

# OPINION & EDITORIAL

## Do teachers really care about Children?

It is the prevailing opinion that a fundamental and essential teaching characteristic is a concern and fondness for children and the generations to come. At the very least, some form of desire for their well being. At every step of the way, however, the vast majority of present and future teachers support malicious living conditions and horrendous work/pay standards for millions of families and children around the world. This 'support' is monetary in value and originates in our profound indifference regarding the origins and means by which we acquire our goods. In short, we can not be bothered to do background checks on organisations we support to be sure they are not exploiting people for their own pocket book and our convenience. The result: the continuation, even encouragement, of terribly immoral working conditions and vast poverty leading to disease, famine and an enormous body of inhuman and preventable conditions. It is amazing that practices such as child labour have arisen in the first place, let alone the fact that the market is now so swamped with immoral organisations that it would be nearly impossible to find a high quality pair of sneakers made in conditions consistent with our 'everyday morality'. By 'everyday morality', I am referring to the alternate set of rules we use to evaluate the living conditions of our neighbours, fellow citizens and ourselves. Things that make us feel guilty because we 'see' them. If we extended this local morality to a consistent global standpoint, we must admit that our actions as educators concerning global poverty are much to

Paideia: Analysing The Inconsistencies Between The Theory & Practice Of Education  
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be desired. But, do we truly have a moral obligation or duty to these slave labourers that exist in some far off world, totally estranged from our own?

In my first year at UNB, I received an introductory philosophy lecture on a topic similar to this in which the professor asked the following question: "would it be an immoral action to find a starving child on your front step and leave them to die?". The entire class shook their heads 'yes!'. A few adding the words horrendous and sinful. The proof then asked us to explain the difference between the fictitious child and those of real life, living in poverty stricken and/or war torn countries across the globe. He made it perfectly clear that, unless we could identify the variable(s) by which the cases were rendered different, we would be horrible people by our own standards.

Personally, I think that I know what this variable is, although it does not justify our indifference. The variable in question is our putrid addition to modern day consumer goods. We refuse to buy clothing that is made under proper conditions because we're either too lazy to identify its origins, the alternative is not cool enough, or its too expensive. All of which boil down to the fact that our petty, insignificant wants and desires are more important to us than the lives and basic living conditions of families and their children. Why is it that we would not give up our precious computers (which I'm using right now) or stereos all together,

for example, until a worker-friendly company came along to make them (of course at twice the price)? If children from your own classes were worked to exhaustion for your sneakers, coffee, or bananas would you still buy them? Would that be a fair and moral exchange? The majority of teachers would go to incredible lengths to prevent these conditions for 'local children'. We would walk in bare foot, caffeine starved protest if these products caused the same ills to the future of 'our' country. Do we not, then, reveal a great deal about our real motives in light of this information? Do we really care about 'children' unconditionally?

This is not to say that teachers are the only ones who take part in these activities by any means. However, the fundamental nature of our profession must cause, at the very least, some form of 'moral disequilibrium' when we are confronted with these facts. This is because, as educators, we are and should be held to a higher moral and critical standard. We must be able to interpret data and the consequences of our actions in a manner that is as objective as possible, and then modify our behaviour to fit our ideals - not the other way around. Why? Not because this is some pre-given teaching criteria, but because every time we walk into the classroom we have thirty plus children who receive a vast quantity of their developmental experiences in schools. Further, the bulk of these experiences are not rooted in the literal meaning of our words, but in our subtle nuances, our immediate reactions to various questions or situations (tone of voice, demeanour, facial expressions) and our everyday choices. Even more important, however, is that which we do not bring to class, such as: a genuine love and enthusiasm for knowledge and critical assessment, a desire to be morally consistent and, most importantly, the conviction to carry through in action. Students observe our actions and are developed greatly by the experiences we chose to put them into, whether they or we wish to acknowledge it. Therefore, to teach ethics and live outside of them is not only inconsistent but inadequate for attaining our educational goals. For those of us, therefore, who do not have a genuine passion for these things, teaching may not be the proper niche. If these qualities do exist passionately in you, congratulations is in order. We are studying to become members of the single most important cultural profession, to take it seriously is to generate extreme moral, cultural and personal satisfaction.

## Putting sex in the context of religion

Sex and religion — the two have never been the best of friends. At most, they tolerate each other, like two territorial jungle cats eyeing each other as they circle around, debating whether to fight or just walk away.

Religion likes everything in its place — orderly, controlled, "nice." Sex is the impulse that religion can't control — when it comes to the bedroom, we all get primitive.

And so life gets problematic, and it becomes even more so for homosexuals who want religion to be as much a part of their life as their sexuality.

Orthodox Judaism, for example, literally interprets the Torah, so it doesn't consider the gay lifestyle appropriate, according to Sivan Kaminsky, the director at Hillel for the past four years.

But some liberal movements within Judaism have given rabbis permission to bless same-sex couples if they feel comfortable with it.

"I have a deep respect and appreciation for the letter of the law," Kaminsky said, "so I never intend to disregard it or disrespect it in any way. But on this point, I happen to disagree."

For Kaminsky, disagreeing means embracing multiple identities and multiple experiences within the Jewish community.

"Specifically, that means people who define their sexuality as part of their identity have a place to stake in the Jewish community," he said. "That's not everyone's belief, but it's my belief."

The trouble with organized religion is that every place of worship and every representative within that religion will have a slightly different interpretation of the core values, and so will every member of that religious congregation. With all these different interpretations floating around, isn't everyone just worshipping their own version of the religion?

How do you keep coherency and community while still allowing space for the individual?

Kaminsky used a metaphor to help clear up the matter.

"Say a family lives in the same house. There are many different rooms," he said. "Not everyone is in the same room at the same time. We own the house, and there's a sense of community that takes precedence over all disagreements."

In the same way, Kaminsky added, religion has to allow for disagreement and debate, because they are necessary steps on the path to finding a solution.

"Each individual has a place in the world," he said. "If you're Jewish, then you have something to contribute to the Jewish community, and however you define you identity, you deserve something from your community."

Kelly Cook, a freshman engineering major in the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, hoped to find the same support from her Roman Catholic church when she "came out" to a nun during religious education classes in preparation for her Confirmation.

"They were educating the heterosexual

about family values in the church," Cook recalled, "and they were talking about all that 'Adam and Eve stuff.' But a woman can't marry a woman, so my question was, do I have to abstain forever? So during a confession I raised this issue with the Sister."

Cook said the nun was very supportive. She encouraged Cook to continue her involvement in the church and participate in all the church events.

"She wanted me to understand it's a place to worship God, and it's not about sexuality," Cook said. "I should be there because God loves me, and I love God, not because of any policies the church has on gays."

The Catholic church considers homosexuality a mortal sin because it's "out of lust and not love," Cook explained with a straight face. Then she shrugged her shoulders and said, "your soul will perish," and she gave a half-hearted laugh that faded into an exasperated sigh.

"The act of sex between a man and a woman is supposed to be godly because it's about creating life. It's not supposed to be about erogenous pleasure," she said. "When a man and a man or a woman and a woman have sex, it's simply for lust because you are not creating life, and that's one of the seven deadly sins. It's condemnable to hell."

### ACT OF REBELLION

Because Cook knows she is sinning by being a lesbian, and she does not repent, her trespass against the commandments is even greater, she explained, because she doesn't allow herself to heal.

But this is the Orthodox Catholic view. Cook said she doesn't see things quite the same way.

"I refuse to believe that giving my heart to a woman is an act of lust. I think it's an act of love. I think it's a bigger sin to marry a man and not be sexually attracted to him," Cook said. "I mean that's lying in its biggest perversion. And I hate all these titles. I believe in falling in love with people, not with genders."

Cook said she just tries to appreciate the gift of life that God gave her.

"The main aspect of life isn't necessarily creating a baby," she said. "I think there are other ways to give life. And I believe that as long as I live my life loving God and refuse to give up my faith, God will accept me."

"It just doesn't seem right that a loving God would condemn to hell those who don't love him," she continued. "Why would he refuse love? But I have to reassure myself I'm on the right path. I get a lot of people telling me I'm not."

And that's the biggest thing with religion. Who's to say which interpretation is the right one? It's important that we have people such as rabbis and ministers, but I think that it's ultimately up to us to find our place within our religions.

Regardless of your sexuality, race or gender, there's enough room for each of us to find our own niche.

Jane Rushmore  
Daily Orange (Syracuse U.)

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