers

of their subject who can reach the heights of academic achievement go on to further study, and those who can't, as they say, teach. The other way of interpreting the vocation to teach is to see the teacher as a figure more like the *Bodhisattva* who is motivated by compassion to forego enlightenment and devote his or her life instead to helping others along the way. In the latter case, it seems that love for the student is necessary to get the life project of education off the ground.

EROS, AGAPE AND ROMANCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL RELATION

I want to clarify at this stage that where I refer to two loves, I am referring to love for two different objects, i.e. student and subject. I don't particularly want to speak of two *kinds* of love, although I will need to address the question of the extent to which educational love is properly understood as *erotic* or *agapeic* (and eventually I am going to defend a certain metaphorically *romantic* notion). Various participants at seminars where I have presented versions of this article have expressed discomfort at the invocation of love, particularly with regard to the teacher/student relationship, and have suggested that it is sufficient for my purposes to speak of the 'relational' aspects of education, or of 'care', 'sympathy' or 'compassion', or of education's 'contemplative' dimension. While these discussions all certainly overlap, I hope to have demonstrated by the end of the article, when I arrive at a consideration of education's 'amateurish' aspect, why it has been important to risk the language of love.

I write 'risk' because the language of love evokes romantic connotations that, as Sharon Todd has observed, constitute a 'pedagogical excess' that "'inappropriately" oversteps the bounds of how institutions define the pedagogical roles and responsibilities for members of their communities' (2003a, p. 35). Todd embraces an ambiguity here, arguing for the need 'to acknowledge the ethical significance of the quality of human contact which necessarily involves a little risk-taking' (p. 35). Geoff Hinchcliffe calls out a certain prudishness when he observes, writing about Plato's *Symposium*, that 'perhaps the only way—or at any rate the best way—to learn is with individuals that one respects and loves and who directly inspire a passion for learning so that one way of expressing one's love for another is precisely through learning from them and teaching them . . . For us, of course, this is a matter of some delicacy: much better to play safe and divorce learning from love altogether. Plato challenges our natural assumption by showing us through the genealogy of love that passion, affection and learning exemplify our humanity' (2006, p. 124). Bell hooks (1993) draws attention to how 'Well-learned distinctions between public and private make us believe that love has no place in the classroom' (p. 62) and defends love (more specifically, 'eros') as a 'motivating force' (p. 60) that 'propelled every life-form from a state of mere potentiality to actuality' (Keen, 1983, p. 5, cited in hooks, 1993, p. 60) and 'enhances our overall effort to be self-actualising' (hooks, 1993, p. 60). 'When eros is present in the classroom setting', hooks argues 'then love is bound to flourish' (p. 62). We perhaps do not need to follow hooks, who is writing specifically with reference to

higher education, in her claim that the ‘sexual’ dimension of eros ‘need not be denied’ (p. 60). In any case, other writers in this Special Issue will more explicitly address that claim (see contributions by Karsten Kenklies and Kevin Williams in this volume).

Although I have so far argued that one philosophical tradition has been somewhat reticent to think about the relation between teacher and student in terms of love, it is interesting to note that Elliott’s discussion of love for subject *begins* with a discussion of romantic love. Elliott writes on the first page: ‘A young man finds a girl attractive. She encourages him. He looks forward to meeting her and takes pleasure in her company. She haunts his imagination, has “captured his fancy”. Time spent in her company passes with a strange swiftness . . .’ He continues ‘Similarly a child at school finds a subject attractive . . .’ (1974, p. 135). If examples of romantic love can play such a paradigmatic role in a consideration of love as it might be applied to a relationship with something as abstract as a ‘subject’, *even if only analogously*, it seems unnecessarily scrupulous to want to avoid the romantic paradigm in a discussion of the teacher/student relation where there might be more fruitful possibilities for the mutuality or give-and-take possibilities already suggested in Elliott’s example.

One writer who has, at least in his earlier work, embraced a thoroughly romantic educational idiom is Pdraig Hogan, who has called the educational relation a ‘courtship of sensibility’ (2010, p. 57), referring to the to and fro of the interaction of teacher and student as a ‘subtle dance’ (1993, p. 10), and to the teacher’s tactful and sensitive accommodation of the pushback of particular students as a ‘defensible cultural wooing’ (1993, p. 10). Hogan explains in later work why he attempts to move away from these more romantic framings while still emphasising the role of a properly educational love, preferring to refer to education’s ‘heartwork’ (2010). The wooing he initially intended was ‘not so much of [students’] affections, as of their best imaginative efforts’ (2010, p. 56). The emphasis on ‘sensibilities’ refers to the ‘enthusiasms, aversions, inclinations, resistances, tolerances, prejudices, susceptibilities, credulities and so on’ of both students and teachers (p. 57). The ‘subtle dance’ analogy (which I have developed elsewhere, with some inspiration from Marielle Macé, as a ‘pas de deux’—see Aldridge, 2019; Macé, 2013, p. 19) suggests that ‘There is always an *interplay*, overt or tacit, direct or oblique, in educational practice’ (Hogan, 2010, p. 58). Hogan’s shift away from courtship results from ‘an emphasis that needs to be placed’ on the fact that ‘anything erotic must be ruled out from the start’ (p. 57). In an extended discussion of Steiner’s ‘thought-provoking’ portrayal of education, Hogan points out ‘the erotic quality that Steiner invariably associates’ with the educational relationships he discusses in *Lessons of the Masters*. When Steiner claims that ‘eros and teaching are inextricable’ (Steiner, 2003, p. 140), this insight certainly has a sexual dimension, given the predominantly adult relationships that Steiner is discussing, but it is not exclusively or even primarily considered in a sexual sense. Hogan observes that Steiner also associates eros with persuasion, claiming that ‘The teacher solicits attention, agreement, and, optimally, collaborative dissent’ (Steiner, 2003, p. 26) and that there is ‘an ever-recurring interplay of “fidelity and betrayal,

of *auctoritas* and rebellion, of mimesis and rivalry” in the relationships of teacher and student’ (Hogan, 2010, p. 72, citing Steiner, 2003, p. 181).

Hogan argues that Steiner gives ‘priority to a kind of love that is burdened with problematic associations where teaching and learning are concerned’ (Hogan, 2010, p. 81). His response is to emphasise a kind of love that is ‘particular’ and ‘essential’ to educational relationships, and which requires ‘forms of insight, circumspection, restraint and inclusiveness that are largely strangers to *eros*’ (p. 81). In a response to Jim Garrison’s (2010) celebration of an educational *eros* that he believes to be central to Dewey’s work, Hogan emphasises that *eros* in its Greek origins connotes seizure, passion and urgency, and ‘a desire to possess its object and delight in it to the full’ (Hogan, 2010, p. 82). Garrison does not deny that *eros* has both religious-mythological and sexual resonances which are of no use in his pragmatist/Deweyan conception of the educational relation. He does not, however, allow himself the easier route of arguing, with Plato, for purging erotic love of sexuality along with its embodied and sensual content; that ‘ghostly’ metaphysical pathway is incompatible with the more naturalistic account of intelligence, imagination, affect and the body that Garrison finds in Dewey (Garrison, 2010, p. 15). This being the case, Hogan argues, Garrison seems simply to drop the unwanted sexual connotations of *eros* without any convincing argument. Hogan wonders then why Garrison is so intent on drawing on *eros* as his classical source for educational love, when other ideas of love that might have more to do with the more honourable relations he seeks to describe (such as *agape* and *philia*) are available (2010, p. 84).

Hogan’s objection has more to it than a desire to purge educational love of sexual connotations; neither is it simply a discussion of what it is best to *call* educational love. What is at stake for Hogan is clearly indicated in his presentation of the distinctly ‘unerotic’ nature of teaching. Expanding on the example of Ursula Brangwen’s naively ardent educational aspirations in Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*, Hogan opposes the particularity of erotic love to the universal acceptance of *agape*. Drawing on Buber’s essay ‘Education’, Hogan cites that on encountering ‘the misshapen and the well-proportioned, animal faces, empty faces and noble faces in indiscriminate confusion . . . ; the glance of the educator accepts and receives them all’ (Buber, 2003, p. 112). Hogan’s educational objection to the more ardent, passionate *eros* is that it chooses its object to the exclusion of others. Yet he fully acknowledges that the attentions of a teacher are often partial, and that ‘the teacher must *learn* to accept all of the students, and must continually renew such learning for as long as teaching remains his or her way of life’ (2010, p. 87). At this point in Hogan’s argument, it is not clear that what the teacher learns is to become more *agapeic*, that is to say more *unconditionally* accepting of students. It may be that a teacher’s love develops as he or she becomes more aware of the particularities of individual students, and more perceptive of their (to use a Heideggerian term that Hogan employs elsewhere) ‘ownmost abilities, aptitudes, sensibilities and potentials’ (Hogan, 2005, p. 239). This seems, in fact, to be more consistent with Hogan’s arguments

for the necessary part that partiality and sensibility play in the ‘subtle dance’ of both teacher and student.

It is interesting that the two philosophers of education on whom Hogan draws to develop an alternative ‘deeply reverential’ or ‘mystic’ Levinasian sense of educational love (2010, p. 88) are much more comfortable connecting eros explicitly with education; I have discussed Todd (2003a) above, and Paul Standish has written of education’s ‘erotic’ development, which defies explicit rationalisation ‘in terms of aims and objectives’ (1999, p. 44). Buber’s essay, furthermore, seems to complicate the distinction that Hogan wants to draw:

But then his eyes meet a face which strikes him. It is not a beautiful face, not particularly intelligent; but it is a real face, or rather, the chaos preceding the cosmos of a real face. On it he reads a question that is something different from the general curiosity: ‘who are you? Do you know something that concerns me? Do you bring me something? What do you bring?’ (Buber, 2003, p. 133).

In a celebration of eros and educational discussion written in 1954, curriculum theorist Joseph Schwab begins with a discussion of the student’s face that suggests he can hardly have been unaware of Buber’s discussion of education’s *unerotic* nature:

If, in the first moments of the first meeting of a new class, the teacher’s gaze wanders first to one, then to another and another of the anonymous faces before him, those faces which are not readable yet as to promise and performance, and if, in this wandering inspection, two or three students answer his regard in a way which signals to him their curious awareness of him as a person, a start has been made. The person who is thus aware of me is a person of whom I become aware. The wandering movement of my eyes is stopped. They return to him or her (p. 55).

The response of the teacher in each case is not universal and unconditional. The teacher has been reached by a particular face, and a particular question, and what will draw other students into this moment will be the teacher’s increasing capacity to see other faces and their own particular possibilities. While there might be a need in some ways to ‘depose’ the ego (Hogan, 2010, p. 88, citing Todd, 2003b), the educational gift that is bestowed cannot be offered unconditionally in the manner of other charitable acts. It cannot be given without some opening on the part of the one who is to receive it, which requires that the teacher is responsive to the particular sensibilities and partialities of each student.

Elsewhere Hogan expresses his nervousness about educational love in terms, not of the opposition between agapeic and erotic love, but of more ‘common’ or less ‘honest’ forms of courtship, ‘where considerations of a more politic kind are to the fore; where posturing eclipses sincerity, where the arts of seduction are harboured and nurtured, and where all of the salutary attributes mentioned just now are secondary to securing the prize, or perhaps more accurately, the imagined prize’ (1993, p. 10). It seems to

me that Hogan hits his target more accurately here. I am not convinced that there is an educational love that is clearly distinct from other sorts of love; the eros/agape distinction seems even in Hogan's own argument to be much more ambiguous. But it does seem right that there are more or less honest or authentic loves in educational contexts, just as in other contexts. Attempting to draw a line between what is properly educational and what is not, does not seem to achieve very much more than Garrison achieves by apparently asserting that educational eros will not have a sexual dimension. Of course the chief issue here needs to be understood not in terms of a teacher's being faced with sexual temptation, but of which kinds of pedagogical advances or overtures are sensitive and which are overly insistent, or mistake or distort the educational 'prize' that is sought. Much educationally valuable thinking can begin from the recognition that the distinction between what is honest or more common in educational love is not clear but is a matter for tact and judgement.

There are points when Hogan seems not to be able to help himself from using romantic imagery, such as when he compares a teacher's too intrusive attentions to 'the movements of an impatient lover who presumes to have his (or her) way without impediment or protest' (2010, p. 77). Importantly, if educational love was as unlike romantic love as Hogan is trying to suggest, the analogy would not make the point that it does. It is rather because educational love *can* be meaningfully identified with romantic love that Hogan's point is made: the actions of the lover here are as undesirable in a romantic context as they are in an educational context. Despite Hogan's best efforts, there is some slippage in his attempts to distinguish between different types of love. Avoiding such slippage seems not only difficult but misguided. Arguing that educational love is not like romantic love (and the analogy seems irresistible even to the most prudish writers) does not insulate education from any of the risks about which Hogan is concerned. The more important recognition is that in educational situations, as in romantic situations, there is a risk of misjudgement that might lead to over-insistence, or a tactless advance. This is, furthermore a *fine* risk, since education is only ever realised within a relation of all too human particularities (Todd, 2003a).

WOONG BY PROXY

Having to some extent defended a slippage into the romantic language of courtship, let us consider the possibility, to which White and Elliott, for example, allude, that the teacher does not court the student directly but woos on behalf of the subject, which cannot make overtures on its own part. This introduces the possibility that the educational love triangle we are considering is akin to those in which an agent acts on behalf of one who has not the words or the status to do so, or who has the words but not (as in the case of Cyrano de Bergerac, for example) the looks. Such triangles frequently lead to tragic consequences—in fact, 'nearly everything can go wrong' (Gontar, 2014).

Joseph Schwab's (1954) highlighting of the importance of pleasure, affect and even affection in the educational relation begins in a way which is

consistent with what has been argued so far. A ‘liking’ born in a moment of mutual respect between teacher and student is a necessary educational beginning (p. 55). Schwab anticipates Hogan’s concerns in his warning that an appeal to eros may be employed ‘as a powerful device of propaganda and indoctrination’ (p. 60). However, he introduces a further consideration when he suggests that the effects of eros, the youthful ‘energy of wanting’, may be ‘channelled toward the envisaged outcomes of the curriculum’ (p. 54). That a transference or substitution of erotic objects is intended can be seen in Schwab’s presentation of the weak teacher, who ‘may direct the Eros, not through himself to the objects of the curriculum, but upon himself’ (p. 60). Again, there is the sense of a ‘fine risk’ to be run here, as for Schwab the recognition of self and selfhood is as much a part of the development of the teacher as of the student. Following that early recognition of the ‘curious awareness’ of the student, the teacher is affirmed in the maxim ‘I have affected, therefore I am’ (p. 55). On the other hand, ‘The teacher who teaches himself is more than a joke’ (p. 68).

It might be objected that the ‘courtship’ that Hogan intends by the educational to and fro between the teacher’s overtures and the student’s pushback or responding opening need not manifest itself ever as a ‘liking’ between teacher and student, let alone a liking that must be transferred, against temptation, from teacher to subject. Nevertheless, the risk of transference of erotic interest, on behalf of the student as well as the teacher, represents more than just a slippage of the language of romantic courtship into the educational relation. Michele Le Doeuff writes of the unconscious incursion of the ‘erotico-theoretical transference’ into institutional contexts:

For example, one often sees the ‘masters’ (teaching either in a preparatory class or in a university) choosing ‘followers’—that is, transmitting a flattering image of themselves to some of their pupils. This attitude is part of an important process of overstimulations which organize the future succession and designate, often from the earliest stage, those who are going to feel ‘called’ (and in fact are) . . . The teachers’ sexist and sociocultural prejudices take on a considerable importance in this period of philosophical apprenticeship (1989, p. 120).

The risk of transference captures some of what Hogan seems to want to imply to be a more ‘common’ element of educational love. The risk is present in educational contexts whether or not we are prepared to accept that love is an appropriate relation between teacher and student. Transference constitutes part of the ‘dark’ of education’s love triangle, but does not exhaust the triangle’s potential for tragedy.

RIVALROUS TRIANGLES

In literary examples of wooing by proxy, the transference of affection, either intended or unintended, often leads to rivalry among two possible suitors of a beloved object. Rivalry amongst students as objects of the teacher’s love appears to be a concern of Hogan’s, such that he wants to define a

non-exclusive kind of educational love that would preclude this possibility. The rivalry I primarily want to consider is that between the two love objects of the teacher—student and subject. It is in the question of how teachers can legitimately accommodate the pushback or resistance of their students while also lovingly presenting their subject that the real possibilities for a rivalrous, or even a tragic, love come into play.

In his paper, 'The Primitive Artist and the Lover: Two Stories of the Origins of Teaching' (2003), Hunter McEwan offers two anthropologically inflected foundational 'myths of teaching' which he calls the 'standard' and 'relational' accounts. He summarises that 'Some teachers are driven by a passion for their subject and see their central task as communicating it in ways that are meaningful to students; others are devoted to their students and see their central task as one of nurturing or care. Both outlooks coexist in the present day as biases or preferences or, in extreme form, as commitments' (p. 436). However, he concludes that 'it is very difficult to reconcile them' as 'they are encompassing attempts to ground a particular view of teaching' and 'As such, they do not tolerate compromises or combinations'. Because these are myths, in Hunter's view, which offer 'divergent narratives of the origins of teaching', this incommensurability does not prevent the two accounts from jointly fostering 'a more varied and rich conception of teaching' (*ibid.*). However, if we interpret passion for subject and care for student not as narratives but (as Hogan does) as two loves which make legitimate claims on the teacher, McEwan's work suggests that what Hogan wants to present as a creative polyamory might at least in some cases manifest as a tragic tension.

Hogan devotes considerable space to a discussion of Nel Noddings, perhaps the best known and most thoroughgoing exponent in educational philosophy and theory of what McEwan calls the 'relational' account. Hogan's telling conclusion is that Noddings neglects to explore some essential factors, including 'the teacher's relationships to the subject(s) she teaches, and the question of how the quality of this influences the quality of relationships between teacher and students' (2010, p. 91). Noddings' emphasis on the centrality of care in the relationship between student and teacher leads her to propose a curriculum of care—'care for self, care for intimate others, care for strangers and distance others, care for nonhuman animals, care for plants and the living environment, care for objects and instruments, and care for ideas'—and to hope that eventually 'subject disciplines might give way entirely to a new basis for curricular organisation, based on care' (p. 92).

In another account of the educational relation offered by Iain Thomson (2015), an aporia opens which can only be resolved by restoring love for the subject to its place in the educational triangle. Thomson's Heideggerian understanding of education is concerned with the question, '*How do we become what we are?*' (2015, p. 180). Education is a poetic event in which teacher and student discern and creatively develop 'the possibilities that continually emerge at the dynamic intersection between self and world', enabling a 'transformative return to the self' (p. 181). At the heart of this *poiesis* is a teacher's learning to 'dwell' with his or her students, or coming to

realise that our ‘ways of understanding the being of entities *partly capture* but never *exhaust*’, and that students as entities are therefore ‘richer in meaning than we are capable of doing justice to conceptually’ (p. 184). This also means that students’ possibilities can exceed or frustrate our preconceptions of them.

Thomson asks how one responds to the resistances one encounters: ‘Does one seek to flatten out and overcome them or, instead, to cultivate that which resists one’s will and so help bring it to its own fruition?’ (p. 185). In teaching, students ‘push back against us’, and ‘we need to learn to respond creatively to these claims if we do not want to deny the source of genuine creative meaning in the world’ (p. 185). The ‘pedagogical truth event’ is thus, for Thomson, an ‘event of enowning’ (Ereignis) in which ‘we find ourselves coming into our own . . . precisely by creatively enabling other entities to come into their own’ (p. 186). Thomson illustrates this by drawing a parallel between Michelangelo, who comes into his own as a sculptor by ‘setting free’ his David from the marble after a period of careful study, and the teacher who ‘comes into his or her own as a teacher by learning to recognise and cultivate the particular talents and capacities of each individual student, thereby enabling these students to come into their own’ (p. 186). Significantly, Thomson exhorts that ‘Fidelity to such truth events requires us to persevere in this struggle to help unfold the ontological riches they can disclose over time’ (p. 186). It is perhaps somewhat surprising, then, that in two places in his argument Thomson draws our attention, without significant elaboration, to the woodworker who, in responding to the subtle weight, colour and grain of an individual piece of wood decides to ‘leave it be’.

The reference here is obviously to the discussion of the cabinetmaker in Heidegger’s ‘What is Called Thinking?’ where we learn that ‘what teaching calls for is this: to let learn’ (1976, p. 15). This resonates with Hogan’s contrast of education as a to and fro of tentative overture and response with an approach that presumes ‘some proprietorial claim on the hearts and minds of students’ (2010, p. 66). The point is well taken that courtship cannot proceed by one or other party’s explicitly laying claim to the other. A romance proceeds by each learning to let the other party be who they are, and accommodating the pushback from the other without compromising the self. The lesson of the great writers is that no suit was ever ultimately won by attempting to make one’s beloved into someone else, nor by either party presenting him or herself as other than he or she is. We know in such cases that there is always the possibility that honest courtship transforms into rivalry, or aggressive power play, or proceeds through deception or misrepresentation of the self. When these situations arise, we exhort those we care about to terminate the courtship and move on to new loves. Perhaps such a termination of courtship is intended in Thomson’s recognition that the teacher, like the woodworker, must at times leave the student be. But what remains here of the teacher’s calling to ‘persevere in this struggle’ if he or she has decided that a particular student is so dull and earthy, or so totally resistant, that nothing can be made of him or her?

It is important that Thomson makes specific reference here to the phenomenon of mentoring, 'namely, the teacher's helping the student to identify and develop his or her distinctive talents and capacities'. He continues that 'it is amazing how little it can take'—a few single words 'can have a profound impact' (p. 186). He also reminds us that this is not a wholly 'other-directed action', since it is through this guidance of a student towards a fulfilling life that teachers themselves come into their own (p. 187). Such a process 'is never exhausted by our poetic discernment and creative development of its possibilities' (*ibid.*). This being the case, there is no conceivable revelation on the student's side that would render possible the ceasing to strive or letting be whose possibility Thomson acknowledges—the demand on the loving teacher would surely be to continue to look more carefully and creatively for possibilities for the student's self-fulfillment; thus also would the teacher be fulfilled as a teacher. There is also no possibility that the teacher could encounter anything in the push back from the student such that the continuation of the courtship would compromise his or her identity as mentor. Although Thomson acknowledges the possibility of courtship's interruption, then, there is nothing in his one-sided presentation of the mentor/student relationship that could render it an intelligibly loving response.

Thomson concedes that the mentoring relationship is only an element—albeit a crucial one—of what he calls 'ontological education', but he does not explicitly state what has been left out. His emphasis on the mentoring relationship leads him to claim that that 'teachers are more important than topics', elaborating as follows:

Different teachers have different styles and interests, and different styles and interests disclose some students' distinctive skills and capacities better than others, so students should be encouraged to find the teachers whose teaching styles and interests speak to them, calling them to put their most into a class rather than just trying to get a good grade (p. 190).

In a late address, Heidegger makes explicit that his model for the educational encounter is Socrates (2002). With such a model in mind it is hardly surprising that both Heidegger and Thomson, following him, stress the mentoring relationship. Socrates' only responsibility in dialogue is to his interlocutor and to the truth that emerges in shared enquiry between them—in this he is the philosophical *amateur* par excellence. In the same address Heidegger decries the fragmentation of Higher Education into specialist professional areas that hinder the university's *universal* aim, and constitute an emphasis on head over hand (2002). In the state of professional education nowadays, no teacher is Socrates; teachers are no longer amateurs but are called to represent a discipline or subject—even to an extent, at any given moment, in the earliest years of primary education. The subjects therefore, in Paul Smeyers' words, 'exhaust the potential of the learner, exhaust her potential, compete with each other for the best place' (2002, p. 97). The teacher of classroom subjects, no less than the teacher in higher education,

cannot simply follow the student's becoming wherever it leads. It is the situation of educational fragmentation and specialisation that leads to this divided heart of teaching and the possibility that love for the subject matter or discipline can interrupt the teacher's otherwise inexhaustible loving response to the student.

CEASING TO STRIVE

'Enough. Enough, now.'

Mark, *Love Actually*

'Cease to strive'.

Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1992[1922], p. 280)

Ceasing to strive does not constitute, in educational terms, a downing of tools. It is an ontological orientation or mood rather than an explicit pedagogical occurrence, as the business of teaching all students, for the professional teacher, must go on. There is always, furthermore, the possibility that a student might surprise a tenacious teacher with a new interest, a sudden yielding or cessation of resistance. However, ceasing to strive has a pedagogical application in the sense that it recognises limits on the nature of the strategies that might be employed by particular teachers with particular students. Recognising education's love triangle means acknowledging the possibility of a teacher's needing to choose between pushing back too hard against a student's resistance to his or her advance, or compromising an aspect of his or her fulfilment as a teacher rather than simply a mentor, that is, the obligation to another love (the subject). Some understandings that might be reached between teacher and student might too far compromise the educational gift (the subject) that is being bestowed, so that with some students a teacher can only do enough, and enough is enough; to attempt more than enough on behalf of the subject would constitute the sort of tactless or impudent striving too hard, or dishonest seduction, that leads to harm of the beloved or rejection of the suitor. Ceasing to strive with a particular student *at a particular time* might constitute a gracious recognition that this student's courtship of the truth must continue elsewhere, under the guidance of another. Alternatively it might mean recognising and checking the urge to invoke institutional power to manipulate an unyielding heart ('you might not be interested, but you must listen anyway, because you will be sitting an exam . . .'); it would manifest itself in patient waiting, attentive listening, and slow progress.

Returning, as promised, to Alston and Elliott, we note that in focusing on love between teacher and student and love for subject respectively, each points toward an eventual sublimation of their chosen educational love into a further loving relation to truth. Alston argues that the beloved becomes 'no longer an object of a love that is held entirely by the lover' but 'becomes a participant in this relation to truth' and that eros 'moves both the lover and the beloved in the direction of truth' (1991, p. 390), so that Alston's 'eternal triangle', with truth at its apex and lover

and beloved at its base, stands in a transcendent relation to the horizontal love triangle so far discussed—forming, as it were, a pyramid. Elliott urges that love of discipline ultimately manifests itself in a love for truth, requiring the lover of a subject to strive toward generous openness to exponents of other ways of thinking. Ceasing to strive, then, might also be interpreted as that ‘letting be’ or ‘releasement’ (Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit*, see Thomson, 2002) by which not only teacher and student, but also being itself, are disclosed and brought to fulfilment. Healing education’s divided heart would require resisting those forces of enframing that have divided the endeavour of thought into scattered and alienated technical projects.

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