

Kant, emotion and autism

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Kant, Emotion and Autism: Towards an Inclusive Approach to Character Education

Abstract

Modern Kantians often address the conception of Kant as ‘cold hearted rationalist’ by arguing that there is a place, in Kantian moral theory, for the emotions. This theme of reconciling Kantianism with the emotions is concurrent with a recent interest, on the part of some Kantians, in issues pertaining to character education. This paper will argue that Kantianism has much to offer character education; in particular, inclusiveness of those who might have difficulty experiencing appropriate moral emotion. Nevertheless, I will argue that this inclusivity can only be maintained if Kantians refrain from over-emotionalising their accounts.

Key Words

Kant, Emotion, Character Education, Autism,

Word Count

6508

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Introduction

It seems to have become a theme in contemporary Kantianism, in particular amongst those interested in moral theory, to address the idea of Kant as ‘cold hearted rationalist’. Motivating this, at least in part, is the thought of reconciling Kant’s deontology with sympathy for the role of the emotions in moral decision making and action. In the first part of this paper I will describe this theme. I will argue that, although there is significant room for emotion on a Kantian conception of morality, it is important to be cognisant of the possibility of the pendulum swinging in the opposite direction. As Kant’s arguments on the grounding of morality show, there is an aspect of morality that must stay separate from the emotions and the particularities of human nature, or so I shall argue. This understanding of Kant’s moral theory, as sensitive to emotion but not grounded on it, is a contrast both to the cold hearted version of Kant but also to the tendency to over-emotionalise Kant’s arguments. The second part of this paper will address a specific area wherein contemporary Kantians are currently making progress. I will argue that recent contributions to character education, on the part of Kantians, constitute an opportunity to reflect critically on a largely Aristotelian discipline. In fact, a Kantian approach to the topic may prove to be more inclusive, in one respect. In effect, it may be more straightforward, on a Kantian theory of character education, to include those within its scope who have difficulty experiencing appropriate moral emotion. To see this, I will refer to the topic of character education and the specific case of persons with high-functioning autistic spectrum disorder (HF-ASD). I will conclude that the benefits of an inclusive conception of character education may be lost if Kantians do not stop at sensitivity to the emotions, but instead over-emotionalise his arguments.

Section 1: Kant: Misunderstood on Emotion?

One particularly influential example of Kant as cold hearted rationalist is Simon Blackburn's 'Kantian Captain' (Blackburn 1998). In comparing the Humean conception of moral personhood to the Kantian, Blackburn describes the Kantian agent as follows:

He is a peculiar figure, a dream – or nightmare – of pure, authentic self-control. He certainly appeals to our wish to be, ourselves, entirely the masters of our own lives, immune in all important respects from the gifts or burdens of our internal animal natures, or of our temperaments as they are formed by contingent nature, socialization and external surrounds. Context free, non-natural and complete stickler for duty, perhaps the Kantian self is nothing but the sublimation of a patriarchal, authoritarian fantasy (Blackburn 1998, 252)

I find the idea of Kant advocating a version of moral agency that is capable of immunity to our contingent nature puzzling. Such a nature includes our emotions and yet is larger in scope than our emotions. In the next section I will lend my voice to a movement that reads Kant as sensitive to the role of emotions in moral agency. For the remainder of this section I will deal with the idea that we can be immune to our contingent natures in terms of vulnerability and imperfection.

Blackburn's Kantian Captain would indeed be a nightmare; entirely free from his animal nature, presumably including his inclinations and emotions, and even immune to them. One must ask, why would anyone be a Kantian if this was Kant's view of moral agency? If, like many Kantians, you are awed by the moral law within you, is not this awe coming from a very human place? Do we not look up to morality as an 'awesome' capacity we have, as humans, in the midst of our all too human needs and frailties? Thankfully, Kantianism gives us all we need to address Blackburn's Kantian Captain. Any reasonably sensitive reconstruction of Kant's moral theory must allow that the sort of freedom from our contingent natures that Blackburn mentions is but part of the Kantian story. If autonomy, in Blackburn's sense, was the only feature of our moral reasoning worth mentioning, then the term 'ought' would be irrelevant. In fact, 'ought', or moral necessitation, is applicable to us in virtue of the fact that we are needy, vulnerable beings. Absent such needs, we would not be recognizably human. In fact, we would start to look much more like the Kantian conception of God. Similarly, the Kantian conception of virtue is only meaningful in the context of human frailty. For Kant, virtue is morality applied to human beings and includes the experience of an inner struggle. Such struggle cannot be comprehensibly applied to God or angels, and as such they are holy, rather than virtuous, beings (Kant 2001, 27:13).

References wherein Kant contrasts human agents with perfect, infinite, divine agents are not difficult to find. To see how this juxtaposition functions to inform our conception of human agency, take one example wherein Kant makes use of it:

No imperatives hold for the divine will and in general for a holy will: the 'ought' is out of place here, because volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the law. Therefore imperatives are only formulae expressing the relations of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, for example, of the human will (Kant 2002, 4:414)

Kant uses the juxtaposition of imperfect, finite human rationality, with perfect, infinite, divine rationality in the above quote, and throughout his practical philosophy, to remind us that practical reasoning is the provenance of imperfectly rational creatures. Insofar as we are imperfect, but yet rational, we are uniquely situated: were we perfectly rational we would never act according to the imperatives of practical reason. In fact, practical reasoning itself would be totally unnecessary. It is our imperfection, and our finitude and need, that enables our feeling of awe when faced with the moral law within us.

At this stage, it might still be asked of the Kantian, what is the practical import of this recognition of the human being as finite? I think it is clear that no reasonable Kantian can claim human beings are capable of immunity to our animal natures. Our inclinations, our contingent nature and our external surroundings are inescapable. Nevertheless, a faultfinder may still object to the placement of these features of humanity within Kant's theory; perhaps the role of the Kantian Captain is to subject these circumstances to suspicion and to heft himself, by his boot straps, as far away from them as possible. Perhaps our needs and our emotions can only be understood as negative; as a pull away from acting in accordance with the categorical imperative much like the tempestuous waves our Kantian Captain must navigate in his pursuit of the patriarchal fantasy. I have three responses to this.

First, a Kantian does not have to commit to the idea that these facts about a human being's existence are a mere negative distraction from moral behaviour. For one thing, as I outlined above, it is our contingent nature which enables practical reasoning. Our awe at the example of the heroism, and sacrifice, of someone like Dietrich Bonhoeffer is not diminished, when we recognise him as a human being, liable to the same feelings and fears as the rest of us. We can admire all the more his courage in returning to Nazi Germany when we recognise the fear he experienced in his flight to the safe haven of the US. His personal struggle here has worth. Presumably such an example corresponds with the idea that those subjective 'hindrances' (eg fear), which far from concealing the good will 'elevate it by contrast and let it shine forth all the more brightly' (Kant 2002, 4:397). Here, then, our imperfect nature and the inclinations which feed it, even in their most negative connotation (as pulls against our adherence to the categorical imperative), are nevertheless not merely negative. It is our finitude and imperfection which enable our practical reasoning, sustain our feelings of awe for the moral law within us and provide the possibility for moral heroism.

Second, there is plenty of scope, within Kantianism, for interpreting our vulnerability as implying the need for justice. If, as moral agents we are free but finite, and our finitude can constrain our moral agency, then a Kantian argument can be made for providing conditions that address our needs in such a way as to promote our freedom. For example, if hunger (as a human need) can adversely constrain our freedom (it is more difficult not to steal food when starving), then it would be wise to provide circumstances within which agents are free from hunger. I take it these arguments are close to those of Onora O'Neill, in particular when she states that, for Kant, it is the combination of agency and vulnerability which constitutes the circumstances of justice (O'Neill 2000, 138).

Finally, third, and most pressing given the concerns of this paper, is the fact that the emotions, as part of our contingent nature, can be given a distinctively positive role in Kantian moral theory. In the next section, I will examine the role of the emotions for Kant.

Section 2: Kant, the Emotions and Character

Many Kantians today hold that taking the emotions seriously is fully consistent with their Kantianism. Katrin Flikschuh describes this as Kantians claiming ‘things are not as bad as they seem’, a position she terms ‘conceding the principal charge’ (Flikschuh 2014, 265). One example of this position is that of Thomas Hill and Adam Cureton. In a recent paper, they argue that, for Kant, ‘some feelings are simply aspects of all moral experience and others should be cultivated aids in our efforts to avoid wrongdoing and to promote moral ends’ (Hill and Cureton 2018, 265). Similar to my remarks on the awe inspired by the moral law within me, the authors note that the feeling of respect for the moral law is a product of our inescapable recognition of moral requirements. Other feelings mimic respect, for the authors; like guilt, shame and satisfaction. Moreover, some emotions function as aids to morality insofar as they might facilitate moral action by counteracting contrary inclinations (for example, sympathy might counteract inclinations of selfishness). Finally, certain feelings, when appropriately morally constrained, are necessary for human happiness; and as we have an imperfect duty to adopt the happiness of others as an end, and an indirect duty to pursue our own happiness, we might be said to have a duty to cultivate these emotions (albeit imperfect and/or indirect) (Hill and Cureton 2018).

As such, for Kant, emotion is neither avoidable, insofar as we will never be immune to it, nor is it unimportant. Nonetheless, we can agree with the argument that the sorts of feelings discussed are either helpful assists to duty or happy by products of it, without going so far as to say that one cannot be moral if one does not feel appropriately. The question now becomes how significant are the emotions on a Kantian framework. Are emotions a helpful ally in the work of doing our duty? Or are they, in some sense, necessary for moral agency? Are emotions part of the meat of morality or are they the garnish on the plate? On this question, the work of Nancy Sherman is instructive. For Sherman, the emotions have a constructive role within virtue; she interprets Kant as having a ‘conception of moral character in which emotions responsive to the constraints and ends of duty come to be viewed as morally estimable’ (Sherman 1997, 126). Sherman allows that if such positive emotions (those that aid morality) can themselves be shaped by the moral law, such that acting from the emotion involved a concern for rightness and wrongness and respecting others as ends in themselves, then ‘a maxim grounded in compassion would seem to have moral content, and moral worth’ (Sherman 1997, 150). As such, she goes beyond Hill and Cureton’s approach; here emotions look much more meat than garnish. This is further emphasised when she states the emotions are ‘something more than merely ways of accenting or adorning virtue. They are part of the fabric of the response. The moral response that lacks appropriate emotional expression lacks a means and mode of expression that for humans, at least, is morally significant’ (Sherman 2014, 29).

In the following sections of this paper, I will argue against this position as over-emotionalising Kant’s moral theory. As will become apparent, I do not believe that emotion is part of the fabric of morality for Kant. Instead I will, in line with Hill and Cureton above, describe Kant as sensitive to the role the emotions play in morality. Nevertheless, I will also describe Kant as dismissive of grounding morality in the emotions. This, I believe, has important consequences for character education; an area that is currently seeing interest on the part of Kantians (Baron 2014; Hill and Cureton 2014). Before proceeding to the topic of character education, I will spend some time analysing research on how individuals with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (HF-ASD) learn to be moral. My motive for doing so is to prepare a case for the argument that a Kantian conception of character, that

includes an idea of moral agency as sensitive to the emotions but not over-emotionalised, is more inclusive of such persons than an over-emotionalised account of character. As such, it may be helpful to end this section by mentioning Marcia Baron's paper *Kantian Moral Maturity and the Cultivation of Character* (Baron 2014). Baron discusses character education by giving the example of Fitzwilliam Darcy in Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*. In the course of the novel, Mr Darcy learns to be good. As he does so, he learns that it is not enough to follow good principles; one must also have 'the right attitudes and feelings' (Baron 2014, 69). I shall return to Mr Darcy and character education in the final section of this paper. First though, I would like to ask, what if Mr Darcy is incapable of this sort of personal awakening; what if he simply cannot combine his principles with the right feelings? It is these kinds of concerns that motivate my discussion of the literature on how individuals with HF-ASD experience morality.

Section 3: Emotions and Autism

Over-emotionalizing Kant, in my opinion, amounts to attributing to him a position that places too much significance to emotion. It is one thing to claim, as I do, that the emotions can aid and inform moral action, and even empower us and imbue us with awe; and quite another to claim that only action done from emotion (as well as duty) is moral. Simply put, my specific concern is, 'what happens if a person lacks appropriate emotional response'? In an effort to answer this question, I believe it will be useful to spend some time examining what happens when individuals with HF-ASD attempt to learn to be moral, or more pertinently, when they attempt to cultivate good character. In *Autism, Empathy and Moral Agency*, Jeanette Kennet notes that people with HF-ASD 'display moral concerns, moral feeling and a sense of duty or conscience' (Kennett 2002, 349). In explaining how people with HF-ASD learn to be moral, Kennet takes a largely Kantian approach. She states, such persons can 'develop or discover moral rules and principles of conduct for themselves by reasoning, as they would in other matters, on the basis of patient explicit enquiry, reliance on testimony and inference from past situations' (Kennett 2002, 351). Interestingly, these considerations lead Kennet to the conclusion that a Kantian account of agency is preferable to a Humean one on the grounds that it 'grants full moral agency to morally conscientious autistic people' (Kennett 2002, 355).

Kennet's account was one of the first attempts to use empirical findings from studying persons with HF-ASD in an attempt to answer the question whether empathy is necessary for morality. Since the publication of her paper, progress has been made in the field; it is now thought that persons with HF-ASD do experience empathy (contra Kennet's arguments) in the form of affective empathy (Bolland 2013), as explained below. This finding has resulted in a push against Kennet's conclusions (Aaltola 2014). Nevertheless, I believe that digging deeper into what the research tells us about how persons with HF-ASD make decisions in morally salient situations; it becomes apparent that their experience of empathy is not as clearly discrediting of the Kantian approach as it may have, at first, appeared.

In the literature, empathy is generally believed to have two components; affective empathy can be discerned from cognitive empathy on the grounds of emotion versus belief formation (Dziobek 2008). As Elisa Aaltola states, with affective empathy 'one resonates with the phenomenal aspects of another individual's mental states' (Aaltola 2014, 77), or one 'feels' the suffering or joy of another. In contrast, with cognitive empathy, 'one forms a representation of the mental state of another individual' (Aaltola 2014, 77), or one believes that the other is experiencing joy or suffering.

Generally, it is held that in a morally salient situation, then, the person with HF-ASD will likely experience difficulty taking a perspective other than her own (Mazza et al. 2014)¹. For clarity, take the example of Anne, a child with HF-ASD who is part of a mainstream class. Her class teacher organises a party for the entire class. As part of this, the teacher plans to have a disco; the other members of Anne's class love music and dancing. Anne fears such activities. On the morning of the party, Anne purposely breaks the music CD. Her classmates are very upset by the fact that there will be no music and dancing. Given Anne's impaired cognitive empathy, she cannot understand the point of view of others in her class. Anne acted from emotion (her fear of music and dancing), but it was a self-directed emotion. Given Anne's difficulties with cognitive empathy, it is difficult to see how she could use her emotion to motivate moral action. In fact, Anne may very well feel compassion for the disappointment of her classmates, but bewilderment as to its cause (how could they feel anything but fear for music and dancing) and confusion as to how she might alleviate it.

My interpretation of Anne's emotions, her compassion and subsequent confusion, is consistent with findings on how individuals with HF-ASD navigate morally salient situations. In an article on moral reasoning amongst adolescents with HF-ASD, Amie Senland and Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro agreed that it is cognitive empathy that is impaired, rather than affective empathy, in the case of persons with HF-ASD, and they noted that adolescents with HF-ASD also showed significantly higher levels of personal distress than typical adolescents (Senland and Higgins-D'Alessandro 2013). Elucidating the example of Anne above, the authors found that, while adolescents with HF-ASD perceive themselves to feel compassion, they were not necessarily able to use it to support decision-making during challenging sociomoral situations. The authors surmised that the higher distress noted above might be accounted for by 'discrepancies between the self-perceptions of adolescents with HF-ASD and their capacity to use empathetic concern in solving challenging situations' (Senland and Higgins-D'Alessandro 2013, 220).

As such then, even though persons with HF-ASD do experience empathy, they have difficulty using this empathy to make a judgment as to the right course of action. Feeling, then, is not doing the moral work, so to speak. In fact, if anything, feeling would seem to only make matters worse (the distress outlined above). Nonetheless, persons with HF-ASD do exhibit moral behaviour, and a commitment and enthusiasm for morality; how can this be accounted for?

A recent study on the link between moral judgment and behaviour among children with HF-ASD is very informative on this point (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014). The authors asked typically developing (TD) children and children with HF-ASD to judge the morality of an actor in a story as naughty or nice. After this the children were encouraged to play with the morally nice and morally naughty child in repeated games. The study found that both sets of children were capable of making correct moral judgments. Nonetheless, children with HF-ASD did not differentiate their play behaviour between their naughty or nice playmates, whereas TD children were more likely to play with nice playmates. The authors concluded that, unlike TD children, the cooperative behaviour of children with HF-ASD was not influenced by partner's nice morality. In fact, putting this in terms that suit my present purpose, the authors surmised that 'TD children might be more likely to take into account their

¹ Note, there is some discord on this. Some authors argue that those with HF-ASD may have impaired cognitive and affective empathy, while others believe it is only affective empathy that is affected. For my purposes, this does not matter. My argument will hold if both are affected. As such I have chosen to engage with those who believe affective empathy is present as it poses more of a challenge for my position.

partners' characters, including their morality, compared with HFA [HF-ASD] children' (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014, 2).

Some of the underlying findings of this report are highly instructive. For one thing, the authors found that the children with HF-ASD judged harming others as significantly worse than TD children, leading the authors to surmise that children with HF-ASD might be said to have even more rigid criteria for what constitutes an immoral act (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014, 3). They stated that they found moral reasoning among children with HF-ASD to be more rule-oriented (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014, 3). Moreover, they found (like Anne above) that children with HF-ASD are essentially focused on the self, and while some such children show empathy and overcome this self-focus, this takes great cognitive effort (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014, 4). The authors quoted Baron-Cohen in that although autistic individuals are typically self-focused, they are highly moral people, have a strong sense of justice, and think deeply about how to be good (Li, Zhu and Gummerum 2014, 4). In other words, they seem to care about their own moral character. As such, it is important that any theory of character education, as an instrument to helping develop character, be reconcilable with how these individuals experience morality and learn to be good. The next section of this paper will turn to this topic and argue that the Kantian account of moral agency I put forward is reconcilable with the way individuals with HF-ASD experience morality. In this respect, such an account is more attractive than its over-emotionalised Kantian, or Aristotelian, alternative.

Section 4: Over-Emotionalising Kant

It is hard to say, for sure, if the children and adolescents with HF-ASD mentioned above are acting from duty. This admission may seem to concede defeat on my part, but in fact it is consistent with a Kantian approach. After all, the content of others' maxims are not the sort of thing we can ever be sure of. In fact, Kant goes so far as to stipulate that even our own motives may be obscured to us (Flickschuh 2014, 266). What a Kantian can say, I believe, is that it certainly appears that these children and adolescents are attempting to act from duty. They are reasoning about morally salient behaviour (naughty or nice) and coming to appropriate conclusions. This reasoning seems to be rule based; they are, in Kennet's words developing and discovering moral rules for themselves. I would also add that these rules seem to be the outcome of a commitment to exceptionlessness, a theme I will pick up on presently. Moreover, the children seem to be thinking deeply about such matters and they are concerned by issues like fairness and justice. The children's lack of discernment in the second task (choosing a playmate) may have multiple interpretations. It may be a failure of cognitive empathy; the HF-ASD child may fail to take the position of the 'naughty' child and may fail to see that they have a characteristic tendency towards naughtiness. It may be that the child with HF-ASD applies 'strict' rules to deciding who to play with, and past naughtiness is not encapsulated within these rules. Moreover, it may well be that part of the commitment to these strict rules comes from a respect for the fair treatment of others.

I began my treatment of Kant by arguing that there is a role, on his account of moral agency, for the emotions. Nevertheless, I held back from what I termed 'over-emotionalising' Kant. Motivating my misgivings on this is a respect for the following piece from Kant's Groundwork:

Empirical Principles are not at all fit to be the ground of moral laws. For, the universality with which these are to hold for all rational beings without distinction- the unconditional practical necessity

which is thereby imposed upon them- comes to nothing if their ground is taken from the special constitution of human nature or the contingent circumstances in which it is placed (Kant 2002, 4:442)

I do not believe it is a coincidence that Simon Blackburn uses the term ‘contingent nature and surrounds’ when describing the Kantian Captain, though if he is alluding to this passage, I believe he has misconstrued the relevance of it. Instead of pertaining to our capacity to immunize ourselves to emotion, Kant is maintaining his commitment to exceptionlessness. Put simply, for Kant, it would be incorrect to say we are moral because we have certain emotions. When it comes to the *grounding* of morality, the justification of ‘ought’, emotions (and our contingent circumstances) are completely irrelevant. So, emotions cannot ground morality, and neither can ‘the contingent circumstances’ within which we find ourselves. A description of the world, and our sensible natures within it, cannot afford us a justification for morality. Motivating Kant here is the idea of universality. Morality must be exceptionless; it must be lawlike in this respect. Emotion cannot give us this lawlikeness.

Going back to Marcia Baron’s Mr Darcy, what can a Kantian like me say about his character education? The sort of Kantianism I have been describing can allow that he would be well-advised to cultivate the right attitudes and feelings; they will, after all help him discharge his duty; they might be a great source of meaning and worth in his life. He may even have duties to this end, albeit indirect and imperfect ones (discussed above). But would he fail, morally, if he did not pursue this cultivation; if he, instead, remained a man of good principle but bad temper? I do not think so. Now imagine a Mr Darcy with HF-ASD. What if, consistent with his HF-ASD, he always experienced great difficulties overcoming his self-directed emotions in morally salient situations, and could only do so with great cognitive effort, applying principles of exceptionlessness, etc? Well, on the account I have put forward, he can still be said to show a commitment to morality, and morally appropriate behaviour.

I believe these arguments have important implications for character education, in particular Kantian conceptions of character education. To see this, let me dig a bit deeper into Baron’s account of the cultivation of character. Clearly, in a number of ways, I am very sympathetic to her approach; I have outlined these points of consent above when describing my view of Kantian moral theory as sensitive to the emotions. Nonetheless, I believe Baron is an example of ‘over-emotionalising’ Kant. Although she does mention the idea that we should not over exaggerate the extent to which we can control our emotions, this does not seem to constrain her account. In fact, she states that ‘the cultivation of morally desirable affective responses and attitudes is a vital part of good child-rearing and, more generally, of the moral education of children’ (Baron 2014, 71). Moreover, when it comes to the idea of the sort of moral struggle I attributed to Bonhoffer, Baron does not seem to concur with my estimation of its worth. Baron gives, what she believes to be a morally salient example, of a child delighting in smashing up a car, and says of it:

The problem is not (merely) that those who find such a thing intensely pleasurable are more likely to be, or grow to be, destructive. It is plausible to suppose that they are, but even if they are not, finding such activities pleasurable is itself morally problematic (Baron 2014, 72)

Imagine for a moment a second Bonhoffer; a pyromaniac Bonhoffer who, although actively anti-Nazi, nevertheless experiences intense pleasure upon witnessing them burn books. Now think of the struggle this twisted Bonhoffer might feel. On the one hand, his intellectual and moral principles tell him burning books is wrong, especially when done from a commitment to Nazism. On the other

hand, he just loves starting fires and watching others do so. A Kantian Bonhoffer would know that he cannot trust this emotion, and to do the right thing he must instead reason appropriately. And yet he struggles. For me, this struggle has worth. It is the human struggle; the struggle of beings who are prone to all sorts of corruption but still capable of morality; it is the struggle of persons liable to all sorts of mistakes and misadventures while maintaining the potential for autonomy².

At the risk of mixing my metaphors, let me now return to my Mr Darcy. One might disagree with me here on the extent to which I can say a HF-ASD Mr Darcy is subjecting the content of his maxims to a universalizability test, and only willing those which pass. After all, some studies have found lower moral reasoning among those with HF-ASD (Senland and Higgins-D'Alessandro 2013). It may be the case, consistent with the Li, Zhu et al study, that Mr Darcy can apply rigid (exceptionless) rules; but at times fail to accord with a Kantian conception of morality given his difficulty with abstraction. Importantly, this too is consistent with a Kantian view of morality. At the heart of this article is a vision of Kant, far from the Kantian Captain view, as a philosopher all too aware of human moral frailty. If perfectionism means one cannot be said to be capable of morality, if one does not show perfection in morality, then Kant was no perfectionist. In fact, the highest good of perfect morality is, according to Kant, unachievable, at least in this life. It is an ideal we must strive for, but never reach. Our failures in morality do not mark us as amoral; they show us to be human. It is not important that HF-ASD Mr Darcy sometimes fails, it is only important that he is capable of moral behaviour on the Kantian conception. As such then, a Kantian conception of morality can include HF-ASD Mr Darcy within its purview. Can the same be said of other approaches?

I think, as Kantians, the more we move towards Aristotelianism, the more problematic it becomes to maintain the view that inherent emotional frailty, the sort exhibited by my HF-ASD Mr Darcy and my Pyromanic Bonhoffer, is consistent with the potential for full moral agency. According to Kristjan Kristjánsson, implicit in the move towards Aristotelianism is an 'image of the self as an enmattered essence, which if it is to realize its full potential, must think its feelings and feel its thoughts.' (Kristjánsson 2007, 3). Similarly, Kristjánsson notes that virtue typically comprises a set of perception/recognition, emotion, desire, motivation, behaviour and comportment or style, where none of the factors can be evaluated in isolation from the others (Kristjánsson 2015, 14). If feeling and thought is so entangled, on the Aristotelian conception, it becomes difficult to see how moral behaviour is possible without appropriate moral emotion. The Aristotelian might argue that 'falling short' is as consistent with their account as it is with a Kantian one. Instead of full autonomous virtue, HF-ASD Mr Darcy might obtain moral continence. Leaving aside the insult that is the term 'continence' (as opposed to 'incontinence'), can someone who cannot exhibit appropriate moral emotion be said to be merely falling short, on an Aristotelian account? Here, for the Aristotelian, it depends on what one is struggling with. If, like HF-ASD Mr Darcy, you struggle with your own nature, you are incapable of immunity to your feelings of superiority (or as Austin might call it – conceit), it is difficult to see how you could attain continence. I follow Heidi Furey on this; her account of Aristotle has it that such a constant internal struggle against one's own feelings, would constitute a flaw in

² This struggle is also the struggle at the heart of man's unsocial sociability (Kant 2007, 44), or the tension between his inclination to live in society and his resistance to others. Interestingly, this struggle has the result of ameliorating the situation of man as a species, from barbarism to culture (Kant 2007, 44). Moreover, as mentioned in section 1, it is also the struggle associated with the Kantian conception of virtue. As Manfred Kuehn states in his introduction to the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, virtue is "something human, perhaps even all-too-human" (Kant 2013, xxv).

one's character (Furey 2017). As such, it isn't that Mr Darcy falls short on his path to virtue compared to someone with the appropriate emotional responses; he is 'on the wrong path altogether' (Furey 2017, 480).

It is certain that Aristotelian concerns have influenced the Kantianism of Nancy Sherman; but they are, I believe, also present in the Kantian character education of Marcia Baron. In fact, as I see it, inherent to over-emotionalising of Kant's moral theory is a commitment to Kristjánsson's enmattered essence. As I hope to have shown, while there is certainly scope on the Kantian account for a concept of moral agency that is sensitive to the role of emotion, an over-emotionalisation may lead to excluding some, or at least denigrating their moral experience to that of constant failure (those with HF-ASD). As any teacher worth their salt knows, you ought not to set children up to fail. If the task, set by the teacher, is structured in such a way that some children simply cannot access the learning in virtue, perhaps, of a special educational need, then the task is inappropriate. All educational approaches ought to take into account the needs and potential exclusion of its learners; character education is no different. This is not to say that Aristotelian approaches are inappropriate. The move towards Aristotle, has been in my opinion, a move in the right direction. It would seem we are operating in a zeitgeist that embraces the emotional element of humanity. Whether this phenomenon is captured through the vocabulary of 'emotional intelligence' or the public floodgate opening of momentous events like the death of Princess Diana, it certainly dovetails nicely with a move towards Kristjánsson's enmattered essence. That said, as I have shown, something may have been lost along the way. The intuitions that drive teachers to differentiate their classroom approach such that all can be included in the learning, should move us to differentiate our approach to character education. Perhaps this differentiation might end up being a hybrid approach; it is beyond the remit of this article to discuss this in depth. Nonetheless, given the concerns of this paper, when it comes to inclusiveness, I believe the Kantian approach to character education has the edge over its Aristotelian counterpart.

Conclusion

Throughout, I have expressed my approval for a concept of moral agency that gives emotion its due. A Kantian account of moral agency can do this due-giving, without compromising on its inclusiveness. As such, when it comes to character education, Kantian variants can include some within its purview that might be excluded on over-emotionalised Kantian or Aristotelian alternatives. This inclusion is important. I have described individuals with HF-ASD as having the capacity to commit deeply to morality, even if they may find using moral emotion to support their decision making difficult or even impossible. It is incumbent upon character education to find a way of including these individuals in a way that facilitates their development of character, and refuses to denigrate their experience of morality. I believe that a theory of character education, with a Kantian account of moral agency (as outlined above) can include these individuals appropriately.

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