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Kant on the endless struggle against evil in the pursuit of moral perfection and the promotion of the happiness of others—Challenges for education

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ABSTRACT

Kant argues that we have a duty to perfect ourselves morally and promote the happiness of others. He also argues that we have an innate propensity to evil. Our duty to perfect ourselves suggests that we struggle with our innate propensity to wilfully deviate from doing our duty. And we do this when we struggle against the depravation of our heart, namely our propensity to reverse ‘the ethical order as regards the incentives of a free power of choice’, namely, our propensity to wilfully comply with the principle of self-love and override the moral law. It seems, however, that education does not enable those concerned to fulfil their duties. It seems, instead, that education basically makes them efficacious with regard to desired ends and with the devised means. It seems, too, that education does not necessarily make it possible for those concerned with duty to perfect themselves morally and help others to do the same, which in turn suggests that those concerned are not being enabled to make themselves ‘as conscientious as possible in [their] moral self-examination’. I argue that education ought to enable those concerned to cultivate their moral strength to do so and enable others to do the same.

KEYWORDS

Immanuel Kant; efficacy; autonomy; creativity; radical evil; education; moral perfection

I

When we strive for and are enabled to do our duties, we make ourselves efficacious, autonomous, and creative, that is, we pursue morally accepted ends, viewing ourselves as the cause of our ends and as beings capable of engaging in the free play between imagination and understanding so that we can set new ends, in particular morally permissible ones. And this we do when we confer value not only on the ends set but on each other and ourselves as end-setting creatures capable of setting and pursuing ends which are not merely new but original and stand as examples for the continuous effort to set and pursue such ends (see Roth, 2018).

Education plays an immense role in making the above possible. It seems, however, that education as it stands in nation-states today does not enable the rendering of efficacious, autonomous, and creative beings due to its emphasis on valuing the setting and pursuing of specific external ends and of affecting those concerned to submit to them through the devised means. It seems that education is basically striving to make those concerned efficacious with regard to the ends set within nation-states (Roth, 2018, 2011), and an effect of this is that antagonism is reinforced among people, not merely within but also between nation-states.

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When this happens, education does not enable the pursuit of morally permissible ends, but rather for the ends set for education in the nation-state which serve the interests of the nation-state and in many cases the interests of the majority culture within the nation-state, which are not the same or similar in nation-states throughout the world (this is due to historical circumstances in which education was designed in terms of nationalism and patriotism rather than cosmopolitanism; see for example Roth, 2015).

II

Even if education adopted the goal of making students efficacious, autonomous, and creative, there is no guarantee that they would become so. It may be that students do not merely deviate from making themselves in the above-mentioned terms, but that they also wilfully do so. They can, for example, wilfully act contrary to their duty and freely comply with the principle of self-love, which Kant (1998b, 6: 45) argues is the source of all evil, and as one effect pursue their own personal ends, which are not necessarily in agreement with the ends set by someone else in education or elsewhere throughout the world; another effect is that they use others (and themselves) as mere means for their own private ends.

By complying with the principle of self-love, they act upon their beliefs, norms, and values, not uncommonly affected by social, cultural, and political conditions, as if they, or the reasons given for them, were self-evidently justified without scrutinising them, and they do not necessarily make it possible for others to critically assess these beliefs, norms, and values. When this happens, they give in to their tendency to 'insist upon [their] own theoretical or practical conclusions at any cost, while still wanting to appear—to [themselves] or to others—as though [they are] abiding by the constraints of theoretical or practical reason' (Moran, 2014, p. 419). They also give in to the tendency 'to reconstruct evidence and rationalize so that [they] may be convinced of [their] own virtue' (ibid. 2014, p. 419). As an effect of this, they take things as they stand within certain practices and traditions, seeking their own 'happiness in the sense of pleasure and the satisfaction of natural inclinations, such as those for power, honor, and wealth' (Wood, 1996, p. 143), due to the above-mentioned tendencies, instead of making others happy by making it possible for them to perfect themselves morally.

Kant calls the tendencies to have one's 'subjective determining grounds of choice ... [as] the objective determining ground of the will in general' (Kant, 1997, 5: 74) *self-love*, and he calls the tendency to make the moral law subordinate to the principle of self-love and have self-love as the 'lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle' (ibid. 1997, 5: 74) *self-conceit*. The latter means that one has a tendency to think it would be righteous, or at least not necessarily wrong, to comply with the principle of self-love, and hence give in to the above-mentioned tendencies. This goes not only for individuals, but also for groups of people, that is, groups of people can also submit to the substantial conditions for their own agency and act in such ways that they do not question or engage in transforming them but maintain them; hence, they then leave themselves in conformity and want others to do the same. Kant, however, says:

[T]he ground of evil cannot lie in any object *determining* the power of choice through inclination, not in any natural impulses, but only in a rule that the power of choice itself produces for the exercise of its freedom, i.e., in a maxim. (Kant, 1998b, 6: 21)

Kant continues:

Any profession of reverence for the moral law which in its maxim does not however grant to the law – as self-sufficient incentive –preponderance over all other determining grounds of the power of choice is hypocritical, and the propensity to it is inward deceit, i.e. a propensity to lie to oneself in the interpretation of the moral law, ... (Kant, 1998b, 6:42n)

And the conclusion he draws is that there is no further explanation why people choose to comply with the principle of self-love rather than the moral law other than the free power of

their choice. Such a choice is, for him, inextirpable, hidden in the ‘depths of [their] own heart’ and hence, inscrutable (Kant, 1998b, 6: 51), even though the choice to subordinate the moral law to the principle of self-love can be affected by the strength of their own inclinations or the propensity to ‘*gain worth in the opinion*’ of the other (Kant, 1998b, 6: 27) with regard to the social, cultural, and political conditions, or a combination of all of these (see for example Wood, 2009, 2010). However, even though the free power of choice is inextirpable, it does not mean that we should not engage in either self-examination with regard to our own motives or the examination of our self-deceptive strategies as far as possible. On the contrary, we each have a duty, according to Kant, to ‘carry the cultivation of his *will* up to the purest virtuous disposition, in which the [moral] *law* becomes also the incentive to his actions that conform with duty and he obeys the [moral] law from duty’ (Kant, 1996, 6: 387). He calls such disposition the ‘inner morally practical perfection’ (ibid. 6: 387), which needs to be cultivated continuously, in education and elsewhere. And in order to cultivate such a disposition, we have to make ourselves ‘as conscientious as possible in our moral self-examination’ (Allison, 1990, p. 177), and be enabled to do so.

III

One way of being enabled to engage in the endless moral self-examination of whether or not we have cultivated our ‘*will* up to the purest virtuous disposition’ is to examine the extent to which we deviate from the moral law; and we can do this, according to Kant, in three grades, namely when our will is frail, when our motives are impure, or when our mind is ‘corrupted at its root’ (Kant, 1998b, 6: 30; see also Louden (2010) for a discussion on the ordinariness of evil in the Kantian sense). Let us begin with the first.

When people give in to the inclination to comply with the principle of self-love instead of the moral law, their will is, for Kant, frail (ibid. 1998b, 6: 30). Kant does not say much about frailty, nor about the other two grades of evil. He says, however, that people with a frail will know what the right thing to do is, but they give in to the strength of their desires or pressure from the expectations of others, in particular the craving for their liking, and have ‘*incorporated it into [their] maxim*’ (Kant, 1998b, 6: 24; see also Allison, 1990, p. 40 for a discussion on this), which, if it is regulated by the principle of self-love, dictates that one should give in to the particular inclination that one has incorporated in the maxim—as a spontaneous act of one’s freedom. I take this to mean that when one does this, one is willing to acknowledge the more or less socially and/or culturally accepted weaknesses even though one knows that what one does is not morally right. One can then also acknowledge one’s guilt and shame when doing this, even with a certain amount of liking.

Kant says, moreover, that a frail will is a sign of ‘moral weakness’ (Kant, 1996, 6: 384), a will that, for him, needs to be cultivated so that it is strengthened and that those concerned can comply with the moral law instead of the principle of self-love. A prerequisite for this is, I think, that those concerned with education are made conscious of their ‘*capacity* to master [their] inclinations’ (ibid. 1996, 6:384), on the one hand, and that they have a choice when it comes to complying with either the moral law or the principle of self-love, on the other. One is not, for Kant (1998b, 6: 24), compelled to do what one has a desire to do; nor must one do what others want just to get their liking; one can choose not to respond directly to such inclinations, especially if the maxims of which they are a part are not morally permissible.

With regard to the above, I think that education can make it possible for those concerned to engage in inquiring into the idea and practice of a frail will and whether one’s maxim is morally permissible or not; that is, whether its end promotes the happiness of others and the moral perfection of themselves or not. And those concerned can do this by critically inquiring both into moral examples and into their own and others thinking of them, and by considering how it is possible to think or act differently in order to strengthen their virtue to comply with the moral law instead of the principle of self-love. Exactly how this can be accomplished cannot be spelled

out since the strengthening of one's duty is an imperfect one, that is, a duty that only prescribes 'the maxim of actions, not actions themselves' (ibid. 1996, 6:390). It cannot therefore be specified 'precisely in what way one is to act and how much one is to do by the action' (ibid. 1996, 6: 390). This opens up the possibility for those concerned with education to cultivate their judgment when they perceive their will to be frail, and to examine the ways in which they can strengthen their will with regard to their capacity to act morally and to note the conditions which hinder or enable them to engage in such a pursuit.

People do not just demonstrate a frail will, according to Kant, when they subordinate the moral law to the principle of self-love. A person can, for him, also act with impure motives (see Kant, 1998b, 6: 30). I take this to mean that we can say what we believe is needed in the particular situation we are in, in order to have the other do what we want, so that we can pursue our own private ends, without publicly declaring that we use the other as a mere means for our own purposes. Reasons and beliefs are then reconstructed and rationalized so that they serve the purpose of using the other as mere means for our further ends and hence our own happiness. When this happens, we do not necessarily make it possible for the other to critically assess that we are complying with the principle of self-love instead of the moral law, which means that the other has his or her freedom limited if not diminished, and that the other is not respected as an end in him or herself. And when this happens, we do not even respect ourselves as ends in ourselves, which in turn means that we can even let ourselves be used as a mere means for someone else's already set ends. We then also distort our response to our conscience (see Kant, 1998b, 8: 270), that is, our sense of responsibility with regard not merely to the other but also to ourselves, and in particular to our sense of duty, which in turn means that we make ourselves numb towards our responsibility to act in agreement with and be motivated by the moral law, and become insensible towards our own freedom and the freedom of others. We may then also come to believe that our worth is (only) associated with the value we have as a means for someone else's end, which, for Kant (see Kant, 1998a, 4: 429) means that we diminish our humanity, in particular our personality (see below), that is, our propensity to comply with the moral law. It also means that we distort our self-worth as-ends-in-ourselves, which, for Kant, is associated with our duty, that is, with our harmonisation with the moral law, and the strengthening of our virtue, and not with the value we have as means to some further end. Kant says:

[W]ith respect to contingent (meritorious) duty to oneself, it is not enough that the action does not conflict with humanity in our person as an end in itself; it must also *harmonize* with it. (Kant, 1998a, 4: 430)

The neglect of such harmonization may, for Kant, 'be consistent with the *preservation* of humanity as an end in itself' (ibid. 1998a, 4: 430), but it is, for him, not consistent 'with the *furtherance* of this end' (ibid. 1998a, 4: 430). That is, with the continuous transformation (when needed) of beliefs, values, and norms of action, and the unceasing pursuit of the creation of new ends that can stand as examples not merely of the possibility but also of the value of such pursuits for all concerned. The furtherance of the above-mentioned ends suggests both the perfection of the conditions for making them possible, but also the perfection of 'our own will or power of choice by conforming to our own ideal of rationality' (Guyer, 2016, p. 79). This ideal consists of an 'ideal of the world in which human autonomy is fully realized, that is, a world in which the human will "is a law unto itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)" (G, 4: 440 [G stands for Kant, 1998a, *my comment*])—a world in which the will is determined by a law inherent in itself rather than by the desirability of any object offered to it' (ibid. 2016, p. 80). In such an ideal world, people strive to engage in moral self-examination with regard to impurity, apart from frailty, and to create the conditions needed to make the pursuit of such an ideal possible. Here, too, education can sustain such a pursuit for those concerned by clarifying not only the actual but also the possible ends, in particular those that sustain moral self-examination and that preserve 'the possibility of further free choices by their agents and the others affected by them' (ibid. 2016, p. 87), namely the moralisation of them by making it

possible for them to 'acquire the disposition to choose nothing but good ends' (Kant, 2007, 9: 450). This in turn requires that they learn to do good because it is good, and not just because others or they themselves desire some specific end or others unjustifiably demand that they pursue it.

People with impure motives can come to recognise publicly that they do act with such motives, and when they do so they can acknowledge their guilt and shame. Here education too can make it possible for those concerned to respond responsibly not only to a frail will but also to impurity. It can enable reflection and critical assessment of what is being said and the possible reasons for it. It can also enable inquiries into the extent to which those concerned manipulate each other in order to have their own ends satisfied or pursued. It can, moreover, make it possible for those concerned to inquire into what motivates not only individuals but also groups of people and the extent to which people are sincere. Such inquiries can concern whether nation-states enable, through education, those concerned to set and pursue morally permissible ends within the nation-state to do so, or whether they are used as mere means to the ends set 'under the name of happiness' (Wood, 2009, p. 115). Hence, education can enable them to reflect upon and critically assess the ends set and whether such ends hinder or limit their own freedom, or the freedom of others, to set and pursue their own morally permissible ends. It may, for example, be the case that education becomes too preoccupied with certain substantial ends, so that those concerned are not given the same or similar opportunities to have those ends as objects of reflection and critical assessment; and when this happens, it can neglect or play down the value of such engagements with the proposed substantial ends. As a result, education can reflect impurity with regard to what it makes possible. That is, it can use those concerned as a means to some further end, namely discipline, and civilise them with regard to what is expected of them, without making it possible for them to engage satisfactorily with the suggested ends and devised means reflectively and critically, so that they can set and pursue their own ends that are compatible with the freedom of all to do likewise. Impurity here means that education stimulates the propensity to comply with the principle of self-love in terms of the interests of the nation-state 'under the name of happiness' as if it were self-sufficient and not in need of being an object of reflection and critical assessment. It also means that it does not acknowledge the possibility for those concerned to engage in an endless struggle to moralize themselves and it can thereby encourage self-conceit, that is, the tendency to have self-love as the 'lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle' instead of the moral law. This makes it even harder to engage in moral self-examination, to pursue the perfection of oneself as a moral being, and to make others happy by making it possible for them to engage in such pursuits.

It may also be the case that people reverse 'the ethical order as regards the incentives of a free power of choice' (Kant, 1998b, 6: 30) completely and act directly on the principle of self-love; that is, they subordinate the moral law to self-love. Kant says about this third grade of evil:

[A]nd although with this reversal there can still be legally good (*legale*) actions, yet the mind's attitude is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and hence the human being is designated as evil. (Kant, 1998b, 6: 30)

When this happens, people use each other as a mere means for their own private ends, without necessarily recognising their responsibility with regard to each other, even when they are caught out with having reversed the ethical order 'as regards the incentives of a free power of choice'. It may be that they do not acknowledge the shame and guilt publicly with regard to each other, or even acknowledge it to themselves, which does not mean that they do not have that capacity, even when they have been caught out with having used the other as a mere means for their own ends. Susceptibility for such feelings, for Kant, is essential for our capacity as moral beings (1998b, 6: 80, footnote; see also Wood, 2008, p. 183), and without this capacity we would not, for Kant, be capable of responsibility. Kant calls, for example, wilful deviation from the moral law, *innate* guilt (Kant, 1998b, 6: 38), which applies only to creatures that are

capable of being aware of the moral law and are capable of complying with it. He says that innate guilt originates in freedom and is imputable to agents; it *can* be judged to be unintentional guilt when it comes to the frailty of the will and its impurity, but deliberate guilt when it comes to the third grade of evil. This does not, however, mean that guilt is necessarily unintentional when it comes to frailty and impurity, only that it may be so. It can very well be intentional and deliberate, even when it comes to frailty and impurity when, for example, people play along and intentionally use situations and others for their own interests. Kant says too that deliberate guilt is 'characterised by a certain *perfidy* on the part of the human heart (*dolus malus*) in deceiving itself as regards its own good or evil disposition and, provided that its actions do not result in evil (which they could well do because of their maxims), in not troubling itself on account of its disposition but rather considers itself justified before the law' (Kant, 1998b, 6: 38). Kant continues:

This is how so many human beings (conscientious in their own estimation) derive their peace of mind when, in the course of actions in which the law was not consulted or at least did not count the most, they just luckily slipped by the evil consequences; and [how they derive] even the fancy that they deserve not to feel guilty of such transgressions as they see others burdened with, without however inquiring whether the credit goes perhaps to good luck, or whether, on the attitude of mind they could well discover within themselves if they just wanted, they would not have practised similar vices themselves, had they not been kept away from them by impotence, temperament, upbringing, and temptation circumstances of time and place (things which, one and all, cannot be imputed to us). This dishonesty, by which we throw dust in our own eyes and which hinders the establishment in us of a genuine moral disposition, then extends itself also externally, to falsify or deception of others. (Kant, 1998b, 6: 38)

Kant calls such dishonesty malice, and says it deserves 'the name of unworthiness' (Kant, 1998b, 6: 38). He thinks it 'rests on the radical evil of human nature' (ibid. 1998b, 6: 38; see also Formosa, 2007 for a discussion on Kant's notion of radical evil), that it thwarts our ability to judge morally, to think from the standpoint of the other and to transform our beliefs, values, and norms of action. He also thinks that it 'constitutes the foul stain of our species—and so long as we do not remove it, it hinders the germ of the good from developing as it otherwise would' (ibid. 1998b, 6: 38). We will see, however, that Kant does not believe that we can remove such a *foul stain* of our species but that we can, at best, only regulate it.

Education could, for Kant, acknowledge 'the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* [of evil] parades before us' (Kant, 1998b, 6: 33) and have them as objects of reflection and critical assessment, even though it cannot be explained why people choose to bring evil upon themselves and others. It may, however, be somewhat easier to acknowledge examples of the first and the third grade of evil since such evil demonstrates itself much more openly, in particular for those concerned, than the second grade of evil, which may be more difficult to recognise due to the fact that people who have impure motives can be more or less talented in hiding their own personal interests and private ends and in manipulating others in the pursuit of their own private ends or the ends set by someone else. This can also be the case when those who are civilised within the nation-state by, for example, education and society at large and act in agreement with what is considered to be the outwardly right motives are not enabled to reflect upon and critically assess those motives through education. Education should, for Kant, make it possible for those concerned to have such examples as objects of reflection and critical assessments, in particular when it is designed to enable such endeavours. And if education is not designed in such a way that those concerned are not enabled to have them as objects of reflection and critical assessment, then it should, for Kant, be redesigned so as to make this possible so that they can perfect themselves morally and promote the happiness of others.

IV

Kant argues that one reason for people to wilfully deviate from making themselves 'as conscientious as possible in [their] moral self-examination' is that imperfect rational beings have an

innate propensity to evil—even the best people (Kant, 1998b, 6: 30)—and that such an innate propensity to evil can be reinforced by a person’s social, cultural, and political setting, as seen above. By innate propensity to evil Kant means the following:

[T]he subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire, *concupiscentia*), insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general ... it can ... be thought of (if it is good) as *acquired*, or (if evil) as *brought* by the human being *upon* himself. (Kant, 1998b, 6: 29)

Kant believes that evil is chosen, and that those concerned bring it upon themselves by their own choice. He also argues that we have a predisposition to use our own reason to submit to the personal ends set for us, namely, ends set by a specific group of which one is or wants to be a part of in education and society at large, and that such ends are supposed to lead to or generate happiness, if not immediately at least in the long run. I take this to mean that imperfect rational beings can be affected by their circumstances to submit to these already set ends and use the devised means to achieve them ‘under the name of happiness’, without scrutinising them; ends which they might believe are, but cannot be, their duty. Kant says:

For his own *happiness* is an end that every human being has (by virtue of the impulses of his nature), but this end can never without self-contradiction be regarded as a duty. What everyone already wants unavoidably of his own accord, does not come under the concept of *duty*, which is *constraint* to an end adopted reluctantly. Hence it is self-contradictory to say that he is *under obligation* to promote his own happiness with all his powers. (Kant, 1996, 6: 386)

That is, even though we cannot avoid being affected by the practices and traditions of which we are a part, it does not mean that it is our duty to maintain them, or the social, cultural and political conditions, ‘under the name of happiness’. It is not merely self-contradictory to do so in the name of happiness, as Kant pointed out; it also means that it is problematic to take things as they stand, maintaining conformity and not transforming our beliefs, values, and norms of action when needed, which in turn means that we just make ourselves efficacious with regard to specific ends and the devised means, but not that we make ourselves autonomous and creative. And by taking things as they stand and maintaining them, we diminish our personality, that is, ourselves as beings capable of respecting the moral law, and instead make ourselves efficacious with regard to the ends set in order to ‘*gain worth in the opinion of others*’, which in turn generally means that we keep ourselves in obedience with what is expected of us and that we do not think for ourselves, from the standpoint of the other, and consistently. Nor do we critically assess beliefs, norms and values or our attitudes and, when necessary, go against what others demand.

The above (also) means that we (hinder or even) diminish our possibility to *cultivate* our personality, that is, our respect for the moral law. It also means that we limit freedom, not merely for ourselves, but also for others, and this we do when we do not allow others or ourselves to become ‘as conscientious as possible in our moral self-examination’, as pointed out by Allison (1990, p. 177). It means, moreover, that we do not allow ourselves to engage in ‘such self-examination [which Kant believes to be] ... an absolutely vital part of the moral life’ (ibid. 1990, p. 177). Such self-examination is, for Kant, absolutely fundamental, since it would not be possible to scrutinise motives for our actions or the motives of others without it; nor would it be possible to engage in enabling each other to feel ashamed and guilty and express such feelings when we deviated from the moral law. It is not only important that we are enabled to do so by education, but that we take responsibility for engaging in such a continuous struggle and for making ourselves autonomous and not merely efficacious with regard to ends set for us. It is vital because when we focus on complying with the moral law, and hence, strive to make ourselves efficacious, autonomous, and creative, we will acknowledge not only that we will sometimes succeed in doing so, but that we will also sometimes fail in our pursuit; we will not then necessarily burden ourselves with such failures or by the negative judgments of others; we will instead continuously compare ourselves with the moral law and not our failures or the harmful or destructive judgments of others. That is, when we focus on the moral law and show

respect for it, we will be less dependent on our failures or others' negative judgments of ourselves. Instead, we will strive to perfect ourselves morally and help others to do the same (see Kant, 1996, 6: 386). This is not something that happens in a social, cultural or political vacuum, as seen above. On the contrary, it is absolutely vital that such conditions are continuously critically assessed if, and the extent to which, they enable or hinder the ends that are also our duties.

When we are enabled to take part in such a struggle through education, then we are informed or striving to become so by not merely accepting the ends set for us, but also by critically reflecting on how these ends are affected by the social, cultural, and political settings in our own time and the historical circumstances in which the ends have come about. We are then also enabled to inquire and be engaged in inquiring about the extent to which such ends and their circumstances limit or hinder the freedom of those concerned to engage in the above-mentioned self-examination, that is, the effort or direct struggle to try to make it possible for them to engage in becoming 'as conscientious as possible in [their] moral self-examination'. Such an undertaking is, however, not necessarily easy. It may be difficult and perhaps at times not even possible; it is a continuous struggle for those concerned with education and elsewhere.

V

Thus, as seen above, education as an institution faces an immense challenge; it can enable those concerned to make them efficacious, autonomous, and creative and to deal responsibly with their innate propensity to evil. It is, however, not easy work. Kant says, for example in his essay *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (2009), that 'out of such crooked wood as the human being is made, nothing entirely straight can be fabricated' (Kant, 2009, p. 16). And he continues: 'Only the approximation to this idea is laid upon us by nature' (ibid. 2009, p. 16; see also Guyer, 2009 for a discussion on human beings being made of crooked timber). That is, for Kant, it is an unceasing struggle, since he believes that as long as we human beings are imperfect rational creatures and have an innate propensity to evil, we have to battle with ourselves and each other, and with our propensity to wilfully deviate from the moral law and our inclination to comply with the principle of self-love, in our pursuit to perfect ourselves morally and promote the happiness of others. It is therefore no surprise that Kant says: 'The human being must make or have made himself into whatever he is or should become in a moral sense, good or evil' (Kant, 1998b, 6: 44). One way of dealing with such an immense challenge is through moral self-examination; education not only can but also should make it possible for those concerned to reflect upon and critically assess moral examples, the extent to which they exemplify grades of evil, and whether these hinder or limit them in their pursuit of moral perfection and the promotion of the happiness of others, or so I have argued.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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