Emotion, Reason, and Awareness

by

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ABSTRACT

In a western tradition of philosophy, beginning in Ancient Greece and continuing into a dominant role in Anglo-American thinking, emotions have generally been relegated to a role subservient to reason—a role further reinforced by a scientific view of emotion as unthinking responses shaped through evolution to situations in life. Against this view, other resistant discourses have developed that attempt to reshape this hierarchy.

This study challenges this traditional view of the emotions using critical analyses of the reason/emotion dualism that come from two different theoretical positions—that of human development theory and a feminist analysis of emotions as sites of political power. Using ideas from Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, another view of emotions is proposed that places them at the centre of language and meaning-making within patterns of living. In this central position, emotions become the most common and compelling site of inner, private experience engaging with outer public language, and a prime example of the engagement of private experience in conceptual understanding.

Because of this central position, an emotional education must address both the inner and outer aspects of experience. The latter requires that students are fully engaged in the language of emotion, primarily through open and accepting relationships with mentors ready to respond to the feelings of the student. The inner aspect requires that individuals themselves learn to pay open attention to their own inarticulate inner experience.

Two practices for developing awareness of the pre-conceptual aspect of experience are examined: mindfulness meditation coming from Buddhist tradition, and a practice called Focusing developed by Gendlin. The kind of relationship between inner experience and conceptualization developed by these practices provides access to new possibilities for expression of emotion and ways of incorporating emotion in understanding.

Benefits to individuals and the possibility of positive social change that would occur from emotional education are examined. Suggestions for further study are made regarding how emotional understanding can become a positive part of every student’s experience in school.
**Keywords:** Reason/Emotion dualism; Private language; Mindfulness; Focusing; Awareness; Emotional curriculum; Teacher/student relationship.
To my heart, my inspiration, my wife

Linda Muttitt
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PART ONE

THE CHALLENGE OF THE EMOTIONS
CHAPTER ONE

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

For isn’t philosophy in its prime and ipso facto dying, consuming itself in its own fire? If philosophers unable to bear the heat, or others bent on their own business, extinguish the flames, then there will remain only blackened confusion. But if the fire burns itself out then from the ashes will be born something like but different.

John Wisdom

Hope

I’ve often counselled my writing students, as they struggle to start a piece of writing, to leave space at the beginning so they can come back later and fill in the introduction. After all, who knows what they are going to say before they have said it. This section is my trying to listen to my own advice—something every teacher should try from time to time. Rereading the sections that follow sometime after writing them, I realize how grumpy I can seem. There was a place for that irritability as the conduct of many students I have taught in secondary school over the last few years bothered me. I have always hoped so much that what I have taught students had some chance of helping them to live fuller and happier lives where their emotional experience would enrich and give vitality and depth to what they did. The grumpiness comes from believing that for many students school is a place that has little to do with enriching their lives in that kind of way. The joy of teaching for me has come from those students for whom I
have been able to provide a chance to move forward into new experience with passionate interest.

My hope in writing this thesis is that I can show how the way we in the West, and many of those affected by Western thinking, have generally come to talk about emotions and their role in life has restricted how we can imagine them being an important part of an education. Further, I hope by showing the origin of some of this restrictive way of talking and thinking, and by providing another view of the emotions that escapes some of these traps, I can expand how we think of emotions and how they can become part of what we teach and how we teach. In essence, I hope by showing that there are other ways of talking and thinking about the emotions to provide a basis for building an emotional education that will help support a passion for living and learning for everyone in school and beyond. This basis is a kind of relationship with immediate experience, the inarticulate experience of the moment, which can be lost in the buzz of discursive thought and the press of information that we allow to command our attention.

The irony of producing all the words that follow to support developing careful attention to inarticulate experience is not lost to me. But I will argue that just as language so often shapes our experience, the reverse is also often true. Careful attention to immediate experience can lead to new ways of talking, and these ways of talking can in turn influence new ways of living. In the final chapter of this work, I will mention some of the ways that all the words, those in this writing, and those in the conversations that have moved my thinking along, have had an impact on my life and professional practice. To get there, I will start with the dissatisfactions that began my interest in emotions particularly as they appear in school.

**Reflections**

This study began with me as a teacher wondering what was going on with my students. This wondering then led to me wondering in new ways what was going on with me. Even though my students and I generally got on well with each other, it seemed to me that they were getting meaner and less understanding towards each. Were they less able to recognize their own and others’ emotional states? Was I, as a person of a certain age, falling into that place
in life where all I could do was grumble about how the younger generation was
going to hell in a hand basket? In addition, it seemed to me that more and more
of my grade 11 and 12 students would come to me at those course planning or
life planning times of the year and say, “Mr. N, I don’t know what to take next
year,” or ask, “What should I do next year?” I’d ask, “What are you passionate
about?” — a question that would often be answered with a shrug. I’d try different
questions: “What are you interested in?” “What are you curious about?” “What
do you want to learn more about?” Shrug, shrug, “I don’ know.”

That wasn’t every student’s response, of course. There were lots of others:
“Soccer,” “Dance,” “Hockey,” “Winning the lottery,” and more. But for me, that
absence of a passionate interest in some of what I thought of as my best students
was worrying. I might not have worried so much if my wife, herself a passionate
primary teacher, didn’t come home with stories of the excited curiosity that most
of her students could so easily find about life. These contrasting reports kept me
honest, remembering that at some point all those adolescents in front of me had
been active and interested learners. They’d learned language, how to walk and
run, how to observe, and so much more. Students in my wife’s grade two classes
may not have always been interested in their schooling, but they seemed to be
interested in life in ways that my grade 10, 11, and 12s were not. Was I, and
schooling in general, doing something to detach students from an early
enthusiasm for learning, from curiosity and passion? That thought took some
uncomfortable swallowing. It ran so counter to the hopes that I had brought to
my teaching career.

It wasn’t that I had been adept in handling or understanding emotions
myself. In a few pages, I will make some confessions about that aspect of my life,
but I was convinced through experience that living a full emotional life was a
worthy goal, that connecting emotionally with life provided meaning and
purpose to all experience, and that such a life was worth cultivating. The thought
that schooling might somehow be working against developing this kind of
emotional engagement with living was very concerning. With that concern,
though I didn’t fully realize it at the time, the main goal for the work in this
thesis was set: how can we best understand and promote a meaningful emotional
life for ourselves and for students in our care?

This sort of question became the focus of my reflections on my practice as
a teacher. They joined another set of questions that had been growing out of my
work teaching communication skills to students in my English classes. Years before, when I had first got a job as a teacher and faced classes where I had a chance to influence students from the beginning of the course, I started each class with a “teacher speech” where I talked about how we would all treat each other with respect and understanding. I thought that if I affirmed those hopes at the beginning, my classes would naturally unfold in that way. I talked about the excitement I thought inherent in the reading and writing that we would be doing, hoping all that talk would somehow be infectious, would support and maybe revive students’ desire to learn. I hoped at least that we would be able to get along together.

Through reading Carl Rogers *On Becoming a Person* at this early stage in my career, I had started to imagine how communication of respect or “unconditional positive regard” might sound, and was working to develop skills to communicate respect and other attitudes in more facilitative and effective ways. Some aspects of my own personal development in these skills, I found very challenging. I confess to one of my difficulties further on in a following section called “Confessions,” but I made progress nonetheless. I imagined that as I grew better at modelling these kinds of communication skills, I would naturally see my students improve in their ability to provide me, and each other, with the kind of feedback and understanding that would make the classroom a kinder place to be.¹

If a teacher’s first years of teaching aren’t marked by a faith that amazing things will happen, then what would we have to sustain us through the beginning of a career? The interesting and unexpected courses that we find ourselves teaching, the burden of developing fresh lessons or begging, borrowing, and stealing what has worked for others has to be supported by some kind of faith. If my students still tended at times, particularly when stressed, to be rude, self-centred, or less than perfectly respectful or empathic, it seemed it could only be because I needed to learn and develop my skills further.

At some point in the process, I took a course to qualify to teach counselling skills to students in peer counselling programs. Clearly for most of the specially selected students in these programs, the same small group

¹ There is evidence that such improved kinds of communication are possible and would have benefits for teachers and students. See Aspy and Roebuck, *Kid’s don’t learn from people they don’t like.*
experiential kinds of learning that were part of my own learning program did work to develop their facilitative communication skills—with some of them becoming very adept quickly while others struggled as I had myself. Working with these students provided me with examples of both success and failure. These ways of interacting seemed to be “natural” only to those who had guided experience in using them even among groups of students who had been recommended for the program because of their abilities as supportive listeners. Perhaps where teachers might once have expected students to communicate with them in certain respectful ways, now those ways had to be taught and modelled in school. But even then, I realized, as I developed my ability as a teacher of effective communication and became better at responding to students’ emotions in the classroom, that it wasn’t simply a lack of communication skills that was of concern. It seemed more and more, for many students, that losing track of their own curiosity and passion for learning might be connected to a more general inability to recognize and respond to other people’s emotions.

This loss of ability to recognize others’ emotions emerged more and more as I continued to teach effective communication skills. With Carl Rogers’s guidance and techniques based on his ideas developed by Robert Carkuff,3 I identified three skills that I wanted students to practice: communicating with empathy, effective self-assertion, and communicating with respect. Because I could only imagine that my students would have their own emotional experience available to them, and that they could see how others were feeling, it followed that if I didn’t see my students communicating well, it had to be because of a lack of skill.

Yet over the years that I have taught these skills, a number of things became apparent. Teenagers struggle with the idea of providing feedback to another person before launching into their own stories. Perhaps that’s not surprising. What did surprise me was the ease that they all showed in imagining hurtful, judgmental, or otherwise low levels of communication, and the great difficulty many had in correctly identifying their own and others’ emotions. Perhaps it was, on the one hand, unfamiliarity with a style of communicating, but more worryingly it seemed more and more to be a failure to be aware of or to perceive the emotional messages in the voice, body language, and tone of the

2 “The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Personality Change.”
3 The Art of Helping.
message to which they were responding. Most suffered from the kind of “deficiency” to which I will shortly confess. Where I had assumed that I would be teaching students to communicate in ways that showed respect and understanding, what I realized I needed to do was teach students to become aware of their own and others’ emotions in ways that I had assumed would happen on its own. I began to wonder if that kind of emotional development had ever happened naturally, or whether it was the result of a complex of environmental factors that had changed in society or were no longer working as well as they once had. Other teachers’ concerns about the ways students had changed how they communicated with each other, with adults, and how they treated themselves and others reinforced my concern.

So the first round of my reflections led to my discovery that I had come a long way in developing my communication skills, and in the process had developed emotionally, but I had still little idea of what teaching in the area of the emotions would look or sound like for those students who seemed to lack the emotional awareness that made the communication skills work. As a result, I set off on a search for something that might be called an emotional curriculum, and that search eventually brought me to this thesis. Along the way, I realized that more reflection and perhaps more honesty was required—or a deeper understanding of from where I had come and to where I had arrived. That means I have some confessions to make.

Confessions

Perhaps too few pieces of academic writing begin with confessions—yet there is some precedent for confession. All the work that goes into producing something one hopes is worth reading comes from an individual motivated by something or other, and as a reader, I’ve often wondered what on earth could have compelled someone to write all this—whatever “this” was at the time. In any case, I’ve repeated so often to students one of the platitudes of the writing teacher—“All writing comes from experience”—that I find myself believing it without reservation. It has all the inescapable validity of a tautology. Where else could writing come from but the writer’s experience?

So saying that this writing comes from my experience, and trying to proceed with the often dispassionate voice of the academic is a difficult task—
and a fairly ironic one given that this work is to some extent a critical examination of a presupposition widely held in Western philosophy that the rational mind exists in a space quite separate from daily experience with its impulses, emotions, and inspirations. The Writer’s Platitude hints at a view of writing, and perhaps of thinking, that is quite distinct from this presupposition: namely that writing does not come only from a space distinct or separate from all of the writer’s experience but is in some way an expression of that experience.

I’ve started with how my experience as a teacher led me to wonder what was happening to the emotional understandings of my students and to reflect on how what I was doing as a teacher might be having an impact on their development of emotional understanding. Naturally enough, such thoughts led to what I had learned about emotions and the role they had played in my life. I am sure that we all have emotional experiences that have been central to forming us into the people we are. At this point, I’m including several confessions of events that seem to me to exemplify ways in which emotions can have a profound impact on our understanding and the way in which we live our lives. Whatever thinking or theorizing about emotions may do, it needs to help us make sense of these experiences, and to appreciate them for the importance they have in shaping us. One way to see what was missing in the lives of some of my students was to remind myself about the powerful ways in which emotional responses to the world had informed and shaped my life.

Everyone has these powerful emotional events in their lives. One reason why I record several of mine here, and describe a few others at later points in this study, is to remind myself that it is experiences like these with real living importance that should be honoured and preserved intact when battered by thinking and philosophizing about them. Perhaps readers will be reminded of experiences where emotions were central to important times in their own lives.

**Falling in Love**

In the autumn of 1983, I started falling in love with the woman who would become my wife and in many ways my inspiration and greatest support. Married to her still, I can think of no greater defining emotional moment in my life than falling in love with her and choosing her as my life mate. At the time, however, the experience was tremendously complicated and conflicted because I was married to someone else when I met her.
My temptation at this point is to make this story either way too short or way too long. In its broadest outline, it is a common enough story. In its specifics, it represents one of the most transformative experiences in my life—but I won’t include many specifics. What needs to be said is that I fell in love despite my efforts to not fall in love. I had made promises to another that I intended to keep. I could not imagine how I could remain an honourable person and break those promises. I could not imagine who I would be if I acted against my word. That is why falling in love with someone who was not my wife was so confounding. In the end, there was no reasoning with my heart, which was uncontrollably drawn towards my new love, and no suppressing of those feelings, no avoiding having those feelings, could stop my heart breaking promises made towards my wife of the time. Through falling in love, I was no longer the person I had been, and through my efforts to not fall in love I was not the person I was inevitably drawn to becoming.

I have no clearer or more profound experience of the power of emotion to obliterate what one thinks of oneself or of how one ought to behave. In an attempt at marriage counselling, I described my emotional dilemma at the time as having to choose between one life and another.

Powerful emotions have been seen as overwhelming passions that sweep over one like a fit of madness obliterating rational control. The experience that I’ve outlined here gives me my own sense of that aspect of emotion that is feared in some of the traditional texts that will be examined later in this study. While some philosophers argue that emotions are the ground of personal meaning in the world, and that they give value to life, the dominant view has been that they are dangerous as they threaten and sometimes overwhelm our rationality. Looking back on the experience described above, I must acknowledge that something of that rings true, for giving into love in many ways seemed both to me and others who knew me a descent into a kind of madness. So it might have been seen, and yet from my present perspective I would say that surrender to love has meant all the difference to me. It remade me or transformed me in ways that would not have been possible without the engagement of the emotions.

Can emotions be both dangerous and beautiful, madness and perhaps a kind of supra-sanity? This story calls upon me to wonder. Was I inadequately fortified against what some might call the sickness of the emotions, or terribly out of touch with their wisdom? I have to incline towards the latter view.
The next confession from around the same time in my life shows to me now two things: that I was often unaware of my emotional response in my daily experience and because of that not able to act in ways that were helpful to myself or others.

**Becoming a Teacher**

During the summer semester, my final semester of training to be a teacher at Simon Fraser University, I took EDUC 483, Curriculum Development, with Selma Wasserman, a course that had the nickname of “The Delicious Alternative.” We often ate together meals that we planned and cooked. Aside from the gastronomic interest, the course focused on three ways of thinking about and implementing curriculum: Teaching for Thinking, Values Clarification, and Helping Interactions with Students that included responding with empathy. Through that summer semester, we practiced questioning and other communication skills inherent in each of these models. I quickly developed skills in two of them but struggled greatly with the third. I had terrible difficulties supplying empathic feedback. Questions of all kinds would flood my mind, but the empty spaces in “You feel ______ because ________” remained blank a great deal of the time.

Communicating my empathic understanding of others wasn’t my only challenge in the area of understanding and communicating emotions. During my long practicum of the semester before, I had dutifully read *Teacher Effectiveness Training* to help me deal with one problem class. They weren’t working when I wanted them to and that was frustrating me and not boding well in the evaluation of my teaching. I found a possible action to take in the “I–statement”: “When you _______, I feel __________.” All I had to do was stand in front of the problem group and announce, “When you people don’t work during class, I feel frustrated as your teacher because I can’t do my job and help you learn.” I role-played my response, “journalled” it in my reflective journal, and was never so nervous in my life as I was when I stood before that class ready to deliver my carefully planned revelation. In front of the class, I had all the symptoms of someone suffering acute anxiety from the butterflies in my stomach to the sweaty palms. That feeling was fully available to me.

---

4 Gordon, *Teacher Effectiveness Training*. 
When the time came, as it almost always did when I said, “I want you to take out your books and start writing,” and nothing happened much, I made my announcement. The completely unexceptional response of my students was in many ways the perfect ironic backdrop to all the anxiety of my preparation. I remember one student looking up, saying “Oh,” and gratifyingly opening her notebook. My practicum evaluation went well, and I soon entered the teaching profession.

Having since that time worked with pre-service teachers in their practica, I can gratefully say that I’m not the only one who has struggled with that simple kind of self-disclosure as a teacher. And “genuineness” or “congruence” in teacher-student interactions is no magic bullet. In later years, I clearly remember confronting one group of boys in one of my classes with “When you guys say stuff like that, it hurts my feelings.” One student’s response was “Eww, Nelson’s feelings are hurt!” He did not say it like he thought that was a bad thing. But “genuineness” or whatever it may be that is illustrated here is certainly a part of any real relationship that has transformational potential. In chapter 11, I will return to examine the kind of relationship needed to develop emotions as transformative tools.

In terms of thinking about education and the life of our emotions, the question that arose for me was why it is that after a Bachelor’s Degree in English Literature and Philosophy and several years of postgraduate study in Philosophy, and the first steps in preparing to be a teacher, I should find it so difficult in many circumstances to communicate and understand emotions. I have my own personal story that goes some way to explain this difficulty, but the general question remains: How does our education either help or hinder us from living fully and intelligently a life that is filled with emotion? This question leads again to further reflection on my experience with students.

**Students’ Experience**

More recently than the confessions I have told to this point, I happened upon the book *Destructive Emotions*, Daniel Goleman’s report on a meeting of Western scientists with the Dalai Lama. I found it thought provoking in many ways. In it, for example, Daniel Ekman reported on some of his work on the micro-expression and recognition of emotions. That chapter included a set of
photographs of expressions of basic emotions. It gave me an idea for an informal “survey” of some of my students. I started asking students what emotions they saw in the pictures. When one bright and socially adept 17-year-old girl looked at an enraged face and said, “I don’t know. Is he sad?” I really started to wonder where emotional understanding had gone. Could some of the aggressive atmosphere of school hallways be the result of students just not noticing that others were annoyed? It was no wonder that Goleman’s own sally into the field, Emotional Intelligence, had struck such a chord and spawned new curricula under the label of Social and Emotional Learning. Other programs were starting to address this problem, too, such as the “Roots of Empathy” project brought into a Langley School District elementary school. I wondered whether programs were available for adolescents or whether had some developmental “window” had closed—a pessimistic thought.

My assumption had been that emotional development would occur naturally, that students would arrive at school, at least at the age of 15 or 16, with some self awareness and awareness of others, and that skills such as responding to others empathically or having the ability to access curiosity or interest could be built on this foundation. Perhaps we all have a road to travel towards these developments that has to be blazed or paved and cannot simply be followed. This study reflects my growing understanding of that road of emotional development and what we can do both for ourselves and to help others move along. The final story I include in this chapter suggests where this work has led experientially for me. Without the work I have been doing in the area of experience and emotion, I don’t think I would have this story to tell. I include it in more detail than the others because I am still amazed that I did what the story describes. The final chapter will include other reflections on what movement ahead is like in this area, but I hope this story suggests something of what kept me at work at this task.

**Joining up with a Horse**

Even though I am not a person drawn to horses, one professional development day, I signed up for a workshop involving interacting with those large strong animals. I had never wondered how a human could go out into a field and get a

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5 Chapter 6.
larger, faster, stronger animal or how this getting involved a joining up. I’d not
ridden horses, studied them, nor felt moved to do so. Yet I felt moved to take an
opportunity to see horse guided leadership in action, and been surprised to
volunteer to actively participate. I’d seen the trainers release the horses into the
big paddock. One was brown and the other dark greyish or something like that. I
realize that by describing them as those colours I reveal how little I know about
horses. The brown horse would probably be called “chestnut” and the dark
greyish might even be called “brown” or “bay” or “black and tan.”

I’d seen the horses set free in the big paddock and, compared to the three
in the little paddock in front of me, they seemed much more to enjoy their
freedom—if charging around the place and kicking up their heels was any
indication. They seemed full of energy and sunshine and the cool breeze that
reminded them it was just spring, and from a distance all the racing around and
energy seemed joyous and very impressive of their speed and strength.

Their size and strength was the reason I hesitated, after the group had
moved up from the small, lower paddock with its calm horses, when the trainers
asked, “Anyone want to catch one of these?” I had the impression that we, a
group of educational leaders, all at least inwardly took a big step back—but that
may have just been me. Somewhere on the way out to the farm I had decided
that I was going to use this day to make a big attempt, but the moment had
arrived and I was stepping back before I stepped forward.

“You’ll both be with me, right?” I asked the trainers, but I was stepping
forward.

It is very different being inside the fence with horses compared to being
on the outside, especially when the idea is that I would go out and “catch” one of
the horses and lead it back from freedom towards the barn. The only horse that
I’d ever been up close to was a trail riding horse at Cultus Lake when I was about
ten years old, and I’m sure that nothing I could do with it had any impression on
it whatsoever no matter how high I bounced as we moved along the trail. That
had been 46 years earlier, and I was sure different and unknown techniques
would be called for in the present situation.

The coaching began as the two trainers and I began our walk out into the
paddock. “You’ve seen with the other horses how there was a clearly dominant
one and a clear order of dominance. These horses are different: they work as a
team.” Coaching doesn’t have to be reassuring, I suppose. “And you see, even though they are prey animals and watch carefully when being approached, how these two are playing at ignoring us? That’s a sign of how confident they are.”

It sounded like a good reason to just ignore the horses right back—to show them how confident we humans felt, but we just kept moving forward purposefully. As we did, the two horses both turned to look at us and then bounced over to the angle where two lines of fencing met. They put their heads down and pretended to eat. And they were only pretending because the wood waste surface of the paddock was inedible. “Great,” I thought, “We’ve got them cornered. Now they’ll have to fight their way out.”

I was sent left to the fence line, “flagging” with my left arm to see if I could move them away from the corner. The chestnut, closest to me, lifted her muzzle from the ground just enough to eye me with a deep brown eye. I heard the trainer behind me say, “Good.” Then the brown picked up and whirled around between the chestnut and me. I said, “She wants the chestnut to ignore us. She’s trying to distract her, isn’t she?”

I was told to flag again and move in. Suddenly, two horses were up and wheeling around through the weak line of humans at a gallop and out into the paddock. They split apart in that manoeuvre, but I was so focused on the chestnut that I hardly noticed. I was moving somehow to do what—intercept? — the chestnut horse and didn’t notice where the other horse had gone. I went by the young woman who was part of the team who said, “I just let them go. When they want to move like that, there’s not much you can do.” As we moved with the horses, she said, “I’ll get the other one so she can’t interfere again.”

The chestnut had stopped facing away from me, and I looked over to see that the other trainer had moved closer to the horse’s head. As I moved following her, the horse turned away. She coached me to stay on the side of the horse where it was able to look back and see me so I didn’t appear as if from nowhere. The chestnut walked to my left and I walked parallel to it and stopped square to its eye. “If it looks away, stop. It’s deciding whether it should run from you. When it looks back, take a step forward. Again. Stop. It’s looked away.”

Later the group outside the fence would describe this as a dance—step, step, wait — step, step, wait. It was a dance set to the music of the chestnut’s curiosity, interest, and trust, music played through its body slowly turning more
and more towards me, the head turning towards and away, and eventually just its eyes on me and then shifting even the slightest bit away.

“Raise your hand, palm up. Make a noise with your hand. Wait. Do it again. Take half a step forward. Wait.” And then the soft, fuzzy, muzzle of the chestnut was investigating my hand, touching and breathing softly.

I didn’t know where those last instructions came from. It seemed like the trainer’s quiet voice was right in the back of my head. When the horse nuzzled my hand, the tone shifted slightly and relaxed, “Now, reach up with your other hand and take the side of the halter. Take the rope and clip it on.” Then, after a pause, “Now, lead her back.”

And I did, my heart wonderfully full and in an amazed state that just registered that the horse was following my lead, that huge head with its deep brown eyes just at my shoulder. She would stop when I stopped and wait as the group talked, and then come back with me as, with further amazement, I led her into the barn and her stall and turned her in that little space before unclipping and saying goodbye.

There is getting a horse and then there is getting a horse to join up with you. So much of the impact of this experience came from the horse’s willingness to cross the last distance between us of her own volition. Talking with more horse knowledgeable friends, I hear stories of other kinds like of the young colt who wouldn’t be got until a traditional sort of cowboy solved the problem. How did he do it? He said, “I just threw a rope around his neck and he came along.” Another friend told me the story of a horse that wouldn’t be got until he put him in a round pen and followed a different ritual that ended with him turning his back to the horse, it coming up to him and nudging his back and then following him as he walked away.

I hope this bit of writing gives a hint of what the experience was like for me working with the chestnut horse with the mentoring voices of two experienced horse persons. The magic of joining up across the gulf of species with the differences of size and power all in the horse’s favour was very moving for me, yet I am pressed to describe what I learned from this experience. Though I was carefully coached through the event, there were also moments when I moved from within in immediate response to something from the horse. There was a kind of paying attention or openness to impulse. For a little while, I started
to understand why some are moved to talk about “somatic knowing” even though that is language that I avoid.

I suspect I will apply what I learned from this experience in many ways. It was a big thing for me working with a horse. It is reassuring that horses, whatever they may represent—let’s say Nature—can have the effect of reaching in and touching something hidden, dormant, or that has existed as a potential only. That may be one reason why they are being used in therapies for the physically, mentally, or emotionally disabled—working with horses having the power to touch some deeper place. One goal of writing this thesis is to see whether I can make more sense of what this deeper place is and how it can be accessed and understood in developing the ability to live a full emotional life.

It’s no coincidence that horse lovers working in this way are likely to attribute special powers to the horses they work with, suggesting that they are particularly and perhaps uniquely powerful in this regard. There are other forms of animal assisted therapy with various other animals assisting. But at this point, based on my own limited experience, the general ability of the horse to illicit some kind of deeper level, or as some say physical, somatic, or emotional response, and that it is important and therapeutic, is remarkable and undeniable. If it is an unexpected response to Nature, it could be of special importance, if human beings are, as some claim, Nature-deprived in ways that restrict or affect some kinds of development.

The question then becomes how do we think about and understand the source and significance of these deep and apparently non-rational responses—especially when the temptations to denigrate them for their apparent non-rationality can be so strong. Observing and working with pre-service teachers, I have found myself using unexpected metaphors: “Think of the class as a pack of dogs” and other talk about “calm, assertive energy.” Teaching and learning

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7 This sort of therapy seems of recent interest for scientific study and to take different forms with different results. See for example Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, and Bowers, “Equine-Facilitated Learning for Youths with Severe Emotional Disorders;” Karol, “Applying a Traditional Individual Psychotherapy Model to Equine-facilitated Psychotherapy;” or Schultz, Remick-Barlow, and Robbins, “Equine-assisted psychotherapy.”

8 Language taken from Cesar Millan, the “Dog Whisperer.”
inevitably takes place on levels other than the intellectual, as does living, and it would be good to have useful language to talk about these levels.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{Introduction to What Follows}

The goal of this work is to develop a better understanding of emotion and the role it plays in experience, the vitality it gives to perception and experience, and the meaning and direction it gives to life. With this understanding, I hope to suggest some practices that could be used in schools and an emotionally engaged pedagogy that could be emphasized in teaching and that would allow this emotional connection with life to be further developed and supported throughout a person’s education. To get to this goal requires a critical look at the overlapping and sometimes conflicting views of emotions that we currently have in our thinking about the emotions and a reconsideration of the way we find meaning and understanding in our experience. There is a felt foundation to experience that lies below our conceptual and discursive thinking, giving thinking its vitality, and opening possibilities for creative expression. Not restricted to artists or genius, this level of experience is part of everyone’s life, though not everyone is aware of it.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part, beginning with this chapter, looks at the importance of emotions in a fully lived life and the variety of theories that have developed around understanding the emotions. I hope the present sketches of events that led me to begin examining our views of emotion, mind, and body serves to connect the reader with his or her own key emotional experiences which are, after all, important touchstones with which theory can be assessed. However, mere introspection can be misleading as it is hard to escape from the circular track of much used concepts: our views shape our experience, which in turn confirms our views. Hence, the second chapter in Part One looks at views that challenge the “common sense” view of emotion that splits emotions off from our rational lives. Both of the views presented there try to open up assumptions in Western thinking about emotion. The third chapter examines one example of how unresolved confusion in our understanding of emotion can

\textsuperscript{9} Not that this is news to many. See Noddings, “Affect and Story in Teacher Education,” for a brief overview of how the privileging of rationality and of the rational, detached professional has restricted how we talk and think about teaching.
connections

impact attempts to introduce an emotional curriculum in schools. When we see the confusion that results from overlapping discourses of the emotions, I hope that the need to reduce confusion becomes clear.

Part Two explores the philosophical background that led to the mind/emotion split in our thinking. Mind/emotion (and mind/body) dualism is at the base of so much of our thinking. Two alternatives to this dualism are examined: one that attempts to move emotions over the boundary into the mind and another, using a kind of philosophizing developed and used by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, attempts to make the dualism disappear as it is argued that the idea stems from a misuse of language. Wittgenstein’s method can be useful as a way of clearing up confusions that arise from the language we use to explain our concepts. Our language, I will argue, is grounded in uses within language games based on patterns of living, and we often import from one game into another creating confusion in the process. Understanding that process often dissolves the confusion and the necessity we might once have felt to see things a certain way. Suddenly we can see a new aspect of our experience. This approach has useful implications for our thinking about emotions, I believe, and is the basis of the view I develop in Chapter 7.

Part Three takes the view of the emotions developed in Part Two forward and begins to consider ways in which a more unified view of experience that incorporates our emotional life into our lived experience may become part of education and schooling. Moving from theory to practice requires especially that philosophical work continue to be done to maintain and respond to practices that arise with new thinking. As part of that work, two practices that hold promise as part of an emotional education are considered. How to proceed with developing new programs or curriculum where theory and even language itself threatens new understandings is a challenge. As a result, Part Three may hold more questions than answers—but then answers in the form of theory may not be what are needed.

It is my hope that this thesis will go some way towards reconceptualizing our emotional lives in ways that will allow us to reconceptualize schooling and make teaching and learning more of an opportunity to grow and develop as a person—recognizing that this growth and development can occur at any stage of a person’s career as a student or as a teacher. I will propose a view that suggests that our emotional lives are already implicated in work in schools because our
emotions are inextricably implicated in every experience we have. This connection between emotion and learning is already reflected in all sorts of language we use when talking about education—about the affective domain, the tone of a school or a classroom, attitudes towards learning, all the kinds of interactions that go on in schools, and, more recently, social and emotional learning, developing emotional intelligence, or intra- and interpersonal intelligence. However, most of this talk is part of a discourse that splits what is better seen as one. With a view of emotion that reflects the part it plays in all our experience, I hope we will be able to shape our practice as educators so that our students and we can live fuller and more vital lives.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CHALLENGE OF THE EMOTIONS

Individuality is founded in feeling; and the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen and how work is actually done.

William James

Introduction

What goes on as we learn about our own and others’ emotions? Who teaches us and how—and to what end? It seems at least slightly odd for me to ask these questions because, for the most part as the first chapter has shown, I have assumed that emotions take care of themselves in the same way that early language acquisition generally takes care of itself. Emotions show up and are expressed by infants laughing, crying, or staring wildly about, and follow along in their way through our growth and aging. Scientists such as Paul Ekman see them as part of our biology, aspects of our evolutionary heritage, preserved in the older parts of our brain, with any unusual or deviant development of an individual’s emotional life the result of disease or damage. But what if this explanation of our emotions is not true, or not complete? If we cannot simply rely on the genetically based unfolding of emotions to build our emotional lives, but instead realize that our emotions and our understanding of our and others’

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10 Ekman, Emotions Revealed.
emotions results from the interaction of our genetic potential with experience and learning, then we would need to take care of this development. We would have to ensure that we look after our emotional lives and the emotional lives of others, especially those whose growth and development is our responsibility.

This chapter examines two challenges, stemming from the work of Stanley Greenspan in the area of human development, on the one hand, and Megan Boler working in a tradition of feminist philosophy inspired by Maxine Greene and Donna Haraway on the other. Both these thinkers challenge the idea that emotions somehow look after themselves. Both challenges question whether we are appropriately taking care of emotional development if it in fact develops through certain kinds of experiences and learning. Both are explicit in stating that it is the way we think about the emotions that makes them problematic—typically as things resembling impulses or conditioned responses that need to be controlled or subdued. Each challenge, in its own way, offers an alternate view placing the power or insight of the emotions at the centre of human understanding. And both argue for the need of society and education in particular to take better care of the emotions. While different in many ways, the different origins and practices of these two challenges serve to emphasize the important call they make to rethink and revalue emotions.

Greenspan’s challenge comes from his study of human development. In his view, all intellectual development is based on key emotional developments that can only occur in certain types of relationships—relationships that are being undervalued and threatened by changes occurring in modern Western society. These changes are diverse and wide-ranging and vary from changes in family composition to the impersonalizing effect of urbanization. As a result, many steps in the intellectual and emotional development of individuals are not happening in a way that promotes the kind of intellectual development society needs to maintain itself. This claim taken as a whole is massive in its assumptions and implications, but of immediate import within this view is the claim that much of our inability to see what is happening during emotional/intellectual development comes from the way we have traditionally seen and talked about the relationship between emotion and reason.

Boler’s challenge comes from a theory of emotion she has developed from the work of Elizabeth Spelman, Alison Jagger, and Sandra Bartky, among
others. In their work, the idea of the biological origin of emotions and their private and personal etiology is challenged by a view that sees emotions not as individual, private experiences generated by our biology, but as socially understood and shaped expressions with political purposes that can be used to criticize, disenfranchise, or subjugate different classes or genders. In sharp distinction from the view that emotions and emotional development can be “left to itself” as an unfolding biological process, this view sees emotions as shaped by diffuse power towards political ends, and liberation depends on facing this understanding and resisting this power by engaging the emotions in a process of resistance.

Both of these schools of thought call upon us to examine and re-conceptualize the role emotions play in human life and development and to act with this new understanding to preserve or create possibilities for rich, full, and liberated ways of living. This is the challenge of the emotions—a challenge to the dominant discourse about the emotions, a discourse that will be examined in detail in Chapters 4-6, and the assumptions it instils in our thinking. Greenspan’s and Boler’s challenges are calls to change the practices that enforce that discourse. After developing the challenges in more detail in the next two sections of this chapter, I will conclude by looking at how these conceptual challenges might find appropriate response. I will argue that Wittgenstein’s idea of the development of language games through history provides a way of looking at the historical roots of common ideas of the emotions that may help untangle the resulting confusion.

**A Challenge based on Greenspan’s Human Development Theory**

Stanley Greenspan was a psychiatrist who worked with children showing developmental difficulties, often those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and others coming from “multi-risk” families, that is families showing dysfunction through a combination of addiction, abuse, neglect, poverty and so on. His experience led to the following conclusion:

> While charting these earliest stages in the growth of the mind, we have been confronted with mounting evidence that such growth is becoming

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11 Boler, *Feeling Power*, pages 9-18 provide a full list of her philosophical sources.
seriously endangered by modern institutions and social patterns. There exists a growing disregard for the importance of mind-building emotional experiences in almost every aspect of daily life…. The lack of this foundation can even be seen in the processes we use to communicate, govern, and build international cooperation.\(^\text{12}\)

After working with children with developmental delays, normally developing children, and those coming from dysfunctional families, Greenspan concluded that intellectual development is inseparably linked with the development of key emotional understandings. This link remains, connecting even the most abstract thinking and emotional experience, throughout life.

Development of the intellect as it is normally understood—the site of our conceptual and logical intelligence—requires emotional experience and learning “for its architecture.” In other words, there are basic emotional understandings that must be learned for language to make sense as communication, for example, or for abstract thinking to intervene between impulse and action. One cannot be completely without certain basic emotional understandings and retain the ability to think: “Abstract, apparently self-contained concepts, even those forming the basis of the most theoretical scientific speculations, also reflect at bottom a child’s felt experience” (GM, 20). I’ve used the word “understandings” here to talk about the outcomes of emotional experience, but these understandings are in many ways seeing the world of inner and outer relationships in certain ways, and manifest in such things as being able to calm oneself and focus attention, to see that one’s actions and expressions can influence others, and that they can influence in return.

Greenspan is not alone in making claims linking emotions with thinking and decision-making. Antonio Damasio also suggests that normal decision-making is not, and cannot be, simply a function of rational thinking but must include input from the emotions.\(^\text{13}\) Damasio came to his view after investigating the challenges faced by people with certain kinds of brain damage. If the thinking part of the brain cannot connect with the emotional part, people would typically get stuck in weighing pros and cons of even simple decisions. These injuries rendered people unable to maintain social behaviour or to act purposefully in their own lives. It was as if the missing emotional preferences


\(^\text{13}\) Damasio, *Descarte’s Error*. 
were necessary to tip the balance of logical considerations. Greenspan, who drew his conclusions from an analysis based on observation and treatment, finds this interconnection between emotion and thinking begins in early development, and that the development of conceptual thinking occurs only if key steps of emotional development have occurred as an inseparable early part of intellectual development and then remain alive and infused as part of that development.

Greenspan is more explicit about the failure to make the connection between conceptual thinking and emotions resulting from our philosophical heritage that splits the two apart. As a result, inquiry into failures to develop is often directed away from emotional issues:

The perennial dichotomy between emotions and intelligence persists because, until recently, there has been little inquiry into the way emotions and intelligence actually interact during early development. (GM, 7)

While it is useful to distinguish between emotions and conceptual thinking in some circumstances, the dichotomy between them has been and remains harmful to understanding and effective action. Greenspan states that the mistake is not the distinguishing but the separating of emotion and thinking. When we think the two are separate, there are negative impacts in a number of important areas of human endeavour like raising children, structuring work and society to support the raising of children, making psychotherapy effective, understanding others, and educating students:

Undermining the effectiveness of our educational system is the dichotomy between the emotions and the intellect that underlies many of its principles. The separation between emotional and intellectual growth ignores developmental levels and individual differences, thus hindering many children’s potential. (GM, 211)

The enduring legacy of our elevation of rationality to the defining characteristic of mature humanity is this muddle about the emotions. The more we have developed our ability to get hold of ourselves or to pull ourselves together and reason coolly, the less we have been able to understand or incorporate emotions into our thinking about ourselves and how we might live:

The basic element of thinking—the true heart of the creativity central to human life—requires lived experience, which is sensation filtered by an
emotional structure that allows us to understand both what comes through the senses and what we feel and think about it as well as what we might do about it. (GM, 39)

What is it about modern institutions and social patterns that threaten this kind of development? In particular, what is it about schools that threaten emotional growth and therefore the kinds of intellectual development, such as the development of self and other understandings that require better emotional development? Greenspan contends that some of what stops schools from incorporating emotional experience in learning is the way we tend to think of the emotions as non-intellectual, “bodily” processes that develop on their own and usually complicate learning rather than being essential to it. When children’s emotions are included in educational thinking, it is typically as “interest” that can be directed through motivational strategies, as dysfunctions that need to be treated, or as a part of learning that can be employed to enhance memory and retention of information.

But to separate the emotions from reason, even if alongside reason, is to mistake the necessary relationship Greenspan sees. Emotional development to at least a certain minimal level is a necessary part of the formation and operation of our rationality that must precede abstraction and consideration of logic, and then remain a part of all thinking. This development begins before thinking in language starts:

Our entire bodies are involved. Our emotions are created and brought to life through the expression and gestures we make with the voluntary muscle systems of our faces, arms and legs—smiles, frowns, slumps, waves and so forth (GM. 22).

Two conceptions are at work in maintaining the split between emotion and thinking that Greenspan attacks. First, as previously mentioned, is the belief that emotions and emotional development can in many ways be left to itself, just the way that growing bodies can be left to themselves to fulfil their genetic potential, needing only the right physical inputs like food and water. It is only when bodies or emotions don’t flourish that intervention is necessary—and the appropriate intervention is usually in some way medical in nature. The second

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14 These sorts of expressions being the foundation of how we learn the concepts we use to express in language our inner experience. See for example Wittgenstein, Investigations, p. 118.
belief is that the primary purpose of schooling is the intellectual development of the child which will be measured, more and more it seems, through regimes of standardized testing that typically include primarily questions about the recall and application of information and learned processes or procedures of thought. These two conceptions are the offspring of our intellectual heritage—or one part of it—and are directly challenged by Greenspan’s claims.

In Greenspan’s view, it would not be an adequate response just to say that society should place greater emphasis on emotions. What is necessary is to rethink the separation we place between thinking and feeling:

We can no longer afford to ignore the emotional origins of intelligence. Theories of, say, cognitive versus emotional intelligence, however helpful in emphasizing the importance of emotion, unfortunately leave us with a conception of human nature that separates two of our most important capacities (GM, 40).

It is the seeing of them as separate and able to function totally independently that has to be questioned. It is the separation of emotion and intellect at the source that is the mistake that needs correcting:

The intellectual and emotional features of the human mind both arise from a single source, namely, complex emotional interaction. By fostering rapidly increasing impersonality in every aspect of life, however, the structure of modern society undermines the foundations of the mind. Advanced societies thus risk destroying the basis of their own achievements. If certain trends continue, society stands to lose not only its soul but also the prize for which Faust traded his own soul, the ability to acquire and use knowledge (GM, 167).

As a secondary school teacher of some experience, I can attest to the institutional pressure to focus more and more on students’ examination scores and the changes that can be made to raise them. Exam scores are seen as hard evidence of learning and the search for hard evidence often impacts the “softer” areas of curriculum and pedagogy. This institutional pressure comes from somewhere, and part of that somewhere is the kind of thinking about education that is done. My direct experience comes from teaching at the secondary level, and the pressure to see education this way is surely different at different levels
and in different places, still, while the following story is only one anecdote, it seems to me to be entirely characteristic of a common kind of thinking.

When I was just setting off on this study, I was introduced by a mutual acquaintance to a school administrator at a conference as someone who was studying “emotional intelligence.”

“That’s a big field,” the administrator responded. “Do you have a particular interest?”

“I sometimes worry that schools aren’t teaching kids to be happy, and that we should.”

His reply was, “But how would you measure that? Only things that can be measured get done.”

The need for measurable results alone pushes some towards one line of thinking. First, find or develop an instrument to measure the general level of student happiness in a school. Then, devise various kinds of interventions to use in the school, put up pictures of smiling people, encourage staff to smile a lot, and reward students who meet happiness criteria as they walk down the halls. Use the test instrument to determine happiness at intervals after the intervention, and if there is significant upward improvement, implement the interventions on a wider scale, monitoring for effectiveness. If improvements continue, work to make knowledge of the effective interventions part of all new teachers’ training and get these kinds of interventions made available for in service professional development. In the pragmatic way of things, these are just the sort of programs that are being tried in schools, perhaps with happiness, but certainly with the idea of emotions in general, usually with the idea of moderating or bringing emotions more under control or harnessing them to the general service of testable achievement. Education, happiness, and emotions in general are so important that more radical revisions seem necessary.

The pragmatic approach so often proceeds before important conceptual work has been done. The conceptual problems in the imagined line of thinking above begin immediately with “find or develop an instrument to measure student happiness.” What is happiness? As the inquiry grows wider so do the questions. What are the emotions? Which ones are good and which ones destructive? Who decides the value of emotions? How will they be measured—self-report, observation, brain scan? Programs that use some way of developing
mindfulness in students are being employed, to measurable effect, in schools, to help students moderate their emotions while, concurrently, the researchers work to operationalize the concept of mindfulness. The need to do something, and the existence of a certain method of doing, combine in this kind of pragmatic action.

But it is not pragmatic thinking that Greenspan sees as effectively dealing with the challenge of the emotions:

At the bottom of these proposals is a philosophical shift in the conception of what human beings are. Nations implement policies consistent with their view of who and what they are. If society continues to see the intellect and the emotions—the objective and the subjective aspects of mental organization—as distinct and even conflicting entities, we will not take seriously the central role that intimate interactions play in the development of mind. If we do not come to see subjectivity as basic to both intellect and creativity, and thus fundamental to our ability to compete or cooperate with other nations both economically and in world affairs, we will not only hinder our progress and risk further conflict. We may also become victims of a more dangerous paradox. As we attempt to progress as a society, we may unwittingly erode the building blocks that are the origins of our highest mental abilities. Attention to subjective experience is then not purely a humanitarian or aesthetic activity, but one that is crucial to human survival. (GM. 316-17)

Doubtless, research programs looking at emotions in education are created by people already mindful of developments in the way children behave emotionally in schools. Teachers I talk with uniformly worry about the harsh language and treatment that students in high school hallways dish out to each other. Our way of thinking about the emotions is hindering the development of effective responses to these problems because built into that way of thinking are the assumptions that produce the problem. Greenspan’s greatest challenge to thinking about the emotions is this claim that there is a perennial and dangerous dichotomy in our thinking about emotions and intelligence that hides a necessary interdependence between them. I’ve presented that challenge here to show one of the theoretical claims that provides impetus to what follows. The

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15 In chapter 10, I look in more detail at problems that emerge because of difficulties in operationalizing the complex notion of mindfulness.
same challenge, applied to further work done in this thesis, will reappear in Chapter 12 as a measure of whether the thinking here may be of use.

**A Challenge from Boler’s Feminist Philosophy of Emotion**

The second challenge to our common place thinking about the emotions comes from a theoretical framework put together by Megan Boler incorporating thinking from a variety of feminist sources.\(^\text{16}\) In a survey of theories of the emotions, she identifies four discourses that represent ways in which the force of the emotions has been contained:

1. Rational—in which the “content” of the emotions is thought and judgement, which should be in turn channelled into debate and rational discourse. This discourse is used to disenfranchise groups on the basis of gender, race, or class insofar as the group is seen as less able to contain emotional discussion within this rational context.

2. Pathological—the scientific or medical discourse which assumes an emotional equilibrium that is normative and where emotions that are out of the range of this equilibrium are viewed as pathological and in need of treatment.

3. Romantic—in some religious or artistic traditions, this discourse sees emotions as inspirations or revelations, and as primal, sometimes defying language or other expression.

4. Political—the “most modern view” in which emotions are seen as sites of political power and control that seek, for example, to manage the righteous anger of oppressed and subjugated groups in society.\(^\text{17}\)

The fourth discourse, the political, challenges three elements of emotions that are common to the first three discourses and more generally part of the commonsense or dominant view of the emotions. These elements are

- Emotions are universal (as opposed to cultural)

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\(^{16}\) See note 2 above.

\(^{17}\) Boler, “Disciplined Emotions: Philosophies of Educated Feelings.”
- Emotions are natural (“It is natural to feel angry when _____” as opposed to “You have to learn to feel angry when _____")
- Emotions are private (as opposed to outside the individual in the public sphere).^{18}

Boler’s take on aspects of feminist philosophy takes an opposing position in regards to each of these elements, characterizing emotions as specific sites of cultural control wherein power is used to restrict participation by women who are cast as bitter, overly emotional, or inappropriately sentimental. Sue Campbell puts it this way:

I am interested in a particularly duplicitous kind of dismissal that does not dismiss women for having emotions, but characterizes our emotional lives as unhealthy, attempting to limit our ways of acting in the world, and, consequently, our effects on the world.\textsuperscript{19}

Campbell’s analysis of the ascription of bitterness, developed in the same essay, is a powerful example of how feminist thinking challenges the three elements outlined above. Campbell describes how bitterness is sometimes ascribed to women in the following way.

Bitterness begins as anger at a situation that is unfair. It begins its life as an expression of “intended anger.” In such a situation, anger has an energy and impact that may help to redress the situation and empower the oppressed person or group to find fair treatment. This initial expression may, or perhaps is likely to, fall on the deaf ears of others who reject the unfairness of the situation. In the language that Campbell uses, there is no “uptake” of the anger. Instead, the person expressing the anger is labelled as “bitter” — they are not angry about something; instead they are “bitter” about it. They may have intended anger, but they are expressing anger at injuries in a context where others no longer care to listen. This results in the emotion being labelled as “bitterness:"

The collaboration of a certain mode of expression (recounting of injury) combined with a certain mode of response (failure to listen) forms bitterness. (\textit{BD}, 50)

\textsuperscript{18} Boler, \textit{Feeling Power}, 12.
\textsuperscript{19} Campbell, “Being Dismissed: The politics of emotional expression,” 49. Further citations are given as \textit{BD} in text.
Once the ascription of bitterness is accepted by the person originally expressing anger or just by others, the original injury can be ignored because the returned emotional response to it is just someone “being bitter.” Bitterness becomes, therefore, a powerful political tool to limit or reduce a person’s agency or ability to express emotion and affect action:

   The criticism of bitterness is a powerful political tool that can be used to persuade people that the importance of how they view their lives, as marked by what is recalled and recounted as significant, is of dismissable [sic] interest to others. (BD, 53)

From this example, the challenges to the commonsense view of emotion by Campbell’s view of emotion, adopted by Boler, can be developed. First, it is clear that the ascription of bitterness arises in a specific situation, namely one where someone expresses anger at an injustice or injury and the anger is rejected by others. What would be anger in a different situation is bitterness in this one. The emotion, whatever its impulse, is not universal, but specific to a particular political situation. Second, on this view, bitterness is not a naturally occurring emotion but one that arises from the situation and the ascription or labelling of the expression as bitterness. Finally, by the same argument, bitterness is not a private experience but occurs in the public sphere.

   Campbell outlines this process of the public formation of feelings and shows how the division between a private and public formation of emotion cannot be maintained in any circumstance where expression of emotion is crucial—which may be all emotional events. Expression is important as it comes from a person “attempting to articulate or communicate the significance of some occasion or set of occasions within the context of how she views her life” (BD, 54). Articulation is only possible when one has the “socially acquired resources” for articulation such as language, action, or gesture, and such articulation is the way in which a kind of meaning or significance is both “individuated” and expressed. However, if our articulated expression is not taken up, that is, not heard in ways that “neither distort our intentions nor leave them opaque,” then confusion results in the person who tried to express the feeling. As Campbell puts it:

   On my view, if someone consistently fails to secure uptake for the feelings that get formed only through acts of expression, it cannot be clear
even to that person what she or he is feeling, and many people’s emotional lives are, in fact, dominated by a confusion that is an inevitable consequence of persistent lack of uptake. (BD, 55)

In other words, though anger may have been intended, the person is left with only two options when bitterness is ascribed consistently: recognizing that one is actually feeling bitter; or, one might say at best, feeling confused, helpless, or hopeless instead of angry.

Because of the above options, this view allows one to question what one should feel in certain situations. Only the first three discourses given in Boler’s list above allow that only private introspection might discover how one “really feels.” The feminist view calls for another approach and a different way of thinking of what “emotional literacy” might be—especially where education is seen as a route to liberation through political action inspired by anger against oppression. Boler writes:

The existing programs [concerning emotional literacy], founded on a combination of cognitive and psychobiological science and behavioral psychology, are directed in part toward behavioral modification. Only in rare instances do these curricula address questions of social hierarchies or power relations in relation to emotion. Who gets to decide what counts as good and appropriate emotional behavior for the next generation?

Boler’s answer to her final question above is that feminist philosophers should decide, for they are in the best position to understand the challenge of that task. Chapter 12 will briefly touch upon some pedagogical responses proposed by Boler and examine how the view of the emotions that will be developed in this work stands in comparison with them. Though Boler writes primarily of anger that may fuel political action against oppression, any view of the emotions needs to recognize and respond to this challenge, for it represents an important way to move through some of the dualistic ways of thinking of the emotions that have mired thinking in the same mud for so long.

I think that Boler’s work provides another useful touchstone for any theorizing about the emotions. I will return to it with this in mind in Chapter Twelve.
Science as an Approach to Emotions

It may be useful at this point to see how scientific thinking about emotion fares in the face of these two challenges. Two scientific disciplines that have much to say about emotions are cognitive psychology and evolutionary psychology. Both look at emotions as things of third-person ontology: that is, as the functioning of an organ or system of organs (the nervous system), or as the functioning of an organism in an environment; the intentional content of emotion is generally subsumed in the physical response. Emotions are a phenomenon that can be identified and defined. They can be represented in theoretical constructs and located in individuals. Both of the challenges to our ideas of the emotions contain within them challenges to the scientific pursuit of answers to questions about the emotions.

In the first case, the human development challenge questions whether emotions can be separated from rational thought. Any theoretical construct of the emotions that sees them as antithetical or incidental to rational thinking is built on an idea of the emotions that does not fit Greenspan’s human development interpretation of how human beings develop their thinking ability. Boler’s challenge posits an idea opposite to the one held within science that emotions are private, natural, phenomena that develop within individuals through their private and personal experience. This idea fails to consider the political genesis of emotion. What results from the comparison of these two challenges and the scientific assumption that emotions are identifiable phenomena open to empirical investigation are three quite distinct views of the emotions resulting from the perspective from which emotions are viewed.

What is really being looked at in these perspectives on emotion? The answer to this question will use ideas and methods based on the latter philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein as his later philosophy is directed at resolving confusions that arise from conflicts in how we talk about phenomena. The key idea is that philosophical confusion arises because we have talked our way into a corner. It is my hope that the analysis inspired by this idea in Chapter 7 will show us a way out of that corner. At this point, though, I am going to briefly focus on Wittgenstein’s comments on the scientific approach to the study of mental phenomena. I do this to underline the importance of philosophy rather than science as a way to seek resolution of the conflict of various discourses.
Wittgenstein suggests that underlying the scientific thinking is something that he calls a "tacit assumption:"

Then psychology treats of behaviour, not of the mind?

What do psychologists record? —What do they observe? Isn’t it the behaviour of human beings, in particular their utterances? But these are not about behaviour.…

“But then they make a tacit assumption.” Then what we do in our language-game always rests on a tacit assumption.20

The way to pursue that assumption about psychological phenomena is by looking at the language we use talking about them. D. Proudfoot puts it this way:

For Wittgenstein psychological phenomena are intentional in virtue of the public role of the linguistic expression of such phenomena. On this view and contrary to both old and new paradigms [of cognitive psychology], the intentionality of thought derives from that of language rather than the other way around.21

And Wittgenstein also suggests what will happen if one sets off on a scientific search without doing the philosophical work to find clarity about the concepts and assumptions within our pattern of living:

The existence of the experimental method (in psychology in particular) makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by. (PI, 232)

Chapter 7 will develop an argument that philosophy, rather than science, has to safeguard our language from changes brought on from science, and one might add from any other source, especially changes that work to remove our ability to act intentionally in the world. Doing so is one way that philosophy can help preserve an idea of the self as agent in the world, for as John Searle argues:

It [the self] is to be an entity, such that one and the same entity has consciousness, perception, rationality, the capacity to engage in action, and the capacity to organize perceptions and reasons, so as to perform

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20 Philosophical Investigations, 179. All other references to this work will be given as PI in text.
voluntary action on the presupposition of freedom. If you have got all of that, you have a self.\textsuperscript{22}

Preservation of the self, or of agency, may be a useful endeavour—part of the more general task of preserving a pattern of living, but it is a task that can have value only in so far as the preserved pattern of living has value. Both of the challenges in this chapter question that value of a pattern of living that separates emotion from intellect and from social influence. I would argue that preservation cannot be the only goal of the philosophical task, but the task of moving ahead thoughtfully needs to replace or at least complement it. One way that moving ahead could occur is for philosophy to contribute to clarifying the concepts of psychology and humanity’s subjectivity in a way that may help the scientific method to develop and extend our understanding of these aspects of our experience—though clarity itself should further understanding on its own.

**Our “Form of Life”**

Wittgenstein, the philosopher who more than any other guides my thinking on the emotions, uses a metaphor of the modern language game or discourse as a grand modern metropolis built around and over the structures and detritus of older cities and their patterns of living:

> Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (\textit{PI}, 8)

It is an apt reminder of the structure and complexity of the game we are playing talking of the emotions. It is a reminder that the way we talk of the emotions now is influenced by, but not the same as, the way we talked about them in the past. The metaphor suggests that a kind of archaeology of ideas would be helpful to examine the layers and labyrinth of the language games around emotion.

While it is not common to think that Wittgenstein is including considerations of history in his analysis of language games, I would argue that it is both useful and necessary, in the case of the emotions, to look at the

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Mind: A Brief Introduction}, 204.
development of the discourses that shape our thinking. If new language games are possible, or changing of the one we have, understanding older language games and the elements of them that now carry over into contemporary confusions can be resolved. Wittgenstein alludes in his later thinking to the historical aspect to our language when he talks of the idea of family resemblance.\footnote{Philosophical Investigations, Sec 65-7.} Wittgenstein argues that games, and by inference language games, are very varied, so varied that when comparing two different games, they may have nothing in common except a family resemblance, that is

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\text{Don’t say: “There must be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’” — but look and see whether there is anything common to all. — For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. (PI, 31)}
\]

It is not a stretch to go from “series” to a sequence of relationships over time. It is the philosopher’s habit of looking at concepts sub specie aeternitatis that has made the common interpretation of this idea of family resemblance into a “theory of family resemblances” that says, instead of a single essence, all things baring a family resemblance must share a “pattern of resemblances.”\footnote{Beardsmore, “The Theory of Family Resemblances,” presents this theory as the most common, and misleading, interpretations of Wittgenstein’s idea.} Instead, of this idea, the historical interpretation allows that language can change over time, and that the history of these changes and their contexts in patterns of living is part of what gives the games a family resemblance rather than some continuously contained common elements:

Wittgenstein’s remarks in paragraph 66, then, will involve not the philosophically dubious empirical claim that there is no feature common to all games, but rather the conceptual claim that what counts as a feature common to different games will depend on the various contexts in which we identify common features.\footnote{Ibid. 145. See also Priem, “Family Resemblances,” for an interpretation of family resemblances that explicitly supports including an historical explanation of concept change.}

Chapters Four to Six explore the historical context of the way we talk and think about the emotions. They will sketch out some of the language games that
have contributed to the subjugation of the emotions to reason and eventually led to disputing views of our subjectivity, such as the two specific challenges to that subjugation discussed in this chapter. Chapter 7 applies further some reminders from Wittgenstein to the overlaps and confusions that result from this history. My goal is to develop a view of the emotions in our experience that is more capable of representing the role they play in our lives and that supplies a rationale for including practices in life and schooling that support and extend our ability to live full lives of integrated thought and feeling.

There are two other thinkers whose work influences what follows. Both have brilliantly, in quite different ways, done some archaeology on the modern Western pattern of living. One is Charles Taylor who has as one part of his thinking documented the rise of the idea of sentiment as a moral source. This rise is particularly important because it marks the emergence of resistance to the privileging of reason above emotion. Some of his ideas are used in Chapter 4.

The second thinker is Michel Foucault. He has said much about how we have come to understand and conceptualize emotions particularly in their relationship with madness. Where once emotion or passion was considered to move towards madness, which was once a source of divine inspiration, later, a revaluation of sentiment occurred and the excess of passion fuelling madness became pathological. His ideas are discussed in Chapter 5 in particular.

These intertwined histories form part of the complexity of overlaying strata of thought that make our concepts of the emotions tangled and perplexing. Understanding the history of these concepts will help us understand the first three of the discourses of emotion identified by Boler in the section above. Taylor and Foucault proceed very differently in their thinking: Taylor by a history of ideas, and Foucault by finding the emergence of ideas from changing practices in society. Some of our difficulties with understanding emotions stems from changes in society and the kind of people needed to make new structures work. Where once an interchangeability of individuals with moderate and predictable emotions might have benefited the work of the assembly line, later a drive to passionate, expressive individuality might have been more valued—by or for some at least. I hope that a sense of where our thinking comes from will suggest ways forward from here.

Before proceeding with that analysis, I want to look at a specific example of how the overlapping of discourses impacts on both theorizing and
implementing programs directed at the emotions. The next chapter provides an example of the confusions that may arise from proceeding without sorting out these overlapping discourses. The chapter presents a first overview of five views of the emotions and the constraints they place on our thinking about emotions. It then proceeds to look at how, in the work of Daniel Goleman, overlapping several of these views negatively impacts his ideas and especially their implementation in schools.
CHAPTER THREE

COMPETING EMOTIONAL DISCOURSES AND PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM THEM

The practical principle which guides them to their opinions on the regulation of human conduct is the feeling in each person's mind that everybody should be required to act as he, and those with whom he sympathizes, would like them to act.

John Stuart Mill

Views of the Emotions

The last chapter argued that when faced with the challenges of the two views presented there, Greenspan’s and Boler’s, the dominant way we talk about and think about the emotions is inadequate and misleading. Since we perceive any subject through various lenses shaped by the way we think about that subject, our view of the emotions shaped by the dominant discourse is itself distorted. That is, since the way we see something is coloured by the expectations we have of that thing and the concepts we have to apply to it in our thinking, language shapes perception as emotions, in this case, falling into accepted ways of thinking and talking. This idea is, I hope, commonsense enough to just stand on its own. It follows from this idea that what we see of the emotions arises from what we expect them to be, which is founded as much on the way we talk about emotion as our experience of emotion.
Talk about emotion in the western tradition of philosophy has settled into a few discourses that can be categorized in a number of ways. Prominent in this tradition of philosophy are a number of binary oppositions, the most common one being the opposition between the emotions and reason. Another binary opposition that might be laid over talk about the emotions is seeing them generally, or in some cases distinguishing between them individually, as destructive or helpful. Another binary opposition is seeing emotions, again generally or specifically, as healthy or unhealthy. Each of these ways of categorizing emotions add overlapping layers of interpretation and expectation, so when it comes to seeing emotions many lenses have to be removed. In addition, because these distinctions add valuations of emotions along with descriptions, the situation becomes even more complex and laden with lenses that some would say clarify while others say distort.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of five categories of these discourses of the emotions with some of their educational consequences. This overview is in effect a first survey of the terrain of the emotions in western thinking and necessary to establish the layout of the contested ground. It will allow an examination of how ideas about the emotions and educational programs based on them can get lost. In particular, this chapter will focus on Social and Emotional learning, a series of programs for schools based on Goleman’s theory of emotional intelligence. While later chapters will critically examine the history of the discourses outlined in this chapter, this chapter will show at the more generalized level of categories of discourse how these unresolved or unacknowledged different views can result in misunderstanding and distortion of a specific educational program concerned with emotion. With this example, I hope to show specifically how the confusion of discourses about the emotions results in confusion of both understanding and practice. It will be the goal of Part Two to reduce this confusion.

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26 The phrase “western tradition of philosophy” refers to a line of philosophical thought tracing back to Ancient Greece. This tradition is prominent in Anglo-American thinking, but has had influence beyond the English speaking part of the world.

27 See Boler, “Disciplined Emotions,” for a categorization of theories of emotions somewhat different than the broad outline given here. She does agree that these oppositions are not merely objective analysis of facts or ideas.
Traditional View

The view of the emotions as non-rational can be attributed to a line of thought stemming from Plato. The idea is that the highest and most noble attribute of humanity, reason, must hold sovereign sway over our passions and appetites. Plato’s own writing, in many instances, does not support the complete dominance of reason over passion that some found in it. It is, however, easy to imagine Plato seeing the rule of reason as an antidote to the violence of rulers he saw about him in Greece during his lifetime. The idea of the rule of reason was taken up by Augustine who wrote so scathingly of the earthly passions and their evil tendency to lure one away from God towards earthly delights. These two thinkers together provide a basis for a view of the passions as morally suspect. By the time Locke was writing, for example, the idea that reason had to control the passions, tame them to its service, for fear that reason, humanity’s special quality, would otherwise be swallowed up in animal passion, matched a common train of thought. Locke’s students had to be inured to appetite and passion from an early age so that when reason did arrive it would have an easy time bringing them under its sway. Emotions are seen as intrusions into the territory of the rational and moral and have to be contained through training and practice.

This line of thinking can be seen in views of the emotions as merely instinctual or unthinking physical responses to stimulation that need to be suppressed or controlled by our higher powers of reason.

Progressive view

This category of discourse emerged in resistance to the Traditional View. It is based on a line of thinking, well exemplified in Rousseau, which seeks to overturn the privileging of reason over emotion. A central part of the Romantic Movement, the main idea is that society, and reason with it, has somehow gone wrong, or too far, and needs be corrected by emotion—or at least certain deep passions brought alive by nature’s beauty and awesome power. As a general view, found in the English Romantic poets for example, people are born in touch with this passionate and intense connection with Nature and tend to lose it with age unless this innate or natural connection is cherished and preserved.
The view that there is a “natural” unfolding of emotion that can only be harmed by tampering with it underlies much of the progressive view of the emotions. The idea is that there is a natural course of development that will, if not distorted by inappropriate intervention, produce a person with appropriate emotions. It underlies the thinking of Carl Rogers and A. S. Neil, for example, and can be found in many who, perhaps following Dewey, find conventional schooling an imposition on a natural process that is private and personal.

The following chapter will examine these two foundational discourses in more detail. Together they set out the basic conceptual structure that has shaped our view of the emotions even as they contest whether reason or emotion should be dominant. In both the Age of Reason’s suppression of emotion and the writers of the Romantic period’s elevation of awe and beauty in Nature is the idea of the innate arising of these capacities through the grace of Nature or of God.

**Evolutionary view**

This discourse is a return to the Traditional view in that emotions are viewed as instinctual forces without any innate wisdom. Instead they exist because, at some time in humanity’s evolution, they contributed to our survival. This is different from what the evolutionary psychologist Stephen Pinker calls the myth of the Noble Savage. For Pinker, the idea that if left in some ideal state of nature human beings would naturally grow into a civilized state is a romantic dream that actually hides the true nature of human development which is evolutionary: we have come to be what we are, with whatever innate capacities we have for thought and emotion, through natural selection. Our emotional responses exist only because they helped render us better suited for survival as a species. For example, anger evolved as a mechanism to alert us to danger and to render us better able to fight or faster in flight. Love evolved to help us maintain lasting bonds that would give our offspring better chances to survive and pass on our genetic material. Emotions exist because they enhance the chances of our genes passing on and multiplying.

What distinguishes this view most sharply from the progressive view is the realization that in some cases emotions will provide an evolutionary benefit even though humanity might view the actions undertaken because of the

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28 *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature.*
emotion as distinctly anti-social or immoral: male lions will kill the cubs of other male lions, for example, to bring the lionesses into heat to breed cubs with their new genes in place. Helping one’s immediate family is favoured by evolution where helping strangers may not be for similar reasons. In evolutionary terms, emotions exist because they have utility in a particular environment—within that environment, they make it more likely that an emotional person’s genetic material will be passed on to her or his offspring in the environment existing at that time. In other words, emotions cannot be relied upon to have moral authority. So even though emotions are natural—that is part of our heritage as evolutionary creatures—they should not be dominant over reason.

One other consequence of this view is that some emotional responses may now be stale dated, as it were. The fight or flight response was of great survival value when humans lived in small bands of hunter gatherers, but in modern societies the constant stimulation of the same response results in high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke rather than a successful escape from predators. Unfortunately for our evolutionary future, the deadly effects of stress induced through this response typically only occur after child bearing and rearing, and as the offspring of these stress-susceptible people will most likely be supported to their own child bearing ages, the chance of “selecting out” the stress response is very small. The educational project of this discourse may be to somehow inhibit or realign these inappropriate responses to modern life. Whether or not this part of our evolutionary inheritance can be inhibited or not, the view of the emotions I will develop in this thesis offers another way to think about this part of an emotional education.

**Emotions as cognitive events**

One common feature of the views discussed to this point is what might be described as the mechanical or “hydraulic”\(^\text{29}\) nature of the emotions: they are things that are provoked, triggered, suppressed or nurtured; they are innate, instinctual, or otherwise built into the organism. They are not things that one can make decisions about, by choosing to be in or out of love, for example. Robert Solomon has described this sort of view as having more to do with plumbing than thinking, taking up the idea in Aristotle that a good tragic play has the

\(^{29}\)This is Solomon’s preferred word to describe this view which he finds central in Freudian thinking. See *The Passions*. 
effect of “purging the system” and leaving the audience all feeling much better.\textsuperscript{30} Descartes’ ideas are also implicated in the mechanical view. His idea that mind is necessarily distinct and different from body contained the notion that the energy of the emotions was part of the plumbing of the body whose agitations could be conveyed to mind but were not a part of it.

Solomon has developed a view very different from this mechanical view, as has Martha Nussbaum.\textsuperscript{31} In both of Solomon and Nussbaum, emotions are cognitive events just as thoughts are. They are essentially of “mind” rather than “body.” They are judgments of value that contain cognitive information we use to inform decision-making. Because emotions are not seen simply as mechanical responses to stimuli, the cognitive view suggests broader possibilities for the education of the emotions as thoughtful or value laden judgments. The intentional content of the emotions, the beliefs and values that constitute them, which on this view is their only necessary part, can be talked about and debated. In other words, they can become part of reason and of rational discourse and are thus educable. We can be convinced that it is not reasonable to feel a certain way, and to ignore the physical symptoms of an emotion, the “feelings” associated with an emotion, as inappropriate.

I will return in Chapter Seven to some of Wittgenstein’s “reminders” in \textit{Philosophical Investigations} that suggest that our understanding of our own emotions is based on our understanding of the language used to talk about emotions and so necessarily part of our “form of life.” The fate of the feeling or somatic component of emotions will have to await that discussion, too.

\textbf{Emotion and medicine}

Michel Foucault, in \textit{Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason}, finds a tradition of thought that places the passions at the centre of madness. Beginning with mechanical ideas of the passions from the period of Descartes, starting with the emotions as expressions of “animal spirits,” his work connects the passions with the experience of “unreason” — a deep realization of the contingency of reason itself. It is because of this essentially revolutionary effect that society rendered unreason a symptom of mental disease and excessive

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Upheavals of Thought}.
emotions came in their turn to be regarded with great suspicion as capable of carrying one off into madness. In this way, emotion came under medical supervision with the older distinctions of inspiration and madness becoming questions of mental health or mental illness. The educational task becomes educating for mental health and such things that promote easy social functioning.

However, for Foucault, it is the power of the passions to bring the insight of otherness, that things could be seen as other than they are—and that is their connection to genius. Moving madness and emotion into medical care has the effect of making genius a disease. Chapter Five will examine this argument in more detail. Moving emotions into medical care has often resulted in moving them out of the concern of educators by making emotions matters of referral to other professionals for treatment.

Social Emotional Learning

Daniel Goleman develops his ideas of emotional intelligence in the conceptual terrain overlaid by the discourses briefly outlined above. The problem that results from this is that his ideas, which have influenced the development of curricula that are often gathered together under the umbrella of Social and Emotional Learning, conflate some of these views. As a result, when his ideas are implemented, they are interpreted in a way at odds with what seems to be part of his original intent. This section looks at these conflations and some of the misinterpretations that result, in particular some of the critical differences from his original ideas when programs have been implemented in schools.

Goleman and Emotional Intelligence

Much work in developing ideas of emotional intelligence and curricula for developing this intelligence has been founded on Daniel Goleman’s synthesis of research in his book *Emotional Intelligence.* This book incorporates much of what I have called the Traditional View of the emotions with its opposition of passion and reason. The opposition can be seen when Goleman describes a “limbic hijacking” in the second chapter. This hijacking occurs when the limbic system,

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32 Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than I.Q.*
or “seat of all passion” in the brain, directs behaviour without communicating with the neocortex or “the thinking brain.” The neocortex in an emotionally intelligent person would intervene and moderate overly “passionate” responses. Indeed much of what emotional intelligence seems to be when implemented in schools is this controlling of inappropriate and unruly feelings. An emotionally intelligent person knows to defer gratification of the passions when it makes rational sense to do so—making emotional intelligence (EQ) very Neo-Platonist in conception, EQ taking the role of driver of the soul’s chariot. Some of what the emotionally intelligent person does is suppress emotion in favour of reason.

However, it is wrong to characterize Goleman’s ideas as simply a suppressionist project. While he sometimes writes very much in the traditional discourse and promotes a suppressionist direction, at other times he talks in a very different way. For example, he places at the foundation of his conception of emotional intelligence the awareness of emotions.\textsuperscript{33} Table 1 below lists the domains of emotional intelligence that Goleman uses. The two foundational levels, self-awareness and empathy, most closely match the two sorts of personal intelligence identified by Gardner as intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence.\textsuperscript{34} Following Gardner’s arguments as Goleman does, these domains might be considered the most distinct and specific domains of emotional intelligence. This fits best in the Progressive discourse. At a stretch, one might even be inclined to find Rousseau’s healthy love of self and compassion for others hiding in those domains as well—if not put in the high place Rousseau saved just for them.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Goleman takes much of his conception from Howard Gardner and Peter Salovey. See \textit{Emotional Intelligence}, 37–45.
\item Howard Gardner, \textit{Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences}.
\end{enumerate}
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Table 3.1: Emotional Intelligence Domains

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Goleman, quoting Salovey, describes self-awareness as “being aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood.” One must assume that mood and emotion are here being taken as synonymous. Goleman goes on to explain that this awareness can be either non-reactive and non-judgmental, or it can take the form of thoughts like “I shouldn’t feel this way.” The conflation of mood and emotion make it difficult to say for sure, but Goleman seems to be suggesting that awareness of mood alone is enough to somehow change it. Whereas one can be ordered to stop behaving as emotion impels, one cannot be ordered to stop feeling the emotion. However

Self-awareness has a more powerful effect on strong, aversive feelings: the realization “This is anger I’m feeling” offers a greater degree of freedom—not just the option not to act on it, but the added option to try to let go of it. (48)

This transformation of emotions, here described as a process of “letting go,” is similar to the process described in Buddhist literature where anger, when held non-judgmentally in awareness, will transform into compassion. Goleman,

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36 *Emotional Intelligence*, 47.
himself a student of Buddhism, uses a key term from this tradition (mindfulness) in describing this effect: “In short, their mindfulness helps them manage their emotions.”\textsuperscript{38} In my view, this introduction of mindfulness and the transformation of emotion, especially in an educational context, is very important. It has the potential to move the conception of emotions out of the dichotomy of the traditional discourse. More will be said about mindfulness later in Chapter 10.

In the context of this chapter, the importance of these few lines is that they suggest that the project of emotional awareness is based on the transformation of emotions rather than their suppression as suggested earlier by the description of a limbic hijacking. However, this break from the traditional is quickly overlaid with more suppressionist suggestions. Goleman writes that the “Master Aptitude” of emotional intelligence is the ability to suppress “pathological” emotions that interfere with clear-headed thinking and to encourage “the marshalling of feelings of enthusiasm, zeal, and confidence” as these are the positive motivators that lead to achievement.\textsuperscript{39} For the same reason, emotions like elation, hope, and optimism (the mood/emotion conflation continued) are to be encouraged. The emotional education agenda seems here to be clearly one of selection—some emotions are to be “managed” while others are to be encouraged.

Goleman’s discussion of empathy takes place, at least in part, within yet another view of emotions—namely the progressive discourse. He describes empathy as “the ability to know how another feels” and traces its development through a series of stages that begin with “motor mimicry” in the infant.\textsuperscript{40} He seems to view the development of this emotional capacity as one that occurs naturally unless interfered with in some way. This has led to research that supposes that in cases of severe empathic “disability,” as in psychopaths for example, there must be an accompanying neural defect that, presumably, could only be treated through some form of medical intervention. Goleman somewhat counterbalances that view by referring to an educational, perspective-taking program that has been developed by prison psychologist William Pithers.\textsuperscript{41} In

\textsuperscript{38} Emotional Intelligence, 48.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 79.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, chap. 7.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 107.
effect, this discussion moves from progressive to traditional and medical discourses.

In the case of empathy, then, Goleman looks at the capacity for empathy from three different points of view. Insofar as this capacity naturally develops in a healthy organism, its development should be left alone. The progressive /evolutionary view of the capacity makes it something that cannot be taught, as such, though it can be interfered with. On the other hand, the cognitive view of the capacity suggested by the perspective-taking approach means that educational approaches, rather than medical ones, are appropriate. Yet if something goes wrong with the development of compassion, medical intervention might be appropriate perhaps in the form of counselling or simply diagnosis. The conceptual confusion inherent in holding these differing views of the capacity makes it difficult to see what should be done.

This conceptual confusion and the earlier confusion about whether emotions are to be suppressed, selected, or transformed makes it unclear how educators should proceed. Goleman has been very effective in arguing the need to promote emotional intelligence, but not so clear at providing a clear understanding of what it is. The sources of this confusion are the conflicting views held about emotions and their role in life discussed earlier in this chapter. As a result of this confusion, the various curricula developed to promote emotional intelligence that cite Goleman’s work as seminal, curricula often grouped under the name of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), tend to stray in varying degrees away from Goleman’s foundational aspects of self-awareness and empathy. Instead, they focus on what they call “competencies.”

Social and Emotional Competencies

Social/Emotional Learning typically looks at certain social and emotional competencies. These are generally based on how it is judged that an emotionally

42 Other programs exist focusing on promoting the development of empathy in young children. Mary Gordon (see also Ch. 1, n. 6) has developed a program for schools: “At the heart of the program are classroom visits by an infant and parent. Through guided observations of this loving relationship, children learn to identify and reflect on their own thoughts and feelings and those of others (empathy). (“Welcome to Roots of Empathy,” http://www.rootsofempathy.org/.)

43 The language of “competencies” may well, in turn, be influenced by contemporary ideas of accountability and measurement through testing.
developed or intelligent person would behave in certain circumstances. These behavioural descriptions are essentially normative and seen as describing good and appropriate ways of behaving. This is the behaviour that is identified and promoted by the different types of educational intervention in Social and Emotional Education. Where Goleman identified certain behaviours as resulting from intelligence and being aware of emotions and their significance in self and others, these curricula work from the opposite direction. If children can be taught to behave in certain ways, then it can be assumed that the underlying intelligence is being developed. It is a not uncommon educational assumption, but in this case it results in a basic shift from Goleman’s aspects of emotional intelligence. Table 2 shows the fundamental competencies developed through SEL.

Table 3.2: Social Emotional Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEL COMPETENCIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Control</td>
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</table>

The most significant change is that “Self Control” has replaced “Self-Awareness” at the base of the table. Self-awareness in no longer listed, despite these suggestions from the same article:

I would suggest that self-reflective capacities on the one hand and the ability to recognize what others are thinking and feeling on the other provide the

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The assumption must be that if children are trained to behave in ways that are associated with emotional intelligence then they will become self-reflective and empathic. It is not clear whether “Self-reflective” and “Self-aware” are supposed to mean the same ability. Self-control reflects no conceptual confusion: it suggests that emotions are to be controlled—that socially appropriate emotions are to be felt while others are suppressed, as Goleman put it in his “Master Aptitude” described above.

Perhaps this conclusion is too strong, and certainly greater examination of these curricula in action is necessary, but even a cursory examination is revealing. Table 3 lists skills in self-management taken from the New Haven Social Development Program, an SEL program. Self-monitoring is the closest equivalent to self-awareness but monitoring has the implication of a constant supervisory function; that is, it contains the notions of checking, supervising, and evaluating. And of course all these skills are listed under the heading of self-management. It is no longer a matter of being mindful of one’s emotional state and letting it transform, rather certain kinds of emotions and behaviours are to be monitored, controlled, and rewarded. Rather than developing better emotional understanding, these programs seem to have become about controlling behaviour.

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Table 3.3: Self-Management Skills

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<th>SELF-MANAGEMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There is a critique to be written here based on Foucault’s critique of disciplinary society and of excess emotion as disease. The question should be asked, “What self is being constituted by this idea of self-management?” There is the additional question from a cultural view of human development about the ability of a SEL curriculum of this type to select behaviours associated with emotional intelligence that could be applied across cultures. What is to be controlled and what rewarded? Perhaps it should be expected that resolving to see emotion as non-rational, and therefore a response that might only be managed through some form of conditioning, as seems to be implied by this curriculum, would invariably open it to criticism from those seeing emotions as judgments and part of our rationality. The complex and contradictory views of the emotions can often lead to confusion and conflict.

Yet even within the family of views that comprise SEL there is room for critique. Jonathan Cohen, quoted above (n. 9), emphasizes the need for “self-reflectivity.” Later in the same volume, he writes of an SEL perspective that in its own way emphasizes the need for self-awareness:

Child analysts are particularly attuned to how unrecognized feelings and thoughts shape children’s mental and behavioral lives and what we can do—as educators, parents, and health-care professionals—to facilitate healthy development.

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This psychoanalytic perspective thus also supports the idea of self-awareness being at the base of emotional intelligence. I would further argue that self-awareness entails becoming more aware of what one feels first rather than suppressing or inhibiting an emotional response to the point where it is not felt at all.

Conclusion

I have in this chapter attempted to explain some of the conceptual confusions and contradictions about the emotions that exist within the canonical western philosophical view of the emotions, and the legacies they leave for all working in fields influenced by Anglo-American thinking. Looking at the various views, I drew conclusions about two general constraints on what could be done in any curriculum setting out an emotional education. Within those general constraints, there seem to be five possibilities for the overall goals of such a curriculum. I hope that this background allows for a critical view of Daniel Goleman’s ideas that are at the centre of a set of curricula called Social and Emotional Learning popular in North America, and then for a critical view of the curricula themselves. It is my view that Goleman’s ideas suffer from unresolved conflicts that stem from looking at emotions from different perspectives including reason/emotion binary thinking, and result in the conflicting goals identified in this chapter.

Looking further at SEL generally, and then at one instance of such a curriculum, I have suggested that these curricula make a simplification (or resolution) of the confusions in Goleman’s ideas that open both the general and the particular curricula to other critiques.

I want to go on to make some suggestions, however, as to how these difficulties can be faced. First, it seems to me essential that efforts be made to resolve the contradictions and paradoxes of the western views of emotions. There is philosophical work that needs to be done to show us the way out of this particular bottle.\textsuperscript{49} Part Two works towards finding an exit from this conundrum. Second, it would serve all interested in developing curricula in this area to remember that most agree that the foundation of emotional intelligence is the

\textsuperscript{49} To paraphrase Wittgenstein.
awareness and understanding of our own emotions and the awareness and understanding of others. Neither awareness nor understanding in either case can be taken for granted—at least in the way they may have been in the past. Any proposed curriculum needs to keep these basic “intelligences” in mind. Finally, there are two traditions that promote self-awareness that might be usefully considered when developing curriculum in this area. One is the Insight or Vipassana meditation tradition central to Buddhism but sometimes described as non-sectarian. Its main goal is to see things as they are—especially perhaps things such as one’s own emotional state. This clear sight is developed through strengthening mindfulness, an ability at the centre of several health, counselling and educational projects. Developing mindfulness requires an accepting and compassionate environment rather than a controlling one. As mentioned above, Chapter 10 will look at how this ability is being reconceived for these endeavours. The second tradition is personal journal keeping. This tradition also encourages careful self-observation and understanding. It was the tradition that interested Foucault when his thought turned towards care of the self.50

Both of these traditions depend on an ability to look inward and connect with an immediate sense of lived experience as Gendlin has pointed out.51 Chapter 11 will examine Gendlin’s ideas. With one or other or all of these serving as a foundation, then the challenge of understanding self and others could be addressed—which is the hope at the heart of this thesis. It is within these traditions that a firm foundation might be laid if a consistent view of emotions in general can be developed. The next part begins the development of such a view.

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50 Martin, Gutman, and Hutton, eds. *Technologies of the Self.*
51 See for example Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.*
PART TWO

TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING
A language only exists and is maintained within a language community. And this indicates another crucial feature of a self. One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it.

Charles Taylor

A Short History of Disenchantment

Part One began with personal stories about how my expectations, assumptions, and experiences with emotions have had an impact on my personal and professional lives, and ended with an examination of how the layers of discourse about the emotions have built up and made the intellectual footing we need slippery and uncertain to the detriment of educational programs we develop to enhance emotional functioning. This part looks again with somewhat more depth at the development of the key dichotomies that arise from these multiple discourses, that of the emotions and reason in this chapter, and that of reason and madness of the passions in the next. These dichotomies have shaped the way we in the West have thought about the emotions and so also constrained what we have imagined an emotional education might be. As the dichotomies lose their power to shape our thinking, we can think again of how emotions are part of learning and education.
With a deeper understanding of these dichotomies, Part Two will go on to challenge the validity of such complete separation and attempt to reunite them as different aspects of the same experience. With this understanding, it should be possible to understand better the function of the practice of mindfulness and focusing suggested in the last chapter, which will be developed in Part Three.

First, we need to look at how the emotion/reason dichotomy occurred.

Once the gods spoke through us, then they spoke to us, and then they were silent—that’s one way of looking at it. There was a time of prophets whose words were the words of God, then there was the Word as it had been written, and then the Word became just another story. At every step along this way, it became more of a challenge to know what to do and what to believe. Consequently, it became more of a challenge to know what to teach. Most challenging of all, with the greatest implications for our experience of life, as this progression continued, we were increasingly trapped in a conceptual world of our own making. Where once we could look out at what were seen as external sources of knowledge in the world of Forms or in God, over time our source of knowledge turned inward and settled in our rationality and then in our ability to apply reason through the scientific method to understanding the world around us. Now, in the minds of most, this rational and scientific way of thinking is the pre-eminent way of seeking the truth—or whatever passes for truth these days—perhaps not truth but the most efficient and cost effective path to materialistic ends.52

This move towards privileging rationality and reason as humanity’s most noble or defining characteristic was accompanied by a corresponding devaluing and separation of emotions and our subjective experience from the objective and in many ways impersonal realm of reason. It was, as emotions became more and more associated with the body, a great disenchanting of the body now separated from the mind as a source of inspiration or understanding, running parallel with a general disenchantment of the world.

The elevation of reason continued in the West until, most notably, Rousseau realized that this source of knowledge had become inward looking, and rather than accessing a realm of greater knowledge, it had fallen into corruption and delusion. He hoped to rescue us from this fall by turning back to

a different external source, which he found in Nature—the Author of All Things’ creation—believing that returning humanity to a natural condition in childhood would put humanity back on solid footing. Nature would keep us in touch with certain of our emotions and they would in turn protect us from society and culture-induced corruption.

This chapter will build on the synopsis above to look at some of the key philosophical steps in this chain of ideas. These steps lead to the two discourses of emotion that shape a great deal of our thinking about emotions now. They establish a dichotomy between emotion and reason, an antagonism, even while they contest which of the two should have supremacy over the other. Between the Traditional discourse and the resistant Progressive discourse, the dichotomy is established and a dualistic view of reason and emotion made to seem inevitable. With this view established, conceptual constraints on how we think about emotion establish constraints on how we can conceive of an emotional education. By establishing the relationship between the constraints and the dualistic view, I will show in subsequent chapters how these constraints loosen their hold on thinking through work that challenges the dualistic view itself.

**Elevation of Reason**

**Plato**

Contrast today with a time when it was acknowledged, if not commonplace, that people could fall into states where the gods worked through them directly. It might be Achilles on the battlefield or the Pythia at Delphi, or even Plato himself—all had room for this direct contact with the gods. In his Republic, where the breeding of the Guardians was to be carefully directed through a form of animal husbandry, those selecting the pairings for mating might join brother and sister if the Oracle allowed. Plato’s great teacher, Socrates, had his daimon on which he relied for guidance after all:

… I [Socrates] am subject to a divine or supernatural experience…. It began in my early childhood—a sort of voice which comes to me and which it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do,
and never urges me on. It is this that debars me from entering public life, and a very good thing too, in my opinion….53

So the pupil was also ready to accept the advice of the gods—especially if the gods themselves had also found Socrates the wisest of men.

But that said, there was already little room for the gods in Plato’s Republic. The form of the Good that was available through reason had largely replaced them. In order for this to happen, reason had to be put in control of the city and of mankind. Reason had to prevail over inspiration, enthusiasm, and passion—all of which had perhaps been avenues for the gods in the past. Reason might be checked against the Oracle, but the experience of divine inspiration was gone—reduced to a notion of fighting spirit. But this thumos (spiritedness) wasn’t a source of ideas. It was more an impulse in a certain direction and as such needed the control of reason.

Plato talked about the passions in a number of places in his writing often using image and metaphor. Perhaps the best example of this is presented in the Phaedrus while discussing the emotion of love. In that dialogue, Plato famously uses the image of a two-horsed chariot to describe the lover’s soul. Mankind, unlike the gods, has horses of two different kinds pulling the chariot of the soul: one, fair and beautiful, always aspires to fly higher and closer to Ultimate Truth and Beauty found in the world of Forms; the other, dark, defiant, and ugly, strains lower and lower pulling only towards immediate gratification and the sight of the beloved. The soul must with all force and the harsh instruction of the bit, force the ugly nag back on its haunches as it rushes the chariot to the specific beloved in order to see through immediate gratification to the profound and lasting appreciation of love and beauty embodied in the beloved but actually resident in a heavenly realm.

Very clever of Plato, who would in his Republic later ban all imitative poets, to describe so vividly this struggle between high and base desire:

But the driver, with resentment even stronger than before, like a racer recoiling from the starting rope, jerks back the bit in the mouth of the wanton horse with an even stronger pull, bespatters his railing tongue

53 “Socrates’ Defence (Apology),” in Collected Dialogues, 31d.
and his jaws with blood, and forcing him down on legs and haunches delivers him over to anguish.\textsuperscript{54}

It is a common, modern interpretation of the two horses drawing the chariot to call one reason and the other passion. A quick search of the Internet, for example, finds this:

Plato's myth of the charioteer in the \textit{Phaedrus} illustrates this idea. The charioteer is the soul of man, while the two horses represent reason and passion. Plato's preference for reason has dominated Western culture for a long, long time.\textsuperscript{55}

Even in the \textit{Phaedrus}, that is far too simple an interpretation. There is the charioteer to account for, and it ought to be remembered that in that dialogue Plato also writes "What we have to prove is…that this sort of madness [love] is a gift of the gods, fraught with the highest bliss." (245c)

In the \textit{Republic}, it is clearer that Plato had a tripartite composition of the human soul in mind, the parts of it corresponding to the classes of his ideal city. The parts of the soul are appetite, spirited (\textit{thumotic}), and reasoning—suggesting again a more complex relationship between "passion" and "reason" than is usually allowed. For one thing, the guardians are to be selected for their spirit, at least initially, provided that spirit is in service to reason and not mere appetitive drive. The \textit{thumos} provides the drive towards justice and honour. The best of these spirited guardians were further selected for the highest education to develop reason that would provide the light hand on the reins to turn their high spirits to its use.

However, with the simple reason versus emotion interpretation as a foundation, the notion that reason needs to control the passions became common—or I imagine it was common when say \textit{Jekyll and Hyde} was written. More recently, the opposition can also be seen, as discussed in the previous chapter in Daniel Goleman's book \textit{Emotional Intelligence} (1995) when he describes a "limbic hijacking." This distrust of emotion truly runs deep in Western thinking, and early Christian thinkers reinforced it, most prominently Augustine.

\textsuperscript{55} Prevos, "Exsanguinated philosophy."
Augustine

It was Augustine’s neo-Platonism and Christianity that contribute ideas that move more towards the simpler reason/emotion dichotomy. This dichotomy developed as Augustine began making the earthly passions the great hindrance to finding God—even though love of God was necessary to ultimate salvation. The temptations and appetites of the flesh were above all to be guarded against, and in this task reason still had its special role because it was still reason that led to truth, knowledge, and goodness. As Augustine developed that line of thinking further, reason became the path to the love of God, for those few who could manage it. Reason led to the faith and love of God that allowed Him to lift us into pure and certain knowledge of Him.

As with Plato, this ascent into truth could only be hindered by irrational and uncontrolled earthly passions. But for Augustine, unlike Plato, the capacity for reason alone could not be enough to bring us through to understanding and action. We were too much at the mercy of temptation unless our will was strengthened by the grace of God:

In fact, Augustine will reject the entire philosophical project of antiquity that relies on human reason alone. While he would argue that Platonic philosophy can come to most truths of religion, the Christ event in history and its significance lay beyond the powers of human reason alone: "I found in Platonic philosophy all the truths of Christianity save one: 'The Word was made flesh.'" 56

All earthly appetites and desires distract and lead us away from knowledge. We turned inward towards God, away from earthly distraction, away from the passions, using reason inspired by love of God. There were, after all, two cities, the earthly and the heavenly:

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. 57

56 Richard Hooker, “Early Christianity.”
57 Augustine, City of God.
Knowledge found through reason would lead to the love of God. And crucially, this love was found by looking into our selves and not through reason alone to an external world of forms:

The outer is the bodily, what we have in common with the beasts, including even our senses, and the memory storage of our images of outer things. The inner is the soul. And this is not just one way of describing the difference for Augustine. It is in a sense the most important one for our spiritual purposes, because the road from the lower to the higher, the crucial shift in direction, passes through our attending to ourselves as inner.\(^{58}\)

We could, in other words, look out to the world and damnation or inward towards God and salvation. This turning inward would continue—though perhaps God would not. This inward turn was not a meditative contemplation of experience in the world, but a look inward turning away from worldly experience in search of salvation.

Two thinkers helped this inward turn along. The next chapter will consider Descartes’ impact on this inwardness from another perspective, but here the importance of his *cogito* argument should be pointed out. With “I think, therefore I am,” humanity became most of all a thinking thing. Our thinking was the one undeniable feature that kept us from disappearing into the sceptic’s non-world. Thinking became the essential quality of the mind, and Descartes made the split between thinking and feeling more evident when he made the seat of passion part of body and not of mind.

Nor was it only the Rationalists who demoted passion from soul to body. By Locke’s time, the passions were largely something that could be trained through habit to hold their proper course in life. And the proper course of the passions (and appetites) is to be subdued so that no longings or cravings will have the power to upset the course of reason. Hence Locke’s educational prescriptions for cold water, leaky shoes, no hats and plain food. The goal was to inure the child to the blandishments of pleasure and the fear of pain so “that on all occasions it may be disposed to consent to nothing but what may be suitable to the dignity and excellency of a rational creature.”\(^{59}\) Humanity is now

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\(^{58}\) Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 129.

\(^{59}\) Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 25.
composed of rational creatures that can be built from the inside out, through the
careful arranging of units of experience, free from the pushes and pulls of desire
and pain.

Resistance

Humanity had become the rational animal. Our rationality as conceived
and mapped out in the West was our unique and saving characteristic that lifted
us up into a privileged position on Earth, enabled our dominance, and qualified
some of us to lead the others not gifted with rational clarity and understanding.
Or so it was until the arrival of Rousseau; he saw us quite differently, trapped
inside the walled city of our rationality and civilized imagination, surrounded by
a pattern of living that we had created but that was no longer serving us—or
most of us. The ideas that we had created were now imprisoning us in inequality
and unhappiness. His plan for escape was to retreat to an uncorrupted past, to a
time when our reason and imagination would have been focused on just what
was in front of our faces—the acorns under the oak that fed us or the water that
quenched our thirst. To a time before language, or at least to a time when nouns
and active verbs were all language was. To a time in the past that was a fantasy.

Rousseau thought that if we could preserve our children in that time as
long as possible, or at least keep them as close to that pattern of living as more
modern conditions could possibly allow, they would be saved from believing
that what people think is what is real, especially that inequality between people
had become accepted because the reasoned thinking that made it seem necessary
was false. Separated from the perverse reason of society, people would develop a
healthy, self-centred esteem that would combine with reason, when it emerged,
to supply an intellectual escape from the prison of thinking that was not
available to someone who had been immersed in that thinking from birth. We
could rely on this healthy love of self to emerge naturally as long as we provided
conditions that were near enough to those of nature and far enough from those
of society. Thus, a healthy emotion could correct the misapprehensions or
reason.

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60. This argument is developed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education.*
In Rousseau’s thinking, the hegemony of reason was not enough to ensure Truth or Happiness—in fact reason was so easily corrupted by early habit, association, and the too early acquaintance with ideas that it would not lead to truth but to corruption. It was not a robust, wild, plant of nature that would grow strong from its own roots in whatever place it might be found, but was far more tender, more vine than tree, at least in its early stages.

What was the trellis, to extend this metaphor, on which Rousseau believed reason would grow? What were the structures, apparently laid down in childhood, that would support the development of reason so that it could eventually, in those few who developed the capacity, lead us to happiness? It wasn’t just Rousseau who worried about those early lessons. Others had already proposed many ideas: restrict and censor the stories that we might hear as children, the rhythms and harmonies that move us, remove as much as possible the temptations of the flesh through prohibition, harden us to cold and heat to toughen the body. What Rousseau added to these ideas was the following: first, if you don’t interfere with the child too much and just provide the right kind of opportunities, the child will naturally learn; and second, it is most important to get out of the way of the child developing a healthy love of self that does not depend on comparison with others. This *amour de soi* will happen naturally as long as the child is left alone—well, with the example of Emile before us, not left alone, but actively protected from the evil influences of society and society’s reasoning and led through experiences designed to allow his natural faculties of response to the world, the most important thing being his healthy love of self, to develop.

The third idea, implicit in the other two, is that the emerging faculty of reason, if it is to do any good, must be built on a foundation of character and morality founded on emotion, primarily *amour de soi* but also the other natural emotion of compassion. These two emotions would allow Emile to move from the purely self-centred state of childhood to the mature state of healthy and rational citizenship and *amour propre*. In other words, there are certain moral and emotional lessons to be learned, upon which reason will be based and which will prevent reason from being corrupted. Rousseau had put it this way in his answer to *What is the Origin of Inequality among Men*:61

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61 *A Discourse on a Subject Proposed by The Academy of Dijon.*
Throwing aside, therefore, all those scientific books, which teach us only to see men such as they have made themselves, and contemplating the first and most simple operations of the human soul, I think I can perceive in it two principles prior to reason, one of them deeply interesting us in our own welfare and preservation, and the other exciting a natural repugnance at seeing any other sensible being, and particularly any of our own species, suffer pain or death.

Or to put it more in keeping with the earlier landscape metaphor, there are structures of character, made up of virtues and emotions, that shape and support the emerging reason of the child, and that keep reason from repeating the corrupt structures of society which it would otherwise do—despite their “unreasonableness.”

This last is not such a new idea in some ways. Plato pointed out that the wrong kind of music or stories could easily lead the emerging self so far that after the age of ten there wasn’t much use in trying to re-educate the citizens of the new republic—better banish them and start fresh with the children. Locke’s considerable efforts at developing the habits of the young were explicitly for shaping the vessels that would eventually contain reason. Saved from wrong associations of experience at an early age, each individual could build afresh through clear thinking and analysis of the bigger ideas that could be derived from experience.

While the idea that something precious in youth has to be preserved from corruption may not be new, Rousseau has introduced a radical revision. Completely unlike Locke, who had built on the dichotomy of emotion and reason, valuing above all reason, Rousseau has taken that dichotomy and flipped the valuation, valuing above all two key emotions. Rather than seeing reason as the supreme faculty of mankind, Rousseau argued that reason, to be useful, has to be seen as a faculty that rests on, and is corrected by, attributes of character that are moral and emotional. As Rousseau says, we have to “perfect reason by sentiment.” Consequently education that has the goal of fostering rationality or “thinking skills” must also fundamentally be concerned with developing character and emotional awareness. It should be noted, though, that Rousseau’s radical revision was not a rejection of the dualism between emotion and reason, but a reciprocal valuation of what he still saw as two separate faculties.

This revaluation of emotions is particularly clear when one follows up on another aspect of Rousseau’s critique of reason. Unless a person’s reason is supported by perceptions made clear by healthy love of self and a trained sensibility, it alone will not be able to think its way out of the corruption of society. Whereas in Plato’s thinking, reason could lead out of society, indeed out of the self, to a vision of The Good that was true and eternal, for Rousseau that was no longer possible. Reason was enclosed and internal to a way of thinking that was embedded in society. Something else outside of reason was needed to move it along the way towards truth and happiness and that something else was emotion, albeit only of certain kinds.

As previously noted that “something else” had in the western world been the God revealed through Christ—the logos or the word. For Rousseau it was the “Author of All Things” who had written these emotions in the natural development of humanity as a part of nature rather than in the dogmas and traditions of the church.63

The Dominant Discourse

Many of the cornerstones of the situation with the emotions that we find ourselves in now have been laid. Within this discourse, humanity is distinguished by its reason, and our emotions are disquieting remnants of our evolutionary past that need to be controlled or monitored to better ensure the functioning of our higher capacities. There is an additional step to be taken to make this way of talking dominant, and that is to move control of the emotions to the medical profession away from education. The next chapter looks at that step and the impact it has had. At this point, Rousseau has introduced an alternate, resistant discourse that shares the conceptual structure of the reason/emotion dichotomy but, as resistant discourses are likely to do, seeks to flip this structure so that two specific and “natural” emotions are given more value than the reason they serve to perfect. A tension has been established between reason and emotion: which impulse do we trust, which faculty do we develop? The two visions of Paradise—Rousseau’s earthly one and Augustine’s

63 Yet Rousseau’s “Nature” was as much a creation of his own imagination as it was of God’s hand, humanity never the solitary animal wandering the benevolent forest.
City of God—both sit as visions to which humanity can aspire and as inspirations to support the divinely given opponents of reason and emotion.

Possible shapes for an emotional curriculum

In broad outline, these two views, what I have called the Traditional and the Progressive in the last chapter, comprise the dominant Western discourse of the emotions, varying as they do in their ways of justifying their ideas from notions of the mechanical functioning of the body machine to the spiritual transcendence of the physical. Each view has its own implications for what the proper educational consideration of the emotions could be. The following sections will examine what some of the constraints and directions suggested by these views are. Seeing the dependence of these constraints and directions on the dominant discourse, which has been shown to be a view constructed over a history of thinking that includes ideas that no longer seem compelling, we may realize that the constraints themselves are not so constraining. The other possibility is that when an alternative view of the emotions is developed, these constraints, dependent as they are on older views, will be seen as no longer relevant.

Constraints

Two general factors constrain the possibilities of any emotional curriculum: (1) the inherent mechanism of the human organism that functions in producing emotions, and in some ways the converse of the first; (2) the meanings and experience of emotions can be shaped by the norms of the form of life or culture in which the emotional education is to take place. Thus we can think both “Noble reason is undermined by debased, instinctual emotion” and “Pure, natural emotion can be contaminated by social conditioning and the crazy reason of society;” that is, both those propositions make sense though neither may be true.

The first constraint is an acknowledgement that mind and body are inseparably connected, and that if the body and brain are incapable of generating an emotional response of a particular kind, no amount of training or education will produce it. This is a constraint that is evoked, for example, by William Solodow when he writes of the emotional changes that come with adolescence: “There is a biological clock inside us that begins the process on which education
has little influence.” This constraint also appears in general “common sense” notions like “Human beings are naturally competitive animals,” or “Men are naturally competitive because of testosterone and so inevitably more easily angered than women.” It is more evident in the evolutionary view of emotions and, perhaps, least evident in emotions as cognitive events.

This constrain is only absolute if one supposes that all forms of mental development are only affected by innate, genetically determined features of the organism. To the degree that intellectual and emotional development are open to influence by experience, nutrition, environment, and nurture, then genetic predestination makes less and less sense. I suppose that if some emotional development can only occur for those who naturally perceive ultraviolet light and hear super high frequencies, then human beings are bound to be left out, and these developments left to fish or bats. That our sensory apparatus generally works within a certain range may well be part of what constitutes our pattern of living as human beings.

Generally in the philosophy of mind, the mind/body question has occasioned much debate. Yet even Descartes, who was so concerned to differentiate mind and body, acknowledged that there had to be some meeting point. Some modern scientific thinkers are more likely to argue for a brain/mind identity, seemingly willing to lose mind for brain activity. The converse is true for other thinkers. Within the middle ground, there is still much debate about the extent to which the inherent structures of the brain determine behaviour and thought patterns, but the work of Damasio surely shows that if the brain cannot make necessary connections, whole aspects of thought and feeling cannot come to be. We are more or less constrained by our biology to feel certain emotions—with the proviso that “more or less” covers a great deal of territory. Our ability to interpret even sensations like pain differently seems to be built into the “mechanisms,” if indeed that metaphorical description can be used, of perception. It stands to reason that if the physical mechanism of pain sensation can be altered by thought, then our own awareness of our thinking and feeling is also not purely mechanical.

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64 “The Meaning of Development in Middle School,” Chapter 2 in Educating Minds and Hearts.  
65 See Pinker, The Blank Slate for discussion of the “ghost in the machine” and an interesting history of debate between those arguing for the Blank Slate and others putting forward a view of an inherent Human Nature.  
66 Antonio Damasio, Descartes’ Error. For a different view see Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought.
The second constraint derives from the philosophical position that the meaning of emotions arises not from private sensations but from public language and concepts inherent in language that are used to express and understand emotions or from other more draconian forms of social conditioning. If emotions are seen as hardwired responses of the nervous system without any conscious or conceptual content, then presumably suppression or redirection would occur with appropriate forms of operant conditioning—an affirmation of the effectiveness of the torturer O’Brien in Orwell’s novel, *1984*. In the same novel, however, Big Brother also endeavours to control what is felt and thought through the systematic control of language with the idea that a language suitably purged of words would not allow people to have heretical thoughts or feelings because they would not have the vocabulary to think or feel them.

I suggested earlier that Wittgenstein’s ideas will help show a way of better placing this view in a new context to be developed in Chapters Seven and Eight. Foucault’s work further illuminates the notion of social control or development of emotions to include social structures that support discourses whose logic is derived from the power of those structures. Demonstrating that is left to the next chapter, but at this point I hope we can say that our emotional response to situations is shaped in some way by our experience—an implication educators could find heartening, even if that shaping does require teachers to be some form of O’Brien.

To what do these constraints amount? We can’t feel what can’t be contained within our mind/body, and we can’t understand what can’t be interpreted within our cultural neighbourhood. These constraints define the boundaries of the area of emotional possibilities. It would seem that there are lots of directions within that area in which one could move.

**Directions**

Given that some learning and movement can take place regarding the emotions, it seems to me that there are at least five possible directions that a curriculum could take in guiding emotional development:

- 1. Suppression—where emotions are generally suppressed

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Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* traces this general idea and its effects on the formation of the modern notion of the disciplined self.
2. Expression — where all emotions are encouraged
3. Neglect — where emotional development is left to its own devices
4. Selection — where some emotions are encouraged while others neglected or suppressed
5. Transformation — where emotions are encouraged to develop along certain paths without suppression.

Which of these directions a particular educational curriculum would choose, is largely dependent on the view of the emotions held — at least in theory. In practice, what an emotional curriculum would look like would be guided by specific situations looked at through a view of emotions and the needs of the moment. This is why curriculum needs to be matched with pedagogy. Use of any of these five directions in the moment may be necessary, even while recognizing that in general one is most useful.

For example, if emotions are seen as essentially non-rational, and rationality is valued, then emotions would consequently be suppressed. For example, some students develop a fear of learning math and panic at the first sign they are not “getting it,” or others panic when writing exams. These sorts of emotions are the enemies of clear and objective thinking. Presumably, some form of desensitization or deconditioning of that fear response could be considered. On the other hand, if emotions were viewed as developing naturally out of the maturing of the organism, then emotional education would consist in not interfering in that natural development. Or some might encourage the expression of emotions as a kind of exercise to strengthen the developing “emotional muscles.”

These examples show how one’s view of emotions “makes sense of” the actions and interventions used when dealing with emotions in schools. Similar examples could be generated in other areas of life: imagine the cool rationalist who responds to an angry person, “I can’t talk to you when you’re so emotional. Cool down and think about this.” Statements like these encourage the suppression of emotion in favour of “clear headed” thinking and imply the traditional view that emotions only disturb the exercise of reason. A person holding a progressive view would be more likely to say, “You speak so
passionately now, I can tell that this means a lot to you”—a response that could well further encourage the expression of emotion rather than its suppression.

It is possible to discern potentials for practice within this theoretical tension. The examples in the preceding paragraphs show two ways of responding to the same situation. The response a person makes in those sorts conversations is the result of many things certainly, and one influence is the beliefs she or he has about what emotions are and what value they have in life. It’s unlikely in our modern world that someone speaking in anger would be seen as a person inspired by a god—easier for some to see them possessed by a demon. The next chapter will examine how the intense and extreme emotional responses came to shift from expressions of the divine to symptoms of madness—a shift with major consequences for the treatment of emotions and a reason why the intentional content, the judgments or inspirations of emotion, may have become suspect. I will say more about the intentional content of emotion in Chapter Six.

In this chapter, we have mapped out the general area in which an emotional education might operate. It will operate within what can be felt in our body/mind and with what can be understood and expressed to those around us. What that means more specifically in both theory and practice will depend on how we understand the nature of and importance of emotions. I hope this chapter also goes some way to building an understanding that there is no necessity to think of the emotions and rational thinking being at odds with one another. The ensuing chapters will, I hope, show that a more useful conception of the emotions is available to us.
CHAPTER FIVE

REASON, UNREASON, AND THE PASSIONS

The split between emotion and reason gives little hope that the education of the emotions will take place in recognized seats of learning. This education might well have to begin in the consultation room of the psychologist or psychiatrist—one of the few last places where emotion is still acknowledged to have at least some value.

James Hillman

Chapter Introduction

Even if emotions are separated from mind, the dominant discourse about them in the West has left possibilities for education about them as the last chapter has demonstrated. This chapter will trace a concomitant move that has resulted in shifting the emotions from things open to educational intervention or support towards things of medical concern. This move also has the impact of reducing the ideas or intentional content of the passions, as emotions are most generally called in this development, first to errors and then to symptoms of madness. When elements of this view become part of the dominant discourse, then fear of both being seen as too sentimental or of educators meddling in an area that is regarded as the proper concern of medical practitioners can inhibit engaging emotionally in ways that are in fact important to learning how to be fully alive. For this reason, this chapter follows the development of this medical view of the emotions guided by the work in this area of Michel Foucault to see where it can
be challenged. I will look at how these ideas also shape modern conceptions of and attitudes toward emotion and ultimately how emotions are dealt with in schools.

Foucault in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* finds a tradition of thought that placed the passions at the centre of madness. Foucault looks at the role the passions were thought to play in explanations of madness in the Age of Reason and how those explanations, arising first as accounts stemming from the confinement of the insane, shaped the modern conception of madness as disease requiring medical intervention. Foucault’s mad passions and their intentional objects are only different by degree and judgment from other emotions and their own inherent beliefs and judgments.

**Madness and Passion**

Foucault identifies passion as “the meeting ground of body and soul,” each in its way setting a limit on the other and the meeting of each being the point at which one communicates with the other.68 It is difficult to see what to make of these claims. Rather than being a part or consequence of Descartes’ view of the body/soul division, Foucault explicitly notes that this view came before Descartes and lasted long after him. However Descartes’ ideas of body/mind do offer one way of seeing what Foucault is getting at here.

Descartes would have us consider the soul as composed essentially of thought while the body is a physical machine. He is never clear about the relation between these two distinctly different substances, but he suggests that they relate through the pineal gland. Where most parts of the brain are divisible or duplicated, the pineal gland is single and indivisible and so most like the soul. The pineal gland can affect and be affected by the fluids, humours, or animal spirits of the body. Descartes writes of conflicts in which the animal spirits of the body might push the pineal gland one way while the thoughts of the soul might push it back in opposition.69

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68 *Madness and Civilization*, 86. All further references to this book will be made in text as MC.
69 For this interpretation of Descartes’ views see Gert-Jan Lokhorst, "Descartes and the Pineal Gland."
It is as if two forces are attempting to work the joystick that controls the mechanisms and movements of the body—though that is too simple an analogy. It may be that Descartes himself thought that trying to be more specific about this relationship was logically impossible—like trying to see something as single and double at the same time.\textsuperscript{70} For Descartes, mind is essentially different from the corporeal substance of the body, so to imagine it pushing and pulling an organ, however undivided itself, threatens this difference.

What is important to Foucault’s analysis is the relationship between these two sometimes antagonists. On the one hand, there is the mind composed of thought and on the other the body given to appetites, desires, and all the passions. Whatever “gate” or “mechanism” through which these two communicate is also the gate through which madness enters the soul.

While this description of mind/body seems at home in the ideas of Descartes (as Foucault would point out because Descartes was at home in the society that produced them) they do not have their only home there. For a modern example, Antonio Damasio has developed a model of decision making in which the mind incorporates information about body states as an essential part of such thinking.\textsuperscript{71} It is not impossible to imagine that this mechanism could be an entry point for such states of passion that originate “in the body.”

Though it might seem that passion itself is “madness,” or conversely that real madness must enter through the gateway to mind as a separate and complete entity, that is, as other than a composite of mind and body, neither is the case. In Foucault’s analysis, madness is the result of the spirits of passion collecting around an intentional object of passion and so pushing the mind towards that object despite itself (MC, 87). Passion is not by itself the cause of madness: “it forms the basis for its very possibility” (MC, 88), but is not on its own sufficient to produce madness. That passion would collect around some object with such force is, as it were, not simply passion’s responsibility alone (the “object of passion” must bear some responsibility); it is just that sometimes this combination overpowers the balance of the mind. The controlling joystick is

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Descartes’ error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain}. Damasio, however, is not seeking to maintain a rigid mind/body dichotomy, but to show how all parts of the nervous system must work together for effective thinking and decision-making.
pushed in a direction (selected by the “object”) with too much force (supplied by the passion) resulting in the mind doing mad “acrobatics.”

The view of the Classic Period of which Foucault writes was that madness could strike as quickly as passion gathered and dissipate as quickly as it went away; that a paroxysm of rage could induce madness that would leave as soon as the rage abated. The passionate energy of the rage was not learned, but it had the dangerous possibility of teaching. This dangerous possibility was that the unbalanced mind might form images, impressions, and ideas in this mad state that would not dissipate with the passion, but remain. These persistent objects would support the state of madness as long as they remained. The functioning unity of mind and body even at the level of developing accurate impressions of the world through the senses and understanding would be broken leaving the sufferer with “chimeras, hallucinations, and errors—the cycle of non-being” (MC, 93).

**Delirium**

Persistent madness involves the imagination, for the delusions of the mad are their own inventions, but Foucault notes that imagination itself does not supply what is essential about madness: “Madness is thus far beyond imagination, and yet it is profoundly rooted in it; for it consists merely in allowing the image a spontaneous value, total and absolute truth” (MC, 94). The passions have rushed towards an imaginary image with such force, perhaps, that the mind has unbalanced to the extent of thinking the imaginary a true representation. This investing of an image with the force of truth, and acting with passion in its regard believing this truth, is what Foucault calls delirium—overt delirium.

His analysis of delirium continues, however. He states, “under the chaotic and manifest delirium reigns the order of a secret delirium” (MC, 97). This secret delirium is “a discourse which sustains and at the same time erodes the image, undermines it, distends it in the course of a reasoning, and organizes it around a

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73. See Damasio, *Descartes’ Error* for the idea that some “body states” can be stored in the brain for later reference without again consulting the body.

74. It is interesting to wonder whether Rousseau might have seen this mechanism as the one that supported the “delirious” reason of social thinking which he criticised.
segment of language” (MC, 94). The mind, overbalanced by passion and having fixed on an image as reality uses its ability with language to “make sense” of this new world, using language as rational and perfect as any: “The ultimate language of madness is that of reason, but the language of reason enveloped in the prestige of the image, limited to the locus of appearance which the image defines” (MC, 95). Foucault uses examples of patients who had developed complete conviction in images of themselves that others saw as false: one was a man whose son accidentally drowned on an outing with the father; the other a man who believed himself to be made of glass. The first showed signs of deep melancholy and believed a demon had been assigned to him as a result of his guilt in his son’s death. The second had an extreme fear of being touched or jarred for fear of shattering. In these examples it is easy to see how a clear line of reasoning extends from the initial “image” of guilt or being made of glass to the mad behaviour.

This kind of deep delirium or deep discourse is powered by emotion and underlies all forms of madness and can be said to constitute its “truth.” As Foucault says, “It is madness itself, and also, beyond each of its phenomena, its silent transcendence, which constitute the truth of madness” (MC, 101).

Reason and Unreason

In cases like these, where a person who sees and hears a demon and another who acts and talks like his body is actually made of glass, most people would be quick to agree that those people are mad. Yet even with those examples, Foucault asks what is it about the “truth of their madness” that is manifestly untrue? On the literal level, one could quickly answer, “There are no demons” or “A body of glass could not live.” The literal truth or aspects of the images in these cases shows them to be false. But on other levels, we cannot so quickly arrive at judgment. Isn’t the hallucination of the demon a true expression of the man’s feelings of guilt? Isn’t the fragile nature of life somehow captured in the image of a body made of glass? Foucault’s question about the truth of madness makes more sense when directed at these other levels of expression and interpretation.

Throughout the book, Foucault makes the case that between the beginning of the Renaissance and the Age of Reason there is a break in how madness was viewed. The break was formulated in a continual move away from the “truth of
From a time when the mad were kept in the open or wandered freely, this move also involved the confinement of the mad along with criminals, vagabonds, and the indigent. Spurred on by social and economic reasons, this confinement required a new justification especially as the idea of human rights grew. One aspect of the new conception of madness that provided this justification was the idea that madness was based on error—perhaps in particular moral error—error that might be contagious. It was error that could not be allowed to roam or to influence others and so had to be confined.

It is this idea of error that Foucault identifies as a particular break from older ideas of madness. These “traditional” ideas contained the notion that madness could be a window into another, even a deeper, reality. He writes, “Whereas tradition compared the delirium of the madman to the vivacity of the dream images, the classical period identified delirium only with the complex of the image and the night of the mind…” (MC, 103). Shakespeare wrote in the older tradition when, for example, he shows King Lear’s madness and the insights it brings into the tragic situation his own actions had wrought. In the period Foucault examines, madness lost this connection to truth and became (most often) moral error. Madness “assumed its precise meaning in this fact: that madness in the classical period ceased to be the sign of another world, and that it became the paradoxical manifestation of non-being” (MC, 115).

Madness lost its connection to tragedy in cases like King Lear’s and the “delirious language” lost its connection to truth. The mad no longer had anything to say that could suggest the arbitrary or illusory nature of accepted convictions of society. Their madness and its associated emotional state locked the individual away, as it were, and isolated them from the rational world. The reason at the centre of their discourse was rendered “unreason” and “error.” Confinement was justified because it marked just that change—madness was error with nothing of importance to say—the malfunctioning body has overwhelmed the mind.

Later this nullification of madness would further evolve, rendering madness an illness as it was dealt with more and more by the medical profession. This development followed the pattern that Foucault described and that I have summarized above—namely that the “truth of madness” revealed by its rigorous reason is turned into emptiness and “unreason” or nothing that has anything to say. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that “we find that
prodigious postulate, which no medicine had yet dared formulate: that madness, after all, was only madness” (*MC*, 277) — critical madness was no longer possible because all madness had been reduced to a medical condition.

One consequence that Foucault draws from this evolution is the effect it had on art and philosophy. In the modern age, madness has become both the limit and the ground of critical and creative thinking. The madness of Van Gogh and Nietzsche reveal the extent to which they had to go, the passion that they had to bring to their work, in order to come to a place from which they could work, from which they could bring back work that challenged the conventions and convictions of the time. A place from which they both would eventually not return — while their work would provide the challenge that Foucault saw coming from the “old madness” of tradition:

Ruse and new triumph of madness: the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness, since in its struggles and agonies it measures itself by the excess of works like those of Nietzsche, of Van Gogh, or Artaud. And nothing in itself, especially not what it can know of madness, assures the world that it is justified by such works of madness. (*MC*, 289)

To return to the main question — what is the truth of madness? — part of the answer seems to be this: madness shows that there are limits to reason, for reason, just like madness, can build a fortress on a dream or a delusion. A threatening answer it seems — the excessive passion so often at the heart of a dream or of madness has become a moral fault needing correction (*MC*, 157–58). Perhaps it is not too much of an extension of this line of thinking to say that reason, split from emotion and so given to absence or excess of passion, is in danger of leading us astray.

**Passion, madness, and Genius**

The modern vision of madness is as psychiatric illness. Our understanding of the relationship between the functioning of the brain and patterns of behaviour is becoming clearer and clearer. It might be possible now to identify, based on images of Nietzsche’s brain functioning (should such have been available), his “critical madness,” and to distinguish it from the catatonic madness of his final years when he was no longer writing or functioning. Perhaps such an
examination of brain states would reveal a distinctly different sort of functioning or conversely a gradually changing state that was responsible for both the writing and the final madness. But even if such images were available, their interpretation would have to be tied to an evaluation of the writing and its importance. Any interpretation of the brain state would have to be founded on a critical interpretation of the work. That is why such an empirical study would only be possible after the critical interpretation was complete. In itself, it would not, and could not, be an examination of what Nietzsche had to say or the passion that drove him to write often at great personal cost. The brain states only take their meaning from the description associated with the behaviour and the concepts used to describe it. When we presuppose madness to be incapable of discovering or stating truth, diagnosis obviates truth.

The physical mechanisms of madness are not Foucault’s interest, though the development of the medical treatment of illness is. His point is that the treatment of madness, and the way it is considered and the moral weight that it is given, are interpretations of madness quite distinct from the physical mechanisms of madness. For example, Foucault points out that the inability of the mad to fit into the emerging capitalist and industrial economies rendered them appropriate for confinement—long before their medical condition was seen as the problem (MC, 39). In Nietzsche’s case, for example, there may be a point in his writing where he crosses a line from critical madness, the madness that inspired and informed his critical philosophy, to “medical” madness where what he writes becomes a symptom of his disease and so only capable of exhibiting something about his disease. Foucault would argue that even the idea of that line, let alone where it might be drawn, is the result of the re-conceptualization of madness that occurred in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries spurred on by social change. Changes in philosophy, psychology, and morality all follow after the changes demanded by the new shape of society. The boundary between art and philosophy, on the one hand, and madness on the other, maps the area of this newly emerged society.

It follows then that the change of “unreason” to nothing more than medical symptom rather than social criticism or philosophical insight stems from this re-conceptualization. In the same way, the valuation of the passions had to change: they became the fuel of the madness that is unreason’s gateway. The insane might no longer be seen as morally culpable for their excessive
sensibility—they are ill, after all. That diagnosis means that they no longer allow their passions to run away with them or to turn from their “natural” course, but the excess passion is now a result of their underlying condition. The misplaced passions are not forgiven nor are they given epistemological weight; they are discredited in a new way as symptoms of illness. They have the weight of a fever or a coated tongue. The old disjunction between reason and emotion is part of this new valuation—but it now also includes the connection between passion and unreason.

**Romantic Sentiments**

In the Western tradition, our ideas about the passions are made more complex by the influences of Romanticism. There is still alive the Romantic notion that our moral sentiments are a source of moral understanding for us. The result is that we believe that we can trust our emotions in some ways but must distrust them in others. The criteria we rely on to see which emotional responses might be trusted or need be distrusted are unclear. Foucault points out that ever since Sade, we must acknowledge that any feeling that a human being can have must in some sense be “natural” (MC, 283). The Romantics would disagree: like Rousseau, their position would be that society, rather than nature, was responsible for mankind’s debased passions. The “natural” passions are a source of meaning while “unnatural” passions are perverse and dangerous. Here “natural” and “unnatural” are moral distinctions of the same kind Foucault argues were made to distinguish madness from the productive life demanded by society. Romanticism seeks to redefine the “acceptable passion,” finding love of nature and awe and wonder of nature’s power acceptable while rendering the passion for reason and the geometric organization of gardens (and life in general) unacceptable. This reordering of the passions results from an attempted reordering of power in society, not from a re-conceptualization of passion and madness.

There are unresolved visions in the Romantic/Reason difference, but not only there. In Victorian England, the idea of “The Noble Savage” as found (for example in The Last of the Mohicans) coexisting with “The White Man’s Burden,” a slogan representing the idea that the “higher” white Europeans had the

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responsibility to spread civilization to the “savage” lands they colonized. These ideas are unlikely to be found in such blatant existence now, but they still have their effects.\textsuperscript{76} We are more likely now, in explaining cultural differences, to see them as largely the result of differing environmental and ecological opportunities offered in the areas of origin of different cultures.\textsuperscript{77} From this point of view, looking back on the Victorians, one can see the values they placed on technology over other values such as spiritual connection with the land and so on as arbitrary or grounded on place or habit. The burden the Victorian English felt would appear an illusion based on misapprehensions—or a delusion arising from a kind of delirium of superiority.

Before moving on to a more modern and less blatant example of the kind of analysis that Foucault’s ideas suggest, I want to point out another stereotype that suggests the ambivalence that we still have toward passion and madness. While Foucault refers to “mad” philosophers, poets, and artists, there is another creature he does not point out—the “mad” scientist. Perhaps “mad scientists” are only creatures of melodrama and popular culture, but they illustrate how passion is valued to a point while being condemned when it exceeds a certain power over “reasonable” behaviour. From Doctor Frankenstein to Doctor Otto Octavius, popular culture has shown that the line between genius and madman is fine and easily crossed. These “mad scientists” are driven by their passion and a vision of what might be accomplished, even though the accomplishment or the means to accomplish it transgress a moral boundary. Their madness is to not see that they have gone too far. While we admire a passionate commitment to work, discovery, and success within certain bounds, when those boundaries are crossed we see madness.

But the delirium of madness and unreason need not be taken to extremes. The relationship between passion, image/dream, and discourse is present everywhere. I recently listened to a radio debate between a suburban mayor and an environmentalist. The subject was the planned major expansion of bridges and roadways connecting suburbs to a metropolitan area. The two speakers were at opposite poles in the discussion, the mayor applauding the expansion while the environmentalist opposed it arguing in favour of increased public

\textsuperscript{76} For a modern history of the idea of “The Noble Savage” (among others) see Steven Pinker, \textit{The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature.}

\textsuperscript{77} Jared Diamond, \textit{Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies.}
transportation and a redesign that would allow people to live much nearer to where they worked. Each participant’s impatience with the other’s inability to see the superiority of his or her position was obvious.

At one point the mayor said, “We all have cars. We all need cars. We will always have and need cars—and trucks. So we might as well make them as easy and efficient to use as possible.” Where does the reason of “We will always have and need cars” come from? Of course, a number of answers are possible, and what the mayor was thinking is unknown, but it seems entirely plausible that the inevitability of cars and trucks comes from the mayor’s passionately held vision of a future with the freedom of individually owned and operated automobile transportation for profit and pleasure. It seems odd to put this vision in the context of hallucination and delirium, but suppose the context were different: imagine it were widely held that cars were a major source of air pollution that regularly became so bad as to cause illness and death, that the use of hydrocarbon fuels was causing a significant climate change with disastrous consequences, that the deaths caused by automobile accidents were the leading cause of death among some age groups—especially the young. If these sorts of negative consequences were so severe, then the Mayor’s vision and reasonable statement would seem like madness and unreason, as perhaps it did to the environmentalist in the debate. His vision of an oil-less, internal combustion free future without commuters and so on seemed just as unrealistic and unlikely to the Mayor in its turn.

This sort of debate would typically be analyzed in terms of the “reasonableness” of the two positions, the validity of assumptions, the logic of argument. Foucault’s insight suggests that forming the underlying assumptions and the very discourse in which the discussion is conducted are passions that shape images and language—passions and something akin to dreams or delirium. However, because of the dominance of reason, these passions and images are left alone, are not part of the debate, and so no rational resolution is possible.

The key point here is that a part of every passionately held idea, position, or line of reasoning is an implicit emotion that in many cases is the fuel of disagreement. Movement ahead may require a better understanding of that emotion. A retreat to objectivity does not allow better understanding of this passionate foundation.
Passion and Education

Foucault has written about the development of modern schools and their structure as a mechanism of a society based on discipline. Put very briefly, the argument is that schools take their structure and purpose from the need to standardize students to fit within certain roles in society in order to stabilize production/consumption and internalize social control. Implicit in the structure and functioning of education is, then, a certain view of society and what it is to be a proper citizen. Plato in the *Republic* started with the view of a properly functioning city and then worked backwards towards the kind of citizens that had to be produced to ensure such a city’s proper functioning. He was explicit about the re-education or removal of those who may have already been corrupted by ideas that would not be compatible with the planned utopia. Foucault’s analysis suggests that education, as part of the disciplinary apparatus of society, pursues similar outcomes though with very different methods: those people incompatible with the dominant social organization will be considered either delinquent or mad. In either case, they will be subjected to corrective measures. The goal of education will be to shape individuals with images and emotions (and knowledge) compatible with the structures, expectations, and shape of power within that society.

The impact of this goal on emotions, whether overt or hidden, is profound, especially on those critical emotions that have as their objects other conceptions of society or any other ideas that are outside of the prevalent episteme or power-knowledge structure of discourse. Passionate convictions of “truths” other than those current in society are most likely to be medicalized as madness. There will be a range of these convictions, however, so that not only the “lunatics” on the fringes and edges will be affected, but also others of less “unreasonable” inclinations. Young Picassos will be taught to colour within the lines created by tracers. Young Einsteins will be told again that they ask too many questions, and the passionate way that they hold onto their convictions

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78 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.*
79 In British Columbia’s Year 2000 educational review, for example, the human development language of an early draft was altered by the addition of goals designed to ensure a prosperous and sustainable economy.
might well be seen as defiance or symptom. None of this is new. Foucault has focused the forces that heat the crucible of “self formation:”\textsuperscript{80}

It is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.

The “fabrication,” in the “building” sense of that word, includes building the complex of perceptions and judgments that will shape what the individual feels and the sense that he or she makes of those emotions. The unanswered questions include the following: what emotions will those be that are “built in?” and, in light of the conflicting connections between passion and genius or critical visions, will an increasingly disciplined society allow room for the kind of selves that are capable of passionate critical and creative thinking? Thinking of this kind will require ways of learning and changing on the level of the passionate underpinning of thought.

Nietzsches, Picassos, and Einsteins are not really the problem—they tend to prevail—or at least persist through some degree of suffering. It is the less hardy souls that will be shaped to think and feel as needed. Many would say that this is as it should be. Those who might be labelled “Traditional” hold that it is the job of schools and other social institutions to mold the clay of children into citizens and people seen as normal, moral, and fit. The real challenge of Foucault’s thinking is for “Progressives” in education, those who believe that the function of schools is to develop the uniqueness of each individual in the system, to “lead out” the innate special qualities placed in each student by nature or god. But is there anything in there to be led out? The construction of the self is inevitable, Foucault argues:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.”\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Discipline and Punish, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, p. 194.
In this view, even a discourse in resistance to a dominant discourse, will be producing rather than leading out an already existing self. A first step for educators to take in light of this analysis is to develop an awareness or consciousness of the creative role they are playing—perhaps to be followed by some process (if any can exist) of becoming aware of the results of this role and ways in which ethics or even hopes might shape it. To put this point again, in other words, it is not possible for educators to escape their role as agents shaping their students’ passions and selves by retreating to being transmitters of impersonal or objective knowledge and skills. The structure, expectations, and relationships within the classroom inevitably have some influence in these areas of student development.

In his later thinking, Foucault came to embrace the passions for their power to transform us from the person we have been created to be by the diverse power of our society, into an ever-emerging invention of ourselves as aesthetic creations:

Foucault advocates a life that recognizes ourselves as beings with a passion for ceaseless attentiveness to ourselves as works of art. This involves a “refusal of what we are,” because “to be oneself no longer makes sense.” Passion demands that we abandon our learned habits and beliefs, turning it into a profound force that takes advantage of our affective intensities and creates a new space-time of existence.

On the face of it, there are strong resonances here with the Romantic view of the sentiments. One can be transformed from the disciplined and rational self produced by the forces of knowledge/power at work in society through the force and power of passion. There is also a strong resonance with the role of passion in madness:

Passion marks the power of someone to escape confinement in a particular body and encounter other bodies. Bodies, pleasures and the

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82 The problem with power-knowledge is that there is no obvious “outside” of the episteme which to refer any ethical or other consideration. Here Foucault’s later writing offers useful suggestions.

passion that inspires them constitute the potentiality of the subject to resist.\textsuperscript{84}

It is in the quality of the passion to provoke resistance, that it will be judged. The use of passion is to produce a subjectivity that can transgress one’s habitual self. One must retain one’s critical sense and use it to monitor the passions that would keep one comfortable in the old self and those that transgress. The politics of passion in education, then, in setting up the “new economy of bodies and pleasures,” requires this critical attentiveness for that which disrupts the existing order and looks at self and others as “assemblages” of forces, relations, movements and pleasures. In effect, the escape from “here” comes about by following the forces that lead “not-here.” Selecting those forces requires the ongoing attention of a critical guard informed by theory—which sounds a bit like a new orthodoxy driven by a new theory.\textsuperscript{85} If there is escape from the manufactured selves of theory, escape that is liberation, it will have to come from a new way of seeing the cycles of dominance and resistance, or in the specific case of the emotions, disciplined emotion and madness.

**Passionate Sources**

The view that education is unavoidably engaged in a kind of social engineering is a challenge to educators who feel they are engaged in some other “higher” calling, whether it is a humanist notion of personal development or an attempt to develop and progress knowledge. In all these cases, Traditional or Progressive, at the centre of education is a passionately held image—not a scientifically validated theory—and so much is built on this passion and image that the whole enterprise teeters on the edge of unreason. Appeals to “validity” end up as passionate appeals to images of society, human development, or scientific theory that are all bound together with history and function rather than “pure” reason and science. Foucault’s thinking challenges many deeply held assumptions about the nature of the debate of educational issues.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, 143.

\textsuperscript{85} At least in the interpretation developed by Zembylas. The practices developed by Foucault in *The Care of the Self* are both more nuanced and specific about a kind of self monitoring and a relationship with a mentor that are involved in self-transformation.
Not the least challenge is to the very notion of what constitutes movement towards understanding in this situation. While it may have become more a commonplace acknowledgement that reason has its limits in changing beliefs, it is not a common practice to acknowledge that passions underlie every image of how things are supposed to be. In discussions of accountability in education, for example, what would happen if it were acknowledged that the need to make education accountable stems from the fear of what would happen if educational workers were not closely monitored, or from the need to feel powerful or in control? Or that the resistance to being held accountable might stem from the need to be respected or the desire for personal freedom or being able to act more from an internal personal prompting? “There has to be accountability” is a reflection of a worldview just as is “There will always be cars.”

It is a very rare discussion that looks at the social genealogy of an idea, let alone at the person’s etiology of emotion connected with it, and it is a rare education that encourages and enables skills and attitudes that permit such examinations. When cultures were more homogenous and more isolated, such examinations may have hardly seemed necessary. There would have been very little necessity to entertain or understand worldviews that diverged wildly from norms generally accepted except by those exceptional people first encountering the unsatisfactory aspects of that existence. Now that those days of isolation are gone, and with cultures of differing assumptions rubbing up against one another and emerging “multicultural cultures,” an ethos of understanding seems increasingly important. Simple single point of view judgments are too likely to lead to conflict.

Whether understandings based on more general insights into the passionate images that underlie ideas would automatically lead to less conflict is another question. There is the Buddha’s statement “To understand everything is to forgive everything” as encouragement, but could such general enlightenment be achieved? The general principle suggested by *Madness and Civilization* is that our treatment of madness and the ideas about medical treatment that grew from it are neither historical inevitabilities, nor scientific insights, nor deeper insights into eternal truths. It seems unlikely that awareness of the *contingency* of ideas would inspire fanatical devotion to them—that people would realize that they are not the sort of thing for which one would fight and die. Of course, few ideas are ever likely to inspire such devotion—or, one might say, too many already do.
In more usual circumstances, though, a greater fluency with the passionate underpinnings of ideas might lead to a greater fluidity of thought in general. People might become more open to entertaining alternate possibilities, borrowing as it were some of the willingness of geniuses to pursue alternate explanations and ideas. This is a notion of “emotional intelligence,” an idea that I will examine in the next chapter, that might have great utility in discussion and in promoting tolerance of differing points of view.

This greater fluency does not rest on a simple and general acceptance and encouragement of the passions. Desire of some kinds, anger, and hatred, if encouraged, are hardly likely to lead to a culture of understanding. Those passions seem largely incompatible with a passionate search for truth. Consequently, a proper emotional education would not simply encourage students to be more passionate, more emotional, or more expressive of whatever it is they feel. A more thoughtful curriculum is required. The next chapter examines emotions to see whether that “thoughtfulness” might actually be contained within the emotions themselves. Perhaps the intentional objects of our emotions have the potential to bring in thoughts that can contribute to our freedom. There may be, in addition to the critique and resistance, some hope for a felt sense of rightness that artists also feel when the creation matches their inspiration.
CHAPTER SIX

INTELLIGENT EMOTIONS: SOURCES OF PERSONAL MEANING

The present moment contains past and future. The secret of transformation is the way we handle this very moment.

Thich Nhat Hahn

Paradox of Intelligent Emotions

In a dominant discourse that values reason over emotion, one way to capture our intuitive sense that emotions are meaningful is to find something reasonable about our emotions. After all our emotional responses to life’s events are as much a part of our experience as our thoughts or perceptions. Emotions enliven our voice and facial expressions and guide us in acts of great foolishness or wisdom. They are woven through every minute of life even if we are sometimes only aware of them when they rise up and seem to overwhelm us. It may only be at times when sadness or fear threaten our ability to live that we seek help understanding our emotions, otherwise we let them run their course, sometimes annoyed at their intrusion into what we might imagine is the ordered functioning of our minds, dismayed at the confusion they inject into simple decision making, or lifted by unexpected moments of joy. Seen in this way, emotions hardly seem things that we
can be intelligent about or that we could teach others to be intelligent about, however much they are part of our lives.

This is particularly true within the view of the emotions that comes from the tradition that we have examined in the preceding chapters. Emotions have been moved from any connection with the mind, the “rational” mind, and become something more akin to instincts or unthinking reactions to stimuli — a part of our genetic and evolutionary heritage. An excess of emotions beyond the socially accepted has become pathological. Perhaps one can be intelligent about the emotions, but there is no sense to the idea of intelligent emotions — at least in the sense of intelligent that means having the capacity for thought and reason.

Yet most of us continue to believe that our emotions contribute a significant part to the meaning and value of our lives despite the theoretical confusion that results. Can we value our emotionality while still valuing our rationality? This chapter considers philosophers who answer a resounding “Yes” to that question and argue for that position by making the necessary or defining part of emotions their intentional, mental content. They maintain a dichotomy between the physical affect or feeling and this mental content. As a result of this view, emotions become cognitive judgments and assertions, which in turn become part of a rational discourse, to be supported or refuted by reason. Making emotions cognitive events makes them more amenable to treatment in the cognitive environment of schools; however, stripping emotions of any necessary connection with their physical sensations seems not only strange, but may run the risk of removing from them any critical or creative power — trapping them within a predetermined catalogue of meanings. So while emphasizing the cognitive component of emotion is a useful counter to positions that deny emotion any cognitive component, this emphasis is just a step towards a new view of the emotions. I hope to show that there is a way of thinking about emotions that better explains their capacity to generate meaning and that developing this capacity should be a concern for schools where we want to develop students’ ability to think and find meaning in their own lives. Realizing that emotions do have cognitive content is a step in that direction, and the following chapters will show how that content can be reunited in language that recognizes that content is not separate from physical feelings.
To start the chapter, it may be good to begin with a personal example of a time when the emotions that were part of an experience were very important. The following experience is another of those touchstone moments I want to be faithful to amidst all this philosophising.

**Moonrise at McLeary Lake**

One summer, my wife and I were canoeing around the Bowron Lakes circuit in northern British Columbia. At the end of a particularly hard day involving an arduous portage and tricky river travel, we set up camp in the Caribou River valley opposite some alpine peaks almost tangible in the clear air. Exhausted by the day’s events, as dusk was growing, I looked up at the rock and snow of the opposite peak and saw the first arc of the full moon appearing from behind the mountain. It seemed incredibly close in the clear air. As I sat there unable to move, I felt the earth rotating away from the moon as it grew to complete fullness, the mountain dropping away beneath it.

I had never felt with such certain impact how small we are—creatures on a planet spinning through space whose whirling would occasionally show us sights like the full moon, itself so small above our heads, appearing behind glacier formed peaks. I felt humbled as astronauts are said to be humbled looking at the little globe of the Earth that could be seen outside their spacecraft.

Of course, if I hadn’t been taught about the rotation of a spherical Earth that is part of a thing called the Solar System, if there hadn’t been a Copernican revolution, I couldn’t have had that experience—if my education and upbringing hadn’t all conspired to make it possible for me to see the Earth move one way while the Moon went another. What I knew about the Earth and Moon combined with the exhaustion of dealing with the forces of wind, water, and rough trails to leave me sitting in complete awe. I can only speculate about what other influences gave that moment its weight: sharing its perfection with my beloved wife, having been a fan of Wordsworth and “wandering lonely as a cloud,” loving the photography of Ansel Adams[^86], or sitting on a lakeside pier singing “I see a bad

[^86]: I encourage readers to seek out Adams’ photograph titled “Autumn Moon, the High Sierra from Glacier Point.”
moon arising” as a teenager. In that moment, I felt the sublimity and beauty of nature that romantic poets imagined suffusing childhood, and it has affected me ever since.

Experiences such as mine are not common—at least for me, but they are central to living if only because they can change the way we see the world. That is a wonderful thing—an experience that can change our perceptions, which can influence our emotions, which can change the way we think and live. Those processes—perceiving, feeling, thinking, and acting—compose the chain that we use to make meaning of our lives. It is amazing how little we give them care, but instead expect links between them to form without special care. Yet there may be very little automatic about the ability to form meaning of our experiences and much more that is learned. And if learning is required, then teaching might be helpful—or even schooling. I’m leaping ahead here—but it suggests my direction.

Going further, I’ll say that of these processes the one that is most necessary to generate meaning in life is the emotional process. If I think of my experience on the Bowron Lakes watching the moon and imagine myself indifferent at seeing/thinking the Earth was rotating to expose the Moon, the experience becomes so different in its impact that it becomes a different experience altogether—certainly one without the meaningful impact that it had. The same is true if I imagine that I was just curious about the close appearance of the moon and speculated about atmospheric conditions or perspective; or if I had simply been afraid that the moon was actually closer to the Earth and thinking that our planet was about to be pulled apart by increased tidal forces. It seems essential that what I felt was awe, and that particular feeling gave the experience the meaning that it still has for me.

So a number of intellectual processes are involved in generating meaning from experience, but the ability to feel and then to incorporate the emotional component is an essential part of the process. That said, it might be important to point out that the emotion itself is not the meaning, that is, saying I felt awe does not sum up the meaning of my canoeing experience—especially if one views emotions as a purely physical response to certain stimuli. To put it another way, if

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87 One could go further and suggest that this process is part of what forms the sense of the self. See the chapter on “The Personal Intelligences” in Gardner (1993).
it were possible to take a drug or otherwise directly stimulate a part of the brain to produce physical sensations identical to those I felt seeing the moon, neither of these methods would produce an experience with an equivalent meaning to the experience I had. To imagine that emotions work this way is to take one side in a critical debate.

**Cognitive Emotions and the Adversary**

It is thinking of emotions as only physical responses to stimulation that leads to the position described by Martha Nussbaum as that of the “Adversary:”

Like gusts of wind or the currents of the sea, they [emotions] move, and move the person, but obtusely, without vision of an object or beliefs about it. In this sense they are “pushes” rather than “pulls.” Sometimes this view is connected with the idea that emotions derive from an “animal” part of our nature, rather than from a specifically human part—usually by thinkers who do not have a high regard for animal intelligence.

Looked at this way, emotions have most of the characteristics of the impulses that move a hand away from a hot surface. It is hard to see how my emotion of awe at the rising moon could contribute to the meaning of that experience if it was the equivalent of a flinch. This view is what makes it hard to imagine emotions can be part of the process we use to make meaning of experience. That is one side of the debate.

Nussbaum represents the other side. In this opposing view, emotions are not physical responses to stimuli that bypass the mind; they are part of what the mind does: the cognitive mind thinks and it also feels. Emotions as part of cognition have four important qualities: (1) they are about something; (2) that something is an “intentional object” — so emotions “embody a way of seeing” (*UT*, 27); (3) emotions embody beliefs; and (4) these beliefs are about value and

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88 One of the tragic aspects of drug addiction and chronic sentimentality is the sensations involved don’t have the meaning that those having them might hope.

89 *Upheavals of Thought*, 25. Other citations of this text given as *UT* in text.

90 I am simplifying the Adversary’s position. See Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 25n7 for references to the philosophical, psychological, and psycho-analytical sources that comprise the position.
importance—“The object of the emotion is seen as important for some role it plays in the person’s own life” (UT, 31). There are more than these points in Nussbaum’s overall theory of the emotions, but these points and the Adversary’s are sufficient to develop two ways of interpreting my canoeing experience.

On the one hand, there is the Adversary’s interpretation as follows. The day had been stressful and physically demanding, calling on a great deal of physical effort, resulting in rising adrenaline levels which left chemical residues of stress in the blood stream. Missing lunch depleted blood sugar exacerbating the other physical responses. Finally making camp and having something to eat turned off the stress response and allowed some of these neuro-chemicals to dissipate leaving only the endorphins that had been created to ameliorate the damage done by the exertions of the day. Moonrise coincided with the time when the chemicals of the fight or flight response were being replaced by mild euphoria produced by endorphins and rising blood sugar.

Contrast that interpretation with a cognitive description of the experience. I felt awe at seeing the vividly clear disk of the moon rising over the Caribou Mountain Range because it seemed to me to show the solid Earth, in so many ways my whole universe, was from another perspective just a mote of dust swirling with other motes of dust. The difficulties of my day, moving over this tiny, swirling, cosmic particle, showed that on the speck on which I existed, I was only a speck. Yet despite the insignificance in the cosmos of one mote riding on another, the day had been infinitely precious, graced with the beauty of that moment when the moon detached from the peak, still radiating the golden glow of sunset. However insignificant I was, life was reaffirmed as precious and worth living.

The first thing to note about these two accounts is that they are not mutually exclusive, that is, I can give both those accounts without denying one because of the other. However, it is easy to change that. All I have to do is preface the Adversary’s account with a phrase like “Whatever you thought was going on during the moonrise, all that was actually happening was…” before continuing with the explanation involving neurotransmitters and blood sugar. That reduction of the experience to an account of the mechanism of experience, and nothing else, stems directly from the idea that emotions really have nothing to do with the cognitive mind. Without that belief, the accounts are not mutually exclusive. To
say that the mechanical interpretation trumps the cognitive is analogous to a technician saying, “You have electrical activity occurring in your neocortex” and you saying “I’m trying to decide what to have for dinner” with the technician replying, “No, all you have is activity in the neocortex.” The electrical activity doesn’t mean that you are not trying to decide what to have for dinner, just as trying to decide doesn’t mean that there isn’t electrical activity taking place in your brain.\footnote{Searle, in \textit{Mind: A Brief Introduction}, has argued against this kind of reduction of conscious states to neuro-chemical ones.}

Still it is common that a person’s statement like “I’m really feeling down today” is often greeted with statements like “Maybe you’re just hungry,” or “Maybe you’re coming down with something.” It isn’t that the person might not need to eat or rest but the emotion is somehow discounted by making it a physical symptom rather than a cognitive event with some meaning. Making the emotion or mood a physical symptom has the effect of reducing or eliminating the meaning or, as Nussbaum would say, discounting the judgments about value inherent in the feeling itself.\footnote{It may be to counteract this tendency that Nussbaum argues that emotions should not be identified with certain types of activity in the brain.}

Nussbaum goes on to argue that a cognitive theory of emotion is a better theory of emotion than the adversary’s theory—and I am inclined to agree with her if only because her account fits so much better with the significance of my canoeing experience in my life and my understanding of the experience itself. It is also pertinent that seeing emotions as part of our cognitive functioning has proven useful in cognitive–behavioural therapy, for example, where the ability of thoughts and beliefs to shape emotions is taken as fundamental and where working with a person’s thoughts and beliefs helps with emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Yet some thinkers associated with this field still greet the interaction of emotion and thought with apparent dismay as it reflects on our inability to function as purely rational creatures. Gordon Bower, for example, writes

The overwhelming results question the age-old belief that people are supremely rational creatures, that we are well-functioning calculators who
can set aside our passions, look at the facts objectively, and arrive at our evaluations and judgments rationally and without bias. All of our subjects believed this myth; they believed that they were being totally objective, that their emotions were not influencing their judgments and perceptions of themselves and their world. But we find that people cannot override their emotions; their emotions appear to leak out in nearly everything they do. Their thinking is suffused with emotion.\textsuperscript{93}

If this conclusion is presented with dismay, it would be over the loss of a myth; if human thinking and our rationality has always been infused with emotion, then the calculating and impersonal thinking that has apparently vanished has always been a fiction. And in fact, Bower is not lamenting humanity’s non-calculator status, but rather pointing out the real nature of our emoting/thinking as it has been all along. Because we have been imagining that somehow our rationality is separate and immune from our emotions, and seeing the emotions as forces that corrupt the objectivity that gives judgments their special weight, the loss of the fiction of this absolute impartiality opens a challenge to the way we value different kinds of experience—a challenge we can welcome as a coming back to a kind of aliveness.

**The Myth of Objectivity and Schooling**

This notion of objectivity as devoid of emotion has been perpetrated by schools and by educational theory. By conflating physical appetite, passion, and emotion and ascribing it to body rather than mind—or at least to the baser parts of mind—the “Adversary’s” position has left instruction and learning about emotions as a part of our experience that informs judgment out of schools. More likely, emotions have always been seen as things in need of control, as in Plato’s *Republic*, where the passions were to be controlled and shaped by restricting art that inflamed them and through controlled exercise and rhythmic marching. Emotions only interfere with the process of rendering us truly rational. If emotion entered the learning

\textsuperscript{93} “Emotions and Social Judgment.” He goes on to hope that recognizing how human thought is suffused with emotion will lead us to be more tolerant of difference: “I think that by appreciating these facts about how our emotions dramatically color our memory and our judgment, we should be able to gain a better understanding and tolerance for differences in each other's judgments and perspectives.”
process at all, it was as “useful” pleasure resulting from the pursuit of education or in more modern term as “engagement” in the learning process. The passionate pursuit of truth required the dispassionate weighing of evidence just as the pursuit of justice required the same, careful, measured and dispassionate consideration of evidence and law.  

We have seen how, in some ways, Rousseau stood against this tradition philosophically, and these views are contained in his thinking about education. He kept his fictional pupil Emile carefully isolated from the corrupting effects of society for three reasons: (1) exposure to the language and ideas of society would pervert young Emile’s imagination leading him to expect and demand more than he could provide for himself from nature; (2) learning to compare himself with others would overwhelm his own healthy amour de soi; and (3) he would adopt a carelessness toward others that would destroy his natural compassion. If any of these effects were triggered, then Emile would be lost. If imagination, self-concern, and compassion were perverted by contact with society, reason would be powerless to redirect the pupil toward happiness: indeed, reason alone would only lead him further and further astray.

Two of these points are relevant to my current discussion. First, Rousseau saw emotion, specifically love of self and compassion, as the foundation of rationality and corrective of reason. But to function in this way, they had to be allowed to flourish untainted by society. Secondly, there is a relationship acknowledged between imagination, emotion, and reason, but it seems, at least in a child’s early years, to function only in one direction; that is, imagination informed by certain of society’s ideas negatively affects emotions necessary for proper development and this negative impact cannot be remedied by more imagination, other ideas, or reason. In any case, for Rousseau, these emotions were important as emotions, that is as felt impulses to think and act in certain ways, and not as abstract principles or intellectual or moral ideas. They had to be felt to have their salubrious and essential effect. It seems on this view, that rendering the intentional judgments of the emotions separable from the physical affect of the emotions could negate their impact in this task.

94 Nussbaum has written extensively on how mistaken this idea of rational jurisprudence is.
95 Emile or On Education.
Another thinker made a brief sally in favour of emotions as part of school. As previous chapters have shown, a long western philosophical tradition had made emotion part of the body rather than the mind. John Dewey (1944) argued against this dualist view. He summed up the problem this way:

Another current opposition is that between the intellect and the emotions. The emotions are conceived to be purely private and personal, having nothing to do with the work of pure intelligence in apprehending facts and truths—except perhaps the single emotion of intellectual curiosity.\(^{96}\)

This dualism resulted in schools ignoring the emotions (though the only emotion Dewey directly addresses is “interest,” a form of curiosity) to the detriment of real learning, and arises out of the existence of two classes of people in society.

Dewey argued against such dualisms in an interesting way, using three points he would have seen as developed from science. First, Dewey believed that science had demonstrated that mind was connected with the nervous system and regulated the body through the brain. Second, this interconnection was the result of evolution and hence was necessarily the way we need to be in the world. Finally, as science showed us these interconnections, and science is our way of “making knowledge,” it followed that the interconnectedness of the mind and nervous system should inform educational practice towards the emotions—primarily through students’ “interest” in developing lessons. Do Dewey’s arguments develop a “cognitive view” of emotion as it contributes to the meaning of lived experience? It is hard to see how they could as they are built on a certain view of science. What is the scientific mind if not the dispassionate mind? The scientist may be interested in his work, and how the result will shape the future, but what does that say of love, compassion, hatred, or fear? Nothing obvious—at least in providing insight into the meaning of emotion, as I argued in Chapter Two.

Indeed, what is an educator to make of Rousseau’s *amour de soi* and natural compassion, or Dewey’s “interest” when facing a class of students? For one thing, all these emotions (as few as they are) seem to be seen from the Adversary’s point of view, that is, they are “natural” emotions arising spontaneously through the development of the nervous system and so need to be preserved by schools rather

\(^{96}\) Democracy and Education, 335.
than shaped by them. They are delicate and easily turned from their healthy function into something unhealthy or not educative. Once turned, learning itself easily turns from real to rote, from authentic to artificial, with the danger that pupils’ lives may take the same turn. The emotions are “developmental” and best fostered by “progressive” means, not ignored exactly, but not interfered with either. Natural interest can be sought and used as guidance to shape learning if it comes from the students. The danger is that motivation can easily become manipulation, and whatever inevitable shaping that is done, as argued in the preceding chapter, will shape any development of emotion.

**Cognitive Emotions and Schooling**

But what if we were to give up the adversary’s view of emotions and adopt a cognitive view? On the face of it, there may then be more room to work with emotion to develop some form of emotional education—for if thoughts and feelings are interconnected, to work with thinking is to work with emotion in any case. If that is so, then schools have always been about developing emotional intelligence just because they are about developing thinking; however, they have been doing it without much consciousness of the task, explicit aim or direction—at least in the era of progressive education. Introducing an understanding of the interdependence of rational thinking and emotional development in teacher education, for example, would be a first step at improving this situation.

This is not to say, however, that the cognitive view of the emotions provides a solution to the problems of the emotions. Nussbaum argues that the judgments inherent in the emotions, “eudaimonistic” judgments of value, are the essential part of emotions with the physiological responses being neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for an emotion. They are perhaps contingently associated with many emotions, but not part of them. This is a view that follows from the body/mind dualism that allows this kind of splitting apart of our emotional experience: if an exclusive either/or is the only possibility, then the cognitivist has to choose the mind. As Nussbaum points out:

97. It was natural from Plato to Locke to think about developing character in students and that aim could well have been about emotions at least in part, but as I have argued the concern was not about emotions as part of mind.
We may want to grant here that there are some nonintentional feelings that are frequently associated with a given emotion: take boiling and anger, or trembling and fear. Nonetheless, it appears that here too the plasticity and variability of people (both of the same person over time and across people) prevents us from plugging the feeling into the definition as an absolutely necessary element.\(^8\)

Having to define an emotion as either physiological response or mental and intentional seems, on the face of it, to be philosophy driving a wedge between aspects of experience that are not ordinarily divided.

Sandra Bartky has developed a view of emotionality that challenges the identification of emotions with cognitive content or “ideology.”\(^9\) She saw women feeling and expressing shame at the quality of their work in her classes while at the same time holding beliefs in their own abilities and achievement. The feeling component of shame had been internalized even as beliefs were held that were at odds with the emotion of shame. We can all conceive of circumstances where we might say, “I’m afraid, but I don’t know why. I know I’m perfectly safe.” Boler, including Bartky in her analysis, concludes:

To study emotion allows us to explore the revealed “space” between ideology and internalized feeling. …I suggest that neither the framework of ideology and consciousness nor of desire and the unconscious offer us adequate entries into this terrain of emotions and power.\(^10\)

This line of argument supports our ordinary sense that belief, judgment, perception and the state of physiological arousal are all intertwined and active in our feeling and understanding emotions.

When we think of emotions as colouring our perceptions and embodying our beliefs about the value of our experiences, we could despair at the impossibility of “clearheaded objectivity” or rejoice at this source of meaning that is essentially human. Both clearheaded objectivity and passionate commitment contain emotionally inspired components. At the very least, if we value the kind of

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\(^8\) Upheavals, 60.

\(^9\) Femininity and Domination.

\(^10\) Feeling Power, 13.
impartiality and disinterest that *may* in fact characterize scientific or moral thinking in their ideal versions, it would still be useful to know how what we feel is likely to influence our thinking. More than that, it might be better to learn what we are feeling, what others are feeling, and how the vital beliefs embodied in those emotions need to be incorporated into our decision making.

As individuals our thinking/feeling can serve us well or poorly, support a happy life, or contribute to our misery. The same is true of societies as the beliefs, values, and accepted range of emotional expressions shape the lives of citizens. Dewey wrote:

> Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger.\(^{101}\)

The process of transmission is as essential now as it has ever been and we have new ways to communicate the “habits of...thinking and feeling.” Knowledge of self and others, as Gardner calls aspects of emotional intelligence,\(^ {102}\) is an essential part of thinking itself, and critical to the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. The concern that educators have always had with the character and values of students can now also be seen as a concern with their emotional development and the values and beliefs that reside in the way we feel about the world. What we will actually do with students in school is still to be determined, but a cognitive view of emotions gives us new ways to think about doing it—as long as we stay in touch with the lived experience of our emotional lives. The aim of such educational action would be to enable students to live lives of deeper meaning and experience, more fully connected to their hearts and the most personal and profound values that reside there.

This chapter has argued in favour of a view of the emotions that includes their cognitive component, but not one including an endorsement of any particular form for this component. We do not need to decide whether this component is necessarily Nussbaum’s eudaimonistic judgment or any in Solomon’s catalogue of

\(^{101}\) *Democracy and Education*, 3.

\(^{102}\) *Frames of Mind*. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Gardner has influenced Goleman’s thinking about emotional intelligence—and mine, for that matter.
the passions. I have also argued that the “nonintentional feelings” of an emotion cannot be so far separated from this intentional content that they are rendered superfluous. The following chapter will develop a way of talking about these two aspects of emotion that allows both to play essential roles in our emotional lives.
CHAPTER SEVEN

TEACHING AND LEARNING EMOTIONS: A WITTGENSTEINIAN APPROACH

[Wittgenstein saying] "We have the idea that the meaning of a word is an object" is also connected with "The application (every application) of every word is arbitrary". And this is connected with the question, "Can you play chess without the queen?" (If I were asked to answer, in one sentence, the question "What was Wittgenstein's biggest contribution to philosophy?" I should answer "His asking of the question ‘Can one play chess without the queen?’")

John Wisdom

The Unhelpful Dichotomies

To begin this chapter, it may be useful to review the burden I have set it to bear. To this point of Part Two, I have looked at the historical development of the predominant view of the emotions in western, especially Anglo-American thinking. This view contains a number of dualistic dichotomies: emotions/reason, body/mind, madness/reason, feeling/intentional content. Part of what happens because these are all seen as dichotomies is that logically we are presented with a number of exclusive either/or choices when it comes to theorizing about emotions. That is why, in the last chapter, we saw the cognitive
theory of the emotions defining the cognitive part of emotion as the emotion while making the physical sensations of emotion only contingently associated with the real emotion that is the cognitive judgment. When I considered this splitting off of the feelings of the emotion from the cognitive part of the emotion, I argued that splitting in this way does injustice to our experience of emotions where the feelings and thoughts seem deeply connected, and in addition, using Sandra Bartsky’s example, pointed out that people will sometimes have the feeling of an emotion even while holding beliefs that are incompatible with the usual intentional content associated with the feelings. This situation does not make the feelings incorrect, but instead points to a more complex emotional situation not yet fully understood.

Rather than being put in a position where one would have to claim either the beliefs are right and the body is wrong, or the body knows best and the person is mistaken about what they believe, it seems to me better not to find oneself placed in this position in the first place. Using Wittgenstein’s private language argument and implications from it about the interconnections between private experience, conceptual understanding, and a pattern of living, I will in this chapter argue that the conflict between feeling and emotion is based on a misunderstanding of these interconnections. This misunderstanding comes about because of the pervasive over-privileging of mind. When the interconnections that allow language to successfully communicate meaning to others are understood, private experience is, one could say, put in its proper place, and this then allows a new understanding of emotion, feeling, and expression of emotion to emerge.

**Wittgenstein’s Approach**

In his later philosophy, Wittgenstein did not set about developing a theory of language to resolve confusions based in the way we talk about things, but said he was assembling reminders of how language actually worked, because when we forget the actual workings or use of language within certain patterns of living, we find we are trapped in problems. His idea was that philosophers should be assembling reminders about how the specific words are used in their “home” language games and that these games had their origins in Lebensformen
or patterns of living—a term usually translated as “forms of life.” His idea was, in the most general terms, that sometimes we take words out of a language game and its pattern of living and move it into situations where that game is not played. This creates problems. One is actually trying to create a new game while thinking it can be played by the old rules. The result is confusion.

For example, I might say, “I feel sadness as a pain in my chest over my heart.” In fact, that is something I would say for I have felt a hurt or ache in the left upper quadrant of my chest when I have been very sad. However, sadness is not a pain in the same way as the sensation of being pricked with a pin is a pain. So much about the use of the word “pain” is different in these two uses. Perhaps it is because we understand pain that we can understand what it is to feel sadness as a pain, but if we just understood sadness, would we learn anything about pain by hearing “Sadness feels like a pain”? But feeling sadness as a pain suggests that it is an experience originating in the body and because we tend to value the mind over the body we might devalue sadness as a body sensation. This example is not meant to represent any kind of reasoning that actually goes on in a person, but to (over)simply represent how the language game around feeling a pain and feeling an emotion as if it were a pain are different. Taking these two games to be the same, and to understand the “having” in “having a pain” and “having sadness as a pain” is the same use in each, may lead to confusion.

We have already seen how these dualisms have their foundation in Cartesian thinking. This thinking with its privileging of mind over body is at the centre of Wittgenstein’s argument against private languages. An examination of that argument and drawing out of implication for emotion is the first step forward in this chapter. What emerges will be a new idea of where emotions might be located that is not mind/body but more inner/outer. This inner/outer is not two objects or two locations, but two perspectives on the same thing. With this idea, and Wittgenstein’s further ideas about what it is to see different aspects of something, we will have a basis to remove the separation between the physical feelings cognitivists say are merely associated with emotion and the beliefs and

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103 I use “patterns of living” based on the argument in E. F. Thompkins, “A Farewell to Forms of Life.” I also use “form of life” because that is how most know the idea and how it is generally translated. Is a pattern something that we might or might not adopt while a form something that existed in its own world? As long as patterns and forms are both seen as human creations, the two terms can be used interchangeably.
judgments that also are aspects of emotion. Finally, this chapter will look at how language games and their grounding in patterns of living change over time, and how this change itself shows the interconnectedness between the inner and outer aspects of thinking/feeling. Once these interconnections are made clear, it will be possible to look at practices that engage and strengthen both emotional aspects and the connections between them. When this is done, we will be ready to move forward.

**On Privacy and Private Languages**

§271. The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible—though unverifiable—that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.\(^{104}\)

It’s just as well to start off by saying that of course everyone has private experiences. Wittgenstein does not argue against the existence of private experience, but does suggest we need to look at it in a radically new way. One thing the quotation above shows is that Wittgenstein clearly acknowledges that people have their own and not another’s experiences. We all possess our own experiences. The curious thing is that in some ways it doesn’t matter, at least in our ability to communicate with each other in normal circumstances, that we have our own unique experience.

We can imagine these days, as Wittgenstein might not have done, that it could be technologically possible to wire people up to a machine that would generate in each person’s nervous system precisely the same kind of activity. We can even imagine that, unlike the Matrix of motion picture fame, this technology instead of having us view the world from individual points of view had us view it from the same point of view. Even here, it would still be a truism that the experience was a personal one—even if it was the same as everyone else’s who was hooked up to the same machine. In a case like this, however, one does push at the limits of what might be considered ordinary uses of “the same” and “personal.”

\(^{104}\) Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 95. All further references to this work will be given in text as PI.
The essential thing about private experience is not that we have it but that having it we still manage to communicate with one another. We are not trapped within our experience. We would still communicate with one another about colour, for example, even if “one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.” We can because of the way language works and the way in which we learn language. There is much to be explained here, of course, and that explanation is a large part of what the Philosophical Investigations is about.

As an aside, it is tempting to wonder whether modern neuroscience, or a slightly futuristic version of neuroscience, could verify whether or not sections of humanity had different sensations of red. One can now imagine a sophisticated scan measuring different people’s optical systems when exposed to certain colours. It may be just these kind of imaginings about which Wittgenstein warns us: “The existence of the experimental method (in psychology in particular) makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by” (PI, 232). The point here is that it doesn’t matter whether we have the same experience on a neural level as someone else. Even if we could verify that certain activities in the brain and optical system were the same or different when different people looked at red patches in the laboratory, it still wouldn’t matter as long as they both pointed to the same patch when asked to point at red. For in any ordinary use of sensation, we do not refer to patterns of activity in a brain, but to the words and actions that are part of having the sensation. Thus, the concept red doesn’t reside in a person’s head—not the concept, or the word, or any representation of red.

To resume—the Investigations looks at the workings of language that enable communication about private experience. He begins by arguing for the impossibility of languages that are based solely on private experience. Wittgenstein’s argument against private languages begins with Section 256.

Now, what about the language that describes my inner experience and which only I myself can understand? How do I use words to stand for my sensations? —As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a ‘private’ one. Someone else might understand it as well as I. —But suppose I didn’t have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply associate names with sensations and use these names in descriptions. — (PI, 91)
This last supposition on how a private language might be formed is the one that Wittgenstein argues is impossible. It is also the supposition that underlies language in Cartesian dualism. In that system, the only objects of awareness that are real and available to generate a language are all private cognitions and sensations. Because of his epistemological position, where mind and cognitions are what are known best and directly, Descartes must build a language from this foundation. Wittgenstein argues that doing so is impossible. He does it by separating the mental from the private.

As Anthony Kenny puts it:

The cogito and the private language argument each lie at the heart of the epistemology and philosophy of mind of their inventors. The cogito led to the conclusion that mind is better known than body. The private language argument leads, we might say, to the conclusion that body is better known than mind.\textsuperscript{105}

To put it this way is, of course, to continue the dualistic view and as such is misleading. But as the body is the “public” one of mind and body, there is a point to saying it.

Wittgenstein does not simply opt for the body as the source of language, as it were, but is concerned to show that only those things that have a public expression can have meaning and be understood. A large part of public expression is behaviour enacted with the body. The heart of Wittgenstein’s argument does not do away with private experience; instead, it resituates meaning and so also resituates language and self-understanding. His argument shows that concepts must have a public foundation in behaviour and natural expression if they are to be language that is meaningful at all. To say it another way, words have their meaning in their public use, not in correspondence with private experience, intention, or thoughts. There is no language in private experience that emerges from within. The discursive voice that so often runs along in our head is learned, and is not an innate feature of our experience. The idea that there is a meaning in our mind that somehow gives what we say its power to communicate is a philosophical superstition or—as Wittgenstein might have called it derogatorily—a metaphysical use of language. It is an illegal move in the language game where language communicates to other people. He writes:

\textsuperscript{105} Kenny, “Cartesian Privacy,” 361.
116. When philosophers use a word—“knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition”, “name”—and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? —

What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use (PL, 47).

Here, the move from ‘metaphysical’ to ordinary language is described. The same kind of “bringing back” applies to bringing back words from an impossible private language to everyday public use of language that will actually work to communicate to others. It is in this public language that meaning resides. Language begins as natural expression and behaviour in a specific context and results in a language game whose home is not an individual but a “form of life.”

Of course there have been criticisms of this argument—notably by A.J. Ayre, “Can There be a Private Language?” — and defences. But the private language argument has had its effect: Charles Taylor relies on it when he writes:

A language only exists and is maintained within a language community. And this indicates another crucial feature of a self. One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it.

Taylor has recognized a key consequence of the argument as far as describing the self—or as understanding the concept of self—“One is a self only among other selves.” Wittgenstein had cleverly insinuated the “I” into his list of things that philosophers try to get the essence of in Section 116 (quoted above) and Taylor has taken him up on it to say that the self cannot be understood on its own. This I take to mean that the self cannot be understood as a purely private entity; instead, even the self is understood within the community (or “form of life”) in

106 “Here the term “language-game” is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life (PL, 11).”

107 See, for example, J. W. Cook, “Wittgenstein on Privacy.”

108 Sources of the Self, 35.
whose language it is described. The purely private self is a “metaphysical” entity or a “spirit.”

So where does this take us as far as the dualism of mind and body? The idea of Cartesian dualism is that we find ourselves essentially in our minds, which exist as thinking things whether or not we have bodies. Indeed, they could not, not exist because we would have to think they did not exist—that is the point of the cogito argument. Wittgenstein has argued that the essentially private self/mind cannot exist because there is no way that language could develop if it did. On the contrary, the existence of language itself shows that mind (“the mental”), and so in some sense the self, exists in public in a way more like the body exists in public. More specifically, the mind exists in public the way an expressive gesture exists in public—and nowhere else—not in private intentions, meanings, essences or spirits.

Saying yes to the ideas in the above paragraph does leave one feeling somehow exposed or as if something precious has been taken away. “My innermost thoughts and feelings! How dare you? I’ve never shared them with anyone.” I can imagine someone saying that—I can imagine myself saying that—and feeling quite sad about it because I certainly wouldn’t want to imagine that either those innermost thoughts somehow didn’t exist or that they were on public display. Neither of these concerns has foundation, however, as the Wittgensteinian position does not force hidden things out into the open or make them disappear.

In regard to feeling exposed, Kenny puts it clearly:

It is worth remarking, perhaps, that there is an altogether unproblematic sense in which our sensations may be private: we can sometimes keep them to ourselves. In this sense we often speak of a man’s thoughts on some subject being private. No doubt most of our sensations are private in this sense once we pass beyond childhood.

A first glance, Kenny’s statement seems unproblematic. He does, however, talk of our “sensations” being private rather than our thoughts and feelings being

\[109\] “Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a spirit,” (PI, 18).

\[110\] Though our innermost thoughts and feelings are on display to some degree to those who are observant and who know us best.

\[111\] “Cartesian Privacy,” p. 318.
private, or seems to conflate the two, and in so doing obscures important
distinctions between those concepts: there are important differences between
sensations and thoughts and feelings, namely, our sensations like feeling hot or
cold, pain, and so on are private in that only we can have them. In the same
sense, only we can have our dreams, imaginings and thoughts. But there is an
important way in which this “having” is different with the different concepts.
When we are conscious of pain, we have pain, and when we are not conscious of
pain, there is no pain. It is different with thoughts and emotions, at least when
the thoughts and emotions have intentional content that is contained in
language. When our thoughts exist as if spoken “inside our head,” I would say
that most of the time we don’t own them in quite the same way as we own the
inarticulate sensation of pain. We can have, for example, recurring or obsessive
thoughts that seem to own us, or that lurk somehow even when we are not
having them. We have beliefs even when we are not actively or consciously
believing them. They have a life outside of our awareness of them. The same can
be true of unconscious emotions that affect our behaviour even when we are not
aware of them. Thoughts and emotions are not like sensations because they are
conceptual and shaped by language. They exist even when we are not aware of
them.

But I hesitate to make any hard and fast distinctions here. I’m reminded of
a scene from the novel All Quiet on the Western Front where the veterans of the
front would respond instantly to the sound of a weapon firing, knowing whether
to hit the ground or not in the instant of hearing the report. In this case, which
does seem true to life, there seems to be judgment in perception shaped by
experience. It does, however, seem odd to say that reactions such as described
here are conceptual. A sound is perceived as dangerous like footsteps following
behind on an isolated street late on a dark night might be perceived as a threat. I
will shortly look at Wittgenstein’s thinking about perceiving aspects. In this
language, it is possible to talk about a concept “forcing itself” on a perception at a
time that seems before being conscious of whatever is perceived.

Is there any way that a pain can be seen as conceptual and hence public?
The answer to that is a pain is public when it is expressed in behaviour such as
wincing, crying out, groaning, or saying “That hurts!” One of these expressions
is only possible because we learn language or as Wittgenstein puts it: “You
learned the concept ‘pain’ when you learned language” (PI, 118). It’s not that you
felt nothing before learning the concept of pain: judging from the looks on little children’s faces when they’ve hurt themselves, the sensations they are feeling can be intense and terrifying. What is interesting is that hearing “It’s OK—you’ve just hurt yourself” can in a way be soothing. The interactions between the sensation and the concept of pain are interesting and complex. There are circumstances in which one might hope to make pain entirely “public” if that would mean that it would disappear “privately.” But that is not the way pain works—nor is that the way “private” and “public” work here. As the distinction between concept, which belongs to a language game, and sensation, which is the private experience of an individual, becomes clearer, and the connection between the two is made through expression, the problem of dualism starts to disappear. The sensation of pain cannot be made to disappear into the public realm, for it is ours, but the expression of pain is in the public realm—though with effort and self control we can keep any expression to ourselves. And in so far as the concept and sensation interact within, that realm is “in” us as much as “out.” In the case of thoughts whose expressions are words, the in/out distinction makes no sense. When a thought is words in a language, it is part of a form of life whether it is concealed or publicly stated—even the thought “I am in pain.” We think the thoughts we have in that inner discursive voice because we have learned language through our participation in a pattern of living.

Are there thoughts without words? That is where language games and concepts start to cross and weave with increasing possibilities to entangle. If the concept of thoughts includes things like sensations, impulses, and other forms of the “inarticulate,” then there are thoughts without words—but this does seem like a strange game to play. But then, what should we call the half-formed thought that struggles for expression in language? It certainly makes sense to most to say, “I’ve got a thought, but I just can’t seem to put it in words.” I have had that kind of thought any number of times in the production of this thesis.

**Sensation and Emotion**

So while it is true generally that if a person does not feel pain, there is no pain—the same is not true of thoughts and feelings. We can imagine a person telling a story about a recent event that ends “I don’t really know how I feel about it,” and

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112 One discussion of this point can be found in Chapters 22 & 23 in Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*. 
in reply someone else, possibly a therapist, could say, “I think you’re really angry.” And the therapist could be correct: the client telling the story is really angry about what happened but is also not aware of the anger—at least not as anger rather than a more general sense of being somehow upset or even feeling nothing but blank or empty emotionally.

A similar situation can be imagined with regards to thinking. Imagine a person in the middle of a long explanation, for example, suddenly stopping and asking, “What am I thinking?” An attentive listener could reply, “You were telling me why your car wouldn’t start.” If that response is helpful, if the explanation continues from that point, then there is a sense in which the listener at that moment knew what the other was thinking (saying) even though the speaker had momentarily lost track. This example is not that of being ‘lost in thought’ but more of losing a ‘train of thought’ and being helped to find the track again. Wittgenstein didn’t have situations like these in mind when he wrote “An ‘inner process’ stands in need of outward criteria” (PI, 153), but this note does remind us that thinking and feeling can, in these examples, be seen in some way as a collaborative process. This kind of collaboration can take place because thoughts and emotions are available to others who are attentive to our language and behaviour.

I don’t want to make the distinction between sensations like pain and thoughts and feelings too absolute. We can also sensibly imagine someone saying, “Ow, something hurts!” and a friend asking, “Is it your ankle?” and that question being helpful. The person in pain could respond, “Not my ankle really. I think I actually feel it in my heel.” What I have in mind with this example is not so much that the question “Is it your ankle?” functions by teaching meaning of the word “ankle” the way a mother might by asking, “Did you hurt your ankle?” when confronted with a crying child holding a leg clearly knowing what hurts but maybe not knowing what that part of the body is called. Instead, I am imagining that somehow the question about the ankle helps the sufferer to focus in on the location of a pain that seemed at first to fill the whole leg. The question in this case helps make the sensation clearer or more specific.

Still, the possibility of ongoing background emotions, such as loving one’s parents even though one is not always aware of loving them, for example, does
differentiate emotions from sensations like pain in most cases. Thoughts can be in the same way distinguished from sensations, as one can seemingly hold a thought without being aware of it constantly—in the sense that beliefs, ideas, and so on are thoughts. Still, a remembered pain is not a pain the way a remembered thought is still a thought or a remembered belief still a belief.

All these examples are examinations of the way language works around the experiences of sensations, thoughts, and feelings that we have wanted to call private. Taken together with Wittgenstein’s reminders, I want to say that it is clear they do not exist merely “in a person’s head” but in the language that expresses them. What is “in a person’s head” are not representations of experiences in language, but experiences as felt sensations, inclinations to speak or act perhaps, that are then expressed in language. I have also suggested that thoughts and feelings are somehow less directly related to private experience than sensations, though no hard and fast rules apply for the sensations or physical feelings of emotion are the experience that may lead to expression. In Wittgensteinian terms, the language–games that are played with these words are slightly different though overlapping. The concepts of meaning, truth, and understanding apply in slightly different ways.

Consider Section 544 of the *Investigations*:

When longing makes me cry “Oh, if only he would come!” the feeling gives the words ‘meaning.’ But does it give the individual words their meanings?

But here one could also say that the feeling gave the words truth. And from this you can see how the concepts merge here. (This recalls the question: what is the meaning of a mathematical proposition?) (PI, 146)

The similarities with Section 241 are clear: the words to express longing are chosen as part of a form of life—participating in a form of life, pattern of living, or “language community” gives the words meaning and the sincerity or accuracy of use of the expression is what gives them truth. A statement about emotion that is not part of a ruse or just playacting is true. What is the longing itself? It is the experience that is embodied in restless pacing, staring out the window, checking the time, sighing, and saying things like “Oh, if only he would come!” An

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outside observer could see and hear all this and think, “I know exactly how he feels” without having to have an experience that was the same. Both the person filled with longing and the observer participate in the same pattern of living where the behaviour and the expression in words of longing are an established game.

Private experience is not got rid of; instead it is situated differently in regard to its expression and understanding in language—it is no longer just in someone’s head, but informs the public realm where others can see it, understand it, and know what is going on (unless it is feigned or hidden). They don’t experience it in the same way that the person having it experiences it—for we can fool others about our longing in a way that we can’t fool ourselves—but we can also be fooled, mistaken, or confused about our own feelings—especially if we think that they will be simply and directly manifest to us. Understanding our own emotions entails participating in outward criteria, not where criteria are like a checklist but more like full participation in a form of life and its language-game.

Of course, to say private experience is situated differently is metaphorical. It didn’t really have a location in the first place. The point is that experience is seen differently. Private experience does not depend on a private object. There is no such object to inwardly contemplate. The content of private experience is expressed in contexts, behaviours, natural expressions, and in words. Because experience can be expressed in these ways, it also consists of these expressions and is shaped by what can be expressed. It is not just behaviour either, as the following shows:

Then psychology treats of behaviour, not of the mind?

What do psychologists record? —What do they observe? Isn’t it the behaviour of human beings, in particular their utterances? But these are not about behaviour (PI, 179)

Speaking, groaning, pacing, and speaking are behaviours, but they are not only about behaviour. They are expressions about what people think, feel, and perceive. We know this because we understand their meaning. Wittgenstein goes on: “’But then they make a tacit assumption.’ Then what we do in our language-game always rests on a tacit assumption” (PI, 179). The tacit assumption does not give skeptical doubt any real room. We cannot say, “I can’t have the same
experience as another person, therefore I can never know what they are thinking.” We can’t say it because the language game is right—we can know what another person is thinking. The Cartesian skeptic does not have the last word. The last word is more like “That is how the game is played.”

On this view, then, emotions are a pattern of expressions, both in behaviour and more specifically in words, in particular situations that are understood within a pattern of living that began with private experience that initiated the behaviour and expression and gives it truth. The private experience is not the emotion, nor is the expression and behaviour arising from it. The two cannot be separated. The concept of the emotion exists in a language game, but the emotion is all of the situation together. The concepts of emotions can interact with private experience and shape it just as concepts of cause and effect and right and wrong can shape behaviour, and that is because we are a part of the pattern of living that gives language meaning. If this view of emotion is correct, then we learn to feel because of our participation in a pattern of living with others and both the nature of the participation and the form and content of the pattern of living shape this education.

**Learning an Emotional Language Game**

Before we learn language, we already have a wealth of means of expression. It is part of the tacit assumption of our form of life that all the wiggling, giggling, cooing, and crying of babies are expressions of happiness, content, hunger and pain. We recognize them as expressions and from that point begin instruction in language that can also be used to express those states. This is the process that Wittgenstein proposed:

> How do words refer to sensations? — There doesn’t seem to be any problem here; don’t we talk about sensations every day, and give them names? But how is the connexion between the name and the thing named

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114 “I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say, “I know what you are thinking,” and wrong to say ‘I know what I am thinking.’ (A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar.)” (222)

This is true where we think the grammar of “know” is the same when applied to self as when applied to other: in other words, we do not know our thoughts in the same way as we know others. This is one of the points developed by Cook, “Wittgenstein on Privacy.”
set up” This question is the same as “how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations” —of the word “pain” for example. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.

“So you are saying that the word “pain” really means crying?” —On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it. (PI, 89)

In this way, we learn new expressions for sensations and we learn the concepts of those sensations.115

Because we learn concepts for sensations, we at the same time make possible other actions that would not be possible without them: for example “A child has much to learn before it can pretend. (A dog cannot be a hypocrite, but neither can he be sincere.)” (PI, 229). Once we have the concept, we can use it separately from the expression. The uses become part of our vocabulary and so can be used in other “games” such as games of pretending—or games of philosophizing. The dog, Wittgenstein believed, cannot form concepts, so all of its expressions will be natural. That may or may not be true—I have met some very smart dogs that seemed to form a good idea about me quite quickly—but generally it is only humans who can become aware of the language-game as a game. Games of pretending can lead to all kinds of things from theatre to fraud. And philosophizing can lead to all kinds of muddles—which is why Wittgenstein urges us to return to ordinary uses of language to make the muddles disappear.

A similar learning process to learning about concepts relating to sensation is involved in learning about emotional states. We do not observe and label an emotion; instead, we express it in perhaps a certain kind of crying out. That cry, the situation in which it is uttered, and accompanying actions, gestures, and facial expressions are enough that others know the feeling expressed. For example, a child is suddenly confronted with a large, loudly barking dog. He jumps back, eyes growing wide open, with a sudden intake of breath, and then cries out. He’s frightened of the dog. An adult with him says, “You’re scared of

115. See Section 384 quoted previously.
the dog, but look, he’s wagging his tail. You might have scared him, too, but now he’s friendly.” The child could come forward to pet the dog or say, “I’m still scared” which would show use of a new expression besides the cry—and the beginning of learning the concept of fear.

It is the context and the learning that are important—not the observation and naming of a private, inner state. The inner state of agitation is not observed and named, nor does it constitute the fear:

We ask “What does ‘I am frightened’ really mean, what am I referring to when I say it?” And of course we find no answer, or one that is inadequate.

The question is: “In what sort of context does it occur?” (PI, 188)

The dog, the cry, jumping back, and the agitation (which might be observed later) constitute the context and the meaning of “I’m scared.” The words are not a description of a state either inner or outer in their normal use. The normal use teaches the concept which can then be used in other ways.

A cry is not a description. But there are transitions. And the words “I am afraid” may approximate more, or less, to being a cry. They may come quite close to this and also be far removed from it. (PI, 189)

Some uses will make sense and others will make muddles as the concept is used in ways that no longer relate to the particulars of the ordinary situation. The point is that it is through learning that we acquire concepts of the emotions and then those concepts shape what we feel just as concepts learned through language shape what we think.

The concept of an emotion could be used to bring the inner experience to the foreground. Imagine a person entering a dark hallway and noticing as she walked along that her heart was pounding. She might think ‘It’s almost as if I’m frightened’ and then attending to the circumstances realize ‘I am afraid someone might be hiding in the dark.’ In a case like this it would not be correct to say that she observed her fear when she noticed the pounding of her heart (though she might say it), rather that she noticed a physical state that might be fear and

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116. Which is why one must be wary of philosophers like Martha Nussbaum who claim to have found an essence common to all emotional concepts.
seeing the context put together what it meant. This example does not show the observing of a private inner state that is an emotion, but how a concept of an emotion can help a person understand a physical agitation. Wittgenstein would be more likely to use an example of someone staring at a mathematical problem and exclaiming, “Now I can do it!” The fear, like the answer to the problem, arrives with the answer and is not a state preceding it.

Do dogs and infant children not feel fear because they have no concept of fear? From the context, their behaviour and natural expressions like whimpering or howling, we say they feel fear, but they do not understand it the way we do. To more fully understand emotions, looking at this outer aspect of them, means seeing and hearing them alive and talked about as part of a pattern of living in which one is a participant.

An Emotional Education

Howard Gardner has posited the existence of two kinds of emotional intelligence. One is the intelligence that is used to see and understand “inner feelings” (intrapersonal intelligence) and the other “the pressures of ‘other persons’” (interpersonal intelligence). My argument here suggests that it would be a mistake to see these intelligences as simply coming to understand inner and outer phenomena. The concepts of emotion are learned in such a way that they are automatically concerned both with oneself and others. That is, in learning the concepts, the same things would be pointed out when learning them as they apply to oneself as to others—natural expressions, behaviours, and contexts. That these concepts “mean the same” when applied in both directions, as it were, may need separate reinforcing, but is not really a different lesson.

The implication of this thinking, when applied to the students I described all the way back in the first chapter who seemed unaware of how others were feeling, and some who seemed oblivious to feelings they themselves were exhibiting, is that they had not had opportunities to participate in the emotional aspects of a pattern of living that would have produced understanding of emotion. This implication is very much aligned with Greenspan’s contention that

117 Gardner, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.
key emotional understandings are not being developed because of changing patterns of living and teaching.\textsuperscript{118}

Gardner sometimes writes as if the development of “personal knowledge” from these two intelligences is a natural process that occurs automatically.\textsuperscript{119} Yet he also acknowledges that the emotional intelligences are fundamentally related to language and to a “cognitive process.” He quotes T. S. Eliot saying “in developing the language, enriching the meaning of words, the [poet] is making possible a much wider range of emotion and perception for other men [sic].”\textsuperscript{120} The public situation of emotions in a language–game fits closely with this idea. Emotions, in the Wittgensteinian view being developed here, are cognitive in that they are “conceptual” and the concepts are learned when a person learns the language of emotion. Presumably, the more sophisticated the language of emotion, the more sophisticated the concepts learned. But they are not purely cognitive because they take their meaning from a public display of natural expressions within contexts within a pattern of living that allows others to say, “Oh, I know how you feel.”

Soon after the above quotation, Gardner writes

To feel a certain way—paranoid, envious, jubilant—is to construe a situation in a certain way, to see something as having a possible effect upon oneself or upon other individuals.\textsuperscript{121}

This sentence brings out the idea that emotions help us see a situation in a certain way—reminiscent of Wittgenstein’s emphasis on seeing being in some ways more primary than thinking. In particular, to me it suggests Wittgenstein’s notion of noticing an aspect. The language of aspects provides a very useful way of understanding how the concepts of emotion, seen as at home in patterns of living, provide insight into both self and other.

\textsuperscript{118} Described earlier in Chapter Two, “A Challenge based on Greenspan’s Human Development Theory.”

\textsuperscript{119} “In many cases, in fact, the development of personal knowledge can take place without explicit tutelage: one does not need to show an individual overtly how to make such discriminations [among feelings]; one simply allows them to emerge.” \textit{Frames of Mind}, 253.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 254
Noticing an Aspect

I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience “noticing an aspect.”

Its causes are of interest to psychologists.

We are interested in the concept and its place among the concepts of experience. (PI, 193)

Seeing the emotional meaning of a situation is not to perceive something new “out there,” nor is it just to perceive something about our own inner state. It is seeing an aspect of something that hadn’t yet been noticed. Imagine a situation where, talking with someone else, instead of warmth and friendship towards the other person, you suddenly feel frightened. You might say “I saw a certain look in his eyes” or “There was a certain tone in his voice, and then I was frightened.” Think of noticing those details and then suddenly realizing that the situation was threatening. That is the experience that Wittgenstein describes in this way: “Hence the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought.” (PI, 197) It is the experience of the concept of fear “forcing itself” on the situation. Or imagine walking into a building and turning down a hallway that is ordinarily well lit but is now dark. Preoccupied with something else, you suddenly realize the situation you are in and feel afraid.

The above examples are not typical ones. Most of the time, the emotion fits the context and is felt more “naturally,” which perhaps means more gradually or that it seems to be part of the situation from the beginning; that is, a person would feel a twinge of anxiety when seeing the dark hallway. This would grow to a concern as he or she wondered why it was dark when usually it was well lit, and so on. Or in the first example, a person might have an uneasy sense that something was not right with the other person. So, though the above examples are not typical ones, they are certainly conceivable. I can remember a mountain walk where a small slip suddenly revealed the danger I had put myself in on an exposed trail. When I looked back at the ground I had just

122 “A concept forces itself on one. (This is what you must not forget.)” (PI, 204)

This needs to be placed alongside: “But how is it possible to see an object according to an interpretation? —The question represents it as a queer fact; as if something were being forced into a form it did not really fit. But no squeezing, no forcing took place here.” (PI, 200)
crossed, I felt afraid in retrospect. I had not seen the danger. I had misread the context and so not felt the emotion when it would have been prudent to feel it. Certainly, people misread others and find themselves in dangerous situations. In these cases, a better understanding of fear would be useful: one could think, “This is the sort of situation where most people would be concerned. I had better take care.” Development of emotional language and emotional literacy would reduce these misreadings.

Conversely, I suppose another person could constantly live in fear of being struck by a meteor. Realizing that very few other people are afraid in ordinary circumstances of meteors might be helpful at reinterpreting the inner experience.

Wittgenstein’s further remarks about seeing an aspect are suggestive when it comes specifically to seeing emotional aspects—or for that matter seeing the moral or aesthetic aspects of experience. It may be one way in which these areas of experience are all linked because they all contain an element of “seeing-as:” seeing something as good, as beautiful, as tragic, as sad. Wittgenstein typically talks of triangles or other geometric representations, a duck–rabbit, or sometimes of simple lines representing a face so applying his ideas to emotional aspects requires some extrapolation. Perhaps not at that much extrapolation, though:

The epithet “sad,” as applied for example to the outline face, characterizes the grouping of lines in a circle. Applied to a human being it has a different (though related) meaning. (But this does not mean that a sad expression is like the feeling of sadness!)

Think of this too: I can only see, not hear, red and green, —but sadness I can hear as much as I can see it. (PI, 209)

Wittgenstein wants to call this noticing of an emotional aspect a modified concept of sensation, but later he will ask “Is being struck [by an aspect] looking plus thinking? No. Many of our concepts cross here” (PI, 211).

Most people can be taught to see different aspects of a picture. Shown a duck–rabbit, a person might see it first as just a duck and be unable to see it as a rabbit. But someone else could point at features in the picture and say, “Look here at the bill of the duck. Now imagine that it’s the head of a rabbit looking in
the opposite direction to the duck. Now these are the rabbit’s ears held down and back.” Then the aspect of the picture as rabbit might dawn on the first observer. Having seen the different aspects once, typically, a person can then see the picture one way and the other, as Wittgenstein says, through an act of will. Seeing it one way or the other is an act of imagining it one way or another.\textsuperscript{123} To see different aspects in something requires “the mastery of a technique.” (\textit{PI}, 208) All these reminders surely suggest that there are skills or techniques that could be learned.

In fact, in some cases, schools assume that seeing emotional aspects can be learned though perhaps without realizing that is what is being taught. An example is the teaching of “stranger awareness” to young children as part of sexual abuse awareness and prevention.\textsuperscript{124} Children are taught that certain kinds of touching in certain contexts will produce either “yes feelings” or “no feelings,” and that these feelings can be used to distinguish good touching from bad touching. These lessons have many of the features of learning to see the emotional aspects of different contexts. In addition, there are lessons intended to show potential dangers such as strangers asking children into hidden places. One example might be that of a strange man who has lost a puppy in the bushes near a playground trying to convince a child to come into the bushes to help look for the puppy. The idea is that the child will learn to see the danger in such a situation and feel the “no feeling” about doing as the stranger wants. The child will see such a situation as dangerous and feel frightened or angry and ready to act appropriately – to call out or to flee. Described in this way, part of what these programs do might best be called “emotional education.”

Another form of emotional education in the sense developed here can be found in psychotherapy and counselling. Gardner has pointed this out:

The recourse to therapy in the West may certainly be seen as an effort to train one’s ability to make finer and more appropriate discriminations

\textsuperscript{123} “‘Imagine this changed like this, and you have this other thing.’ One can use imagining in the course of proving something.” And “Seeing an aspect and imagining are subject to the will. There is such an order as ‘Imagine this,’ and also: ‘Now see the figure like this;’ but not: ‘Now see this leaf green.’” (\textit{PI}, 213)

\textsuperscript{124} Two examples of this kind of program are the “Feeling Yes, Feeling No” program documented in a series of National Film Board of Canada films and the use of “The Care Kit” in Surrey public schools.
within one’s realm of personal feelings and with respect to “reading” the signals of other individuals.  

It may be that the conceptions of emotion as aspect and therapy as emotional education could be useful to conceptualize work in this area, too.

But between programs of the type described above usually done with younger children and psychotherapy, which is not a traditional part of schooling, there typically is a gap where no direct emotional education thought to be done. What emotional education children receive after a certain age, and that adolescents and adults receive as “life experience,” is informal or perhaps even unintentional. This fact suggests a number of questions. Are the informal ways in which we learn emotional concepts changing as society changes? Where do we usually learn about emotional aspects? Naturally? In high schools, English and Literature classes may offer something like instruction in seeing aspects but usually in the context of learning to understand characters in narratives. Does this kind of learning transfer to everyday emotional awareness and understanding of others? Nussbaum focuses on the role literature and music play in developing the emotions and it may be that the arts work in this way by providing opportunities to explore through the imagination aspects that might not be met and understood in life.

What do we do with those who are “aspect-blind” (Pl, 213) to emotional aspects? What kind of education is appropriate? Plato in the Republic and Locke in his instructions on education were explicit in their aim of developing a certain quality of character in students. How much of that character building was a kind of emotional education to see and feel a certain way in specific contexts—to love the city or to love reason above passion?

I have asked a great many questions here because this area seems in many ways unexplored territory. In fact, we are often not even sure what aspects could be seen in a situation nor whether expressions of emotion are genuine. Reflections like this led Wittgenstein to write the following:

Is there such a thing as ‘expert judgment’ about the genuineness of expressions of feeling? —Even here, there are those whose judgment is ‘better’ and those whose judgment is ‘worse.’

125 Frames of Mind, 254.
Correcter prognoses will generally issue from the judgments of those with better knowledge of mankind.

Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through ‘experience.’ —Can someone else be a man’s teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right tip. This is what ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ are like here. —What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculating-rules.

What is most difficult here is to put this indefiniteness, correctly and unfalsified, into words. (PI, 227)

“From time to time, the right tip” — this is hardly a curriculum. Even the idea of a technique is challenged here. At least the ideas of learning and teaching are retained in some form. A lot more work remains to be done to see what useful teaching of emotional concepts would look like.

Writing in a very different tradition, Dzigar Kongtrul, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, has said:

Human beings need teachers. On the Buddhist path to enlightenment, the teacher shows us how to look at ourselves properly. This idea may seem simple: Look at your mind, see what you are doing with your mind, and change it. But in practice it is difficult to do. To see clearly, we must look without ego involvement. The teacher is especially important in this process, because the teacher points out things we can’t see clearly.126

On the path to greater emotional understanding of self and others, perhaps a teacher is equally necessary to point out the aspects that students alone can’t see clearly. This concept of “teacher as mirror” where the teacher reflects and also points out is intriguing. It is commonplace, for example, to talk of the need to mirror emotions for infants. Perhaps it would be better to continue that practice throughout life in some way now informed by the idea of giving “from time to time the right tip.” Specific types of mirroring may be what an understanding and empathic teacher provides, and as emotional education it may be as important as any other part of the curriculum. The pattern of living that actually is practiced in the classroom, which to a large degree might be defined as the

126 It’s Up to You: The practice of self-reflection on the Buddhist Path, 29.
relationship between the teacher and students, will be what gives this curriculum its meaning.

At this point, we have moved quite a distance away from the mind/body dichotomy. In this view, the mind, rather than being a separate world from the body, is actually embodied in the sense that thoughts, feelings, and sensations are all finding their way into conceptual thinking, the *former* preserve of the mind, through embodiment in a pattern of living. Emotions are embodied in expressive behaviour in contexts and moved into language through learning, in relationships with others, how to express them in words. In turn, language then starts to shape the emotions themselves.

The final section of this long chapter looks at the reverse of language shaping emotion or private experience. As it is, it can be inferred that as we learn language, we learn to feel only as we are told to feel. However, it may be that this relationship can work the other way round, that is, that private experience can in its way shape language. If so, then an education that seeks to liberate students from existing oppressions, or one that seeks to promote new and creative responses to life, should also incorporate practices to develop this aspect of emotional understanding. I believe that the following section provides reason to believe that this ongoing response and development is possible.

**Private Experience and the Creative Use of Language**

Wittgenstein acknowledges that new uses of language are possible in two ways: he invents simple language games in order to show the features of a language game, and he writes in ways that make it clear that something new can find its way into language:

> We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike.

> Something new (spontaneous, ‘specific’) is always a language-game. (*PI*, 224)
Some of the simple language games that Wittgenstein creates are intended to show the relationship between a language game and the form of life in which it makes sense:

- It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle. —Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes and no. And innumerable others. ——And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. (PI, 8)

A language consisting only of orders and reports, where nothing else could be said is hard to imagine for me until I start imagining the people who would only use such a language—even then I have to imagine that they would have a use for sentences like “Don’t waste my time with trivialities!” In the case of the language game of only questions and the answers “Yes” and “No,” I imagine a family on a long, long car ride playing the game I Spy, though even in the game “I spy with my little eye” has some more than just ritual use.

In general, the idea is that a language game has a use within an activity done by a group of people: “Here the term “language-game” is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life” (PI, 11). What makes a group of people into a “form of life?” Simply, the criterion would be that they all know how to act and respond to the language game being played. They have learned or developed the game together. The “I Spy” game is a simple one, and the learning of it doesn’t take much time. The games around the expression of love, understanding the plays of Shakespeare, or thermonuclear dynamics all require more complexity and more time to learn.

In any case, language games and their related forms of life do not remain the same for long. They tend to roll on, powered by changing circumstances and our ability to see almost anything as a metaphor or symbol for something else. Perhaps the language game of orders and reports might, in a hundred generations, become the *Iliad* or *Henry V*. Wittgenstein suggests this with the useful metaphor of our language as an ancient city expanded by modern development:

- Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from
various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (PI, 8)

One might only wonder now just how straight those new boroughs had been laid out, or whether their very straightness somehow ran roughshod over the curving pathways that had taken form for a reason once forgotten. In any case, the time-accumulated metropolis of our current language game with its boroughs and byways suggests the confusion that forms our current conceptual map.

Because new language games are possible, then new patterns of living are also possible. It is worth emphasizing this point because changing the game and changing the pattern is one of the ways that philosophy can help us move on from the point where confusions disappear. When our intelligence is no longer bewitched by language, we can move on. In the final part of this thesis, I will look at how the view of emotion developed in this chapter that shows the interdependence of private experience and public language can be used to provide a rationale for and understanding of what an emotional curriculum might be, and then to support and shape the practices of mindfulness and focussing that could be included in this curriculum.
PART THREE

STEPS FORWARD
EMOTIONS AS PART OF A GENERAL EDUCATION

We don’t choose how we look and sound or what we are impelled to do and say when we are emotional any more than we choose when to become emotional. But we can learn to moderate emotional behaviour we would regret afterward, to inhibit or subdue our expressions, to prevent or temper our actions or words. We can also learn not to be overcontrolled, appearing unemotional, if that is our problem. It would be even better still if we could learn how to choose the way we feel and choose how to express our emotions so that we could express our emotions constructively.

Paul Ekman

Interdependence of Feeling and Cognitive Content

The previous chapter ended with a view of emotion as a unity of private experience and public expression shaped within a pattern of living. The private and the public participate in a process of teaching and learning where, as language is applied to behaviours in specific situations, concepts are developed that allow conceptual understanding to grow. Private experience gives rise to natural expressions that are responded to by others in ways that produce understanding. This cognitive understanding is, in the cognitive view of emotion, what emotion is, and this understanding is often so influential that it directs our own attention so we see the emotional aspects of experience only in this cognitive light. What we are feeling can become what we would expect to be
feeling. We think our way to our emotions rather than paying attention to how we are feeling. In my view, the private and conceptual aspects of emotion cannot be split in this way without damaging our vital engagement in living.

Wittgenstein points out, and I heartily agree, that this process of learning is very unlike the learning associated with, for example, learning calculating rules through set step by step procedures. While on the one hand learning about emotions seems like learning a language of emotion, when looked at from another perspective, it is learning to participate in a pattern of living in a way that allows being fully alive and awake to aspects of experience that can be hidden under our thinking. This process of becoming aware of emotional aspects requires a teacher who can provide tips that lead to this kind of awareness. As I argued in the last chapter, from Wittgenstein, developing this awareness is not learning a technique, but a matter of developing judgement—judgement as learning to see one's immediate situation in a certain way. This first chapter of Part Three asks whether the kind of teaching that proceeds not with a logically organized body of knowledge, but one of tips, guided experience, and active participation in living can be part of a general education. I will show that it can.

However, before going into that argument, I want in this section to take some time to emphasize the creative nature of the interdependence of experience and language characteristic of the emotions. It is important to do this now because, to this point in this thesis, I have focussed mostly on the way language, as it is learned, shapes understanding and experience as concepts force themselves on our perceptions. My argument, again from Wittgenstein, has been to get rid of private experience in seeing how our conceptual understanding of emotion finds meaning through language. But experience also affects language as we struggle to find expression for new situations and impulses. The impact of private experience on language does not come about because we invent new, internal, representations of experience to translate into language, that is, through producing a private language, but by participating in a public language game that finds new uses for words in the ongoing change of a pattern of living. It is this aspect of the interdependence that I want to look at here. Understanding this aspect of emotional experience calls for a different kind of attention being paid to inner experience; not one where the kind of meaning and understanding that can only be found in discursive or conceptual thinking is

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127 See n. 20 previous chapter.
looked for, but an inner awareness of the living, inarticulate, and immediate participation in the moment is found. This interdependence is why the practice of mindfulness, considered in Chapter 9, and focussing, in Chapter 10, become important to an emotional education: each develops a certain sort of awareness of inner experience.

As I wrote at the end of the last chapter, because new language games are possible, then new patterns of living are also possible. Language moves on just as philosophy moves on—by producing new, spontaneous, or specific uses of language. Wittgenstein sees that language works in two ways: in one, the pattern of uses of words gather around one idea—they instantiate one idea; in the other, very specific new uses and forms of words are used in a specific place and way. Some things we want to say can be expressed in different ways while others in only one:

531. We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.) (PI, 143-4)

In other words, coming up with something new in philosophy or any other part of a language game is like coming up with something new in poetry, that is, creating a new form of words that evokes new understandings, perceptions, and actions. A new idea must participate in a new language game. What it might be like to create such a game I find suggested in T. S. Eliot—as I will discuss in the following subsections. The link to Eliot emerges when one considers that what Wittgenstein has consistently called private experience is experience that is pre-conceptual and inarticulate; that is, because private experience does not contain language or any representation of language or meaning, it is inarticulate. It is an inclination to communicate—or an inspiration to express something. It is like the inspiration and the effort to say it that Eliot writes of in his poem quoted below.

When the creative aspect of experience and language is emphasized, three claims emerge.
1. There is a level of experience that is pre-conceptual and so “inarticulate.”

In his poem “East Coker,” Eliot writes

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l’entre deux guerres—
Trying to learn the use of words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion.128

One of his last major poems, it is fair to see this part of “East Coker” as Eliot’s reflection on his process of writing and the challenge of saying something new, or even saying something old in a new way. This challenge is accentuated for Eliot writing as a poet, of course, as he struggled to find words to form great poetry; however, the poet’s struggle is in some way all of our struggles with words at times. For most of us most of the time, words come quite easily, but every once in a while we all find ourselves struggling to find words for some thought or feeling—that is, attempting a raid on “the inarticulate.” Most of the time, we say things that are common currency like “Pass the butter,” or “What time were you thinking of leaving?” Then there are other times when words fail us and we end up saying things that might baffle even us: “A few days after my father died, I was missing him so terribly, and then I just felt, I don’t know, that he was there somehow and that things would be, well, sort of OK.”

That last, stammering attempt at language was my attempt to express a profound experience after my father’s death some years ago. Having said it, I feel some need to stand by it, for it does in some way capture my experience, but can I say what I meant by “he was there?” Not really. I don’t have a system of belief that has me believing in spirits, ghosts, or angels, so I might say, “I felt his presence,” and make it a matter of personal conviction or hallucination, or as Scrooge might have it “a slight disorder of the stomach … an undigested bit of

128 Section V, lines 1-11.
beef, or a blot of mustard, or a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato.”

Yet doing so doesn’t honour or capture the experience that made me want to point out into the air of the room. I wouldn’t want to say that what I was feeling was the presence of my father’s ghost; I feel more comfortable thinking it was his spirit—whatever that is. Words suggest themselves and are rejected while I attempt to hold on to an experience of great personal significance, preserving it from the implications of the language I use to describe it. I may not be writing poetry trying to express this experience, but I think the feeling and fumbling with words is a reflection of the poet’s process of “trying to learn to use words.”

The key point is that sometimes we have an impulse to speak but don’t know what words to use to quite get across what we are impelled to say. For the poet creating a new poem, Eliot says in an essay, it is not simply a matter of accessing the personal, but rather the task requires engaging with the tradition of poetry that stretches out into the past. Perhaps only poets, prophets, and the enlightened can make contact with this layer at its deepest level, but I think everyone can access it to some degree.

2. We can access our pre-conceptual experience.

In traditions that talk about accessing an inarticulate level of experience, making contact is not easy or common, but it may be more common than we usually might think, especially if it doesn’t have to be a big deal resulting in great poetry. Still talk about experience is slippery and inherently difficult to conceptualize. In traditions where the idea of accessing this level of experience is commonplace, it can seem fairly straightforward as in this example from the Theravada school of Buddhism:

Meditation deals with levels of consciousness that lie deeper than conceptual thought. Therefore, some of the experiences of meditation just won’t fit into words. That does not mean, however, that meditation

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cannot be understood. There are deeper ways to understand things than by the use of words.\textsuperscript{130}

Words like “deeper,” “higher,” “lower” and so on are always interesting when used to describe faculties of mind: they metaphorically locate faculties in relation to one another and most often set up hierarchical relationships between them. There are signs of the contest in the quotation above. At this point, the existence of pre-conceptual experiences and our ability to access them in some way, voluntarily or involuntarily, easily or with great effort, is all that I am asserting.

\textbf{3. Pre-conceptual and Conceptual experience are connected.}

As the argument against private language has pointed out, this connection should not be seen as connecting a private representation or private language to a public representation or language. Private experience is not a picture or an image or an unspoken language. I have called it an impulse or inspiration. This impulse, in terms of emotions, is the feeling or affective aspect of having an emotion. The expression within a language game and the concepts that develop there are the intentional aspect of emotion. Having an emotion and understanding the emotion requires then a careful attention to inner experience and an intelligent and careful playing of a language game to understand and express the emotion so it can be understood by self or others conceptually.

Both the aspect of careful attention to experience and intelligent use of language can be taught—even though such teaching may not be the transmission of a systematic body of knowledge. They can and should be taught to ensure that we can understand and express our emotions within the language community of which we are a part while, at the same time, remaining aware of the unique inarticulate response we have in the moment. It is the ability to be fully aware of both these aspects of our emotional life that allows expression of emotion that can be as unique and precise as musical themes or lines of poetry, to return to Wittgenstein’s examples, and which in turn create space for our understanding of our emotions to be as individual as we are. It is the burden of the rest of this chapter to show that this kind of teaching can be part of everyone’s education.

\textsuperscript{130} Gunaratana, \textit{Mindfulness in Plain English}, 20.
Goals of Education

It's common to hear that one function of schools is to promote students’ growth and development. While it is more often said that secondary schooling is, at least in part, about producing citizens ready to take on productive places in the economy, part of what goes on during the schooling of adolescents is intended to promote the development of their intellect and their character. In elementary grades, more emphasis is placed on the ideas of development and growth perhaps, but in progressive ideas of schooling the notion that what we are about in schools is aiding and promoting the full development of the individual is central to the whole purpose and justification of schooling.

These observations suggest a range of aims that schools have that vary from strictly utilitarian to maximizing individual functioning in a more global sense. Even the most strictly economic view of humanity must include some minimal set of goals that will permit existence, effort, and reproduction to go on, that will stave off despair, depression, or even worse some might say, lack of commitment to work and consumption of goods. On the face of it, even in a fairly strictly economic view of education, or perhaps especially in a strict economic view of education, certain levels of competent emotional functioning should be encouraged. I think of one of the owners of my favourite fly fishing store telling me, “All most business owners ask of schools is that they produce kids who can do a bit of math, communicate well with customers, and get along with other people at work.” Both the communicating and the getting along imply a certain level of emotional development.

At this point, I hope the presupposition that schools ought to help develop the emotional functioning of students has been supported. However, what the nature of an emotional curriculum might look like and how it might be conceived is yet to be examined. At first glance, within certain views of what can fit in a general education, emotional learning seems an unlikely qualifier even in the broader form so far suggested of tips and pointers arising from full engagement with life in schools combined with practices to increase awareness of inner experience and others to develop an increased understanding of

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131. Much of the interest in Social and Emotional Education may come from hopes that it will result in more stable social conditions that will in turn foster economic growth. I have written elsewhere about the need for education to focus on goals that might be inherent in an “educated person.” See “Redesigning the Academy.”
language use around the emotions. I will in this chapter examine one of the views of what can and cannot qualify for inclusion in a general education and argue that emotion can indeed be part of such an education. I will then further argue that there is a sense that is accessed through the emotions that is essential to understanding experience generally. This felt sense is the inarticulate aspect of our private experience that is inextricably bound to our conceptual thinking through the process of learning language.

It has been difficult to conceive of the emotions as part of a general curriculum if curriculum and the development of “the self-conscious mind of rational man” are tied, by definition, together. After all, emotions, often seen as non-rational, irrational or, when we are in a passion, destructive of rationality, don’t seem part of that sort of mind. If this view were all there is to say about the emotions, then the only way an emotional curriculum might fit in schooling would be as the study of the psychology of the emotions, perhaps as a part of a more general study of science. Such a study, though worthwhile in its own way, does not seem to capture the hopes of developing better emotional understanding in and between students, nor of developing more awareness of their fuller experience of life. It does little to explore the experience of emotions or to develop a personal view of how emotions contribute to a fully lived life. Knowing the neurophysiology or the psychoanalytic interpretation of emotions does not, on its own, seem to be part of a fuller experience and understanding of one’s own emotions or the emotions of others. In any case, one can assume that people were able to live fully emotional lives before the various, and often competing, views of behavioural, interpretive, or empirical psychology were around to explain what was really going on. Knowledge of the emotions fits with the goal of developing a full and vital emotional life only if it furthers the development of such a life, that is, only insofar as it is a means to that end. The goal is not having knowledge per se, but of living fully.

If an emotional curriculum is not a study of psychology, what is it? The views of emotion that emphasize their cognitive content offer a different view of an emotional curriculum. In these views, an emotional curriculum might be a study of the judgments and contents of emotion. Solomon has gone so far as to produce a register of emotions with associated signs, symptoms, and

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judgements.\textsuperscript{133} The educational project in this case would seem to be one of learning and applying this sort of knowledge about the emotions in everyday life.

Yet this project immediately suggests two problems. First, it is focused entirely on the ideology of the emotions. As such, making the “meaning” of emotions a matter of learning general signs and symptoms might leave little room for them to contribute to the individuality of those being taught or to permit the development of reforming ideas fuelled by radical passions. The specificity and personal significance of the experience of emotions might be threatened by the generalized theory that had been learned. The concept of the emotions might interpose itself between understanding and the vivid experience of emotion itself. There is the presumption that we will know our emotions by the thoughts we are having, rather than by the associated physical feelings or other aspects of the inarticulate experience.

Secondly, and clearly related to the first problem, depending on how the register of emotions is developed, this project invites us to take up either an \textit{a priori} or scientific attitude towards our experience. That is, we would be required to either logically analyze our emotions or treat our experience in many ways like a hypothesis—the accuracy of which would be determined by some form of experiment. Imagine the kind of thinking this suggests: “Children restrained from doing what they want show signs of anger.\textsuperscript{134} I am feeling anger. Therefore, I must be being restrained from doing something I want. I must find out what that is.” While this approach may be helpful for some, even necessary, it seems a long way removed from the quick, immediate, and intuitive way in which our emotional life can move us. It depends on our rational understanding to interpret the evidence of our emotional lives and says nothing about either our awareness of emotions on the inarticulate level of experience or their power to reframe our thinking through the immediate perception of different aspects of a situation.

So it might seem that the decision about whether emotions should be considered part of a general education rests on the resolution of a philosophical debate over the rationality of the emotions—or at least so far as we insist that an

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{The Passions}, Chapter 8, “The Emotional Register: Who’s Who Among the Passions.”

\textsuperscript{134} Restraining infants being one way of eliciting anger in experiments. See Ekman, \textit{Emotions Revealed}, Chapter 6, “Anger.” Solomon provides an additional example of someone analyzing the logic of the emotions.
appropriate subject in a general education must be rational and a form of knowledge. It would seem so, but perhaps not necessarily so. In this chapter, I will look at the particular kinds of “irrationality” often attributed to the emotions in order to examine whether this aspect of our emotional experience necessarily would bar emotions from being part of a general education. Given the importance of our emotional experience, we should conclude that learning that develops our understanding of it ought to be included in a general education, even though that learning is in some sense still non-rational.

**Emotions as non-rational**

In Chapter Four, I traced the origin of the privileging of reason over emotion back to Plato, though it appeared that Plato, the “ultra-rationalist,” may have had a more friendly view of the emotions than is commonly acknowledged. This friendlier interpretation has the effect of aligning Plato’s view of the emotions more with that of Aristotle whose view of emotions is developed in his *Rhetoric*. Despite his rigid hierarchies of categories of knowledge and his consistent obsession with paradigms of intellection, Aristotle did accept modes of understanding other than formal logic. Prior to Aristotle, emotion was viewed as an entity “naturally opposed to reason and conceived of as something hostile to thoughtful judgment. It was Aristotle’s contribution,” according to Fortenbaugh, “to offer a very different view of emotion, so that emotional appeal would no longer be viewed as an extra-rational enchantment.”

Fortenbaugh describes Aristotle’s view of the emotions as no longer making them an “extra-rational enchantment” but not as rendering them rational. They are something that can be appealed to in argument using rhetoric but not logic, but they are not something that necessarily must be discounted, neglected, or ignored when it comes to persuasion and decision-making. They are something distinct from animal instincts or appetites as they are an important part of our human capacity to understand the world and ourselves:

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136 Aristotle would certainly argue that the emotions still had to be subservient to logic and reason.
Here [in the Nichomachean Ethics], Aristotle is developing a human psychology that incorporates an irrational yet no less wholly human element into the process of human growth and understanding. The recognition and explication of a uniquely human irrationality gives Aristotle room to develop his methodological theory of the emotions in the Rhetoric as an affect of judgment separate from yet no less powerful than persuasion through logical means.  

One is left with the idea that human judgment is driven into two faculties, namely that of logic and that of the emotions, that both can be appealed to in language when decisions about the truth and desirability of a course of actions need be made, that each contributes to making good decisions, and though making decisions in this way is not strictly rational, it is entirely human.  

The argument here is not an empirical one, that is, the claim is not that humans have this faculty, though that they do is presupposed in the argument, but rather that the use of this faculty, or the appeal to sentiment is, at least in some cases, legitimate and necessary to making decisions. Damascio for his part makes claims like this on empirical grounds when he argues that people with brain injuries that prevent the inclusion of emotional or body states in their decision making processes are incapable of making good decisions. Though arguing from brain to mind is a procedure fraught with peril, and peril I don’t really want to risk, the analogy is intriguing. But as I have suggested, my argument here is more that at one time, in the writings of Aristotle at least, the appeal to sentiment in argument and persuasion was recognized as legitimate and appropriate for study.  

One need not go back so far in time, however. Though it carries an old fashioned tinge, the phrase “educated sensibility” does still turn up here and there, usually perhaps as a synonym for “good taste” in an artistic sense. If the sensibility were seen as referring to the faculty that uses sentiment to inform decision-making, then an “educated sensibility” would be a good thing. Such

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138 Martha Nussbaum, supported by references to Aristotle, sees emotions as judgments of value particularly important in such decision making. See Upheavals of Thought, ch. 1, 19-88.

139 Descartes’ Error.

140 Charles Taylor has written of moral sentiments serving as a touchstone for morality. See his Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity especially Chapter 15.
an education might include a study of rhetoric insofar as such a study would
develop a critical awareness of how appeals to emotions work in oneself and in
others. In this function, some conceptions of what rhetoric is would be more
useful than others.\textsuperscript{141} In any case, even though this emotional faculty is seen as
non-rational, here is a “body of knowledge” that might well constitute part of a
general education.

There are other ways in which the emotions, even given that they are non-
rational, need to be considered in the development of a curriculum for a general
education. The following two sections will consider each in turn.

\textbf{Emotions as Ground for Development}

In Chapter 4, I discussed how Rousseau, convinced that reason alone was
inadequate to ensure the right development of an individual or a society,
preserved his student from the conventional “rational” thinking of the society in
which he found himself. By isolating Emile from the influences and thinking of
society around him, Rousseau offered him the chance to develop his own love of
self and compassion for others that would stand to protect his reason from the
distorted views that develop when people are cut off from these supports.

Rousseau’s point can be put in a more conceptual way. Reason, seen as the
logical use of thought and language, is value-neutral. Its function is to preserve
the truth of what is said and to make clear what is true or false where that can be
determined. Reason allows one to follow a thought through to its logical
consequences. The value of those consequences is, in some sense, a separate
matter from their conceptual coherence. Some part of the value is in the moral or
aesthetic realm where reason is supported by intuition, emotion, and perhaps
other sources. We weigh the principles of value that we state against this “felt
sense” of value in order to determine whether they succeed in capturing what is
of value in particular decisions. The felt sense of right and wrong, ugly or
beautiful is logically prior to the principles of morality or aesthetics though such
principles may in turn impinge on or refine what is felt. Still, without this felt

\textsuperscript{141} “Seeing rhetoric as the study of the dress of thought rather than the study of thought itself
threatened to trivialize it. Rhetoricians from the University of Edinburgh sought to stop this
trend by arguing that the study of correct and persuasive style produced not only competent
public speakers but virtuous people.” \textit{The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing}. 
sense, there is no way to investigate the claims of reason. We justify our esteem rationally, but we feel esteem emotionally.

If we do need to rely on an intuitive sense to feel what is of value, then it would follow that in the course of one’s education, care should be taken to preserve, develop, and strengthen this “background of value” that is often felt as an emotional response to a situation. Yet as Alan Block, for one, would challenge, not only is this preserving, developing, and strengthening not being done in modern schools, but they are, by their structure and the curricula that guide what is done, preventing the development of this felt sense and the sense of self that grows from it. Not only does a sense of self grow from the ground of emotions but from thought itself:

Cognitive modes and activity grow out of emotions and feelings that have direct influence on the generation of further images that ultimately permit further discriminative states in an ongoing recursive process, which is thought.\textsuperscript{142}

If weight is given to considerations such as these about the emotional base that may support reason, two consequences follow. The first is prescriptive. Though the emotions themselves do not consist of a rational body of knowledge that can be taught (providing one wants to still hold that view) they do provide the base on which other kinds of knowledge are built—specifically in the areas of morality and aesthetics—or in any intellectual endeavour as Greenspan has argued as was presented in Chapter Two. As such, any general curriculum should be structured and presented in such a way as not to do damage to this intuitive emotional sense. Even better than doing no damage would be ways of supporting and developing this sense as may happen with the practices discussed in the following two chapters. This leads to the next point below.

This second point goes in a positive direction. A general curriculum ought to contain activities and knowledge that will develop and refine the intuitive sense. That is, this emotional sense should not be left to its own devices but engaged in the educational endeavour in such a way that the recursive process that Block describes is allowed to work to develop the “discriminative states” that would constitute an educated sensibility. It may be that this process goes on in studies of the bodies of knowledge often included in a general curriculum if

\textsuperscript{142} Alan A. Block, I’m Only Bleeding, 115.
they are taught in a certain way—but not other ways. Methods of teaching and their impact on student emotions must be considered and selected because of this emotional impact. The key effort of this pedagogy would be ensuring that the emotional aspects of learning are reflected in the language of teaching and learning and in the relationship between teacher and student. This would be apparent in the interplay of empathy, emotional uptake, and emotional coaching that occurs within that relationship. In all likelihood, this interplay is nothing new to good teaching, but in the context of emotional education, its value can be reinforced.

Another way of looking at the emotions as non-rational remains. This view also sees the emotions as logically prior to thinking. This second view holds that an emotional response is part of the act of perceiving and provides information that can be thought about though it is not in itself something that fits the usual idea of rational thinking. The next section looks at whether this view of emotion would prevent including emotions in a general curriculum.

**Emotions as Mode of Perception**

When we see that someone else is angry, what do we see? Perhaps we notice a red face, glaring eyes, clenched fists, a grim set mouth, or hear a certain tone of voice. In addition to those manifest signals, do we see anger? Clearly, anger is not a thing that can be perceived on its own. Seeing that someone is angry is to notice an aspect of the situation. This idea of emotion as an aspect of a situation was presented in Chapter 7. We do not see the feeling of anger; we see that someone is exhibiting certain signs of anger that together with the situation we see the person in, and perhaps the words being said and so on add up to anger. We certainly don’t look inside the person’s head to see the anger, though if we had the angry person in an MRI machine of a certain kind, or attached to a device to measure blood pressure, we might be able to detect more signs of anger. Thankfully this is not necessary. The anger is an aspect of a situation that is perceived by someone able to appreciate the emotional aspects of life.

One can imagine someone surprised by a person storming off in the middle of a discussion. Turning to a third person, looking bewildered as the other person leaves, the surprised disputant asks, “Where is she going?”

“She’s furious with you. Didn’t you notice?”
It’s a believable enough situation. The surprised person might remain incredulous about the anger or suddenly see that the other person had been growing more and more angry even before storming off. Once the anger has been noticed, the whole situation can be seen to be permeated with it even though it wasn’t noticed earlier.

In the same way, I believe that it is possible for people to grow more and more angry without noticing it themselves, or noticing it and interpreting anger as fear or anxiety. The need for people to be helped to understand what they feel is one of the things that keep psychotherapists in business.

The reason why these examples seem possible, is that we recognize seeing an emotion is not like seeing the conclusion to a logical argument but more like seeing that a drawing of a vase is also a drawing of two face silhouettes in profile or the drawing of a duck is also a drawing of a rabbit. One points out that this part of the drawing seems like a duck’s bill, but that if you imagine a stiff wind blowing a rabbit’s ears would stream back just like that, too. And that bump in the back of the head could also be a mouth. Suddenly the duck “becomes” a rabbit. The person’s rapid departure becomes an angry person storming off. With practice, one can learn to respond to another as he or she walks into the room and say, “You seem very happy today,” and be received like a mind reader. It happened often enough to me as a teacher when students came into the room and I was able to pay attention to them individually. And it also happened often that a student would be surprised at being seen in this way.

Noticing an aspect is not to see something new in the situation. Seeing a face as an angry face is not to see anger as a thing perceivable separate from the face or in the person. Seeing anger is to interpret what is already seen “in a new light.” Is this rationality or a distinct way of knowing? It’s not like seeing that the next number in the sequence “2, 4, 6” is “8” or like seeing that white light is composed of the wavelengths of all of the colours. It is more like seeing that Iago is a vengeful man—especially if we are watching the play well acted on the stage. Yet most children are able to see the anger in another’s face while they are yet unable to point out the visual or behavioural clues that reveal it. Not to be able to do so is a diagnostic sign of a mental disability in its own way—like people who cannot feel pain have to reason their way towards an appropriate response when they smell burning flesh and see that it is their own.
Whether or not the perception of emotional aspects is a body of knowledge, the question remains: can this way of perception be taught? Wittgenstein provides contradictory suggestions. About seeing aspects, he writes: “The substratum of this experience (seeing an aspect) is mastery of a technique.”\textsuperscript{143} One can teach techniques. However, expressing and understanding the expression of emotions is quite different. I wrote about this aspect of emotion and Wittgenstein’s thought in Chapter Seven, noting that Wittgenstein says one does not acquire a technique. Making correct judgments about emotional states is not something that can be reduced to a series of rules, axioms, or hypotheses. The knowledge required is wide and the application of knowledge in making judgments complex. It seems to me that, in keeping with my premise that perceiving the emotions that someone else is experiencing is like seeing an aspect of the other person, the tips that would prove helpful would be like “Look at the tension around the eyes” or “See how she is biting her lower lip.” It would be with tips like these combined with increasing “knowledge of mankind” that one would gain the experience that would increase the ease with which one sees emotions.\textsuperscript{144} Ultimately, the goal would be to see the emotion with the immediacy of lived experience and not as the reasoned conclusion based on an assembly of evidence. The emotion will be there or here, that is, perceived as part of the situation.

Whether this way of increasing experience would constitute a curriculum of a body of knowledge is unclear. It is at least analogous to the kind of judgments that one makes about poetry or characters in literature. One gets tips like “Notice how the rhythm of the line emphasizes this word” and “See how the author describes the way he stares at the moon’s reflection.” One doesn’t calculate the theme of a poem or the motivation of a character through application of rules; these kinds of understandings emerge through paying a certain kind of careful attention while one reads. We teach the appreciation of literature and art in this way. Perhaps teaching techniques like those used in this area of study could be used to increase students’ ability to see the emotions of others and themselves.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Investigations}, 208.
\textsuperscript{144} This is very like what Paul Ekman does to teach about emotions in \textit{Emotions Revealed}.
\textsuperscript{145} Hepburn, “The Arts and the Education of Feeling and Emotion.” says much of interest on this point.
Seeing emotions in others and hearing them talk of them would in turn also increase students’ understanding of their own emotions. This follows from Wittgenstein’s argument concerning the learning of language. One does not match up a word with one’s private experience; instead, one matches up behaviour and use with the word and then notices similar behaviour in oneself. Seeing the behaviour and natural expressions of others and hearing a word used to describe the associated emotion teaches us the concept of that emotion. In this way, deepening our understanding of others’ emotions deepens our understanding of the concept of those emotions and that will in turn give us a better understanding of our own emotions as we see our behaviour in the light of others.

This philosophical point is as commonplace as the idea that as individuals we learn what love between spouses is at least partly through seeing how our own parents behaved towards one another. The tenderness, passion, antagonism, or competitiveness seen there, all labelled as love, will shape our understanding of what love is. Of course, as our experience widens both in real life and in our imaginative lives through literature and art, we will continue to refine and extend the range of expressions and actions that might be practiced under the concept of “love.” This process will go on until (and after) we have enough experience to say “This is what love means to me.” The “this” in the above sentence refers to our own range of statements and actions. This notion is in keeping with another of Wittgenstein’s reminders:

(The temptation is to say “I see it like this,” pointing to the same thing for “it” and “this.”) Always get rid of the idea of the private object in this way: assume that it constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you.\(^{146}\)

Of course, the common notion is that we refer to our private sensation of “love” when we use that word. This is precisely what Wittgenstein’s argument against private languages is intended to counter. I have argued previously that the same argument applies to the idea that our emotions exist in a private space. The idea that our emotions are the physical sensations that often accompany emotions does not reflect the complexity of emotions which are understandable to ourselves and others precisely because they are not entirely private sensations.

\(^{146}\) Ibid, 207.
but part of our emotional “form of life.” This line of argument is one way that Cartesian dualism and its problems might eventually disappear—the mind and body merging in public expression.

I have argued in this section that one way that understanding the emotions might be conceived is as a mode of perception. As such it would be odd to talk of emotional understanding in terms of a body of knowledge. Yet, through a reliance on some of Wittgenstein’s ideas, which I believe to be sound, I have pointed out that even as a mode of perception, there is much that can be learned and taught to increase a person’s ability to see and understand one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. Even though I have focused in this section largely on the social/language way of understanding emotion, I don’t want to leave the idea that there could be no other way of learning the awareness and sensitivity to personal experience that is the unspeakable other half of the study. The great meditative traditions have much to offer here as Western science, at least, has only begun to appreciate.147 There is much here that needs to be explored and developed for use. That would be a worthwhile project to undertake, but one fraught with its own perils as the next chapter will demonstrate.

The last sections of this chapter, looking at ways in which the emotions have been characterized as non-rational, have both resulted, paradoxically, in the conclusion that there might be some worth and possibility of teaching something of the emotions in school. In the final section, I will develop a few thoughts about the emotions as constituting a body of knowledge.

**Understanding emotions**

One of the wonderful ironies of English is that to be “understanding” means to be aware, accepting, and caring of others’ emotions and to be understanding in this way is what many hope for in teaching empathy as part of an emotional education. To provide empathic understanding to another person is one of the things counsellors and others do to help others develop their own “self understanding.” This ability rests on the ability to perceive and understand what

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the other person is feeling and then to communicate that understanding.\textsuperscript{148} I have argued that this ability, typically seen as non-rational or pre-rational, is an ability that can be developed and refined through education and coaching. This sort of education of emotional awareness, a sensible and worthwhile endeavour, is not an education in a form of knowledge, that is there is not really a body of facts nor is there a system of axioms or set procedures that describe allowable moves in the “logic” of the emotions. As Wittgenstein argues, knowledge here is a matter of reflective experience aided by tips and coaching. Should this gaining experience in perceiving emotions and making accurate emotional assessments, by its very nature, something that should \textit{not} be considered for inclusion in a general curriculum? I argue that if it is, then there are other areas of knowledge that should also be excluded, areas that most would agree should be included in such an education such as the study of literature and art. Consequently, the insistence on a standard for a body of knowledge that it be normative or in some way logically systematized is mistaken. Similarly, to insist that a body of knowledge contain true facts about something is also to create a standard that would exclude subjects that most would agree are worth knowing. What notion of truth could be applied, as even a little bit of historical understanding shows that the “truths” of science, for example, change over time.

Rhetoric, one “body of knowledge” concerning the emotions, can be seen as an attempt to systematize or understand the “logic of the emotions,” to learn to understand how the felt sense about the world we all have can be influenced and directed. Yet as a separate study, it has all but disappeared from most modern curricula. The name has become a pejorative—“That’s just rhetoric!” Why? Is it because it recognizes that there is more to thinking than the purely rational, at least when it comes to making decisions about life’s goods, for example? Rhetoric has become something that we must beware of, as its appeals are likely to “cloud our judgments” rather than to make them clearer. I do not want to argue for a return of the teaching of traditional rhetoric by any means; instead, I suggest the disappearance of such teaching shows how the idea of the rational has been elevated in schools to a height that obscures and ignores a range of human experience accessed through the emotions that should not disappear from schooling. In this, schools are a mirror of society. What was once the study of an important human faculty became the study of the dress of

\textsuperscript{148} See for example Robert R. Carkhuff, \textit{The Art of Helping in the 21st Century}. 
thought, and then was discarded in a modernist, “form follows function” kind of language renovation. The recognition of the importance of emotional recognition and appeal disappeared.

What then is lacking from “emotional experience, or mental attitudes and beliefs”\textsuperscript{149} that makes them unsuitable for a general education? We can understand others and ourselves to a greater or lesser degree, with more specificity or less, more depth or less. Though knowledge of emotions, or understanding of emotional experience, may not be rational, on one reading, in allowing us to use “public criteria” to distinguish “the true … from the false, the good from the bad, the right from the wrong,”\textsuperscript{150} it takes public criteria to use language, and language is required to understand emotional experience—not to “have” an emotional experience, but to understand it.

Thinking is a complex activity. Judging wisely and intelligently may well demand emotional insight and understanding. To my mind, at least, any hard and fast distinction between rationality and emotionality in areas of human judgment and understanding cannot be usefully maintained—at least insofar as such distinction would be used to render deepening emotional understanding not proper for a general education. I hope this chapter goes some way towards, as Wittgenstein might have said, “showing [that] fly out of the fly-bottle.” A logical-scientific rationalism is misapplied if it is all that is used to understand human experience, and it is misapplied if it is the standard used to judge what qualifies for inclusion in a general curriculum.

\textsuperscript{149} Hirst, 94.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, 95. As suggested earlier, this too could be contested.
CHAPTER NINE

MEDITATION, MINDFULNESS, AND EMOTIONS

From the world of relative phenomena we are able to touch the absolute, and this recognition brings about a powerful vibration, something like an electric shock. Those who have learned the art of mindfulness are finely tuned and are able to receive this vibration. The ultimate goal of our practice and studies is to be able to touch the true nature of reality with our mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The Mindfulness Solution

The last chapter has shown that some teaching about the emotions could be part of a general education, and that this teaching cannot be a rational body of knowledge about the emotions. While one might well benefit from instruction about what psychology has found about the emotions, how they are expressed non-verbally in facial expression and so on, the foundation of living fully in the emotional flow of the moment comes from learning to pay careful and compassionate attention to immediate experience. Paul Ekman has written about both these aspects of emotion in Emotions Revealed. That book was written for the layperson as a vehicle for Ekman to present the results of his long study of emotions in human beings, which it does admirably and usefully. It also suggests the beginning of a new interest in a different view of the emotions that developed from Ekman’s participation in a panel discussion about the emotions.
Mindfulness and Emotions

with the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{151} In particular, Ekman writes about the important role that being attentive to one’s feelings, indeed the whole of one’s experience in the moment, has on the process of learning to understand and moderate one’s emotional behaviour both physical and verbal.\textsuperscript{152}

Western psychology has more generally developed an interest in the effects of meditation training on the emotions and brain fairly recently,\textsuperscript{153} and as meditation based treatment programs are developed and examined, it has become apparent that meditation has remarkable associations with increased compassion and awareness of others’ feelings, composure, and self awareness and understanding.\textsuperscript{154} Meditation based programs of different sorts have spread to various institutions and schools hoping to help meet challenges of different kinds. Mindfulness based programs offer the possibility of working directly, at a pre-conceptual level, with individuals’ experience of their emotions. While scientific knowledge of our emotions might allow us to eventually infer rationally what we are feeling, mindfulness offers to put us more directly in touch with the impulse to respond emotionally and gives us more freedom to respond in less automatic ways—the impulse enters awareness before a response is triggered. In the Buddhist view, when mindfulness is practiced diligently and seriously, it will put us more in touch with our experience of the moment, as well as our seemingly automatic responses to that experience, in such a way that we will be able more and more to perceive situations as they really are. Both of these outcomes would be valuable parts of a curriculum of the emotions, first as we increasingly become aware of our emotional responses to life, and second as the tendency to see situations only as emotions dictate is replaced by an awareness of our constantly changing response to the moment as it is.

With beneficial outcomes being observed, psychologists have inevitably become interested in assessing the degree to which participants in studies are learning to become more mindful—mindfulness having been identified as the

\textsuperscript{151}See Ekman, \textit{Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life}, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{152}Ibid, 70-81.
\textsuperscript{153}Chronicled in part in Goleman, \textit{Destructive Emotions}.
\textsuperscript{154}A prominent example is Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program. See Jon Kabat-Zinn, \textit{The Full Catastrophe}. 
active ingredient, as it were, of these programs.\footnote{155} This research has been almost entirely within an empirical, psychological model with its need to identify, conceptualize, and assess. However, to my mind, this whole process of development, implementation, and assessment is filled with conceptual pitfalls. In this chapter, I will examine some of the difficulties and possible distortions of our understanding of what goes on when one learns meditation, even meditation that is specifically called “Mindfulness meditation,” as long as the examination abstracts what is being studied from the complexity of the tradition in which it is at home and the situation in which it is taught. This is of particular importance because, in the view of emotions developed in this thesis, a finely tuned awareness of the inner feelings and impulses of emotion is inextricably part of the process of developing an understanding of emotional experience in the moment. The fineness of this inner perception and impulse to express is especially part of the process that produces language that offers the possibility of moving forward from established categories of emotional concepts. With the importance of this use of mindfulness to develop emotional awareness, it becomes important to emotional education that the effectiveness of mindfulness practice not be lost during the process of scientific abstraction.

One additional abstraction occurs in this process. The researchers and teachers themselves have more or less experience of meditation or the tradition from which it is drawn. While many of the originators of the programs examined are meditators with great experience within the Buddhist tradition, some are not. There is a difference between talking of a concept seen from outside and talking of experience. The concept is contained in language, while the experience is contained in a person. This point is of particular importance when talking about meditation and mindfulness. One continually encounters this sort of reminder in Buddhist literature: “You learn what meditation is all about and where it leads only through direct experience of the thing itself.”\footnote{156} Indeed, in Buddhism, straight from the reported words of the Buddha, students have been told to question every statement, compare it to one’s own experience to test whether it is

\footnote{155} See Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Krietemeyer, J., & Toney, L., “Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mindfulness.” for a study that uses empirical analysis of measurement instruments to define and operationalize mindfulness while acknowledging at the same time the increasing evidence that mindfulness is efficacious in some psychological treatments.

\footnote{156} Gunaratana, Meditation in Plain English, 110. All further page references to this book in this chapter will be given in text as MPE.
accurate and useful.\textsuperscript{157} The common Buddhist simile of the finger and moon says a lot about the nature of the non-dogmatic relationship expected between a Buddhist and the teachings of Buddha: a teacher may use his or her finger to point to the moon, but the student should never mistake the finger for that moon. The Dharma (teaching) is like a finger and understanding is like the moon.

Several questions result from these observations. First, when empirical research identifies mindfulness factors that are associated with beneficial outcomes, are those factors sufficient to define mindfulness? Second, is the understanding of mindfulness as a mental exercise or skill sufficient to understand mindfulness and to teach it? More generally, and to return to a central philosophical point, is the concept of mindfulness within a Western, empirical, psychological pattern of living the same concept as that within the pattern of living that is its home?

\section*{Grounding in Experience}

Because of the importance of the experience of mindfulness in meditation and the role it plays in verifying through experience the Buddhist understandings that flow from it, it is important that people working in this area have some experience and practice in meditation. As pointed out above, the Buddhist position is that experience must be at the centre of understanding. This is different from Siegel's position that

Being clear about these different ways of knowing is extremely important as we go forward: subjective experience, science, and professional applications are three separate entities in the body of knowledge that we will need to maintain as distinct [\textit{my emphasis}] dimensions of reality for this integrative effort to be valid and useful.\textsuperscript{158}

The importance of the word "distinct" needs to be emphasized especially when the scientific construct of mindfulness threatens to be kept so distinct from experience and understanding of mindfulness within the Buddhist tradition. I

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{157}“Precepts in Buddhism are not imposed by some outside authority. They arise from our own insight based on the practice of mindfulness. To be attached to the form without understanding the essence is to fall into what Buddhism calls \textit{attachment to rules}.” Thich Nhat Hahn, \textit{Zen Keys}, 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{158}The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being, xvi.
\end{itemize}
anticipate my argument to come, but must underline here that much flows from these differing takes on understanding experience. Do we make sense of our experience from within it or by stepping outside it as a theoretician and observer? Is it most important to experience mindfulness over a period of practice, or can one define it through observation? One approach is central to the experience of mindfulness, and one is not—though the latter position is central to a scientific view of the phenomenon.

But making sense of individual experience has its own challenges. As noted in Chapter Seven, Wittgenstein has pointed out: “You learned the concept ‘pain’ when you learned language.” Experience, of pain in this case, only becomes conceptual when one learns to use it in language. So one learns the concept of mindfulness not through direct experience of it, but through learning the language game in which it is talked about, and, following Wittgenstein, the home of the language game of the concept mindfulness is important. The word may be used in another game, but there need not necessarily be any carry over of meaning—or what is carried over from one game to another may be confusion.

In order to place my own experience of mindfulness on the table, I include a story of one of my experiences with mindfulness meditation, and some of the language experiences that accompanied it. Like other stories that I have included along the way, this one gives a sense of the experience that serves as a touchstone in my thinking about mindfulness. It is also an example of the kind of experience with mindfulness and meditation that characterizes much of what is done in the West, which is to encounter mindfulness largely outside the full tradition of meditation developed and preserved in Buddhist monastic communities.

**Self Created Mindfulness Retreat**

My wife and I completed a self-guided, at home, meditation retreat in the summer of 2008. For five days, we began our days in silence during which we meditated, ate, listened to recorded “dharma talks,” that is, lessons from the Buddhist tradition. We did chores in the afternoons and then repeated the meditation and listening times in the evening. It was a rewarding, challenging, intense, and exhausting time that we both, eventually, said we’d do again.

The program we followed was based on a set of recorded talks given by Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist nun, ordained in the Tibetan Vajrayana
tradition, given by her during a ten-day retreat at Gampo Abbey, her centre in Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{159} The talks present the teachings on the Noble Heart, that is the fearless and compassionate heart epitomized by the life of Buddhist bodhisattvas who dedicate their lives to easing the suffering of others. These teachings contain practices that develop the capacity for universal loving-kindness and compassion. The study guide puts it this way:

For centuries, Tibetan Buddhists have used certain understandings and practices to transform negative emotions into compassion, thereby realizing the essence of noble heart. Some of the most central and powerful of these tools are contained in the teachings on the three marks of existence, the four limitless ones, and the six paramitas. Noble Heart explains and explores each of these teachings through the lens of our everyday Western experience, so that we, too, may come to know our own noble heart.

The talks did much to provide a context for the meditative experiences, to shape the attitudes and aspirations I had for each meditative session, and to build an understanding of what the process was about, but the content of the talk was never the object of contemplation during meditation. Instead, my meditations were grounded on awareness of my breath and the mindful awareness of whatever else might arise—in other words a traditional kind of vipassana meditation, which will be described in more detail in later sections of this chapter.

In addition to this retreat experience, I have had fairly diverse experiences of meditation. I have been a meditator of more or less dedication for years, with frequency of practice ranging from daily to intermittent. I’ve had instruction from other sources, either recorded or in person including a day of mindfulness with Jon Kabat-Zinn, the originator of the Meditation Based Stress Reduction Program.

In summary, I have had a fairly typical experience of meditation for someone in North America coming to the tradition in fits and starts and realizing slowly that the Buddhist canon and presentation manifests its own long history. I am expert in neither meditation nor the science of mindfulness, but I am wary of the practice of mindfulness losing its home.

\textsuperscript{159} Chödrön, Noble Heart.
A Living Tradition

Buddhism was, for hundreds of years after the death of the historical Shakyamudhi Buddha, contained in an oral tradition. Then, as these things often go, the words that had been heard and passed on were written down, in several versions, translated, codified, and debated. One response to this sort of debate was chronicled in the Record of Master Linji, stories of a founder of the Zen school of Buddhism.\(^{160}\) Master Linji recoiled from what he perceived as the seeking for advancement through the intellectual and academic debate of the dharma. He started his own school that emphasized each student’s ability to wake up to understanding immediately through direct breakthroughs. His signature style of teaching emphasized this challenge and was focused more on kicking away the crutch of dharma talk than on discussion of its fine points.\(^{161}\)

In all the schools of Buddhism, however, a core remains grounded on the central pillars of Buddhist philosophy: Life is filled with suffering\(^{162}\); this suffering is caused by grasping onto an ever changing reality and trying to freeze it in certain ways; all this can change; and the way to change it is through following an eight fold path. This path involves clearing up one’s way of living, developing one’s mind, and seeing through appearances to an underlying reality where there is no grasping or avoiding what is and, when equanimity is attained, no suffering. Though methods may differ, there is much in common at that level, too. What remains at the core of these transmissions are different practices that serve two purposes: (1) individuals who practise Buddhism are said to find freedom from suffering and compassion that is individually and collectively beneficial; and (2) experiences generated through practice support and, in a loose sense, verify the claims of the dharma or teachings.

Within this tradition, a base for the transformation that leads to the end of suffering is the practice of meditation, the oldest form being vipassana\(^{163}\), or as it

\(^{160}\) Zen is the Japanese term for this school and the term most known in the West. The Chinese term is “Chan,” and the Korean “Sôn.” Linji was a Chinese chan master.

\(^{161}\) For a more thorough overview of this history see Thich Nhat Hanh, *Nothing to Do Nowhere to Go*.

\(^{162}\) “Suffering” is the usual translation of the Pali word “Dukkha.” Dukkha means an unsatisfactory or uncomfortable condition, which is different from a painful condition as generally implied by the word “suffering.” Here I have chosen to follow the usual translation.

\(^{163}\) Said to have been taught by the Buddha himself. See *MPE*, 31.
is often called in English, *insight* meditation, based on the translation of the Sanskrit word *vipashyna*. This meditation teaching begins with the mindful focusing on the breath and is the meditation teaching that has become the focus of much interest in Western psychology.\(^\text{164}\) Since advanced meditators revealed to Western science certain exceptional abilities that suggested applications to increasingly prevalent problems such as stress, Western studies have focused on the state of mindful awareness that is developed through mediation practices in the hope that the beneficial effects that are associated with it, including the capacity to regulate emotion and to combat emotional dysfunction, can be used in psychotherapy and even in schooling.\(^\text{165}\)

The questions asked on pages 136-7 can be reformulated in the light of this discussion:

1. To what extent is it possible for science, coming with its language and scope of study, to identify, quantify, and define the concept and practice of mindfulness?
2. Can the findings of science be used to identify what and how mindfulness should be used and taught?
3. Do the findings of science help individuals to better understand and incorporate mindfulness and the experience of meditation into their lives?

**The Mindfulness Construct**

Various mindfulness interventions have been developed and are being tested. As this attention from Western psychology is fairly recent, the process of conceptualizing, standardizing, and theorizing that is an inherent part of the scientific process is just beginning—and some of the difficulties of this process have been recognized. The initial forming of a “mindfulness construct” is one way that differing conceptualizations have been highlighted:

The Buddhist scholarly literature presents a detailed picture of the nature of mindfulness. However, that literature’s characterization of

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\(^{165}\) Ibid 6.
mindfulness has not been clearly translated into contemporary research psychology.\(^{166}\)

So there are two great traditions, one religious (in some sense) that sees the practice of mindfulness as part of the path to liberation from suffering and the other scientific, using the word “mindfulness” to explore and explain changes in behaviour and brain functioning. Mindfulness in each tradition is connected through related but distinct practices. In education for example, the use of the term “mindfulness” is widely different in different models, and is made complicated, for example, by its use in E. J. Langer’s work with mindful learning.\(^{167}\) Langer has emphasized one aspect of mindfulness in her work: saying it is the “process of drawing novel distinctions,”\(^{168}\) and has developed this construct in her work in education. The focus in this work is on paying attention while learning in specific ways, making what is taught conditional or open in nature, and keeping what is being taught conditional and fluid rather than absolute and frozen. From his perspective, Siegel identifies two kinds of mindfulness as a result of Langer’s work: “mindful learning” on the one hand, and “reflective mindfulness,” “mindful awareness,” and just “mindfulness.”\(^{169}\) These last three terms he takes to be synonymous. If nothing else, this one distinction within the research tradition in education shows how the use of the term “mindfulness” can vary – perhaps enough to question to what extent the term refers to the same thing.

There are equally important concerns about the distinctions between the scientific use of the idea of mindfulness and mindfulness in its home, contemplative traditions. Eleanor Rosch has developed this point: her argument begins by pointing out that “mindfulness” in Buddhist teaching is part of a system of ideas, one path on an eight fold path towards enlightenment. To focus only on mindfulness is to miss the greater idea of how the Buddhist tradition sees the therapeutic effects of meditation and mindfulness working. The scientific need to define and measure the effective components of the mindfulness-based therapies, Rosch maintains, has the danger of not seeing the larger context. One result is that the thing being measured, is not the thing being


\(^{167}\) See the discussion of this in Siegel, Mindful Brain, 6-8.


\(^{169}\) Siegel, Mindful Brain, 8.
talked about—or even that the talk is missing the necessary interconnections between ideas:

By now it should be clear to anyone acquainted with the scales [measuring mindfulness] that none of them is measuring either mindfulness in the narrow Buddhist sense or enlightened awareness in its broader sense.¹⁷⁰

Mindfulness is one aspect of certain kinds of meditation. One other result of meditation is relaxation. That aspect has also received study and has shown beneficial effects.¹⁷¹ Science, by its nature, seeks to isolate and identify what is causing what, and this procedure has effects on what is being studied—some of which may illuminate and others obscure. In vipassana meditation, relaxation may be one outcome of practice but not the goal of practice: meditation may result in a deep state of relaxation (jhana), but the goal is insight or as Gunaratana states it: “Vipassana seeks another goal: awareness” (MPE, 19). This is an example of how one of the effects of meditation can be separated from the practice of meditation for examination, while at the same time leaving meditation, in its larger and more full experience, unexamined. But can one isolate the “active ingredients” of mindfulness from its surrounding talk and practice and still be talking about the same thing?

Scientific Mindfulness

The medical paradigm is straightforward. An illness is identified together with interventions that seem to have some impact on it. The interventions are analyzed in search of the active ingredient having the effect on the disease. The analysis can be purely empirical, as “we don’t know why chewing the bark of that tree makes headaches go away, but it does,” but more often employs some further scientific method and theory: “Something in that bark must either affect the pain centre of the brain or stop the transmission of signals along the nerves.” The ingredient is identified and its effect measured, compared to others, and dosages determined through trials, and then the cure is implemented. That is a simple-minded way of putting it, ignoring the complexities all along the way.

¹⁷⁰ Eleanor Rosch, “More Than Mindfulness: When You Have a Tiger by the Tail, Let It Eat You,” 262.

¹⁷¹ For an example of this study and its early positioning as study of a mental state rather than a religious or philosophical position see Herbert Benson, “The Relaxation Response.”
The process has resulted in great things, like antibiotics, and many lives have been saved.

The pull of this paradigm is very strong. It offers as a result a cure or an intervention that has impact on the disease. The potential of this method for a cure can directly be applied to emotions. For example, as a concerned teacher, I began to wonder whether students’ emotional and intellectual development was being threatened or hindered. I read that new scientific studies of meditators were showing that these meditators possessed extraordinarily acute perceptions of others’ emotions and that their brains showed unusual development of connections between emotional and thinking centres. Surely, there must be some form of meditative awareness that could be prescribed to students that would have similar effects on them and solve their developmental problems. Work with students is being done along just these lines: identifying the impacts of meditation, analyzing meditation to identify the aspects of it that have the greatest impact, theorizing what connections are being made in the brain, devising and evaluating interventions for schools, and so on.

With mindfulness in particular, in the case of secular public schools, this scientific process has an additional use. It serves to secularize the practice of meditation by removing it from its religious tradition. Mindfulness is a concept closely associated with Buddhism and so is often seen as part of that religion. Buddhism is non-theist and only in some of its forms devotional in any religious sense. However, to employ Buddhist practices in many public schools would be difficult or impossible. That is one reason why many studies of mindfulness begin by arguing that mindfulness is a human capacity common to many religious, devotional, or contemplative traditions. Taking these separate practices, calling them all mindfulness practices, and then looking for commonalities has the effect of secularizing the concept and making it non-religious—thereby rendering it acceptable in schools that could not or would not make promoting a specific religious practice part of their curriculum.

This procedure is analogous to taking a certain root, say, used as part of a religious ritual to cure a disease, finding it used in several cultures, perhaps as part of different religious traditions, and identifying the properties of the root that effect the cure. The result is something no longer religious, but scientific—

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172 See Siegel, *The Mindful Brain*, 8-9 for an example of how this characteristic view is presented.
explainable in terms of cause and effect, verifiable through scientific method, and so on.

It may be useful to contrast this scientific method from the approach taken within one line of Buddhism towards the variety of contemplative practices in different religions and different branches of Buddhism. Gunaratana, in Chapter Three, “What Meditation Is,” distinguishes the practice of vipassana meditation from Judeo-Christian ideas of prayer and contemplation, Yogic or Hindu practices of concentration and visualization, and the practices of two other schools of Buddhism—Zen and Tantric. (MPE, 29-38) Even though the goal of (at least) the Buddhist schools is the same—enlightenment and the end of suffering—the different practices of each school are acknowledged: meditation on a Zen koan or “just sitting” meditation is not vipassana meditation, for example.

Two possibly conflicting purposes are served by, on the one hand, looking for a universal feature of brain functioning as some science would have it, and on the other hand distinguishing between the practices, methods, and goals that would be clumped together. One seeks to locate the capacity for mindfulness in the secular, or at least non-denominational, brain and the practices that develop the capacity within a prescription for better mental health. The other seeks to maintain the practices within the ideas and tradition of Buddhism, perhaps especially Thereveda Buddhism, in order to preserve what has been developed over 2500 years of tradition, possibly to maintain ownership of the practice, and so on. These conflicting purposes arise for a number of reasons, some malicious, competitive, personal reasons, and some concerned with accuracy, truth, and preservation of a line of transmission. They come about as a result of the lens that is used to view mindfulness and the way in which the differing perspectives make sense of how it should be best understood, developed, and made available for use. The scientist, using the lens of scientific method, seeks to make the benefits of mindfulness understood and available, just as the Buddhist meditation teachers, using the understandings of meditation and humanity developed within their tradition, do the same.
**Differences between Buddhist and Scientific Views**

The following table summarizes some of the differences between Gunaratana’s Buddhist view of mindfulness and a summary of current scientific thinking based on the discussion in Siegel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TWO VIEWS OF MINDFULNESS</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of Perception</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-conceptual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Truths (Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness, Selflessness)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding of how Mind Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truths lead to Perfect Mental Health</td>
<td>Improved self-regulation, stress management, pain relief.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wordless attention on shifting Objects of Attention.</td>
<td>Labelling/Describing Inner Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused inward on responses to experience</td>
<td>Maintaining “mindful” brain state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Moment</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes possible full development of wisdom and compassion</td>
<td>Promotes self and other Attunement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers to Daily Life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paying attention. Improved concentration on daily actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Requires metta (loving kindness or loving friendliness)  Requires avoiding self-criticim
Requires/results in an ethical makeover  Results in strengthening of certain brain pathways

The table offers some specific comparisons that suggest great similarity and several patterns of difference. Both views see the practice of mindfulness as beneficial, as providing specific benefits to everyday life. In addition, both views see the potential of mindfulness to bring about positive changes in individuals and society largely coming from the differences between mindful attention and the common mode of attention in society. For both, mindfulness improves individuals’ ability to understand their emotional lives and so is likely to enable them to better moderate their emotional responses in life. Mindfulness also allows people to live more deeply in the present moment often with more complete awareness of physical sensations.

Similarities are to be expected—indeed, to be hoped for as science has used people trained in the Buddhist tradition as subjects to explore the effects of meditation and mindfulness. In addition, many of the programs used for stress reduction or pain control use traditionally trained teachers. Because of this, the language used to describe mindfulness will share similarities. The difficulties arise when mindfulness is conceptualized for study, then these concepts are used to define what is and will be studied. As a result, the important differences revealed in the table are lost.

The first of these differences is that in the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness, when combined with concentration practice in meditation, leads to personal liberation from suffering through insight into the true nature of existence. This is very different than the scientific view that sees mindfulness as a brain state that strengthens certain neural pathways. In the Buddhist view, mindfulness is conceived of as a mode of perception that sees and verifies certain truths of existence that are expressed in the tenets of Buddhism. It is the direct, pre-conceptual experience of these truths that lead towards personal freedom, happiness, and contentment.
An example of the impact of this difference can be seen in Siegel’s view that mindfulness attunes one with one’s own intentions or “primary self.” He hypothesizes that with mindfulness, one is using neural circuitry that allows us to attune to others to attune to a primary self within. It is not much of an exaggeration, given the extent to which Siegel says most of us are out of touch with this primary self, to say that mindfulness allows us to discover this primary self. This discovery is very different from the discovery of selflessness that is talked about in Buddhist literature. In the Buddhist view, there is no primary self but rather a “flowing vortex of thought, feeling, and sensation” (MPE, 37). There is no separate or essential self with which to attune.

This difference can be accounted for—one might argue that Siegel means by “primary self” just that vortex of thoughts and so on, and by attunement with a primary self just the awareness of sensation and so on without identifying with them or reifying them. That is, one might claim that Siegel is talking about the same thing as Buddhism but in another way—a perhaps misleading way—for the associations connected with “primary self” are different than those most people would have with “not-self” or “no-self” (if most Westerners have any associations with those latter two terms).

On the other hand, Gunaratana writes that it is the realization of the impermanence of the illusory self, and the mistake in our hanging on to that self so desperately, that is the key insight that leads to liberation and more openness:

> If you explode that one concept [of “me” as distinct from everything else], your whole universe changes….The “I” concept is a process. It is something we are constantly doing. With vipassana we learn to see that we are doing it, when we are doing it, and how we are doing it. Then that mindset moves and fades away, like a cloud passing through a clear sky. We are left in a state where we can decide to do it or not, whichever seems appropriate to the situation. The compulsiveness is gone: now we have a choice. (MPE, 37-8)

It is, in Buddhism, insights like this one that have the therapeutic effect:

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173 The Mindful Brain, 327. See also: “Mindful awareness promotes neural integration” (320) and “We share our ‘ipseitious self’ with each other, that grounded core essence beneath our adaptations, beliefs, and memories” (321).

They lead to a total transformation of your life. Every second of your existence thereafter is changed. The meditator who pushes all the way down this track achieves perfect mental health, a pure love of all that lives, and complete cessation of suffering. (MPE, 38)

If this is taken at face value, then the idea of a primary self is more than misleading: it contradicts the Buddhist explanation for the salutary effects that are desired. The concept of “primary self” is not itself a scientifically proven entity either, but a conception found in the Western tradition—no area of the brain has been found that might be identified as the source of this primary self. Siegel’s brain based explanation of the effect of mindfulness practice sees the effect coming from the practicing of certain exercises that build pathways in the brain that allow better information processing. What information is being processed? The questions, in the Western tradition, imply their own answers—all answers presupposing the existence of the primary self.

This difference between these conceptions mindfulness is, in effect, the result of a first person point of view explanation of a conscious experience contrasted with a third person point of view explanation of the neurology of the experience.175 The meditator has a pre-conceptual direct experience that she or he seeks to express in terms that explain the experience and give reasons for such changes in attitudes, behaviour, and understanding that result from it. The neurologist sees these differences and investigates the neurology that supports them, finding characteristic differences in thickness of density of neural connections in the brain. The change in thinking (a phenomenon of first person ontology) is evident in a change in neural pathways (a phenomenon of third person ontology), but the two are in effect the same phenomenon viewed from two different perspectives, neither perspective being reducible to the other—one cannot reduce a thing to itself, as it were. It always is itself. It is from the first person view, however, that the work is done in mindfulness practice, and while knowing the other view may be interesting, that knowledge does not produce mindfulness.

175 I’m indebted to John R. Searle’s ideas in Mind: A Brief Introduction for this way of looking at this issue.
Mindfulness as an Intentional State

What are the consequences of this different look at mindfulness? If we simplify Siegel’s presentation of mindfulness, we can see the mindful state of mind as an exercise done to reshape and refine neural pathways; that is, the exercise works because the pathways are created or reinforced through the practice. The beliefs that accompany the practice, whether they are some form of Christian contemplation, for example, or Buddhist dharma, are irrelevant to the effect achieved by the shaping of the brain.

We can use a thought experiment to illustrate this conception. Suppose that a key increase in brain activity in a zone of the left prefrontal brain is associated with feelings of happiness, joy, energy, enthusiasm, and alertness, while a corresponding increase in activity in the right prefrontal area is associated with sadness, anxiety, and worry. Brain scans show that highly trained meditators intentionally generating feelings of compassion towards themselves and all sentient beings show a strong shift towards activity in the left area associated with positive states. Suppose also, a biofeedback device is designed to allow subjects to learn to control this shift to the left by whatever means work for each individual; that is, a person might find that focusing on a mental image of a favourite pet indicates leftward shift, or another might find that the remembered smell of his father baking a chocolate cake creates the shift. The brain based look at developing the pathways of positive mood through mental training would say that any of these methods would have the desired effect of strengthening positive moods in the subjects.

These examples are fairly innocuous. But suppose a subject in the biofeedback regime discovered that a leftward shift could be achieved through fantasies of strangling the operator of the machine. This would be a case where one might well feel that such a trigger of positive feelings is not appropriate, desirable, or something that should be exercised even in fantasy. In short, there is a sense that the content of the thought, image, or fantasy that develops the shift toward the positive side of the brain matters, that using thoughts of compassion is better than using thoughts of the violent death of another person. In other

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176 The neuroscience regarding the right/left shift and negative/positive mood is taken from Daniel Goleman, Destructive Emotions, 12-13.
words, the intentional content of the practice of generating positive states of mind is important.

Is the same true of mindfulness? Does the intentional content of mindful practice matter? For example, does it matter that the Buddhists see one of the insights of mindfulness as the realization that nothing, not even the sense of “I,” has a separate essential identity, while Siegel sees the insight of mindfulness as connection with a primary self usually concealed by our beliefs about who we think we are? Answering this question would go a long way towards answering the question posed earlier asking whether scientific mindfulness is the same as mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition. The following paragraphs will show that the intentional content of mindfulness practice and the insights that come from it do matter very much.

We would never say that the thought “I am those things that have gone to making me who I am at this moment,” is the same thought as “I know who I really am and what I really want.” Both thoughts have content, and the contents are different. Supposing for the moment that thoughts (objects of first person ontology) have associated brain states (objects of third person ontology), then the associated brain states must be different even if we do not currently have technology to detect differences at this level. Therefore, someone practicing mindfulness that discovers a primary self is practising a mind state whose cognitive content is different from someone who discovers that everything is selfless. The primary-self practice may be *useful* in some ways, indeed if the primary self thought something like “I know what I really want and I am committed to getting it,” and takes forms like “I know I really want good grades in school and I’ll do what it takes to get them,” or “I really want this marriage to work and I’m ready to devote time and attention to make that happen,” then the utility and desirability of the mind state is clear. But the brain state view can have little to object to about the discovery of this kind of primary self: “I really want to make as many people suffer as I can, and I will devote all my energy to that task.” One could suppose that this last discovery is not based on all the input received by the mind, or hope that it isn’t, but the content of the thought is not part of the scientific model of mindfulness.

The Buddhist idea of mindfulness is explicitly concerned about the intentional content of mindful insights, believing this content will have a profound impact on the conduct of those practicing mindfulness. For example,
take this passage from Gunaratana referring to the habit of thought of focusing on contrasts between oneself and others:

The meditator’s job is to cancel this unskilful habit by examining it thoroughly, and then replacing it with another. Rather than noticing the differences between oneself and others, the meditator trains him or herself to notice the similarities. *(MPE, 42)*

The idea is that there are some thoughts that are not useful in developing mindfulness, in this case those thoughts that focus on contrasts between the meditator and other people. In order to further the development of mindfulness, a person should rather develop the habit of noticing ways in which he or she is similar to others. Those thoughts that continue to focus on differences between the meditator’s self and others are what Buddhists often call “unskilful thoughts” insofar as these thoughts separate the person meditating from compassion for, and connection with, others.177 Simply, the intentional content of the thoughts one has and brings to mindfulness practice matter and can either further or hinder the development of mindfulness and its benefits.

This emphasis on the content of mindfulness, that is the knowledge that one is mindful of, is made explicit in the Tibetan tradition. There, mindfulness is distinguished from the application of “constant awareness to the actual processes of thought, just observing your mind and the thoughts as they arise,” and is instead “the mindfulness of that knowledge, not the monitoring of awareness.” “That knowledge” is composed of such things as knowing that some actions spurred by emotion, such as punishing someone putting obstacles in one’s path, would be harmful both to oneself and to the other. The Dalai Lama goes on to say, “Mindfulness is bringing to the present the awareness of things that you have learned.” 178

It is not that mindfulness practice is thinking certain thoughts, however. Mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition is about noticing thoughts rather than being caught up in them. One does not stop thinking, or force the mind into a quiet state—at least in mindfulness meditation—that there are other forms of

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177 “An unskilled thought is one connected with greed, hatred, or delusion. These are the thoughts that the mind most easily builds into obsessions. They are unskilful in the sense that they lead you away from the goal of liberation.” *MPE*, 118.

178 Dalai Lama in *Emotional Awareness* edited by Paul Ekman.
meditation in the Buddhist tradition that are all about single focused attention or concentration. The ability to stay with mindfulness requires trained concentration, but being mindful is not simply having the ability to concentrate.\textsuperscript{179} It is taking up a point of view from which one can both have thoughts but not be caught up in thinking them “mindlessly” or identifying with them as part of your very self. All this is on the edge of logic as Gunaratana notes: “There is a difference between being aware of a thought and thinking a thought. That difference is very subtle. It is primarily a matter of feeling or texture” (\textit{MPE}, 70). These sorts of distinctions are one reason why mindfulness is said to be best experienced rather than understood through description. The point is that in the Buddhist tradition some understandings are considered to be essential to developing the ability to be mindful in meditation and in life. Thus some ways of thinking must be considered part of how mindfulness is developed and established.

Earlier, I had asked two questions specifically about the educational impact of the scientific study of mindfulness: can the findings of science be used to identify what mindfulness is and how it should be used and taught, and do the findings of science help individuals to better understand and incorporate mindfulness and the experience of meditation into their lives. The discussion to this point, I think, suggests that the answer to both is no. On their own, without experience in and reference to the traditional practice of mindfulness, the findings of science cannot determine what mindfulness is and how mindfulness should be taught, nor can they, on their own, help individuals better understand or develop their own mindful practice when those findings are used without the context of the tradition of mindfulness practice.

None of this should be taken to imply that scientific studies of mindfulness should have nothing to do with teaching or practicing mindfulness. Such studies can provide an impetus to take up the practice and a view of the impact of the practice on the brain. Both of these uses can be helpful: a skilful teacher of mindfulness must be able to talk about it in ways that fit the traditional home of the concept while at the same time using words that successfully communicate with those not raised in that tradition. It is a tall order to do this teaching, but it is an order central to all good teaching. All teachers

\textsuperscript{179} See \textit{MPE}, Chapter 14 for a full discussion of the synergistic relationship between concentration and mindfulness.
take a subject or a practice, such as the practice of the scientific method, and introduce it to students for whom it is outside of their experience. To do so successfully, they bring their experience together with their understanding of their students and offer tips, examples, and whatever they can conceive that will help their students see in a new way. Those familiar only with the science of mindfulness run the risk of losing touch with the foundations of the concept with which they are working.

**Mindfulness and Emotions**

It has been a journey already to get to the point where we can start considering the role mindfulness can play in better being aware and understanding our emotional responses. In particular the question that extends from previous discussion is “Is it the meditative brain state that produces the impact on emotions or is it the intentional contents of the experience?” Another way of asking the question is, “Does one have to believe or perceive something in particular resulting from meditation, or is achieving a meditative brain state sufficient to achieve greater compassion, understanding of others, and personal equanimity?”

**The Scientific View**

The scientific view that I have been conveying leaves itself open to the interpretation that the strengthening of neural pathways alone is sufficient to develop the desired effects in the area of emotional understanding and control. The following quotation suggests that the physical exercise of the brain alone could develop the desired behaviours:

> It can be proposed, then, that interoception and mirror properties may work hand in hand to develop this increased sensitivity to others’ signals.

Whether it is in our daily lives, clinical work, teaching, or scientific research, we can gain entry into this triad of well-being through any window of opportunity that then can promote coherence of mind, empathy of relationships, and neural integration. In other words, we could focus on promoting empathy in communication and we might find enhanced neural integration and coherence. We might focus on mindful
Mindfulness and Emotions

awareness and promote coherence and neural integration, which then makes empathy more likely to develop.\(^{180}\)

Any window of opportunity that promotes one of these effects is likely to lead to the others: therefore something that promotes neural integration, whatever it might be, could lead to greater coherence of mind and empathy of relationships. This instrumental view of brain function and human behaviour seems almost an inherent part of the scientific view as long as it focuses on brain function as a causal condition of behaviour rather than seeing someone who conducts her or himself according to ways of thinking.

This way of looking at mindfulness and its effects is applied consistently to the observed effects of mindfulness training including what Buddhist thinkers would call equanimity and what Siegel refers to as nonreactivity:

Achieving nonreactivity in large measure can be seen as [a] way of pausing before externally responding and then attaining a coordination and balance of the neural circuits involved in the ‘accelerator and brakes’ function of the brain. (MB, 213)

Again the choice of words suggests a certain significance, “nonreactivity” being defined as a function of the brain, where “equanimity” is more usually a function of practice, habit, or will. In Buddhism, equanimity is one of the sublime states resulting from dedicated practice in meditation.\(^{181}\) Such practice requires concentration and dedication, which leads to understanding, which in turn results in the achievement of equanimity, compassion, lovingkindness, and joy in the happiness of others. Siegel observes the result of this practice in the brain, the state of that organ “causing” the nonreactivity, while the Buddhist perspective sees the mental state arising from understandings about the world, that is beliefs, and desires for enlightenment—both of which are exemplary of intentional mental states with, in Searle’s language, both mind-to-world and world-to-mind directions of fit. They are about how things are in reality and how the meditator

\(^{180}\) Siegel, Mindful Brain, 200. From this point, reference to this book will be given in text as MB.

\(^{181}\) MPE, 181.
Mindfulness and Emotions

would like to be. They are not null direction of fit statements referring only to an inner state or an inferred brain state.\footnote{If such statements are possible. See the discussion in Chapter 8 about the impossibility of a private language.}

The move between the intentional state of mindfulness and the instrumental function of the brain state goes on throughout Siegel’s work. For example, he proposes that mindfulness be viewed as “a form of ‘attention and care’ focused on oneself:

This is how we can see mindfulness as a form of intrapersonal attunement that also promotes resilience. …We have explored in greater depth the details of this attunement within mindfulness and how it may promote the growth of integrative fibres in the middle prefrontal areas \emph{of the brain}. (MB, 215).

Mindfulness, the intentional state, is described as a potentially observable attunement within the brain that develops certain neural pathways. As these pathways develop, meditators may also develop an ability to move more activity into the left hemisphere area of positive feelings and so develop pathways in that area which will result, Siegel further hypothesizes, in other changes:

With baseline higher left dominance, such individuals [\emph{experiencing greater eudaimonic well-being}] would thus be motivated to move toward the events in their lives that could create meaning and pleasure in their way of living. This may contribute to higher levels of well-being.

This baseline shift has been associated with longer-term meditators. (MB, 217)

In other words, the shift to more positive feelings and a moving-towards rather than an avoidance-of results from changes in the brain rather than a change in belief or desire. The question of whether the meditator has learned something that results in the changes in behaviour or belief disappears as the description moves from first person perspective concerning consciousness to third person description of neurology.

A further associated benefit of mindfulness training found in studies is the development of better emotional self-regulation. Siegel cites studies that suggest that people who use words to describe their internal states, such as their
emotions and what they perceive, are more flexible and capable of regulating their emotions in a more adaptive manner, and points out “mindfulness as a construct is associated with the facets of both nonreactivity and describe/label with words, and this is totally consistent with the independent research for these fields” (MB, 224). This association may be one reason why Siegel places such importance on the labelling exercise that is sometimes considered as only an introductory stopgap in meditation training where the goal is to move towards a wordless experience of a distracting mental state to see it in a different way.\textsuperscript{183} This seems to me to be a clear example of where the brain based conception of mindfulness has moved away from the meditative tradition.

However, the scientific model is not necessarily reductionist when looking at these phenomena—nor is Siegel for that matter who uses his understanding of human neurology to explain his experience of meditation. There are brain-based studies that do acknowledge that understanding and contextualizing events may have something to do with people’s resilience and ability to cope with emotional events:

\begin{quote}
It is not that resilient individuals never experience negative affect, but rather that the negative affect does not persist. Such individuals are able to profit from the information provided by the negative affect, and their capacity for meaning making in response to such events may be part and parcel of their ability to show rapid decrements in various biological systems after exposure to a negative or stressful event.\textsuperscript{184}
\end{quote}

It is a relief, in some ways, that a feature of consciousness ("meaning making") still is seen as having a role in shaping our response to experience. It may well be that it is this function of understanding that is given purchase, as it were, in the on-going functioning of our neural system, and it may well be that the understandings developed through mindfulness meditation and practice that have something to do with the observed effects of mindfulness on those studied. Buddhism certainly states that mindfulness functions in the realm of meaning making—the pre-conceptual experience of mindfulness leading to understandings that can be pointed to in language.

\textsuperscript{183} MB, 122.

\textsuperscript{184} Richard J. Davidson, “Affective Style, Psychopathology, and Resilience,” 1199.
The Buddhist View

The Buddhist view sees a strict relationship between three aspects of mind developed through meditative practice. These three are concentration, mindfulness, and changes in conduct and morality described in the precepts, or “mindfulness trainings” as they are referred to in the following quotation:

In Buddhism, mindfulness trainings, concentration, and insight always go together. It is impossible to speak of one without the other two. This is called the Threefold Training—sīla, the practice of the mindfulness trainings; smadhi, the practice of concentration; and prajñā, the practice of insight. Mindfulness trainings, concentration, and insight ‘inter-are.’

Gunaratana makes a connection between mindfulness and another aspect of Buddhist mental development—metta or loving friendliness (more usually translated as “loving kindness”):

Without loving friendliness, our practice of mindfulness will never successfully break through our craving and rigid sense of self. Mindfulness, in turn, is a necessary basis for developing loving friendliness. The two are always developed together (MPE, 177).

Expressing his own concerns about the “psychologizing of Buddhist practice,” Kobai Scott Whitney, an American writer and practitioner, has expressed concerns about the separation of meditation from the other elements of the Buddhist path, particularly the mindfulness trainings or precepts as they are usually called:

As North Americans and Europeans, we seem particularly attracted to the enticing and psychologized project of spiritual enlightenment, but we are neglecting, at our peril, other fundamental Buddhist values and practices.

In a radio interview, he has emphasized this point: “I don’t want to say at any point that meditation is a wrong thing to do. I don’t think it’s the first thing we should do, though” going on to say that the traditional Buddhist process was to

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185 Thich Nhat Hanh, For a Future to be Possible, 8.
first pay attention to ethical practice to settle the body and mind in order to prepare for more advanced spiritual practices such as meditation.  

The interconnectedness of Buddhist thought is clear in these statements—these thinkers emphasize that one way on the eight fold path to enlightenment, right mindfulness, cannot exist by itself, but must be placed in the web of thinking and practice that sustains it. This underlying assumption alone is different from the scientific gaze that seeks to identify a discrete phenomenon, measure, and evaluate it. Our emotional responses to situations are based in part on how we see those situations, and those perceptions are based on the web of our understandings and expectations, both of which depend on how we think about what is before us. If meditation and other forms of mindfulness training impact how we think, it follows that the intentional content of meditation must be an important part of any educational program that hopes to help students live fuller and happier emotional lives.

**Mindful Teaching**

These two perspectives on mindfulness have particular importance for a teacher wanting to implement any mindfulness-based program. Any conscientious teacher will need to be able to answer two closely related questions: What am I teaching? And what will students be learning? On the face of it, at least, the scientific and Buddhist view of mindfulness seem to offer different answers to these questions. With different answers will come also different rationales and curricula.

Though a rationale for mindfulness might contain instructions about the brain and its functioning, instructions in mindfulness are not of the form, “Activate the left prefrontal zone of your brain.” They are much more of the form, “Focus your attention on the sensation of breath going in and leaving your nostrils,” or in the case of metta meditation, “Sincerely wish yourself happiness.” As a teacher of adolescents for many years, my imagination immediately conjures up that student in the class hearing those instructions who asks, in that certain tone of voice that all teachers love, “Why are we doing this?” The

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conceptions discussed suggest two very different answers: 1) “To strengthen the neural connections between your limbic system and your prefrontal cortex,” or 2) “To see if you can discover what the world is really like and what your place in it is.” Answers 1 and 2 are clearly not equivalent, nor would any other answers be, if restricted to the concerns or outlook of either conceptualization, as the following table of answers shows:

Table 9.2: Contrasting Rationales for Mindfulness Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCIENCE BASED ANSWERS</th>
<th>ANSWERS FROM THE BUDDHIST TRADITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“To promote inter- and intra-personal integration.”</td>
<td>“To see whether there is anything of yourself that exists in its own right.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To help you self-regulate your emotions.”</td>
<td>“To develop your loving friendship with all sentient beings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To make you less judgmental of yourself and others.”</td>
<td>“To strengthen your compassion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To develop your ability to move towards challenging situations.”</td>
<td>“To assist you to move towards happiness and the source of happiness.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the statements used above as examples are statements of the goals of mindfulness based programs in schools (or I imagine they could be), and, if the current science is right, the goals in the first column stated in more scientific language will be met by a program based on the goals of the second column stated in language more of the Buddhist tradition. But the question is whether the goals in the second column will be met by a program based on the language of the first column, or even if the goals of the first column will be met by a program strictly based on the language of the first column. That is, will a mindfulness based program based on the goals of brain development and the understanding of mindfulness contained in those goals alone, be able to meet its own goals?
On the one hand, that last question sounds like an empirical question, but on the other hand there are philosophical concerns that are relevant. First, as learning of mindfulness has been taught through language and guided practice and hence through consciousness (the learner’s “meaning making” ability), a substantial change in the words used in instruction and response to student experience must make a change in the learning. Second, the intention of the learner following instruction will also have a bearing on what is learned, for students sitting in meditation thinking “I hope this makes me more effective at work,” “I’m doing this to please my parents,” or “Maybe this will mean I make parole this time” are bound to have different experiences than someone thinking “I hope to discover how to be happy and to help others be happy, too.” And lastly, when assessing progress, looking for evidence of learning through changes in behaviour and understanding, this evidence is likely to be evaluated in different ways depending on whether success will depend on physiological changes, scores on questionnaires, and so on. The question really is whether a program derived from Buddhist tradition but no longer taught within that tradition can be said to be the same as the original program in a meaningful way.

**Mindfulness and Wisdom**

To some extent at least, the key point of this section cannot be stated better than Rosch did in concluding her piece referred to earlier:

> What have we learned about mindfulness from this tour of Buddhism? When Brown et al. define mindfulness as a receptive awareness; they have (unknowingly) opened a pandora’s box. Far from a simple technique or type of consciousness that we might call mindfulness, we are dealing with an entire mode of knowing and of being in the world composed of many interdependent synergistic facets which are simultaneously ways of entering the whole and themselves part of the enlightened awareness itself. 188

What Rosch says for Brown, I say for Siegel’s summary of the scientific literature on mindfulness. I have argued that this move to abstract and define mindfulness is not a feature of his work as much as it is a feature of the scientific model of inquiry itself and its third person point of view of consciousness and intentional mental states.

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188 “More Than Mindfulness,” 261.
Neuroscience may be able to explain the physical substrate of mindfulness while, paradoxically, not being able to describe it in ways that make it teachable or that make its potential for change at the base of consciousness understandable. These aspects of learning and practicing mindfulness are outside the construct itself. Rosch describes several of these further aspects of mindfulness training that are in the Buddhist tradition but not recognized in scientific mindfulness work. They are the following:

1. An appropriate teacher—someone responding to those practicing in ways to help them
2. Teachings—the beliefs and understandings of the tradition
3. Intentions—formed to guide the practice
4. Relaxing or Letting go—a thing in itself requiring intention and practice
5. Life behaviour—guiding one’s behaviour by precepts or with the teacher’s guidance
6. Not knowing and acceptance—a willingness to accept the emptiness of ideas.

The discussion in this chapter has shown how all these aspects are supported by the Buddhist tradition of teaching and practice. The interrelation of philosophy, teacher-student relationship, instruction in developing metta or loving kindness or friendliness, the importance of the precepts or mindfulness trainings are all there, and go a long way to conveying the form of life that strengthens each individual’s experience of mindfulness and gives it meaning. When it comes to producing the effects on a person’s emotional life that are hoped for with mindfulness interventions, it may be even more important to view the development of mindful perception as occurring within the context of intentional mental states and as part of the meaning-making we all do with life. It may be that the best “construct” to understand mindfulness development is practicing the mental state of mindfulness within the context of the teachings of Buddhism guided by an experienced teacher who also practices mindfulness. Conceptualizing mindfulness as a distinct skill or mental state without content that can be taught, and without reference to the understandings and beliefs of the tradition that developed it, is to misunderstand mindfulness itself and how it
proves useful in helping people see their lives clearly and to enjoy happier and freer lives.
CHAPTER TEN

EMOTIONS, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND GENDLIN’S PHILOSOPHY

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep yourself open and aware to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.

Martha Graham

Lived Experience and Emotional Understanding

I want to include this chapter here because Focusing, a practice developed by Eugene Gendlin, has proven itself useful to me personally and professionally as a way of getting in touch with the deeper felt sense of experience in a way that allows expression of that sense and, when working at its best, moving forward into life. Focusing, in my understanding, begins with a sense of the inarticulate aspect of experience and then, through a series of steps or movements, interrogates that sense in order to develop the discursive aspect of understanding held within. Because of this questioning and move into language,
it is not simply a mindfulness practice, nor is it simply the labelling of experience within an existing set of emotional categories. Its goal is to find the specific and unique in experience and to give it a discursive voice. This goal makes the practice of focusing a useful addition to the sort of emotional education that arises from the view of emotions that I have developed here.

What complicates the inclusion of the practice of focusing is Gendlin’s own statement that “What I am about to show you is not the familiar ‘getting in touch with feelings.’ Nor is it the content-free quiet of meditation.”\(^{189}\) He will write on the next page in the same work, “A felt sense is not an emotion” (\(F,\) 10). Given what are for me such strong resonances with the practice of focusing, these dissonances at the level of theory need some response. What I will do in this chapter, then, is look at the practice of focusing and draw some parallels between it and an emotional education that both deepens awareness of the inarticulate felt sense developed through mindful practice, and engages students in full participation in the language of emotion within an evolving pattern of living.

However, before moving into what resolution of these complications I may find, I want to go through a quick examination of how both of the aspects of emotion that I have identified, the inner experience and the outer expression and conceptualization in language, need to be combined in an emotional education. If we didn’t need to conceptualize emotions at all, or to combat emotional discourses that currently interfere with living a full emotional life, the expression of emotion in language that I believe focusing develops might well not be important. We could leave the practice of mindfulness to do its work. I will argue that in schooling influenced by the Anglo-American tradition of philosophy at this time, an emotional education needs to be as much about a re-conceptualization of emotions as a de-conceptualization of experience. The next section begins this examination.

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\(^{189}\) Gendlin, *Focusing*, 9. Other citations of this work will be given in text as *F*. 
Self Awareness and Never Felt Feelings

In a paper written in 1972, Francis Schrag argued for a view of schooling that included an education in the emotions. Beyond the need to teach how to express emotion, he saw the possibility for a curriculum that included two other aspects of living emotionally. The first of these aspects was increased self-awareness or sensitivity about what one was feeling. More specifically, he believed that a person could be taught to be more precise in understanding the intentional component of an emotion. Secondly, he believed that someone might, from time to time, also learn to see his or her own emotional response differently, to see it in a new light or to see a different aspect of the emotion—which in so far as an emotion is defined by its intentional content would be to experience a new emotion.

The focus on intentional content of emotion naturally resulted in Schrag downplaying or ignoring the physical manifestations of emotion, the feelings in the body, but his suggestion that an emotional education should include goals directed at both being more aware of one’s emotional life and being able to see new aspects of emotion is important. The ability to see new aspects of one’s emotions is a step towards freeing oneself from the absolute dominion of a fixed or oppressive conceptual regime. Schrag sees the crucial elements of these goals encompassed in four actions or understandings:

4. Acknowledging the emotion.

5. Seeing emotions intimately and logically inseparable from their intentional content.

6. Feeling ownership of thoughts and emotions by the person experiencing them.

7. Understanding that feelings are not just triggered by the outside but come from inside the person.

The developing mindfulness is one way of moving toward these understandings. Mindfulness, as I argued in the previous chapter, creates a sensitive awareness of internal experience, so much so that advanced practitioners are said to be aware of the moment of origination of an experience.

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190 “Learning What One Feels and Enlarging the Range of One’s Feelings.”
in response to events, sensations, thoughts, and other feelings. In addition to this present moment awareness, mindfulness can also provide insight into the participation of the experiencing subject with these objects of the experience. Emotions are triggered by thoughts, stories, imagination, empathic connections to others, and so on, as much as by situational stimuli. The practice of mindfulness, when combined with compassion towards oneself, stresses the acceptance and awareness of all these emotions, what they trigger in us, and our own responsibility and participation in being triggered. When we have sufficiently developed our mindfulness, we can free ourselves from the bonds of unreflective response and the folly of hanging on to any moment in the unfolding of our experience. This awareness can lead us back closer and closer to the first stirrings of emotion and, the Buddhists say, develop that equanimity or non-responsiveness (as the psychologists call it) that gives us time to moderate our response. We have time to interject our understanding of our own part in forming the response (it is not all “their fault” for example) and to allow our direct awareness of our interdependency to emerge.

This break in the automatic response is the promise of mindfulness. The process is not rational, in the sense that one thinks ones way through it conceptually in language spoken either inwardly or outwardly, but it is found through paying subtle attention to what arises and passes away in our experience. In Buddhist tradition, for the most part, the ability to discern and act with this depth of mindfulness is the product of practice—indeed some would say practice over many lifetimes. And though the process can be described, the intentional contents of these experiences with their imbedded emotions may not be easily brought forth in language as they occur at pre-conceptual levels. It is through practice and direct experience developed through practice that the effects occur. In terms of Schrag’s four actions of an emotional education listed above, mindfulness practice would develop part of the first, acknowledging of an emotion through increased awareness; contribute greatly to understanding of the third action, feeling ownership of emotion, through direct experience of participation in the origin of the emotion; and, from the same experience, contribute to the fourth understanding, that emotions come from within.

It is the second action of understanding the connection to the intentional content of the emotion, which is left relatively unexplored, at least relatively unexplored in discursive thought. So where is the ability to explain the
intentionality of this level of experience to be found? The traditional locations of thought and emotion in the Western tradition, as discussed earlier, were thought in the mind and emotion in the body—with some connecting place in between. These locations allowed the leaking of passion into thought and the odd fixations of thought that resulted in madness. Our capacity for mindfulness, properly understood, erases this hierarchy and its resistant reversals with an inward view that unifies our experience of thought and emotion. Mindfulness provides an experience of a pre-rational and pre-linguistic awareness of experience as it is— including awareness of our own tendencies to distort our experience through desire or aversion.

With mindfulness practice, one learns through experience about experience. One cannot effectively learn about the emotions by just having information poured in or by encouragement to just let something pour out. As Deborah Orr points out

> Such pedagogical praxes which remain situated on the dominant side of the mind/body binarism, are not, nor can they be, entirely successful in creating the necessary conditions to achieve the deep levels of transformation in the lives of students that … critical pedagogy seeks to effect because its impact on the body, emotions, spirit, and the lived sense of self and other can only be incompletely addressed through purely intellectual methods.”  

The same is true for any pedagogies that just call for the acting out of emotions or even the “relief” of emotion through expression as if they were just the built up pressures in the system. At the same time, we must acknowledge that any expression of emotion, and especially expression in language, takes place in the context of a pattern of living and becomes thereby a matter affected by its “uptake” by others and so on. I agree with Orr that the practice of “Vipassana/Insight/mindfulness” offers great possibilities for working through the holistic impact of transformational learnings. The practice of mindfulness with understandings that result from it make concepts more open and fluid.  

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191 “The Uses of Mindfulness in Anti-oppressive Pedagogies: Philosophy and Praxis,” 480. This article is a thought provoking linking of Wittgenstein and Buddhist thought in the service of anti-oppressive teaching.  
192 Ibid, 491.
Gendlin’s focusing practice provides a contrasting method that unifies the experience of the mind and the body in a different way—by implicating the body in the production of language and conceptualization. Gendlin has found this process useful in encouraging personal growth, understanding, and creative thinking. It is because focusing as a practice engages the body, through sensation, in the process of conceptualization through language that it has application in an emotional education that includes rethinking and reformulating the meaning of emotion within a pattern of living. Gendlin’s practice of focusing offers an alternate way of diminishing the power of a dominant discourse while at the same time allowing practitioners to put words to experience. Putting words to experience may be particularly important to philosophers, and, for different reasons, to teachers, too. As a teacher, I was always aware that the question “Why are we doing this?” floated out there in the room, waiting to be asked. The promise of focusing is that not only are those who practice it able to move forward in life, but they are also able to understand and express to a greater degree the experience that allows them to do so.

The Practice of Focusing

As I said in the introduction, it is the practice of focusing with which I feel the greatest resonance. This section introduces the practice as presented by Gendlin and its six movements. When I go through those movements, I will briefly compare them to the practice of mindfulness to illustrate where focusing adds the movement to expression that I believe is its important contribution to an emotional education.

Focusing emerged from a study by Gendlin and others looking for an explanation of why some clients succeeded in positively changing through psychotherapy and some did not. Their analysis of taped sessions with different therapists and different methods of counselling identified that there was a way that successful patients talked during therapy, a way of talking that was present from the earliest sessions and developed over time, and that suggested something that the clients were doing “inside themselves.” At the time of research, Gendlin discovered that if clients did not show this activity at the beginning of therapy, they did not develop it over the course of treatment.

193 *Focusing*, 4. Other page citations will be given in text as *F*. 
Because having this skill was so strongly associated with success in therapy, Gendlin went on to develop a way to teach the skill of focusing and how to use it in situations other than therapy. Many people are able to access their feelings, either with or without the help of therapy, but many find themselves stuck in those feelings: “Many people get in touch with feelings—but then what? They have ‘gut feelings’ all right, but the feelings don’t change” (F, 8). The practice of focusing results in change on many levels, allowing those who practice it to move on from problems that have bothered them for some time. Gendlin maintains that in focusing, a person can actually feel experience beginning to move as the felt sense changes and shifts. This shift in the felt sense is the key indication that focusing has succeeded in bringing experience to expression. And with expression comes possibilities of discursive understanding.

The following section presents a quick overview of the practice of focusing. I should note, as Gendlin does, that even though the process is presented in six “movements,” it has a life of its own and may move quickly through several steps, back to an earlier one, and so on as the felt sense shifts and changes. In keeping with the fluidity of the process, there are other descriptions of it with more than six movements. See Neil Friedman, “Focusing Instructions” for an example.

Six Movements of Focusing

1. Clearing a Space

In order to focus, people must first clear a space in their awareness. To do that, people find a comfortable position so that the annoying sensations of discomfort call for as little attention as possible. They then ask themselves, “How is my life going? What is the main thing for me right now?” and sense into the body for answering sensations. Each sensation arising is noted, but importantly “not gone into.” Gendlin says,

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194 Much information can be found on the website of The Focusing Institute including the “Philosophy of the Implicit” and “Thinking at the Edge.”

195 In keeping with the fluidity of the process, there are other descriptions of it with more than six movements. See Neil Friedman, “Focusing Instructions” for an example.

196 Focussing, 10. Also cited earlier.
“Just list the problems mentally, the big and the small, the major and the trivial together. DON’T GET SNAGGED ON ANY ONE PROBLEM. [Caps in original] Stack them in front of you and step back and survey them from a distance. (F, 52)

These problems are stacked until there is a sense that except for those, everything else is all right.

While traditional Vipassana practice begins with concentration on the breath to clear and calm the mind/body, and typically in this tradition one would not ask a question to call forth sensations, at a certain point, when something arises in the body/mind, the meditator turns mindful attention to it. As above, one would not engage with the sensation, feeling, of thought, but would focus on perceiving it clearly separate from any discursive “story” or line of thought that might want to command attention. There are strong similarities here for me with Gendlin’s call not to get “snagged” on any one problem.

2. Finding the Felt Sense

Reaching this point, one problem may emerge as needing attention. It may well be the one that feels “bad” in some sense of that word. The question “What is worst?” could be asked to encourage this emergence—or a person could just pick one. The next point is key. Gendlin puts it in the following way:

Now, don’t go inside the problem as you usually would. Stand back from it and sense how it makes you feel in your body when you think of it as a whole just for a moment. Ask, “What does this whole problem feel like?” Don’t answer in words. Feel the problem whole, the sense of all that. (F, 53)

At this stage in focusing, people do not describe, explain, analyze or in any other way conceptualize the felt sense. Instead, they feel it as physical sensation. In Gendlin’s language, the purpose of this state is to get this feeling of “all that” where all that is the awareness of the pre-conceptual sense of the problem as a physical experience.

It is at this stage that people are often strongly tempted to go off into thinking and “self-lectures.” Those are to be avoided by firmly, gently, and
politely bringing attention back to the felt sense and giving it space and time to form.

The comparisons I made with Vipassana at the end of the first movement fit well with this movement as well. Gendlin’s language here, though, suggests that focusing in this movement is asking the body to somehow “sum it all up” in a way that is not consistent with Buddhist thinking which would tend not to think of experience as an entity on its own nor as a thing that should be held still, as it were, by being summed up. That said, the fluidity of the process, mentioned earlier, goes some way to dispelling these contrasts with Buddhist thinking, as it makes clear that the key point is following the movement of the felt sense of experience as it changes in response to the act of focusing itself through the next three movements.

3. **Seeking a “Handle”**

Space is created by standing back and not engaging in thinking about this felt sense. One can attend to the felt sense because one is not swept up in thoughts. While maintaining this space, the next movement looks for some word, phrase, or image that fits with the quality of the felt sense. One may hold up a possible word and see if the felt sense responds. Is it “tight?” No shift. Is it “heavy?” Perhaps “like lead?” This process is continued until one experiences a “body shift:”

> You will have to sense for this small shift, so that you don’t miss it. Your attention has to be in your body, to sense if this word, phrase, or picture makes that little relief in there that says, “It’s right. It fits.” (F, 56)

The shift is described as a sense of relief, change, softening, or breathing. When it is felt, then that word, phrase, or image becomes the handle and can be used to return to the felt sense as the process goes on.

4. **Resonating**

This movement is in many ways the recognition that the felt sense is not static. Having found the handle, a shift has already occurred, and this stage allows that shift to continue and the handle to change and refine as it follows those shifts. The end point is reached, in one respect, when there is a sense that there is a
perfect match between the language that is the handle and feeling. In another way, the match is not the end, but a beginning of change:

The sense of rightness [of fit] is not only a check of the handle. It is your body just now changing. As long as it is still changing, releasing, processing, moving, let it do that. Give it the minute or two it needs to get all the release and change it wants to have at this point. (F, 57)

5. Asking

A significant release of the felt sense may well have occurred prior to this point. If it has not, this movement begins asking what the felt sense is and what it needs. Once again, Gendlin warns that it is not a matter of categorizing or labelling the felt sense or fitting it into previous thinking but encouraging further words and images. The test of whether these flowing words are flowing out is the continued sense of change:

The words and images that flow out of a feeling ... are the kind that make a freshly felt difference. They are the kind that make you say, “Hey! Hey, yeah, that’s what it’s all about!” There are the words and pictures that produce a body shift. (F, 59)

The idea is that one is surprised by the words and pictures that arrive. They are new and somehow unexpected as if arriving from some unknown aspect of experience.

Movements three, four, and five contain focusing’s distinctive method of moving inarticulate experience into language and expression. Gendlin emphasizes that this move to expression may take the form of words or images, and that either may be surprising and new.

6. Receiving

The important element of this stage is to welcome what has come from focusing. The result may have to be protected from rational interrogation or critical inquiry—certainly from pessimistic “cement” being dumped on the “new green shoot that just came up” (F, 61). This receiving attitude is both protective and allows change to continue:
Whatever comes in focusing will never overwhelm you if you can have the attitude we call “receiving.” You welcome anything that comes with a body shift, but you stay a little distance from it. You are not in it but next to it. This space, in which you can be next to it, forms in a few moments, as your body eases. … You have it, you are not it. (F, 61)

The attitude of receiving described in the quotation above suggests to me the non-identification with the discursive mind developed by mindfulness practice.

The Theory of Focusing

The practice of focusing has led Gendlin to a great deal of theorizing mainly about a new philosophy of language based on his idea that the real meaning of language is to be found in the felt sense that imbues words with meaning. Much is claimed for his views particularly as an answer to some postmodern critiques of language and the arbitrary and confining nature of its closed and oppressive conceptual regimes. Gendlin seeks to ground language in situations that are also the ground of lived experience and the felt sense that he believes can produce creative and novel new forms and concepts. In his later writing, he introduces two new conventions to make explicit language’s reference to this inner sense. One is to use strings of words, for example, “every argument organizes (differentiates, synthesizes, entisizes . . . . .) in a way that could be otherwise,” to show how the language points at the felt sense or meaning and its fluid and situational nature. The other is to use the five period marks (“. . . . .”) to represent the sense itself.

The idea that language gets its meaning by pointing to a private experience and giving, in communication, the same private experience to others is at odds with Wittgenstein’s argument against private language that is at the centre of my analysis of emotion and emotional learning. Wittgenstein argues that language works even though there is no way to tell whether people are having the same experience through the words used:

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other

197 See David Michael Levin, ed. Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and thinking in Gendlin’s philosophy.
198 “How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience, and How It Can,” 5.
people also have this or something else. The assumption would thus be possible—though unverifiable—that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.¹⁹⁹

One could replace the italicized “this” in the above quotation with Gendlin’s “. . . . .” to make the point clearer. Gendlin proposes a conception of language where it can refer to ‘this/ . . . .’ while Wittgenstein thinks that is impossible and that language works precisely because it does not refer to private experience.

So must we believe that language is somehow inherent in the felt sense for focusing to work? I don’t believe that is necessary. What is helpful is to have some explanation for what happens during the third movement of focusing while one “gets a handle” on the felt sense. Gendlin writes as if during this stage one is trying out language against an inwardly held representation in the felt sense:

We cannot even know what a concept “means” or use it meaningfully without the “feel” of its meaning. No amount [sic] of symbols, definitions, and the like can be used in the place of the felt meaning.”²⁰⁰

There are uses of “meaning” that lead to this idea: “That painting is full of meaning for me,” “Coming back to my childhood home had lots of meaning,” “I associate so much meaning with the word ‘flight,’” and so on. But Wittgenstein would say that none of these experiences give the words of our language their meaning:

The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists in this: if I say falsely that something is red, then, for all that, it isn’t red. And when I want to explain the word “red” to someone, in the sentence “That is not red,” I do it by pointing to something red.²⁰¹

The inward experience stands in need of outward criteria, and what happens during the third movement of focusing is that one searches for outward criteria that fit when one tries on language. The fit is not necessarily determined by comparing an outward form of words with an inner representation of meaning, but by having the sense (here felt physically) that one could live with that

¹⁹⁹ Philosophical Investigations, 95.
²⁰⁰ Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning, 5.
expression in words. I don’t think this is a mystical process. I imagine a situation in which a friend is searching for words and saying, “I feel all, oh, I don’t know, messed up, or like I’ve been shaken—yeah, that’s it, like I’ve been shaken.” Being shaken fits the experience my friend is trying to express, and I don’t think that has to mean ‘fits the way a puzzle piece fits a corresponding void in the puzzle’.

Imagine the conversation with the friend going on: “I really do feel like I’ve been shaken. Do you know what I mean?”

“You never saw this coming. Now, you don’t know what to expect.”

“That’s it exactly!”

Perhaps, given this example, one could say that the fit is in the friendship, in the language that exchanges understanding, in the fragment of a form of life this example shows. One finds a “fit” when one can live with a form of words. Living with an expression does not mean living and dying for just that form of words, but realizing that this formulation is just a steppingstone towards the next.202

Another example might show what this process is like: picture a loving parent dealing with a restive infant. In response to tears, he or she looks at the child and asks, “Are you hungry?” and offers food; “Scared?” and offers comfort; “Tired?” and offers a chance to rest. Whether or not the child has learned meaning of the words at this point, he or she can respond to the situation: the loving looks, the tender tone of voice, the warm presence, the bite of banana, or the warm blanket. This interaction between an attentive caregiver and child is a representation of the interaction between the inarticulate felt sense and the discursive mind offering expressions to see if one fits. There is an interaction between the private, inner experience of the child, expressed only in crying, and a caring outer situation. During that interaction, the infant learns a little more about language and a little more about the inner experience. At the same time, the parent learns about the child. The third movement of focusing invites a person to take the attitude of a loving parent towards their inner experience, and because of this attitude to avoid any hurry to declare, “You must be hungry. Eat this!” while metaphorically pushing the banana into the felt sense’s mouth, or, in other words, picking some understanding out of a limited set of understandings

202 This iterative nature of expression is made very clear in Gendlin, “How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience, and How It Can.”
supported by a pattern of living, deciding that it must fit, and no longer paying attention to inarticulate experience.

In this way, the felt sense can be represented by “tight, heavy, like lead .....” without it having to have an inner representation of the appropriate language. And the word “heavy” might indeed be particularly meaningful in this connection as the word takes on a particular connotation with its use in that situation. It may also be that, through this process, new forms of words emerge. Gendlin compares it to the moment in conversation that one knows one has something to say even though the words that will be said are not all laid out. (F, 85)

This example is not a refutation of Gendlin’s philosophy or even an argument, but I hope it is enough to show that another explanation of the practice of focusing is possible and that this explanation shows how the process can be applied within the view of emotion conveyed in this work. There remains the smaller challenges of relating focusing to emotions and placing it in relation to mindfulness when Gendlin warns that neither of these is what focusing is about.

**Labelling Emotions**

Again my response to Gendlin is not an argument, but an interpretation. *Focusing* was written at a particular time and for a particular audience. It is not a theoretical book or a book for professional therapists. It is a book written to teach the practice of focusing to anyone. As such it was important to address some assumptions that Gendlin believed, quite rightly, would be made about emotion and the process of emotional discovery that occurs in therapy. Because of this time and audience, the book is in effect a source of resistance to a dominant discourse about emotion and therapy, and it is important that the ideas presented are not subsumed into existing concepts and categories but remain distinct and opposed to them. Hence Gendlin writes:

A felt sense is not an emotion. We recognize emotions. We know when we are angry, or sad, or glad. A felt sense is something you do not at first recognize—it is vague and murky. It feels meaningful, but not known. It is a body-sense of meaning. (F, 10)
Many believe that emotions arrive intact with specific intentional content with which one can respond by analyzing or arguing. For example, if the felt sense is quickly labelled as fear, one can respond, “If it’s fear, I must be afraid of something—what am I afraid of?” or, “What are you frightened of, you big baby—be a man!” The concepts of emotions are learned along with certain attitudes towards them, and Gendlin did not want the felt sense compressed into these concepts, but to be held up to understanding and expression in another way. Because of preconceptions and evaluations of emotions, it was important to distinguish the felt sense from those preconceptions. So the felt sense is not “an emotion,” but it is connected to emotions:

As you focus on a felt sense you may get further emotions coming out of it. But a felt sense is not an emotion like anger, fear, hate, joy, or anxiety. It is a sense of your total emotional situation, a feel of many things together, in which an emotion can be embedded or from which an emotion is produced. (F, 101)

Gendlin uses this language not to define what is or is not an emotion, but to help teach a new relationship between inner experience and expression, one that recognizes that if a sense cannot be conceptualized, it can still exist, and if it can be conceptualized, that concept may not be all that it is—or that it may not mean what a person has learned to think of concerning that emotion. The conceptualization of the felt sense is not the last word in understanding experience, but part of a process that requires careful attention to areas of experience not usually associated with thinking. In addition to that point about the relationship between language and experience, Gendlin is also teaching a new caring relationship between conceptual consciousness and the pre-conceptual felt sense.

It is the caring relationship, as much as the logical one, that keeps the labelling of the felt sense from being merely oppressive or “therapeutic,” and allows the expressions that develop to become new forms of words and potentially new language games and therefore the beginnings of a new pattern of living. Not every focusing session, nor every person who focuses, will result in revolutionary new thinking, but new inventions are possible. After all, language and patterns of living do change.
A similar interpretation can be applied to focusing’s insistence that it is accessing knowledge in the body. In the body/mind binary, “mind” has certain implications for most people about what can be done and thought. Saying the knowledge is in the body would then make clear the need to avoid unhelpful kinds of thinking or mentation.

It also seems to me that Gendlin’s passing comment quoted earlier about focusing not being “the content-free quiet of meditation” is also a response to a particular idea of what meditation is. Mindfulness meditation is never “content-free,” but by necessity promotes awareness, which must always be of something—breath, pain, itching, thinking, and so on. This kind of meditation promotes the kind of open and accepting awareness of what is in the moment, which is consistent with movements one and two of focusing. An article written in the Zen tradition, for example, proposes five questions for meditation that can help a person discover clarity in emotional distress. The fourth one, “What is this?” seems especially to reflect some important features of the focusing practice:

This question, perhaps the most important one, is actually a Zen koan, in that it can’t be answered by the thinking mind. The only answer comes from entering directly into the immediate, physical experience of the present moment.

What is distinctly different when comparing focusing to meditation is the interaction with language that begins at movement three and may have contributed to the conception of labelling found in scientific conceptions of mindfulness—whether the nature of the relationship between the physical felt sense and the tentative and iterative process of finding words is retained is not clear.

**Focusing Partnerships**

One aspect of the practice of focusing has not been mentioned yet—that is the participation of other people in focusing. Gendlin talks about partnerships,

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203 “Focusing is direct access to a bodily knowing.” In “What is Focusing.”

204 To say nothing about what Wittgenstein would say about body knowings. He didn’t think we could know what we were thinking. (See Ch. 7 n. 12.)

groups, and speculates about how more general practice of focusing in society might effect changes. Generally, for focusing to work with another or others, the relationship between the people needs to be like the new relationship between the felt sense and conceptual consciousness—that is, an open space into which people can move without fear and with support, primarily in the form of deep listening and attending. When this happens, focusing has the potential to contribute to new patterns of living:

It lets people find their own inner source of direction. It can be a source of new patterns, devised freshly by each individual.

Instead of static structures we need structure-making. This would not be unstructured. Without structure nothing happens. It would be an expected and understood constant restructuring. Social situations could be structured so they could be restructured by the participants. (F, 159)

The notion of new patterns (of living) is welcome to the ears of anyone inspired by Wittgenstein. The educational implications of this idea of responsive restructuring are many: for a start, it suggests that teachers need to be able, within a lesson, to facilitate a restructuring to meet learning experiences of the class. Students would in turn need to learn how to negotiate their learning needs with consideration of the needs of others. The classroom would have to be a model of a responsive community.

Understanding a new form of language game is a challenge. Luckily, in many cases, understanding can be developed. The analogy here that comes to mind is to new forms of art. Enough symphonies have been walked out on, or new styles of painting spurned that have gone on to become classic, to show that points of entry can be found to new expressions—by some. Those finding entry into the new are sometimes able to make them more accessible to others and so on. And typically, in the case of revolutionary works of art, knowing the thoughts or intentions of the artist, while they may be helpful, are not the defining qualities behind interpretations of the work. It is a process of engaging personally with the art and then exploring and expressing that experience that moves understanding along.

206 Thich Nhat Hanh, within the Buddhist tradition, has much to say about deep listening. See, for example, “The Fourth Mindfulness Training” in For a Future to be Possible, 44-61.
How Deep does Language Go?

Within the practice of focusing and mindfulness is the belief that underlying the usual contents of the busy discursive mind is an area of open experience, that is, experience that has not been shaped by concepts, norms, history, or politics. With practice, a person can access this open experience in ways that will impact profoundly their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Not everyone believes this, of course, thinking that we are conditioned by the regime in which we are raised right down to the bottom. Stephen Pinker calls this view of humanity as entirely socially conditioned the “Blank Slate,” and has challenged at length the position with evidence from science and other forms of argument. From my point of view, whether there are inherent traits with which we are born or whether we are only what we have learned, is not the important question—at least in regard to coming to understand our emotions. The practice of mindfulness suggests that we can come closer to a moment-by-moment awareness of both our experience and our participation in interpreting that experience. Focusing, through its attention on a felt sense perceived in the body, also offers in some degree to bypass the conceptualization of the discursive mind.

But suppose that there is no inherent layer of spacious awareness. What would happen to the practice of mindfulness or focusing if, in fact, there were no underlying layer of unconditioned experience? Would the potential for liberation in mindfulness or creative new language in focusing disappear?

The goal of mindfulness practice is to find liberation from suffering. The goal of focusing is to know oneself and others better and in so doing to move towards finding patterns apart from those dictated from outside. Does it matter if the necessary space in consciousness is discovered or created by the practice itself? Perhaps not—both of the practices that have been discussed present at their centres new relationships between experience and consciousness, new arrangements and attitudes towards experience. Whether we discover a spacious mind that has always been there or whether we create space through the practice and our understanding of it growing over time, the result is the same.

See The Blank Slate.
The same argument applies to the emotions—in so far as we can separate them from the general practices. Even if we are born with emotional themes wired into our nervous system by evolution, we immediately start learning how the variations of those themes will shape our subjective experience in life—and that learning shapes the emotion—and continued learning shapes it again. Perhaps there are no evolutionary emotional themes and all our fears are learned. Still the process of learning that goes on is the same. Whether the emotional trigger fires an emotional “gun” that we were born with or that we learned, the practices of mindfulness and focusing help us get clear about our experience and participation in the emotional response, and in so doing create space in which we can act, choose, and learn.

Greenspan and Shanker state that our ability to think at all may be built on key experiences:

The ability of individuals from across the globe to arrive at an implicit consensus on certain basic elements of reality in spite of near infinite cultural variations, emerges in part from these basic interactive processes and experiences that originated millions of years ago.208

That is the power of a “form of life.” Born with inclinations, instincts, temperaments as may be, we are raised and learn through our participation in a pattern of living, most vividly present in our relationships with caregivers at first, but expanding in scope as we expand our ways of participation in that life. At bottom, mindfulness and focusing are practices and not beliefs. They invite us to take up a certain kind of relationship and interaction with our selves and with each other. Whether these practices allow us to discover or to develop abilities, the result of having these abilities is worth the learning.

208 The First Idea, 10.
I find it a very troubling thing to think, particularly when I think about my own experiences and try to extract from those experiences the meaning that seems genuinely inherent in them. At first such thinking is very satisfying, because it seems to discover sense and pattern in a whole host of discrete events. But then it very often becomes dismaying, because I realize how ridiculous these thoughts, which have much value to me, would seem to most people.

Carl Rogers

Further Reflections

It is summer as I sit down to write this, and I’ve taken myself out into the back garden. We have ponds there, and the quiet sound of water running between them is a helpful reminder that there’s more in the world than noise. I was here several days ago with a book to read, but found myself watching a spotted towhee bathing in the upper pond. Towhees are birds of the understorey of the native forests and generally quiet and hidden as they go about the business of making a life for themselves. The one I was watching was a male with his rufous sides and black cap. He had flown up onto a low hanging branch of a cherry tree almost overhanging the pond where he was fluffing and preening after the bath. Then beside him was his mate whom I had not seen in my first look. I felt filled with gratitude watching the pair finish their baths and head off about their day.
and happy to have given them a pond full of water on what would be another hot, dry, midsummer day.

A few days earlier, I was driving off to the optometrist to get my glasses repaired when a Dixie Chicks’ song rotated into position on the CD player in my car. I had heard it before, but this time I listened more attentively to the lyrics. It was about a young soldier, about to go off for training, meeting an even younger waitress, and talking into the night before asking if he could write her from time to time as he had no one else with whom to communicate. They correspond until the girl finds out from an announcement at the local Friday night football game that the soldier is among the local boys recently killed in action. I was parked at the optometrist’s waiting for the song to finish with my eyes filled with tears. It seemed such a touching, small, human tragedy. I was also aware that I didn’t want anyone looking me in the eyes, fitting my glasses, and thinking that I might have been crying.

Not that this increased emotionality has been all sweetness and light. I recently received, in error, a parking citation that I challenged and had removed, only to be contacted some time later by a collection agency looking for me to pay the fine. I talked to the person on the end of the telephone call and found two things: she did not believe that the citation had been dealt with and would or could not make it go away herself. I was getting increasingly angry and frustrated talking with her. So I stopped talking and hung up. After a deep breath or two, I contacted the person I should have been talking to and the matter was dealt with again. The process that led to my hanging up and switching tactics happened faster than it might have in the past and the emotional hangover dissipated more quickly than I expected.

I write about these experiences because part of each of them had me wondering if I would have had them if I hadn’t spent so much time thinking about the emotions. I have had a number of similar experiences when I have wondered whether the work that I have put into this study has altered my own emotional life. Each time, I end up thinking that I would not have had the same response, or would not have been aware of my response, without this work being done. I’m glad that I’ve done it.

There have also been some shifts in my professional life. I am aware that I have more of my emotions with me when I am talking with students and that I am more able to, perhaps more willing to would be better, let them “leak” into
what I have to say. Observing student teachers, as I have over the last two years, has allowed me to see from a different perspective how emotional a place a classroom is, and that those emotions are a part of what education is. Just this perception is enough for interesting reflections on whether “seeing is believing” or whether “believing allows us to see.” It’s clear to me that having a better understanding, clearer of some confusions, has made it easier to understand what has undoubtedly always been in front of me in my work as a teacher.

I like the notion of emotions as an aspect of our experience—all of our experience. In all the examples I have given above, I think what has happened is that I am seeing an aspect of my experience that was always there, but that I have now learned to see. I see these emotional aspects of my experience more often because I have learned how to look.

“Well, good for you,” you might be thinking, “but how else might we see whether this notion of emotions is useful?” The next section returns to the two challenges to the conventional way of looking at the emotions developed from thinking in the areas of human development and feminism to see whether the idea of the emotions here meets those key challenges.

Meeting the Challenges

Human Development

The human development challenge was essentially a challenge of the idea that emotional and intellectual development are separate. The claim is that emotional and intellectual capacities are not separable, though they may be distinguished—they must function together or normal development will not occur. In this view, emotional/intellectual development starts before language starts, in the subtle and intimate relationship between child and caregiver, and only then flows into rational and moral thinking as the child develops the ability to abstract ideas from impulse and action within a framework of boundaries set by a caring adult.

209 For the past two years, I have worked as a Faculty Associate in the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University. Students in this year long program are taught the theory and practice of teaching on the way to being certified as teachers. As part of my work, I observed and coached students during their teaching practica.
The separation between the impulse and action requires the purposeful use of imagination, planning, reason, and so on in order to achieve goals.

In this relationship, the adult pays careful attention to all manner of expressions, at an early age especially the physical expressions, and responds and mirrors them to the child so that they can start to make sense of their experience, within the pattern of living being built in the relationship, then the family, and ultimately the larger groups of neighbourhood, society, and the world. There is, therefore, an intimate back and forth between the inner and the outer represented in the relationship.

This inner/outer view of the emotions fits very well with the view that has emerged in this study. This view says that the inner/outer is not a dualism, nor an opposition, but a system of relationships—but not relationships between separate entities or locations. The relationships are between different perspectives on lived experience. The caregiver/child relationship within the human development model is a very real enactment of the inner/outer relationship, and I would suggest that the mindful attention that we can learn to provide within ourselves, and the back and forth referencing of felt sense and expression within focusing, both fit within this dynamic. And while both practices can be done by individuals in isolation, in both the Buddhist view and the suggestions of focusing, the internal relationship is strengthened and supported by the presence of the sangha, a community of practitioners with a common goal, and focusing partners—as long as those others can provide the right kind of careful attention.

It also seems to me that the kind of inner attention to one’s emotional life is of the same kind that one can apply to the inner promptings and images that constitute intuition and creativity. There is a power within the passion, interest, or curiosity that underlies these ways of thinking and which fuels their exploration and expression, too. The intentional content of our passion to understand is intuition and insight. Greenspan explicitly links our thinking and our emotional experience in this way:

In looking at how creative children and adults deal with abstract concepts, we found that they form these concepts out of a huge variety of emotional experiences. If we limit our concept of bossiness or apples, or of love or justice, to just a few cognitively familiar dimensions, we seriously short change the conceptual richness that is generated by
considering bossiness, apples, love, or justice in the context of the enormous spectrum of affective experiences that relates to each of them.\textsuperscript{210}

In short, emotional development and intellectual development proceed together, and throughout life, but in childhood and adolescence in particular, occur best within continuing, intimate, and reciprocal relationships with adults. When those adults and friends provide the right kind of recognition of affective/intellectual experience, growth occurs, just as growth occurs when we learn to pay mindful attention to those aspects of our experience brought to the fore in meditation and focusing.

**Boler’s Feminist Challenge**

The view of the emotions developed here shares one aspect of Boler’s view, namely in recognizing that the understanding of emotions occurs within a language game or discourse that is part of a pattern of living. This is part of Boler’s idea of emotions as sites of political power. The outer, conceptual understanding of our emotions comes about as we learn the language games of our pattern of living—or in the more post-structural formulation of Boler’s thinking, as we take on the power/knowledge regime of the dominant discourse of our culture. In taking on this dominant discourse, we make ourselves in its image, and discipline ourselves to take on the oppression inherent in the discourse. Subservience, inferiority, weak emotionality, strong rationality—whatever role we are to serve and the characteristics that are part of it become our “nature.”

The politics of emotion places emphasis on this outer aspect of emotion and the theory and practice of liberation applies to this area:

What I call the ‘feminist politics of emotion’ is a theory and practice that invites women to articulate and publicly name their emotions, and to critically and collectively analyze these emotions not as “natural,” “private” occurrences but rather as reflecting learned hierarchies and gendered roles. The feminist practices of consciousness-raising and feminist pedagogy powerfully reclaim emotions out of the (patriarchally

\textsuperscript{210} *Growth of the Mind*, 36.
enforced) private sphere and put emotions on the political and public map.211

The goal of Boler’s pedagogy is the creation of another way of seeing the world and with it a re-visioning and re-conceptualizing of the emotions, perhaps seeing shame at being “too emotional” as anger at the oppressive valuation of emotion or at the restricted roles given to those “too emotional” in a world that values rationality.

While the notion of emotions as an aspect of experience shares this outer view of emotion, it differs when it comes to the inner view of experience. Because women are an oppressed group in patriarchal society, feminist theory argues that many aspects of women’s emotional life are repressed: “repressed feelings of alienation, fear, anger, and despair… lie at the roots of the domination structures of racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism.”212 These feelings have been pushed so far down by domination structures that women’s experience is compromised:

Feminist pedagogies, unlike critical pedagogies for example, recognize that for women ‘experience’ is not a category that can be taken for granted, as their experience has been systematically discounted and dismissed.213

If individual experience is compromised to such a degree, to what can a teacher appeal in order to liberate students from their oppression? This is a tension yet to be resolved in Boler’s view of feminist pedagogy, but she sees promise in historicizing experience:

I believe that we can develop strategies that don’t assume experience as authoritative or inherently “real” or “true”; we can introduce analytical approaches that frame emotional experience as a “window” into ideology.214

This approach is a very different view of how experience should be approached when compared to the compassionate awareness and open, tentative questioning

213 *Feeling Power*, 117.
214 Ibid, 123.
of mindfulness and focusing that Boler might well see as techniques of “pastoral power”—a technique of power she describes as used to reinforce the “normal” which in terms of liberation is the repressive power of society. Pastoral power exists to teach people how to survive within the oppressive structure of society and not how to access and transform “their own pain and rage or how to enact upon the world the alternative visions each carries.”

This critique of some uses of mindfulness needs to be reflected upon, particularly for some of the purely instrumental uses of mindfulness such as building the ability to focus on work and defer gratification, to self-monitor and control emotion, to reduce stress and stress related disease. These outcomes of the various mindfulness programs studied by science can clearly be put to service in propping up the dominant powers of society. From the point of view of liberation pedagogy, this is a bad use. It is also a bad use from the point of view of the Buddhist origins of the method where mindfulness is one path on the way to personal liberation itself. And Buddhist liberation, in the tradition of the Bodhisattva, for example, or the engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hahn, emphasizes social action to remove suffering and spread peace and joy throughout society. In these traditions, the importance of compassion is highlighted, and this compassion is not the passive empathy critiqued by Boler, but a compassion that occurs in the context of inter-being or dependent arising. This notion emphasizes our connection with all phenomena and our participation in them, whether they are oil spills and the car in the driveway, or the scorning of the emotional because of a clinging to the value of logic.

There is much more that should be said about this different view, but that can be left for another time. In the most general terms, I have suggested here that the liberationist goals of the practice of mindfulness and the idea of creating movement that lies at the heart of focusing are not that different from the hopes for social change in feminism. What is different, and profoundly so it seems to me, are the different values placed on experience in these differing views. It seems likely that both mindful awareness and focusing would fall under Boler’s category of self-reflection, about which she writes: “Self-reflection, like passive empathy, runs the risk of reducing historical complexities to an overly tidy

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215 Ibid, 151.
package that ignores our mutual responsibility to one another.”217 I would suggest that, while there are dangers of misapplication and misunderstanding (as there are in any theory and its application), the kind of attention to self in mindfulness and focusing, with the new understandings that result, will produce action that will be in a form reflecting exactly what it is our mutual responsibility to provide one another. When we understand our own emotions and our own responsibility for what we feel, and can participate in a pattern of living that invites everyone to allow exploratory new attempts at understanding and creative flow, we will be conducting ourselves responsibly towards each other.

It is this kind of attention to her students that I think leads Boler to write:

I perpetually reevaluate and struggle to develop a pedagogy that calls on each of us to be responsible, and particularly calls for me to be extremely sensitive in how I pose my invitation to discomfort.218

It may be possible that, however different the theoretical orientations to private experience, the relationship between teacher and students in which growth occurs may share important similarities.

**Implications for Education**

**Schooling**

Greenspan has written about the challenge and necessity of incorporating an understanding of the emotional basis of learning in schools.219 In his view, emotional and intellectual learning of the most important kinds are one, and failing to recognize this unity is the cause of many problems:

Undermining the effectiveness of our educational system is the dichotomy between the emotions and the intellect that underlies many of its principles. The separation between emotional and intellectual growth ignores developmental levels and individual differences, thus hindering many children’s potential.220

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217 *Feeling Power*, 177.
218 Ibid, 179.
219 See Chapter Ten in Greenspan, *Growth of the Mind*.
220 Ibid, 211.
What is needed is not more intellectual input about what emotions are and what they mean, but opportunities to be emotional as part of learning within a system and, most importantly, a caring, reciprocal relationship with an adult that helps with the development of the basic steps of an emotional education. These real basics of education are learning to

8. Regulate attention
9. Relate to others with warmth and trust
10. Communicate with others through gestures and symbols
11. Reflect on one’s own behaviour.

It is not possible for schools alone to adequately provide conditions for these learnings to occur—in most cases, schools have expected students to arrive with them in place. But at the very least, schools should be structured to do no harm to these emotional learnings by endeavouring to provide every student with opportunities to build relationships with adults in school that will foster and support their emotional/intellectual development.

At the same time, it has to be born in mind that, for those who work in schools, doing this emotional work is also an essential part of the job—a part which places its own demands on the time and energy of all those engaged in this task. This dimension of the work of educators and all adults working in schools needs to be recognized and supported by, for example, considering the number of students in classes, the total number of student/teacher contacts in the day, and opportunities for teacher reflection and peer support and mentoring. Secondary schools may be particularly in need of re-visioning given the current structures that move students from room to room and adult to adult many times over the course of the day, and that tend more and more to focus on putting information into passive student bodies for reproduction on limited forms of tests.221

There is much more to be studied and said here, indeed, much that has already been said about the need to engage students’ interests, passions, and curiosity in learning. These emotions are not simply useful or in other ways instrumental in promoting learning, but are part of all learning and should be

221 This focus in schooling occurs in some places more than others. A particularly compelling presentation of the impact of this direction in schooling in the United States can be found in Diane Ravitch, *Death and Life of the Great American School System*. 
recognized and their development promoted as part of the fundamental mandate of education. The role that mindfulness or focusing might play within this mandate, is still to be considered.

**Pedagogy**

Whatever the structure and purpose of the school system, what is at the centre of education happens in moments in classrooms between teachers and students. Thus, while school wide programs of mindfulness practice, for example, may help create abilities in students and teachers (shouldn’t teachers practice, too?) in the face to face interactions where emotions take life, how they are understood, responded to, and incorporated into the life of the lesson are most important. The ability to remain self aware, to notice internal promptings, to retain a measure of equanimity, to focus on problems rather than attacking people, are not new abilities for teachers to have or for students to learn, but they show a new aspect of themselves when emotions are seen as an essential part of any kind of learning. To learn, to function well with other people, to make decisions either with others or on ones own, to find, nurture and develop a passion for living—all are emotional adventures where the guidance and support of another can make a great difference. In all these moments, teachers need to be there, need “to show up.”

There are lots of ways that teachers show up in the classroom for their students. They range from the kind of learning activities teachers plan and how they might engage interest and encourage curiosity and creativity, to opportunities for self-reflection, from classroom atmospheres that make safe the kind of explorations that develop self awareness and sharing opportunities that encourage emotional “uptake” and understanding. When these ways are seen as presenting crucial and continuing opportunities for students to develop the emotional foundation for learning and leading full emotional/intellectual lives with individual interests and abilities intact, the value and need to develop abilities in these things should be clear to all educators. Creative teachers explore these possibilities all the time. I know of several who, in their own ways, incorporate work in student journals that fits precisely with this purpose.

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222 Lack of experience keeps me silent here about distance education and what equivalents for this face-to-face interaction are possible within its systems.
In terms of the specific practices of mindfulness and focusing, I have added elements of them to my teaching practice without feeling the need to develop a program or curriculum. They have become part of the pedagogical base that supports my work. I have, for example, posted several reminders about breath around my teaching space. When I see them, I check in with my breathing. Is it deep or shallow, rushed or slow? What’s associated with that quality of breath—anxiety, fear, contentment, anger? What is the impulse I’m feeling in the moment—to run, to hide, to laugh, or to cry? Am I smiling or frowning? In any day, I find that I need plenty of reminders to come back to the moment, for my temptation is always to go wander away into thoughts of “This is not how I expected it would go,” or “We’ll never get done by the bell.” The reminders to return to the moment as it is are always useful, perhaps especially when it reminds me to say to students, “I just love the activity in the room right now. I hear people asking great questions and having wonderful discussions. How is it for you?”

Students ask, “Why do you have that sign ‘Breathe, you are alive!’ on the wall?” Then there are a few minutes talk about losing touch with how I’m feeling and what’s going on in the moment, and a few comments, and a return to other work.

In the same way, I might say, “Hang on for a second, I need to take a deep breath.” I can say to a student, “Just a second, take a breath and try and just focus on nothing but that breath. OK, what was going on?” These are examples of the mindfulness that happens right in the moment, not in the ten-minute practice after recess, and in some ways they may have the biggest impact. Not that the moment replaces the practice, or that the moment wouldn’t benefit from practice, but the moment is what I have as a teacher—and what we all have available at any time to use. The point of mindfulness practice through meditation is to develop skill that allows mindfulness to be brought into the moments of life.

Focusing practice can also become part of the flow of teaching. I’ve led focusing based writing activities with up to 45 adults, but my favourite experience was when one of my writing students said, “Mr. N., I’m stuck. I have no idea where this story is going. I feel like just ripping it to shreds!”

We took a couple of breaths, and I said, “Look into your body. I bet there’s some tension or weight or some sense in there. Find it and ask it how the story
should go. Wait for an answer.” I watched her for a few moments out of the corner of my eye until she sat forward and began writing.

When I checked in with her later, she said, “I had no idea the story was going to go that way, but I like it.” I asked if I could see what she’d written but she said, “You’ll just have to wait until it’s done.”

And I was fine with that.

**Experience, Awareness, Attention**

In the preceding two chapters, I have talked about different aspects of our experience that can, through directing our attention in certain ways, be brought into our awareness. I have worked hard not to talk about consciousness, for that opens a new can of philosophical worms, and even talking about experience I can feel their wiggling presence. Some people want to make experience and consciousness the same.\(^{223}\) I an inclined to say they are different.\(^ {224}\)

I have been inclined to talk about “inarticulate experience” to refer to that area of experience of which mindfulness can make us aware, that words and practice can lead us to, but that cannot be captured in words. I see this aspect of our experience in Gendlin’s description of “a powerful felt dimension” in our lives that functions with our “logical schemes” in the creation of meaning.\(^ {225}\)

The words “functions with” in the immediately preceding sentence are certainly vague and wave at contested ground. Holding Wittgenstein’ ideas about the impossibility of a private language against Gendlin’s notion that language must be inherent in our felt sense which is located in sensations in the

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\(^{223}\) For an example, see Eric Schwitzgebel. “Do You Have Constant Tactile Experience of Your Feet in Your Shoes?”

\(^{224}\) It is about inclinations such as this that Wittgenstein has a particularly useful reminder: 254. The substitution of “identical” for “the same” (for instance) is another typical expedient in philosophy. As is we were talking about shades of meaning and all that were in question were to find words to hit on the correct nuance. That is in question in philosophy only where we have to give a psychologically exact account of the temptation to use a particular kind of expression. What we ‘are tempted to say’ in such a case is, of course, not philosophy; but it is its raw material. Thus, for example, what a mathematician in inclined to say about the objectivity and reality of mathematical facts is not a philosophy of mathematics, but something for philosophical treatment.

\(^{225}\) *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*, 1-3.
Looking Forward 211

body shows, at first glance anyway, how contested the ground is. Wittgenstein shows how we move from inarticulate private experience, through the learning of language games that function in certain patterns of living, to expression and conceptualization. I have argued that learning language brings with it the possibility of understanding emotions conceptually but with the potential loss of the uniquely individual aspects of experience. They can be got rid of and made somehow flickering, random, or inconsequential spirits. Gendlin, on the other hand, calls on us to realize that it is just those inner feelings that make language emotionally meaningful. My intuition is that these two thinkers are both looking at the phenomenon of language and describing two aspects of it, playing two games as it were, with overlaps and confusions. I want very much to believe that Gendlin is not saying that there are words in the felt sense waiting to be said, but rather inspirations, inclinations, or urges ( . . . ) that find some relief in public language or other forms of expression—but believing this, I may well be putting words into Gendlin’s mouth.

I suspect that typically we do not run into the far reaches of language where there is much difficulty putting our inclinations into words that both suit our inner promptings and communicate with others. It is only when we approach the edges of the game where inner promptings don’t find expression within the rules of the present language game, that we’re moved to talk of inspiration and create innovative uses of language. In these cases, metaphor works best:

401. You have a new conception and interpret it as seeing a new object. You interpret a grammatical movement made by yourself as a quasi-physical phenomenon which you are observing. (Think for example of the question: “Are sense-data the material of which the universe is made?”)

But there is an objection to my saying that you have made a ‘grammatical’ movement. What you have primarily discovered is a new way of looking at things. As if you had invented a new way of painting; or, again, a new metre, or a new kind of song. —

The metaphors don’t settle the contest, but they may make the reason to fight disappear for a while.

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One idea that has emerged in this study connected with this opposition of felt and spoken meaning is the notion of inside private experience and outside public language. Just looking at “inside” and “outside” as physical locations as if they were two countries marked by a boundary of skin, misses the challenge of movement through this border. The boundary is not located in that kind of space. It is within our experience itself. The move from the inarticulate “inner” to the describable “outer” happens with every thought that is put into words. When someone asks, “What are you thinking?” we can typically answer in words without seeming to journey across any boundary. This is why, for the most part, we think of ourselves as living within, or being contained by, the stream of discursive thought that flows within our awareness when we look inside. That is also why, for the most part, we tend to fit our experience into the conceptual categories of public language.

But there is another aspect to our experience, an aspect that often announces itself through our emotional response, and to which we can learn to pay attention. The practices that develop mindfulness and Gendlin’s focusing practice are two ways that can be done. I tend to see focusing as an extension of mindfulness, but also see that each can find their moments in the classroom.

Our experience is bigger than our awareness. Paul Ekman says this enlarging of experience may be the special function of the emotions, especially those that are related to our physical survival like fear or anger, fight or flight. These “emotions prepare us to deal with important events without our having to think about what to do” and are triggered by “autoappraisers” that are continually vigilant.227 To point towards the same idea in Gendlin’s terms, we can say that our body is aware of the totality of our situation and responds to it with a felt sense of which, in turn, we are often not aware. We typically don’t pay much attention to these aspects of our experience. This area of experience is big, and perhaps it becomes “only emotional” when we categorize it as such or when what we recognize as emotions call our attention that way. We can, however, learn to move our attention to our inner experience, to the impulses we have to think a certain way, to the feelings in our left foot, or to the promptings of our heart. The more we do that, the less overwhelming and “irrational” our emotions are.

227 Emotions Revealed, 20.
These are benefits that come from learning to make these shifts of attention and to receive what this awareness offers. These benefits are talked about in different ways when viewed from different theoretical perspectives, from better mental health, improved self-regulation, to liberation of mind and so on. The benefits are useful both personally and socially. Freedom of mind found through our increased awareness and understanding of this aspect of experience will bring more tears, perhaps, but also more laughter. It might even mean that we get to see atomic structure in a vision of snakes, or paintings to be done in the presence of sunflowers or seashells. It may even mean, if we are lucky, that we will recognize that an unimaginable lifetime with someone we love is there before us.


