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On the Nature of Ethics for Teachers

Abstract Teaching is argued to be a moral enterprise; thus, educators must actively and critically engage in what they must do to be called 'good' for the goal of education, according to Plato, is to gain an understanding of and acquire virtues. Teachers are to live the 'good' life so that they may produce good, virtuous men. This paper questions if teachers are morally bound to live a particular life; if their duty is not limited to being an agent of knowledge but, above all else, an agent of morals; and if so, are they ever free? It primarily aims to examine the set of moral principles that guide those in the academe. Drawing on a wide array of literature, the paper introduces three arguments and counter arguments for upholding a universal code of ethics. In the end, the paper takes the stand of the middle ground, recognizing the need of placing limits to what an educator can do as a safeguard to the educative process while maintaining the belief that teachers are also individuals whose right of choice must still be upheld.

Keywords philosophy of education, ethics, moral teacher, middle ground, 'good,' good teacher

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Introduction

A teacher shall maintain at all times a dignified personality which could serve as a model worthy of emulation by learners, peers and all others.

Article XI, Section 3
Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers in the Philippines

It is not an uncommon experience meeting medical doctors who themselves are obese, unhealthy, and sometimes, even replete with their own share of diseases in the world. Lawyers, who supposedly strive for justice, also succumb to lures of injustice in the name of fighting for what they presume is "*just*" for their clients. Priests themselves would agree that temptation never stops from trying to lead them to its side.

This study focuses on a similar case – teachers who do not epitomize the virtues that they are '*supposed'* to teach. Time and time again, people utter derogatory remarks, such as, *"Teacher pa man din pero tingnan mo ang pinaggagawa*" (He is a teacher but look at what he is doing), in reference to teachers who may have "unacceptable" conduct inside and outside the school. Conduct of this sort may range from foul-mouthing one's domestic partner, displaying one's gender preference in public (usually different from one's biological sex), to not paying credit due a loan shark

on time. The news occasionally reports incidents of such actions. For instance, a professor in Pasay City was caught in a video, making verbal and physical attacks against one of his students (Elona, 2013). A high school teacher in Marikina City was arrested for beating up a teenager (Granali, 2012). A public teacher in Cebu was suspended for living with another woman (Mayol, 2012). In some cases abroad, particularly in the United States, school administrators dismissed teachers from service on "moral" grounds – for not typifying virtues they are expected to exemplify.

For these reasons, it is important to examine the set of moral principles that guide those in the academe, specifically the teachers. Are teachers ever morally bound to live a particular life? Is their duty not limited to being an agent of knowledge but, above all else, also as agent of morals? If this is so, are teachers ever free or are they bound by the chains of societal prescription of how they should live? Does the state (in the case of public schools) or a private institution have any right to impinge upon the freedom of a teacher to choose the kind of life he deems 'good'? What is 'good' to the individual may not fit well into what the state or an institution thinks is 'good' for the teacher on the one hand, and the students who are assumed to imbibe passively their teachers' behavior on the other hand.

Teaching as a Moral Enterprise

It is written in almost all code of ethics for teachers that teaching is a noble profession, but most people overlook the growing belief that teaching is "one of the most complex and all-encompassing operations in the society, for the teacher is responsible to self, the student, the larger social order, and the teaching profession… [extending to] her personal life, the classroom, and her public life" (Bowyer, 1970, p. 374). People misuse the adjective "selfless" and "noble" in regard educators and their responsibilities based on this assumption. Truly, Bowyer (1970) makes a valid

observation when he states that in teaching, "more than in any other occupation, the "whole person" is involved" (p. 374). In this case, one may agree that it is a magnanimous profession. However, the word "noble" takes on a more specific context in philosophy – one that is related to ethics.

Fenstermacher argues that teaching is fundamentally a moral enterprise (Fenstermacher, 1990, p.132). Similar to other professions, ideals it *ought* to uphold teaching guide the teaching profession, a good its thrusts are founded upon. Just as medicine strives for the well-being of humanity, relief from suffering, and preservation of life, education too has to have its own goal, its end and its intended view of its product. In *Everyday Morality*, Martin (2007) provides a rather circular, as he admits, but nonetheless useful and adequate definition of morality that suits the purposes of this paper. For Martin, "Morality concerns what we ought to become, how we ought to relate to others, and how we ought to act" (p. 3). According to Phenix (1958), its characteristics are that of decision and values. Moreover, he defines education as "the process of deliberately guiding the development of persons" (p. 280). Moral education then aims towards the development of freedom because, according to Broudy (1964), "without freedom of choice no act is moral in quality" (p. 243).

The relationship between morality and education is in the assumption that "educative activity is based on moral considerations." Furthermore, "It is in every area of education where decisions must be made—about what shall be taught, how and when it shall be taught, who is to teach it, and who is to learn it" (Phenix, 1958, p. 280). In this sense, teaching indubitably becomes a moral enterprise. It is moral in the sense that it is concerned with producing beings into what they ought to become and how they ought to act. As such, Fenstermacher (1990) explains, "Without the specification of the moral principles and

purposes of teaching, the concept amounts to little more than a technical performance to no particular point. Just as a physician who has no idea of why or to what end he or she practices medicine or a lawyer who lacks any sense of the rule of law in the just society, a teacher without a moral purpose is aimless, as open to incivility and harm as to good" (pp. 132-133).

But even if this is cleared, the next logical question that one may ask is this: So what is this thing that humans ought to become after having been taught in schools? What is this moral purpose that teachers are duty-bound to accept?

Bowyer (1970) tries to provide an answer, saying, "[T]eaching… should be geared not simply to the transfer of information nor even to the development of insight, but to the inculcation of principled judgment and conduct, the building of autonomous and rational character which underlies the enterprises of science, morality, and culture" (p. 386). There is more to learning than just lessons on mathematics or science, and a teacher is not only tasked to educate students to improve their intelligence quotients but also to improve their characters as a whole. In his article, *Ethics and the Aims of Education*, in the book *Education and Ethics,* Adams believes that education must be "guided by *an image of an educated man* [emphasis added] that is independent of particular vocations and professions, indeed independent of even the common requirements for the various vocations and professions" (Adams, 1969, p. 35). Education must be holistic. The impression that this gives is that the product of education and of the teaching process is a kind of prototype of what a *good* man is, regardless of what role this man will take in society. In effect, there is a need to look for what will man need, such as his role, job, stature, in order for him to be called 'good.'

It seems that what is being required here is *virtue* – doing what is considered good. What may make a man 'good' regardless of his occupation? Is it his skill? It does not seem to be so since

different jobs and roles demand corresponding skills. Is it the intelligence quotient? In real life, lack of intelligence does necessarily make an individual good. The question of whether a man is skilled or intelligent may sometimes disappear from the picture as well. Sometimes, all it takes is honesty. Does he perform his duties religiously or not? It seems that one may be called good if he is virtuous.

In the history of philosophy, the first European university and the first formal educational institution recorded was the Academy founded by Plato (Copleston, 1962). The Academy, unlike other 'schools', was the first to offer subjects from different spheres of thought: from the sciences to mathematics, from logic to astronomy. This culminates in the mastery of philosophy in the hopes that subjection of interested parties in such rigorous training will produce the ideal "statesmen and not demagogues" (p. 154) that society needs.

In *The Republic*, Plato (1945) talks about the ideal kind of education, going all the way down to specifying the subjects pupils, as potential philosopher-kings, should take in order for them to realize their potentials. He narrows down these subjects into two: music and gymnastics. He equates music with literary education and cultural activity, which directly affects the soul through harmony and rhythm. In contrast, he equates gymnastics with physical training and the general care for one's body. Training in these two subjects must begin in childhood, and must be exercised in moderation. Of the two, music is slightly more important because Plato believes that the good soul improves the body. The end of education is to "help to strengthen the character of those who are capable [of philosophizing]" (Dillon, 2004). In Plato's mind, the zenith of education is to understand completely philosophizing and to apprehend the Forms of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. This leads one to gain an understanding of and acquire virtues, particularly wisdom,

courage, temperance, and justice. To gain these virtues is the *telos* or end goal of all education.

Seeing things in this light provides a basis in believing that the aim of education, as moral enterprise, from ancient times to the present is to produce good, virtuous men. At this point, this presupposition is necessary to establish the more important question, which this paper is concerned about – teachers' ethics. Given that the aim of education is to produce good men, what should teachers be?

From Plato's cave analogy, the educator is depicted as the torchbearer who guides the man lying in the dark cave into the brightness of the outside world. Plato argues that good guardians must not remain prisoners of the cave nor be selfish philosophers. Instead, they should come out from the cave, learn 'good' through philosophy, and go back to the cave to enlighten others. In Plato's education plan, a teacher is supposed to be deeply committed to what he does, have a sense of responsibility and be a true role model. Teachers are expected to practice what they preach.

The Teacher as a Role Model

Inferably, teachers are to take on the duty of making virtuous men in society. Fenstermacher (1990) mentions three different ways on how teachers may do this. First, they can be directive, teaching morality outright. Second, they may also teach *about* morality. Third, they may choose to act morally, holding up oneself as a possible model. Of the three ways however, the third seems to be the most potent mode in undertaking the role of moral agent. As Fenstermacher (1990) concurs, the first may seem indoctrinating. Students, especially children, learn more easily from reflective teachers rather than from teachers who put ideas into their heads (Uusiautti and Määttä, 2012). Merely exposing students to ethical frameworks, which the second method entails, does not convert rude students into polite ones. Moral education involves 'learning

by observation' and 'repetition and affirmation' in contrast to 'learning from books, words, and papers.' This preference gives "greater emphasis on the 'conscious' execution of the exemplary function" on learning by model (Klaaseen, 2012, p. 27).

It seems psychology makes a point in its general claim that role modeling is effective in the learning process. As demonstrated by a child who learns how to use '*po'* and '*opo'* by hearing them from his family, learning through role modeling may really be effective. "People can learn by observing the behaviors of others, as well as observing the outcomes of those behaviors" (Ormrod, 2008, p. 119). Fenstermacher (1990) adds, "The teacher is a model for the students, such that the particular concrete meaning of such traits such as honesty, fair play, consideration of others, tolerance, and sharing are "picked up," as it were, by observing, imitating, and discussing what teachers do in classrooms" (p. 133). A classic example of this would be the teacher's practice of greeting his students "good morning" or "good afternoon" to show the importance of greeting to them.

Then again, role modeling may be of two varieties. One of which is role modeling within the four corners of the classroom. In this case, the teacher is king, queen, or demigod. He is the center and apex of power such that his command has the effect of law. His voice is like God's, and his actions are the standards of what ought to be. Although the authority given him is of relatively enormous force, the teacher is also held responsible for his acts in the classroom.

According to Ormrod (2008), "Children appear to acquire moral behaviors partly through observation and modelling" (p. 131). The way a teacher manifests his respect for his students, regardless of power relations inside the room, bespeaks of what respect means, which students may take as the correct way of dealing with others. The way he corrects the mistakes of his

students would foretell whether his students would grow up admonishing others with downright sarcasm or with genuine concern or not. Ormrod (2008), quoting studies, adds that, "For instance, research has demonstrated the importance of modeling for generosity and other forms of altruism" (p. 131). Teachers have to exemplify virtues inside the classroom if the goal is to form virtuous individuals. There may be some related questions to this, especially when dealing with higher levels of education, when students already have a sense of moral consciousness. This means that they already have acquired their fundamental notions of right and wrong, good and bad, in the world.

Perhaps the more problematic and that which elicits a lot of question and dispute would be the second means of role-modeling – role-modeling outside the school. The attitudes and examples of teachers outside the classroom serve as indirect moral education to students (May, 1971). How the teacher acts and the kind of person he is has the more moral influence on pupils than anything else does. A study by Willemse, Lunenberg, and Korthagen (2008) on actual moral education practices of teachers supports this. Educators were asked about how they practice values, surprisingly, almost half of their answers were not related to teaching and learning methods (Sanderse, 2014). They believed that they express values through their own attitudes, and their moral attitudes affect the moral education of their pupils. Role modeling, in this sense, goes beyond the four walls of the classroom.

Citing Bryan (1975), Ormrod (2004) says, "A review of research by Bryan leads to a clear conclusion: When children hear a model say one thing and do something else, they are more likely to imitate what the model does than what the model says. In other words, to be effective, models must practice what they preach" (p. 132). If teachers provide the basis for being 'good' inside the

classroom, does it follow that to make the instruction operative, the teacher should refrain from doing anything contrary to what he teaches even outside the institution? Is a teacher ever liable for enjoying with his friends and taking some break in a nearby pub when it is in the viewing vicinity of his students? Can a teacher be given the liberty to smoke if it makes him feel better simply because he teaches Health Education to Grade VI pupils?

In the language of Fenstermacher (1990), "the teacher as moral educator is conscious of his or her manner, expanding and acting critically on it, striving whenever and wherever possible to be a more moral person and a better moral educator" (p. 135). Is a decision to teach tantamount to a decision to allow one to lose his freedom and allow for subduing his view of the good in favor of becoming a "moral person and educator?" Is a teacher's life accompanied by restrictions and bereft of personal choices? Does teaching impede an inalienable teacher's rights to pursue his own happiness?

Teachers as Moral Agents

Education and morality are connected through the moral considerations of educative activity, and that teachers' role in moral education is to produce good men. In order to do so, teachers invariably take on role modeling whether consciously or subconsciously and whether inside or outside the classroom. It is through role modeling that teachers become moral agents. In effect, proponents of a code of ethics for teachers hold fast to the view that teachers are exemplars of morality. Three arguments may be offered why this is so.

First, according to the *Code of Professional Ethics for Philippine Public School Teachers and Officials* (cited in, Malolos, 1956),

> [I]t is the teacher, as a person, who energizes the school environment and stimulates the physical, mental, emotional, and social responses of the

pupils. He should possess social and philosophical attitudes, appreciations, ideals and principles, with which it is considered desirable to have the youth of the land instilled (p. 9).

Teachers are in a great position to influence the life of his students. A student, especially a young one, views the world through the spectacles provided by teachers. He acquaints himself with the environment formally through instruction in science. He makes sense of time through clock-reading. He distinguishes the difference between a plant and animal after his lessons on living things in the planet. It is irrefutable that in school settings, the teacher is the "most powerful determinant" (Kay, 1975, p. 298). A teacher cannot avert how his behavior can affect the conduct of his pupils.

Indeed, the teacher introduces students to the world. Further, one of the arguments of those who adhere to the strict ethical requirement for teachers revolves around this. Since they are the gatekeepers of the world to the students, it is best that they orient well the students to what sort of behavior is expected of them inside the world. Just as a tour guide of a museum familiarizes the visitors with the rules, regulations, and ethics inside the museum or park, the teacher is also called to perform this duty to the students. They are to offer, if not directly order, helpful suggestions as to how students are to behave in the world, how to relate with others, and how to conduct themselves.

Greetings are one of the fundamental lessons taught in school. One of the first lessons taught in any regular kindergarten class in the Philippines is for the pupils to stand up and greet the teacher, "Good morning, Sir/Ma'am!", before the class starts. Teachers usually explain that this is to show courtesy and respect and that, essentially, one should also greet any other elder when he encounters them inside the campus. Aside from the '*pagmamano*' (kissing the elder's hand), which for most people is learned inside

the house, a pupil in kindergarten greeting the elderly means courtesy. That is what is meant by this first argument –teachers are the first to provide a view of reality. Indeed, if this is the case, what the teacher does and shows may be taken by students as the rightful ways in life. Again, producing good students involves having 'good' teachers too.

Second, living an ethical and morally principled existence comes with the decision to teach. It is some form of a "special duty that teachers accept as a professional" (Kierstead and Wagner, 1993, p.155). Moreover, developing a code of ethics for the teaching profession "should grow out of the sincere desire of every member to follow a norm of conduct which would elevate instead of degrade the profession" (Fresnoza and Casim, 1964, p. 363). In other words, living a morally conscientious life goes with the job of teaching, just as opting to work as a call center agent presupposes agreeing to a nocturnal lifestyle. Living a moral life comes with the contract of teaching as if it is a given. It is understood that the said argument has many presumptions, foremost of which is the assumption that teachers are supposed to teach morals and role modeling is the most effective way to do this.

Third, to make sure that teachers are ethical, "there is a sufficient measure of agreement on values to permit a statement of broad principles regarding professional conduct (Preamble of the *Code of Ethics of the Australian College of Education*, cited in, Haynes, 1998)." Likewise, in order to attain the endeavors of the Philippine educational system to be of the "highest type" (Preamble of the *Code of Ethics for Philippine Public School Officials and Teachers*, cited in, Fresnoza and Casim, 1964), it is plausible to come up with qualifications for what it means to be an ethical and moral educator. Members of the academe may not necessarily agree in particulars when it comes to, say, a code of ethics for teachers. However, there is a possibility of trying to purge these

particulars and produce a list of possible expansive guidelines on what kind of values teachers are expected to uphold. For instance, teachers are never to take advantage of their position to court their students (Article IV Section 5*, Code of Ethics for Philippine Public School Officials and Teachers*, cited in, Fresnoza and Casim, 1964). Moreover, they are never to engage in abusive behavior, which maybe sexual in nature. This may be broad and may not specifically put into detail what abusive behavior and sexual activities are, but this may be roughly taken as a guide to future behavior of teachers.

Kierstead and Wagner (1993) provided a list of possible representative "Goods" required of teaching. The list includes (a) learning, (b) respect of personhood, and (c) appreciation for a transcultural community and sensitivity. These examples apparently contain concepts, which may be considered vague and too open for probing such as "personhood" and "transcultural community" (p. 155). Nonetheless, the supporters of this position believe that such a situation is not problematic since a particular community can agree on what they mean by these terms, that the people may specify the bounds and parameters of their use of the terms, and that concurrence on such matters is not farfetched. To a certain degree, this is something that this paper agrees with. Coming up with an intersubjective consensus as to what behavior is not allowable is a possibility, but this can be problematic as will be shown later. This will be a considerable cause for hostility between opposing sides.

The Difficulty of the Noble

Teachers are argued to be moral agents because they have the duty to introduce students to the world at large and to be accountable for their responsibilities and obligations as educators. While it is ideal to have teachers who are moral and ethical (just as it is always ecstatic to hear of politicians who promise to be

honest), the ideal may only be as good as it is ideal. Those who believe that teachers cannot be forced to subscribe to a particular moral stance and a way of life have reasons to support their position.

Despite the fact that a community may agree on a possible all-encompassing set of rules, the "may" is only as good as a *may* and not a *will*. The difficulty of designing a universal code of ethics that is acceptable to all will remain elusive to those who will attempt. Why extend a code of ethics to a universal level when it can only be among community members? For one, schooling and ethics of teaching are not limited to a particular community. Students are free to study in a school of their own community or of another community. In fact, in tertiary education, students from different cultural backgrounds and belief systems may attend a particular university. If there is an agreement that designing a particular code of ethics should be localized, then problems of this sort may ensue, considering that such a limitedly agreed upon code of ethics will only be applicable if schools only accept students of the same community. Since it has been shown that this is not the case, the need for a universal code of ethics is in order. The problem, however, as those in this side of the debate would always point out, is that such a venture is nearly impossible because of individual convictions and subjectivity.

Granting that an agreement on a collective code of ethics for teachers can be reached, "we (still) need to be careful… not to think that ethical teaching can be reduced to a list of virtues or principles…. Even good people make mistakes" (Hostetler, 1997, p. 204). Conceding that specifying a particular list of conduct expected of teachers can be done, can it be said that the list exhausts what can be expected of a good teacher? Hostetler (1997) puts it best when he gives the following example:

> Honesty is important in teaching. But does that mean a person who cheated once on a test in college cannot be a good teacher? What about

someone who once tried to buy alcohol with a fake ID? While we need not ignore such things, neither do we want to be moralistic. Even good people make mistakes (p. 204).

If defining what constitutes a moral person and moral educator means identifying what sort of virtues are teachers compelled to exemplify or what kind of life is detestable for them, then we might find ourselves not having teachers at all. This dilemma is echoed in Perkinson (1971) when he asks, "[I]f [teachers] admit to moral fallibility, then what warrant have they to teach at all?" (p. 48). The impression that those who call for ethical teachers give those who are not for it, is that of teachers who are perfectly and morally outstanding. To expect this of human beings would be impractical if not very absurd. However, the implication is that this is not precisely what those for teacher ethics are putting forward.

Practically speaking, there is probably no expectation for teachers to be perfect. Perkinson (1971) believes that the "admission of fallibility (Socrates' awareness of this own ignorance)… is a teacher's warrant to teach" (p. 48). A morally perfect teacher is capable of imposing beliefs on his students, while the morally fallible has room for examination, analysis, and criticism. It is through his imperfections that the possibility of growth can be imparted to his students.

The third and probably most cogent argument against a strict teacher ethics program would be the fact that "in a pluralistic society, we are committed to respecting lives and civil liberties of our teachers" (Goodlad, et al., 1990, p. 188). Individuality and differences are focused as universalization recedes into the background. For example, can people ever encroach into a teacher's decision of sexual preference simply because they think that such a "role model" is not morally acceptable? Should they, therefore, force a teacher to hide his feelings, suppress his emotions in the name of education? Is this too much a price a

teacher has to pay for his desire to educate and at the same time living a life that he prefers? Should he not do something that others find distasteful? Can people ever impose their ethical views on others? The answer should be no.

One problem posed by the third argument is efficiency versus moral socialization. There are teachers who excel in their profession but do not live virtuously. One specific case in the Philippines is that of a teacher molesting one of his students. In a news article from *The Freeman* (Manto, 2013), a college student pressed charges against his instructor for sexual harassment. The complainant described his professor as someone close to his students. He did not realize what it meant until he was invited to a personal excursion outside the school and was subjected to sexual harassment. Another case would be professors who use sex in exchange for good grades. Regardless of what kind of teacher he may be, doing injurious acts are not only wrong but are also subject to judicial jurisdiction. This is where the legal aspect enters into the debate.

Legal Realm as Referee

There seemingly is a difficulty in drawing out the exact line where teachers should be allowed to express what they want and how they wish to act. The point of contest is basically between those who think that teachers should be made to move, act, and behave in a particular way – the ethical way – in relation to his responsibility in society to produce 'good' men, and those who think that teachers have the right to decide on what is 'good' to them. Because the debate appears endless, it might be good to look at the realm of law and see how it supposedly solves cases on this.

According to Strike (Goodlad, et al., 1990), the difficulty lies in trying to reconcile the constitutional rights of the teachers and the school. Although the courts recognize the freedom of the

teacher, it also takes note of the fact that a teacher has an obligation to fulfill in the school where he works. But what is really the responsibility of the teacher to the school and his students? If one goes back to the suppositions established in the beginning of this article, the aim of teaching is to make 'good' men. Now, if a particular teacher's actions do not necessarily affect this aim of education, then evidently there is no problem. The predicament arises when the action of the teacher affects the teaching process. Thus,

> Courts will consider the effects of the teacher's actions. Unless an adverse effect on the school program can be demonstrated, no action against the teacher is warranted. In short, courts will balance the rights of the teacher against the requirement of the efficient management of the school (Goodlad et al., 1990, p. 191).

To sum up what courts usually do in such cases, according to Strike, three points may be raised. First of which is whether the behavior or manner of the teacher affects the teaching. In the example given above, is the openly gay teacher able to deliver his lessons? Can he actually be respectable even with his gay manners and gestures? Are his students' disturbed by his acts such that they cannot concentrate on what they study? Do his actions bespeak of indecency in the society? The second related point is whether the teacher's acts have an effect on the job or the public. Article VIII Section 3 of the *Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers* (n.d.) states that, "under no circumstance shall a teacher be prejudiced or discriminate against a learner." Does it not follow that such a rule goes both ways? Education is a two-way commitment; both teacher and student are engaged in the learning process. It is right to assume that their rights and responsibilities go both ways.

If a particular teacher sells *longganisa* (sausage) and *tocino* (sweet cured pork) to the parents of her wards after class, does this affect how the parents see the teachers in general? Does this particular preoccupation of the teacher disturb the general

perception of teachers in their school? Does it disrupt class time such that less amount of time is allotted to the lessons? Technically, the law allows such. Article X Section 1 in the *Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers* (n.d.) states that, "a teacher has the right to engage, directly or indirectly, in legitimate income generation; provided that it does not relate to or adversely affect his work as a teacher." Again, it goes back to whether such act affects the educative process.

The third and last point, the demonstration of actual diverse effects are not needed in order to infer the rightness of the action. The only thing required is a reasonable argument that adverse effects are probable. A teacher who is seen by his students necking and petting with her boyfriend inside the school grounds is committing an act unbecoming of a teacher. It does not have to be proven and seen in actuality that students imitate their teacher. The fact that it gives a wrong impression of what teachers can be is enough basis for the teacher to be reprimanded, if not dismissed.

A news article from the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Mayol, 2012) reported that Rogelio Tines, a public school teacher, was sanctioned for living with another woman. The case was filed by his wife, who claimed that they were married on Nov. 17, 1992. According to the anti-graft investigator, "His actuations are contrary to prevailing community standards of conduct and this violated the trust reposed in his office". Thus, the Ombudsman-Visayas found Tines guilty of "disgraceful and immoral conduct." The teacher was meted with an eight-month suspension.

Another case is the cheating conspiracy in Atlanta concerning at least 44 schools, 178 teachers and principals during the state-mandated 2009 Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Teachers and principals allegedly altered the test results to make their district look good. In the recent news article of the *New York Times* (Severson and Blinder, 2014), it has been reported that none of the teachers has received jail time. Instead, they will perform

community service and in some cases, pay back the bonuses that were given due to the high test results. Some of them will also testify against the former superintendent of the district, Beverly Hall, who is the alleged mastermind of the conspiracy.

Conclusion

This paper's take on this debate embodies the Aristotelian mean. The middle ground admits to placing limits to what a teacher can do as a necessary safeguard to the educative role of teachers. At the same time, it maintains that teachers are also individuals with inalienable rights to their choices in life. While this seems impossible, this paper offers three points towards a way out of the impasse.

First, respect for intellectual liberty presupposes and requires that the government (for public schools) and the private sector (for private schools) be denied the entitlement to determine a particular view about what is good for its people. This would mean that schools cannot stipulate what kind of 'good' students they should produce and the kind of teachers that would particularly fit in the kind of role necessitated to mold a kind of students. Likewise, this means that teachers cannot be regarded as unethical or immoral by the school based on its own standards of ethics since according to the premise above, they are not entitled to a monopoly of ethics and morality.

A problem, however, arises from this assumption: schools have particular thrusts upon their creation. Normally, and ideally, a school operates with a view – a mission-vision. For example, a science school endeavors to train future scientists of the country, while a Christian school aims to make its students good Christians. If this logic will be followed, which this paper thinks, teachers should propagate, promote, and abide by the school's thrusts and aims. Freedom is not absolute; it ends where responsibility starts. In the first place, the decision to teach in a particular school is

free. Teaching in a Christian school, for example, assumes that the individual is willing to abide by the interests of the school. Otherwise, the teacher may opt to teach somewhere else. The liberty of the teacher must be respected, but it has its own limits. This liberty is practiced in the choice of (1) job (to teach), (2) what to teach (Values Education), (3) and where to teach (Catholic school). In effect, the moment a teacher decides on these matters, it is now his duty to abide by the consequences of his decision – to uphold his job, the ideals of the subject he teaches, and the school he opted to teach. In short, as Broudy (1964) says, "It is the freedom that carries the price of responsibility" (p. 244).

The second point revolves around the idea of 'harm'. An act is normally found and deemed foul when it involves harm. When a person purposely does an act to hurt someone, then that is abominable. When a mother spanks her son for no reason at all, then her act is vile rather than disciplinary. When a teacher's action result to harm, then that is the time it should be regulated. But in this case, what constitutes harm? In the educative process, harm is committed when the teacher impairs the educative process. Again, this educative process is anchored on a certain end, which at the same time, is dependent on institutional goals.

If a particular school, for example, pushes for teaching English to make its students globally competitive, then harm is committed when a certain teacher derails the learning of English by incorporating his own lingua franca in his English classes. Or if a teacher attempts to molest a student in his class, then a possible psychological effect may be seen in the student, such as incapacity to concentrate and listen to lectures because of the constant fear of the molesting teacher. If an act of a teacher disrupts the learning process, thus "harming" it, then the supposition is that the act is unethical.

Finally, on role modeling, this paper adopts Plato's suppositions as a guide. In Book III of *The Republic*, Plato (1945) was very specific when it comes to censorship of the literature that the young in the Republic are exposed to. The youth should not get hold of base literary pieces: those representing the Greek gods in a bad light, showing their vicious and loathsome acts. Censorship, according to Plato, is necessary to shield young minds from any exposure to acts that they are not supposed to learn. Just looking around and seeing how horrendous it sounds for a three-year-old child to use expletives makes Plato still relevant today. Where else does a child of such an age acquire the word if not from an irresponsible, despicable parent whose vocabulary is limited to the words of the streets? Students should also be respected. As rational individuals, they should be given the privilege to determine for themselves their own goods, to deliberate on what they deem good or bad. This is no problem here, if the students we are talking about are already capable of such deliberation. However, as developmental psychology would recognize, students of a very young age (usually, of elementary grades) are not yet mature, and thus very impressionable. They tend to learn what they are exposed to. At this age, caution is in order and definitely, the argument of "freedom-to-deliberate-what-is-good" does not hold.

The need to also regulate teachers' acts inside and outside the classroom is strongly held. The outside-the-classroom problems may seem more problematic as this realm may be considered the private realm of the teacher. Does the teacher's act counter the ideals to which he chose to abide by (The vision of the school he serves and ultimately, he represents whether within or outside its portals)? Does he 'harm' the educative process by doing acts contrary to the ends of his school and the subject that he teaches? Balancing the arguments from the two sides of the debate, one goes back to the aim of education. At the

end of the day, one should ask: what kind of students is desirable to produce? If one were to wish that students become good, then the first step is to ensure that they are to be educated by teachers who are good.

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