



## Moral language and pedagogical experience

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As educators are challenged to develop a moral vocabulary of teaching, such a language needs to be sensitive to the way that pedagogical relations are lived and experienced. This exploration into the meanings of care offers a phenomenological puzzle. It concerns the relation between, on the one hand, commonly accepted and professionally received meanings of the ethical concept of care as we find it in the parental, philosophical, and curriculum literature and, on the other hand, the lived experience of caring. The language of care in the field of commerce and in the helping professions tends to pass over these subtle and deeply-felt sensibilities. It seems that for many parents and teachers caring commonly means worrying. Caring is experienced as worrying responsibility. But this worry ('sorgen' in German) is often neglected for happier or more acceptable understandings of care. This should make us wonder about what happens when language turns professional and theoretical, when it becomes charged with meanings that in everyday life are not always recognizable, and when it becomes discharged of meanings that are existentially at its very centre.

### Introduction

In recent years there has been a search for an ethics-sensitive language of teaching and an epistemology of practice that is guided by an interest in the child's experience and in the relational sphere between teachers and their students. Sockett (1987, 1993), van Manen (1991), Goodlad *et al.* (1991), Noddings (1992), Jackson *et al.* (1993) and others have argued that the most unfortunate fact about contemporary discourses and practices of education is that they have tended to become overly rationalistic, scientific, corporatist, managerial, and narrowly results-based. They argue that we need to ask what it would mean if teachers were treated as moral agents with a practical professional language. A professionally acknowledged moral language would allow teachers to think about their daily practices as essentially pedagogical interactions. Sockett (1997) has pointed out that 'education does not have a sophisticated moral language, and the specific tasks of teaching and of understanding education are made extraordinarily difficult by this vacuum'. As a result of this vacuum, he argues, it is difficult to name the problems that we have, to break out of our primitive discourse,

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to hold profound conversations, and to teach a moral language to children and students.

Common examples of a practical pedagogical language are easily found in the ordinary life-worlds of parents and children. In an online (Ouders Online) parent forum, a mother poses a question:

My problem is that I find it very difficult to pass the care for my family to someone else. I don't mean just for an evening but for several days. (Are they enjoying good company? Are they feeling okay? Are small conflicts properly resolved? Are they eating regularly and enough? Are they getting clean towels?) I know this is a problem of being a worrywart, but do others recognize it and what can I do about it? (My husband is a dear father, but he is often away and is not as close to the home front as I am; he simply does not experience this 'problem' the way I do.)

A second mother responds to the online question:

I do not know if there is a real solution to your query. But you can probably make it somewhat easier for yourself . . . by beginning to look for situations that are not problematic. You are struggling with the process of letting go that begins in part already right at the birth of your first child.

The second mother seems to recognize the worrying experienced by the first. It is not just that the mother finds it difficult 'to pass the care,' she really has a problem with 'letting go'. Next, the second mother gives suggestions for dealing with the problem in some appropriate manner. Indeed, this is often how it goes in life. Language is the way of accessing and understanding experience. By naming and renaming experience, we bring it to awareness, (re)interpret it and come to particular understandings or misunderstandings. The example simply illustrates that finding a language to describe our experience is a critical requirement for addressing and understanding our pedagogical predicaments. And, in passing, it points up a dimension of caring that educators intuitively should understand but on which they rarely seem to reflect.

In education we now hear calls for 'caring schools', 'caring teachers', 'caring curricula', 'caring pedagogies', etc. 'Care' becomes a critical term of a morally attuned professional language, expressing vocational commitments and passing on 'the tradition of service' (Schervish *et al.* 1995). Such moral professional language appears especially highly developed in the health sciences where there is an extensive literature where theorists call for a sophisticated science of care (Watson 1985, Morse *et al.* 1990). In education, too, there seems to be growing interest in care (Jarrett 1991, Prillaman *et al.* 1994, Deiro 1996, Eaker-Rich and van Galen 1996). But if we want to understand how caring is actually experienced, then conceptual models and professional discourses are not always the best references. We may need to bypass conceptual and cognitive models in favour of more literary and imaginary sources that stay attentive to ethical experience.

Since in literature, as in all art, the image has not yet been reduced to the concept, it is useful to work with narratives that are emotionally complex and that offer us some understanding of the meaning of care-as-worry that is unmediated by conceptualization. Through some recognizable anecdotes and literary quotations, I will explore the experiential

subtleties of the moral vocabulary of care in terms of our responsibilities to our children as parents and as educators. Next, I will relate these moral sensibilities to the question of the unique sense of pedagogical responsibility, especially as suggested in experience-based ethics.

### **Experiencing care-as-worry**

When I ask people for concrete examples to illustrate the caring of their parents, I receive various anecdotes. A 30-year-old woman told how her mother had come to stay with her for a few days in the big city. When in the evening she returned home from late night shift-work, she found her mother still up. Surprised, the daughter said, 'Why didn't you go to bed? You knew I would be late.' 'Yes,' her mother answered, 'but I wanted to make sure that you got home all right.' 'But, Mom, this is my life. What do you think I have been doing for the last 10 years!' 'Yes, yes', the mother answered, 'I can't help it. I just like to know that you are okay.'

For many parents, care seems to consist of fretting and fussing and worrying and generally making a nuisance of oneself for the sake of one's children. Of course, kids at times hate this in their parents, but in the back of their minds, they also know that it would be much more terrible if there was no one to worry about them. Recently, a Canadian radio station broadcasted an interview with street children in Canada. One street-kid said,

What is most terrible being on the street is that there is nobody who has dreams about you. Ordinary kids have parents who worry about them. Nobody, neither my father nor my mother ever worried about me, ever had a dream for me.

Of course, we should not think that caring is something that comes naturally with being a mother or a father. Children may have 'caring' parents but still end up in government care. A 14-year-old foster girl said, 'You know what I am afraid of? I am afraid that if I would die no one would really care.'

It seems that when we try to recall particular moments of caring it is often the intense experiences that stand out. But the qualities of these experiences seem characteristic also of the more mundane and common moments of caring. The following is an excerpt from the diary of Judith Minty (1982: 215, 216). It is a story that could have been told by many parents:

My son, my middle child, the handsome one, the worst student, the one most admired by his peers, came home from football practice tonight sick, with a bellyache, half crying.

Thirteen years old, short for his age, he pedals off on his bike at 5 p.m. drags back into the house around eight every night...

A half-cold dinner waits for him in the kitchen. I rush him out there so that he can eat, shower, and rifle through the pages of his homework before he

groans into bed ... And I don't forget to remind myself that if most of his friends are playing football and he isn't, then there is no one to occupy his time, nothing to do between school and bedtime.

But tonight is different. He eats little, says he is sick. I tell him it was the peanut butter sandwich he ate before practice. I tell him that big Scott M across the street throws up after every practice if he eats less than two hours before. My son trudges upstairs to suffer alone.

After his shower he goes to his room, where he thinks no one can hear him. But I hear him crying. I don't worry too much. He is the one who moans when he has a minor cold. Briefly, I think of appendicitis, but brush the thought away. I also think about those other times he has cried because something he couldn't cope with what was gnawing at him. I will wait awhile, see what develops.

In this recognizable family situation, we hear a mother worrying. But this is not the kind of worrying that we commonly regard as self-indulgent and useless. The kinds of things the mother does is the ordinary stuff of parenting: the things parents do and think. This worrying is not a side-effect of parenting: it is the very life of it. A mother is involved in taking care of her son. In everyday life-situations, caring is lived as a worrying attentiveness.

And Judith Minty knows this. She says, 'I don't worry too much'—but of course the point is that she does worry. Saying this to herself is as much a manner of keeping herself in check as it is a way of assuring that she should not let her own feelings and needs overshadow those of her son. She seems to know that worry can be both a way of staying in touch with her child and a way of dwelling too much on her own anxieties. She chooses the former. She worries and waits (Minty 1982: 216).

When he comes downstairs, I ask him if the practice went badly today, was the coach after him? No, he just feels sick. I tell him no television—he needs to lie down in his room. The others come [his sisters] ... [We talk but I] hear my son in the distance, still crying behind closed doors.

I am reading in my bed. He appears. I put my book down. He sits at the foot of my bed, still young enough to weep in public, and tries to start. The others hover, then vanish. They know this is his crisis.

'Lorie [his sister] is going to leave soon', he finally manages to blubber out. I tell him no, that she won't be going to college for years yet. [He says] 'I don't want anything to change'.

Parental care is rarely an explicit fretting and more often a lingering awareness, a heedful attunement. While talking to her daughters or reading, the mother at the same time remains aware of her son's presence in the background. Did she do the right thing?

Worry, it seems, is the *active* ingredient of parental attentiveness. Worry—rather than duty or obligation—keeps us in touch with the one for whom we care. Worry is the spiritual glue that keeps the mother or father affixed to the life of their child. So when Judith Minty's (1982: 216, 217) son finally comes to talk to his mother, she expects that he will open up to her:

The crack begins to open. 'Do you want to stay just the way you are?' [I ask.] Of course he does, and nods, and then it all comes spilling, tumbling out, a

waterfall full of worry and sadness and tears. As he tells it, I remember how, when he was ten, he worried about what would become of us when the sun burned itself out; how, when he was nine, he worried about having to fight in Vietnam. This tough boy-child, whom we worry about with his D+ 's and C- 's has a different depth to him than our others.

What will happen to him if his father dies, if I die? What will he do if he lives to be 103 and there is no family left? . . .

We laugh that when he is 103, [his younger sister] Annie may be 101 and Lorie 105. I tell him that when he goes away to college, I expect him to come back now and then. We talk about change, how people make plans to do things when they grow up, how I will miss him, but won't be lonely. And we talk about the new family that he will have when he leaves his old family.

Notice how nicely the worrying mother takes away the worries of her child, how she indicates her worry as a mother (that she will miss him), but that he need not worry about that either. Finally Minty (1982: 217) reflects to herself:

Have I done a good job? I don't know. He is not crying any more. He tells me he has been thinking about this for a week and hasn't been able to eat much. We both laugh and agree that the not-eating part was probably good for him. (He had put on too much weight.)

It is much later now. He is sleeping. Everyone is sleeping. I hope his spirit sleeps well.

When everyone is sleeping, the mother is still awake, thinking about her child. In some sense, this wakefulness to one's child is characteristic of the life of parenting. To have children means that one will never be able to just sleep. Caring for one's children is a kind of worrying mindfulness. (In several languages this worrying dimension is much more pronouncedly felt by the speakers of different languages, but this is not the place to expand on this curious cross-cultural phenomenon.) I conclude that this caring-worrying is really a very human response to vulnerability in others, it is what philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas (1993), Jacques Derrida (1995), and Knud Løgstrup (1997) have described as the moral ground of human existence.

### **Worry as caring responsibility**

The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1993, 1998) has insistently proposed that caring responsibility can only be understood in its most basic modality if we can somehow transcend the intentional relation toward the world that accompanies all modes of being and thinking. He has shown that it is only in the direct and unmediated encounter with the other that we can gain a glimpse of the meaning of the ethical impulse that he describes as the human responsiveness to the appeal of the other who needs my care. Usually we think of other people as selves who are in the world just as we are in the world as selves. And so we are cohabitants, fellow human-beings who live in reciprocal relationships. In these relations, each of us

cannot help but see others as objects of our personal perception and thinking. But this is not the only possibility. It also may happen that the other person bursts upon my world and makes a claim on me outside of my own intentional cognitive orientation. In other words, it is also possible to experience the other in the vocative: as an appeal. This is especially true of situations where we meet the other in his or her vulnerability, as when we happen to be handed a hurt and helpless child, or when we suddenly see a person fall in front of us. What happens then is this: I have felt a response that was direct and unmediated by my intentions or thinking.

This kind of experience alludes to the originary caring encounter. And thought comes too late, according to Levinas (1981), in this situation. What happens is that this person in distress, this child in need, has made an appeal on me already. I cannot help but feel responsible even before I may *want* to feel responsible. In his earlier book, Levinas (1979) describes the phenomenon of the involuntary experience of ethical responsibility as fundamental, not only to the experience of human relationship, but also to the experience of the self. To meet the other, he (1979: 187–253) argues, is to see this person's face, is to hear a voice summoning me. This is the call of the other. A demand has been made on me, and I know myself as a person responsible for this unique other. This relation with the other is non-reciprocal (in some sense a non-relational relation). Indeed he states this predicament even more provocatively, arguing that the other is not only someone I happen to meet, but this person calls me to responsibility. Stronger yet, this person takes me hostage, and in this gesture, I have experienced also my own uniqueness because this voice did not just call. I do not need to look around to see if it was meant for me. The point is that I felt responsive, I am the one, the voice called *me*, and thus took *me* hostage (Levinas 1981: 44).

Hostage? Is this not just a metaphorical way of speaking? Not if we recognize this experience in our own life: is this not precisely what happens to us when we are claimed by our sick child or by someone in need? The strange thing is that here is this vulnerable child who exercises power over me. And I, the big and strong adult, am being held hostage by this small and weak person who relies on me. If, as a parent, I am careless (meaning: free of worry), then I may inadvertently expose him or her unduly to risks and dangers. For example, I fail to keep my eye on my child when he or she wanders astray. Thus, the paradox is that a care-less parent is not necessarily uncaring but unworrying. Levinas (1998) points out that in relation to the face we come closer to the other. At the same time, it is the face that makes the distance between the self and other irreducible, infinite. In caringly worrying for this person, I cannot reduce this care-as-worry to the care of the self, as described, for example, by Foucault (1986). Indeed, it is especially the face that takes on caring-meaning for us. Many will recognize this phenomenon. What is meaningful in the face is the command to responsibility.

In a recent tele-commercial by the Save the Children Fund, the woman from the agency holds up a child of poverty and then she says to us, the television viewer, 'Look into these eyes and do what you would do if you were face to face'. At the very moment she utters these words, the child

turns and stares directly into the camera. Now, no matter what we think of these kinds of commercials, if we really looked into this child's eyes and if we did not just click to another television channel, then we may have experienced an uncanny sensation. The child's eyes look at us so immediately that, before we knew what happened, they burned us, as it were. What did we see? We saw in this face a vulnerability, a strange accusation—an accusation of a guilt of which we know ourselves innocent. And yet, we felt this guilt, this indebtedness: We have experienced responsibility. This is what Levinas talks about as being addressed by the otherness of the other. In this experience, I do not encounter the other as a self who is in a reciprocal relation with me as a self. Rather, I pass over myself and meet the other in his or her true otherness, an otherness that is irreducible to me or to my own interests in the world (Levinas 1993: 44).

The strange thing is that the more I care for this other, the more I worry and the stronger my desire to care. By desire, Levinas does not mean a personal want or need. Wants and needs differ from desire. I may always have wanted to buy a cottage at the lake, and now that I finally am able to afford my dream, I feel satisfied; or I may find that I am disappointed and that my want was not as worthwhile as I thought. At any rate, my want has been stilled. But desire that lives in my relation of care reaches beyond anything that might bring satisfaction and thus acquiesce in the desire. For example, love is desire in this sense. Think of the lover who asks his loved one, 'Do you love me?' And his love says, 'Yes, you are my love and only love'. The question is: What happens to desire? Chances are that a week later, a day later, or maybe even five minutes later the lover may again feel the desire to ask and say, 'Yes, but do you *really* love me?' And again his love responds, 'Yes, I really do love you'. This example illustrates that true desire cannot be stilled. No answer can forever satisfy. In fact, desire feeds on itself and fans itself—think of the great love tragedies. Similarly, caring responsibility increases in proportion to the measure that it is assumed. The more I care for this person, the more I worry, and the more I worry, the stronger my desire to care.

What is also peculiar about this ethical experience of caring responsibility is that it singles me out. It addresses each person uniquely. When the voice calls, then it is no use to look around to see if it was meant for someone else. No, here is this child in front of me, and I look this child in the face. Before I can even think about it, I already have experienced my responsiveness. I 'know' this child calls upon *me*. It is undeniable: I have experienced the appeal. And this experience is a form of knowing. I am called. I am being addressed—or to use a Levinassian (Levinas 1998: 133–153) phrase: 'I am the one who is charged with responsibility'. What makes Levinas's insights so unique is that he is the only philosopher who offers us an ethics of caring responsibility that is not founded in ethics. That is why he calls it pure ethics. In a sense, this is not yet ethics, not yet philosophy, not yet politics, not yet religion, not yet a moral judgement. He shows us that in the encounter with the other, in this greeting, in this face, we experience the purely ethical before we have involved ourselves in general ethics as a form of thinking, reflecting and moral reasoning (Levinas 1998).

### Experiencing responsibility in the face of the unique

Several authors have clarified and explored the ramifications of this distinction between caring as general ethics and caring as pure ethics (Rée and Chamberlain 1998). Some of these discussions have evolved around the biblical parable of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. For example, Søren Kierkegaard (1983) portrays Abraham as the great God-fearing man who was commanded by God to sacrifice his only son. The horror is that Abraham was indeed prepared to sacrifice his beloved Isaac in the face of and in defiance of any ethical standard. This horror is difficult to alleviate. Yet, in Abraham's predicament we may sense the tension between two demands of caring responsibility. First, there is the demand experienced in the call that has singled *me* out as uniquely responsible. And, second, there is the demand of the community that we must always be able to justify and account for our responsibilities, duties and tasks in some kind of ethical manner. The first demand is explicated in the famous *Fear and Trembling* by Kierkegaard (1983); the second demand is articulated by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1995) in his remarkable text *The Gift of Death*.

Would it not have been easier for Abraham if he had at least tried to explain God's strange command to his wife and son at the outset of the journey? Kierkegaard (1983: 82–120) shows that this would have been impossible. The absolute responsibility that Abraham felt towards God could not, and cannot, be justified in any system of ethics or by any moral principle. If anything, child sacrifice is a mad, murderous, and scandalous act, and Abraham would only have met total scorn and disbelief. So it was Abraham's fate that he had to carry this unbearable burden, this terrible secret, all by himself. Abraham had heard God's call, and he felt it was his responsibility to heed this call.

In re-reading Genesis 22, one may wonder: What would have been the significance of the fact that it was a second voice, the voice of an other, who called Abraham and who commanded him to stop and not raise his hand against his son, the son he loved so deeply? Abraham might have been confused. Why did not God call to him directly as he had done when he asked for the sacrifice? But then, the Bible (King James version) says, the angel called from heaven a second time:

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD.

And indeed the other, every other who calls upon me as true other, calls me with the voice of God. And the voice says, 'Thou shalt not kill!' (Levinas in Rötzer 1995: 64). The ultimate other is God. And so, without intending to be sacrilegious, I like to think that this is how it went: Abraham tied his son to the sacrificial stake as the Bible said he did. He sharpened his knife as he must have done. Then he raised the knife and, at that moment, as he looked Isaac in the face, he heard the voice call his name. And the voice said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad'. Thou shalt not kill. Of course, it was not Isaac who uttered those words, but they arose



from Abraham's originary acknowledgement of the ethical encounter of the face, the face of his own son.

So who called Abraham with the voice of the ultimate other? The point is that this is already an intellectual question, a religious ethical question perhaps. We might just as well say that pedagogy called him. Or that it was Isaac's face, the face of any child for whom the parent holds a unique and inexpressible caring responsibility.

Both Caravaggio and Rembrandt have depicted the sacrificial biblical scene in their paintings. The treatment of Isaac's face is especially striking. In Caravaggio, Isaac's face is contorted with dread and fright, and the Angel's face is expressive with appeal. But in spite of these very different expressions, what is most remarkable is the uncanny likeness of the two faces. Abraham is held from killing his son by staring into the face of his son. Strangely, in Rembrandt's painting, Isaac's face is completely covered over by the clutching grip of Abraham holding him down. It is as if Rembrandt, the famous master of portraiture, did not know what to do with the face of Isaac. And so he covered up the face completely. But both Caravaggio and Rembrandt anticipate Levinas in their understanding of the significance of the face as the ethical experience of responsibility for the other, and in particular for one's child.

The reason that Caravaggio and Rembrandt could show us the ambiguous role of the face is that Abraham's situation is not at all exceptional. In fact, it powerfully portrays our modern or postmodern predicament: our ambiguous relation to our own children. Derrida (1995) has put it very well: in a real sense we can kill our children (i.e., their uniqueness) in many different ways, and all of us, men and women, are like Abraham holding the knife over those who are dear to us. How do we do this? And what does Levinas mean when he says, 'Care for the death of the other is the beginning of the acknowledgement of the other?' (Levinas in Rötzer 1995: 65).

We need to be sensitive to the uniqueness of the other. And the uniqueness of each person comes into sharp relief against the fact of his or her individual mortality. Ironically, we are given this mortality right at birth. Therefore, Derrida (1995) calls this 'the gift of death' since it is our own mortality that belongs to each of us more uniquely than anything else imaginable. Whatever else can be taken away from us, there is one thing that belongs to us so essentially that nobody can take it away, and that is our own death. I may give my death in sacrifice to someone else, and yet even that supreme gift cannot be substituted for their own death. Thus, it is the non-substitutional uniqueness of the other that I must preserve and not kill by betraying it to the general. And yet, Derrida (1995: 69) claims, this is precisely what we do every day:

By preferring my work, simply by giving it my time and attention, by preferring my activity as a citizen or as a professorial and professional philosopher, writing and speaking here in a public language ... I am perhaps fulfilling my duty. But I am sacrificing and betraying at every moment all my other obligations: my obligations to the other others whom I know or don't know ... also those I love in private, my own, my family, my son, each of

whom is the only son I sacrifice to the other, every one being sacrificed to every one else in this land of Moriah that is our habitat every second of every day.

It seems that we constantly betray the call of caring responsibility in our efforts to be caring in the general sense of duty, as in our professional practice. Derrida (1995: 78) articulates the dilemma in such a way that his confession of failing to be responsive to the call of his own son becomes an unsolvable predicament:

what can be said about Abraham's relation to God can be said about my relation without relation to *every other (one) as every (bit) other* [*tout autre comme tout autre*], in particular my relation to my neighbour or my loved ones who are inaccessible to me, as secret and transcendent as Jahweh... Translated into this extraordinary story, the truth is shown to possess the very structure of what occurs every day. Through its paradox it speaks of the responsibility required at every moment for every man and woman.

In a way, Derrida seems to let himself and us off the hook in our unique responsibility to care for the other as other. On the one hand, he suggests that we need to heed this call. On the other hand, his deconstructionist strategy aims to show that we must constantly fail since we cannot possibly be responsive to every other who is out there and who also makes an appeal to our caring responsibility. Since we can only worry about one thing at a time, we cannot worry about everyone and everything. So why worry? Why care in this deepened sense? Indeed, even as a teacher, one would have to agree with Derrida. We cannot really see how we could worry for each child in our charge.

Does that mean that we must flee into the ethical domain of a professional responsibility that says that we must subsume our caring behaviours under some general moral code? The problem with Derrida's approach is that he has already fled into language and ethics when he deconstructs the prereflective occurrence of the caring encounter. The point is that in everyday life the experience of the call of the other, of care-as-worry, is always contingent and particular. It can happen to anyone of us anywhere, anytime. Every situation like that is always contingent. I can only be here and now. In this home. In this classroom. In this street. Thus, it is the singularity of this person, this child who addresses me in my singularity.

### **Caring for the faceless**

I am inclined to suggest, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that care-as-worry can be likened to an illness, a chronic condition of worrying for this other person who is dear to me, whom I love, or for whom I happen to feel responsible. And indeed, this condition of care-as-worry is truly somewhat like an affliction. Existentially, the vulnerability of the other tends to be experienced as, what we might call, ethical pain—ethical pain that is symptomatic of the worrying condition engendered in the encounter with this other person who has made a claim on me. Many parents, many

teachers, many nurses, many physicians and other professional carers would readily agree that this worrying is painful and troubling. But it is also necessary. Why? Because worrying keeps me in touch with the presence of this other. Or as Levinas (Rötzer 1995: 62) says, 'The presence of the other touches me'. And now the ethical has entered my life, I feel I should do something, that something is demanded of me (Løgstrup 1997).

Again, we can check the truth of care-as-worry against our own experience as a parent where pain, fear, illness, discomfort, anxiety endured by my child may hurt me even more than it hurts the child. In other caring relations, too, this can be our experience. A teacher may feel a special responsibility for this or that child. And this care-as-worry is often expressed as, 'I have to let him know that he is doing okay'. Or, 'I need to keep a special eye on her'. Administrators who regulate the practices of educators need to understand that caring in a deeper sense can only occur where contexts, structures, teacher-student ratios, and schedules provide opportunity for the occurrence of genuine caring relations, even though these cannot be controlled or predicted.

Effective practice is not the primary reason to remain open to the ethical demand. Also important is that caring in this deeper sense is the source for understanding every other kind of caring. Of course, care-as-worry cannot be legislated, managed, or controlled. But the sporadic and spontaneous occurrence of this originary kind of care provides the basis for understanding the more practical caring responsibilities that we do expect from professional educators on a routine basis. As I was completing this paper I was invited to join several junior and senior high school graduation celebrations. Here is a fragment from a farewell speech by a junior high school teacher to her home-room students:

I will miss you. And I will think about you, how you are doing. I will miss the good discussions we have shared during class. I will miss the thoughtful and also the embarrassing questions in health. I will miss the penbook letters about novels. The poems you have written. And yes, I will miss even the arguments we have had about why it is a good thing in this day-and-age to study old-fashioned grammar...

Our home room has indeed been like a home. We have been like a family. And, of course, families have their difficulties and differences. I have admired how you, the students, have looked after one another, how you have shown sensitivity to personal vulnerabilities and strengths.

Like in any home squabbles did abound. Yet there were many of those special moments that will leave their traces—you know, those are the moments that an insight occurred, that a discovery came to mind, that a spontaneous chuckle, giggle or laughter broke up the class. Also the moments of a knowing look, a rolling of the eyes, or a quick clearing of the throat, and the occasional happening of a tear to the eye.

I want to say to the parents how lucky they are for having such wonderful sons and daughters. You have been special to me, and I will carry you forever in my heart.

What struck me is that in private conversation the above teacher expressed apprehensions: she was worried about passing her students on

to others, to senior high school teachers. Not uncommonly, teachers worry about particular students. A grade nine teacher said,

For example, there is Michael and Alex. Michael and Alex visit me five times a day for chats between classes, during classes and at the end of the day. They never leave without saying good-bye. I do a lot of listening. Everyday I know what is going on in their lives. These are kids who thrive on personal contact. And now they are leaving I wonder: Who will take my place? Will there be some teacher in that large impersonal high school whom they can talk to?

It is because a teacher feels addressed by the 'faces' of particular students, about whom he or she worries, that the teacher can remain sensitive to the sometimes 'faceless' multitude of all the other students for whom he or she is responsible. The point is that this deeper sense of care-as-worry is the source for understanding and nurturing the more derivative varieties of care that occur and are theorized and called for in our research literature and professional practices. Only by remaining attuned to our sense of unique responsibility can we insert into our professional ethical practices the general responsibility of caring in all its various modalities that our vocations require. For the cynics and the pragmatically minded, this may still be an unrealistic or a 'heavy' idea. Caring as worrying seems a burdening responsibility. But so it is a burden. It may not always be pleasant or delightful, but as Levinas (Rötzer 1995: 61) says, it is good: 'It's the experience of the good, the meaning of the good, of goodness. Only goodness is good.'

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