

Juan Luis Vives on the Constitution of a Moral Self: A Pre-
Enlightenment Perspective on the Education of a Virtuous
Individual

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Although the interest of educational philosophers in virtue and character education has grown considerably in recent years, they rarely use an historical perspective for examining it. This article explores the ideas of the great Renaissance educator Juan Luis Vives on the subject. It focuses on Vives' arguments that moral education should explicitly discuss desirable and undesirable personality traits, that it should promote self control and that it should teach people that they have an inclination both to the moral and the immoral. It is argued that adopting each of Vives' ideas might have marked moral benefits. The article concludes by suggestion that while Vives' ideas should not necessarily be adopted, greater attention should be given to the issues that they raise.

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Introduction:

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment has transformed moral theory. After more than two millennia in which the focus of Western thought was on the agent's moral dispositions, the emphasis has shifted to question of the right moral action. The two major post-Enlightenment streams of moral thought, the utilitarian and Kantian, seek to provide principles to guide moral action and heavily rely on the idea of universal duties (Statman, 1997, 5). In the last three decades, however, there is a renewed interest in the moral aspects of the agent's dispositions. Virtue ethics, which argues that *'the basic judgments in ethics are judgments about character'*, has been gradually gaining currency (Statman, 1997, 7). Similar developments have also occurred in the field of moral education. Following a long period in which the development of moral principles and moral reasoning were the primary aim of moral education, questions relating to character and personality traits are once again on the educational agenda (Wringe, 2006). Undoubtedly, this change is nourished by the mentioned transformation within moral theory. Steutel and Carr (1999) argue that what typifies the virtue approach to moral education is that it is grounded in virtue ethics. The roots of the revived attention to character education, nevertheless, extend well beyond moral theory. They stem from a general feeling that something has gone wrong with moral education; that it fails to face existing challenges and provide the hoped-for results (Cunningham, 2005).

In many ways, the return to character and virtue education marks a revival of the past. There is therefore, I believe, much that can be learned from the long and rich history of character and virtue education. Contemporary moral educators, nevertheless, rarely embrace an historical approach for examining it. One exception is the extensive work done on Aristotle's ideas on the matter. This article provides a different historical perspective on education's role in development of moral character by exploring the views of the great Renaissance educator Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540). Standing at the gates of modernity, Vives lived in an important historical crossroad. On the one hand, he shares with us many conception and beliefs that were foreign to Aristotle. On the

other hand, his views are not yet grounded in many Enlightenment assumptions and ideas which underlie and shape contemporary perceptions. This intermediate position he occupies already makes him into an interesting figure for historical investigation. My aim here, however, is not historical. I neither try to provide a comprehensive account of Vives' understanding of moral education nor do I discuss the period in which Vives lived. My aim here is rather to see if we can still learn from Vives something about character and virtue education. As expected, I believe we can.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section examines Vives' plan of moral education. It shows how Vives' belief that humans have both moral and immoral inclinations led him to argue that moral education should explicitly discuss desirable and undesirable personality traits, that it should promote self control and that it should teach people that they have an inclination both to the moral and the immoral. The following two sections further examine these three ideas. They highlight some of the benefits that can stem from adopting them. It is argued that Vives' ideas might still be of value even when his understanding of human nature is not embraced. The article concludes by suggesting that while Vives' ideas should not necessarily be embraced, the themes that they raise call for greater consideration and further analysis.

Vives' Conception of Moral Education

Juan Luis Vives, who worked with Erasmus, was born in 1492 in Valencia, Spain, but he did not stay there and travelled around Europe until his early death in 1540. While residing at Louvain he studied under and worked with Erasmus. Vives' influence on sixteenth-century Europe was notable. He composed important treatises on philosophy, psychology and history, but it were his writings on education which gained him international fame. He was considered to be, together with Erasmus, one of the two leading educational lights of the age (Watson, 1913). History, however, has not been kind to Vives. By the second half of the seventeenth century, he was almost completely forgotten (Fantazzi, 2008). Vives was then 'rediscovered' around the beginning of the twentieth century but yet again his appeal quickly receded (Fantazzi, 2008). Although today the contribution of Vives is no longer ignored, it seems that once more he does not receive his due place as one of the greatest humanists and educational thinkers the world has known.

Vives wrote extensively on education. Yet, since my aim here is not to provide a systematic and comprehensive account of Vives' educational thought but rather to illuminate some important aspect of his conception of moral education, the discussion can be limited to two of his major books on education and ethics. The first is *De Tradendis Disciplinis (On the Transmission of Knowledge)* published in 1531. This book contains Vives' most profound discussion of educational philosophy and includes a chapter on moral education. The second book investigated here is his 1524 popular work on ethics *Introductio ad sapientiam (Introduction to Wisdom)*. In many respects these books were revolutionary. In the present context, however, it is not necessarily the innovative part of Vives' work which is of the greatest interest to us.

In his *Introduction to Wisdom*, Vives (1524, 110) states that 'The highest subject in the liberal arts and learning is that moral philosophy which brings a remedy for the deadly diseases of the soul'. Much can be learned from this short sentence. Firstly, we can see that Vives connected moral education with the formation of a moral agent. In the *Transmission* Vives (1531, 254) recommends that moral education should be guided by a number of books that deal with 'right living and the formation of character'. He refers to works by Plato, Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca, Cato major and others. Interestingly, Vives (1531, 253) is critical of Aristotle and argues that his books do not 'impel the readers to want to live a moral life'. Vives, however, does not detach questions of character development from those relating to the right moral action. He argues (Vives, 153, 254) that moral education should inculcate 'weighty maxims' that bring people 'to act well'. Vives believed that in order to be moral one has to possess the right character but that developing the right character requires learning the principles of moral action. For Vives these two aspects of moral education could not be separated. Secondly, we can learn from the sentence above how significant moral education is for Vives. Vives, it is important to clarify, prioritises character education because he believed that it was essential not only for making people morally better but also better Christians. Finally, the sentence presented above also teaches us something about Vives' conception of human nature. We will return to discuss this subject later. Let us now move to examine his views on how morality should be taught.

To being with, Vives (1531, 42) argues that moral education should provide a clear picture of what is morally desirable. According to him, pupils can learn what character traits are desirable and how they should act by being exposed to ideal models (254). He strongly recommends that the teacher introduces to the pupils the lives, character and deeds of exemplary historical figures (254). He also expects the teacher himself to serve as a model for moral character and behaviour (254). He writes: 'The teacher of moral philosophy must be holy, pure man, with no ostentation about him, a man of practical wisdom not only with many kinds of knowledge, but he must also possess experience in ordinary life' (254). Moreover, he believed that the pupils should be brought to contemplate on what is morally good and why it is desirable to be virtuous. The teacher then had to provide reasons for why the good is desirable and not just rely on blind obedience (254). For Vives, however, indicating what is morally desirable was insufficient in itself. He believed that moral education also has to specifically address questions of immorality and elicit the influence of undesirable personality traits. Vives did not think that teaching about virtue will also lead to the acquisition of an appropriate approach towards the vices. Teaching about the moral and the immoral were for him two distinct operations; each had its own unique features. He therefore held that moral education must also provide a separate and clear picture of what is morally undesirable by teaching about the vices. The exposition of all vices was to be followed by their harsh condemnation and a demonstration of their destructiveness. The vices, Vives writes, are to 'be attacked energetically by the teacher' (255). According to Vives', education had to separately delineate which character traits and behaviours were morally desirable and which were morally undesirable, as well as, to explain and demonstrate why this is so.

Vives' idea that moral education has to explicitly deal with both the morally desirable and undesirable is grounded in his understanding of human nature. Like many of his contemporaries he holds that the self is divided into a lower part, which impels the person towards vice, evil and the immoral, and a higher part, which guides the person towards the good, the divine and the moral. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Vives does not identify the lower part with the body and the higher with the soul. 'The original feelings arising from the constitution of the body', he writes, incline some 'to what is good, [and] others to evil' (Vives, 1531, 80). For Vives both the higher and lower part of the self reside in the soul. He states that 'within the soul are found

learning and virtue, and their opposites, ignorance and vice' (Vives, 1724, 86). Vives sees neither the human inclination towards the moral nor the human inclination towards the immoral as necessarily dominant. He argues that 'with regards to . . . natural dispositions, I think we should not despair about the evil in them [humans] nor yet trust too much in good' (Vives, 1531, 83). While he recognises that individual differences might influence the strength and direction of one's dispositions, he maintains that dispositions to be moral and immoral are present in every person. They are, for him, two active powers that always find their expression within the human soul. He, therefore, comes to the conclusion that moral education cannot avoid confronting both virtue and vice which are natural to us.

Moreover, according to Vives, the existence of two opposed parts in the soul results in constant tensions within it (Vives, 1531, 251). Vives asserts that one of the central tasks of moral education is to make us fully aware of this struggle within the soul. The teacher, he writes, must 'show, again and again . . . that this life is a perpetual struggle, fierce and vehement' (Vives, 1531, 84). According to Vives, moral education should teach not only which traits are morally desirable and which are morally undesirable, but also teach that the grains of both reside within the human soul. It should clarify that all humans have a negative side they should fight against and alienate themselves from and that they have a positive side they should embrace and develop. Humans, Vives believed, should be made aware that their nature is divided and that being moral, therefore, requires constant effort.

The above understanding of human nature also leads Vives to emphasize the moral significance of self control. Since, as we have seen, he is persuaded that all humans have an immoral part, he argues that unless humans have the ability to control themselves they are bound to yield, at least occasionally, to their immoral and anti-religious tendencies (1531, 84). This brings him to conclude that self control is the basis of moral character and a prerequisite for acting morally. Consequently, Vives (1531, 229) places the development of an ability to control oneself as one of the primary aims of moral education. For Vives, making people aware that they have an immoral part was vital for increasing self control because it clarifies what is to be controlled and renders the importance of self control evident. Vives, however, also suggests other measures for developing it. Moral education, he writes, should teach

'by what things the emotions are aroused and developed; by what things on the other hand they are restrained, calmed, removed' (Vives, 1531, 251). In addition, he argues that moral education should develop practical wisdom which 'is the skill of accommodating all things of which we make use in life, to their proper places. . . [and which is] the moderator and rudder in the tempest of feelings' (Vives, 1531, 228). For Vives, then, having knowledge about ourselves and the world is an important ingredient of self control. Yet, he also argues that, like everything else, self control must be learned by practice and repeated exercise (Vives, 1531, 228). He believed that if people repeatedly practise self control it will become a second nature and that they will exercise it out of habit.

So far, the discussion in this article was confined to structural aspects of Vives' moral education. Three key ideas were highlighted; that moral education must provide a clear image of both morally desirable and undesirable personality traits, that it should teach that we all have inherent moral and immoral tendencies, and that enhancing self control is a vital part of moral education. We did not deal here with the more substantive aspects of Vives' view such as his understanding virtue and vice, his conception of good and evil, his perception of moral character and more. Although the content of Vives' moral education is of historical interest, I do not wish to examine it here since it is, I suspect, of little relevance for the modern reader. In addition, it is possible to disconnect the structural aspects of Vives' moral education from its content. I will therefore now turn to analyse some of the implications of the ideas highlighted in our discussion. I will stress the benefits that arise from embracing these ideas.

Moral Orientation

Let us begin by examining Vives' idea that moral education must both provide an image of the good person and directly address the immoral and the influence of undesirable personality traits. Many, of course, challenge Vives' idea that moral education could or should be guided by an image of a good person. On the other hand, however, there is a growing tendency, especially among critics of action-based or rule-based morality, to point to the essential role that the concept of the good and the good person play in morality (Parker, 2007). Iris Murdoch (1970), Charles Taylor (1989), Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) and many others seem to agree with Vives' claim

that moral education should provide an image of the good person. Moreover, contemporary conceptions of virtue and character education do indeed normally depart from an understanding of what are good or virtuous traits (Steutel, 1997, 400). Vives' view then is very much in tune with the ideas of various contemporary thinkers.

Vives' idea that moral education should also provide a clear picture of negative personality traits and the immoral, on the other hand, does not seem to be as widely embraced by present day thinkers. Although much has been written in recent decades about immorality and evil, current scholarship tends to marginalise their role within moral theory (Kekes, 1990). A glance at contemporary writings about moral education reveals that the increased importance assigned to virtue and the good is not paralleled by similar emphasis on the function of vice, evil and the immoral. While the latter are often used in order to highlight the dangers of a declining moral education or to indicate potential threats to morality, there are rarely seen as valuable moral resources whose discussion is an essential ingredient of moral education. Kekes (1990) ties the marginalisation of the negative in moral theory to the dominance of the Enlightenment assumption that human beings are either blank slates or have a natural propensity towards the good. According to this widely held view, immorality and evil are perversions of human nature and stem from a failure to properly develop its potentialities. The inclination to immorality is seen as the corruption of human nature and not as an expression of an independent and active force within it (Kekes, 1990, 133). If this is indeed the case then a need to deal with the immoral and evil inclinations arises only when a failure already occurred. According to this conception developing our positive potentialities should suffice.

Vives, we have seen, does not share this assumption. Vives' perception of human nature naturally lead him to conclude that moral educations must directly approach the immoral and explicitly deal with undesired personality traits. Firstly, if humans necessarily have immoral tendencies then moral education must tackle them because they would eventually surface. Secondly, if moral and immoral inclination stem from competing forces in human nature then questions relating to the immoral and undesirable personality traits must be addressed separately. Focusing on the desired personality traits will simply not suffice because it does not necessarily correlate with

overcoming the undesired. For example, developing our natural benevolence does not necessarily entail the eradication of our malevolent inclinations. For Vives, and for whoever adopts a similar line of thought, a moral education that aims to make people virtuous by relying solely on the image of the good is bound to fail because it provides an insufficient response to the challenges arising from our immoral tendencies. Vives' ideas regarding human nature and the way in which the moral and immoral stand in relation to each other pose, I believe, a serious challenge to conventional thinking about moral education. This is especially true since they seem to be supported by recent development in psychoanalysis and evolutionary biology (Rustin, 1997).

I want to argue, however, that even if we do not embrace Vives' understanding of conflicting human inclinations, or a similar one, his idea that moral education should provide a clear image of both desirable and undesirable personality traits and actions might still yield important moral benefits. To do so I will rely on Charles Taylor's conception of moral orientation. In his insightful *Sources of the Self – the Making of Modern Identity* Charles Taylor (1989, 33) argues that holding a conception of the good which stands independent of our desires, inclinations and choices is indispensable for human agency. Without such a conception of the good, he holds, we will be unable to develop our identity which is primarily constituted by our commitments and identification to what we consider to be worthy in itself (Taylor, 1989, 27). Once we have a conception of the good, however, we are able to develop our identity by orienting ourselves within a moral space; 'a space in which questions arise regarding what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary' (Taylor, 1989, 28). Having a conception of the good enables us to create our identity by situating ourselves in relation to it. Furthermore, it also permits us to judge the direction in which our life is going; whether we move toward or away from the good (Taylor, 1989, 47). If we accept Taylor's ideas then providing tools for orienting ourselves within the moral space is a central task of moral education.

Vives, we have seen, argued that moral education must present a clear picture of the good person. He thereby promotes an image of the good which will, according to Taylor, provide the necessary conditions for enabling the pupils to orient themselves

within the moral space. But Vives' program of moral education, I want to claim, further facilitates one's ability to orient within the moral space. It does so by offering a picture of what is morally undesirable which is separated from that of the good. Having a picture of what are morally undesirable or bad personality traits increases the number of reference points available to the agent in order to orient oneself. The agent can now locate oneself both in relation to the good and in relation to the bad. For example, a person who learns to control his cruel tendencies but is still very far from becoming compassionate might be able to better locate himself within the moral space when having both a perception of moral and immoral personality traits because such a dual perception enables one to perceive one's life as moving in the right direction not only when getting closer to the good but also when moving away from the bad. Having more points of reference the agent should possess a better understanding of one's position in the moral space and the direction in which one's life is moving.

Moreover, the introduction of a separate conception of the immoral enables the agent to orient oneself in additional ways. Orienting oneself in relation to the good relies on attraction, affirmation and acceptance. On the other hand, orienting oneself in relation to the bad or the immoral relies on rejection, repulsion and negation. The latter are powerful mental forces that play an important part in the constitution of the self (Ver Eecke, 2006). Unless properly guided and carefully balanced these forces can become extremely destructive. When rightly directed, nevertheless, they might have, as Vives recognized, an important function in orienting oneself within the moral space. They provide us with an additional perspective from which we can examine our moral convictions. By negating and rejecting we often develop a clearer and sharper view of our moral convictions; a view that is not always possible to arrive at through affirming and accepting. In addition, the moral motivation that stems from striving to the good and wanting to achieve it is not always identical with the moral motivation that arises from our willingness to avoid an evil. There are times when the latter might move us while the former would not. The forces and motivation that enable us and move us to curb an inclination to be cruel are very different from those which lead to benevolent dispositions. Having a concept of the immoral and undesirable then can provide an important source of motivation for adopting a moral character. It might

even be indispensable for successfully locating and orienting ourselves within a moral space in a way that would allow us to become virtuous.

We have seen one important possible benefit of Vives' idea that moral education should provide a clear conception of moral and immoral personality traits. It might also hold others. Knowing about our immoral inclination can help us to become more aware of them and devise better ways deal with them (Kekes, 1990, 206). Knowing about the immoral inclinations of others can improve our readiness and capacity to cope with them (Kekes, 1990, 206). In addition, as Dews writes (2008, 4-5), 'confronting evil and the immoral offers a unique moral experience because 'it strains our powers of comprehension, forces us to reconsider our habitual notion of human action'. More, of course, can be gained from teaching about the immoral and morally undesirable. I do not, nevertheless, want to go as far as to claim that such teaching must inevitably become an integral part of moral education. Teaching about the immoral might also have negative consequences. For example, it might entail a psychic toll or expose children to damaging moral influences. What we can, I think, learn from Vives is that focusing on the immoral and undesirable personality traits can make a contribution to moral education whose cost and especially benefits are to be more thoroughly examined and carefully weighed.

Enhancing Self Control

Let us turn to deal now with Vives idea that one of the primary aims of moral education is to teach self control. Contemporary writers tend to view self control as morally neutral. It is rightly argued that while self control can help achieve moral ends and lead to virtue it can equally serve to pursue immoral aims. Murders and sadists are also often required to exercise self control in order to achieve their aims. Consequently, contemporary writers on moral education such as Von Wright (1963), Peters (1968), Carr (1991) and Steutel (1999) are mainly interested in understanding the relationship between virtue and self control. For most of them self control derives its moral significance from its potential contribution to a set of specific virtues. As a result, the current tendency is to give priority to the development of these virtues and to value self control mainly for its contribution to them. Self control is rarely viewed as a general skill which has its own moral worth and should be taught for itself.

Once, nevertheless, we embrace Vives' view that humans naturally have an inclination towards both the moral and the immoral, self control receives a new significance. As was mentioned in the second section, it becomes a prerequisite for being virtuous. While it is held that the existence of innate moral inclinations could lead to acquiring certain virtues without necessitating self control, one cannot be a virtuous person without exercising self control because unless one is able to control one's natural inclinations one is bound to develop immoral traits and act in immoral ways. In addition, the view that humans have an innate inclination towards the immoral also implies that this inclination could emerge in different contexts and take various forms. If this is indeed the case then the effects of our immoral tendencies are unpredictable and the best way to counter them becomes developing a general ability to exercise self control. Self control is still perceived as having the potential to become morally destructive but it is seen as morally indispensable and it is therefore viewed as having an inherent moral worth. From this it follows that a good moral education must develop self control and then ensure that it is not used for the wrongs ends. Vives, we have seen, embraced this line of thought. He argued that moral education should enhance self control and properly direct it by instilling a clear picture of what is morally desirable and undesirable.

We can, however, reach similar conclusions regarding the moral worth of self control without assuming, like Vives, that our inclination towards the immoral has an internal source. As Steutel (1999) notes, in contemporary moral theory self control is normally related to restraining natural tendencies but rarely linked to the control of inclinations which are acquired from external sources. Yet human inclinations are often shaped by external forces whose influence conflicts with the demands of morality. For example, even if a person is not naturally cruel he might develop an inclination towards it by watching it glorified on TV. Like innate immoral inclinations, acquired immoral inclinations can take numerous shapes and evolve in unforeseen directions. Here too a general ability to exercise self control is can therefore be extremely beneficial. The presence of inclinations towards the immoral, whether its source is internal or external, renders a general ability to exercise self control pivotal for the formation of a moral character.

Moreover, it is not even necessary to maintain that people have an inclination towards the immoral in order to view self control as an essential ingredient a moral character. For example, in his interesting investigation into the structure of moral character Blasi (2005) maintains that in order to achieve the levels of willpower and integrity necessary for having a moral character one needs a considerable degree of self control. He also shows that self control is often an important part of forming moral motivation (Blasi, 2005). Blasi's investigation thereby highlights the significance of self control for moral character even when we do not assume the existence of immoral tendencies. In addition, the view that a general ability to exercise self control is indispensable for moral character has also been supported by numerous empirical studies (Baumeister, Heatherton, 1996). A link has been found between criminal and immoral behaviour and a lacking ability to exercise self control (Hirschi, 2004). Psychological studies have pointed to the vital role that an ability to exercise self-control plays in preventing self-regulations failures which are a major source of deviant and immoral behaviour (Baumeister, Heatherton, 1996). In light of these findings and the above discussion, Vives argument that teaching self-control is a central aim of moral education should, I believe, at least be re-examined. Moral education, it seems, can benefit from a deeper understanding of the role that self-control plays in creating a moral character and not just from considering its contribution to specific virtues.

As we have seen in the second section of this article, Vives did not only emphasise the moral importance of self control but also suggested ways to enhance it. He argued that education should improve the ability to control ourselves by increasing deliberative capacities, by forming habits and by making people aware that they have an inclination both to the moral and the immoral. While the first two ways suggested by Vives are very much in line with what is normally held today (Steutel, 1999), the third might appear archaic. It brings to mind the concept of original sin and other pessimistic doctrines that the Enlightenment had struggle to refute. It also seems to conflict with a widespread conviction that accepting ourselves as we are and having a positive image of ourselves are necessary for our mental health. The idea that moral education should teach people that they have a part which is immoral is therefore rarely even considered.

In Vives' scheme of moral education, nevertheless, teaching people that they have inclinations towards the moral and the immoral and that the two are in constant struggle occupied a central place. The main reason for this was that he held that teaching it accurately reflected the state of affairs in the world. Vives believed that by teaching this moral education simply provided people with a better understanding of the forces that direct them, the obstacles they encounter and the difficulties they face. Gaining this improved understanding, Vives was persuaded, was a key step in acquiring the means that would enable people to develop morally desirable personality traits. As we can see, Vives' argument that moral education should teach that people have opposing moral inclinations was closely related to his understanding of human nature. What I want to do next, however, is to highlight how teaching it could fulfil other moral functions that are not necessarily linked to Vives' specific understanding of human nature.

The idea of an internal struggle between opposing moral inclinations permits us to construct a personal narrative around two powerful notions; that of overcoming evil and that of fulfilling our inherent potential. It leads us to view life as a quest; a quest towards the good in which we need to overcome internal obstacles in our way to fulfil our inherent potential. Perceiving life in such a way, I believe, can offer a sense of profound moral accomplishment and pour meaning into our moral strivings. To begin with, the idea of overcoming internal evil or transcending our inclination towards the immoral adds an important dimension to our moral experience which is often lacking when the presence of such inclinations is not acknowledged. When it is thought that morally we are blank slates or that we only have an inclination towards the good, to be good and virtuous is perceived as natural to us and we can only be blamed for failing to be so. On the other hand, the conviction that we have of immoral inclinations makes being good or virtuous seem like a difficult task, but in this case every step in the right direction is therefore an achievement. The idea that we need to overcome of immoral inclination allows one to take pride in being moral because it becomes a personal accomplishment.

Moreover, the idea that we have positive inclinations makes the negation of our inclination towards the immoral only one aspect of being virtuous. If we view ourselves as have competing inclinations then to be virtuous or morally good we are

also required to bring to the fore the positive side in us, namely to follow our moral inclination. To become virtuous then is to attain human excellence by overcoming that which is flawed in us and manifesting that which is noble (Manent, 1998). Tying virtue to human excellence helps place our quest to be virtuous within a wider context. It makes being virtuous central for fulfilling our human potential and therefore an end worthy in itself. This can, of course, add meaning to our moral strivings because it explains why we should become virtuous. As Manent (1998, 21-49) notes, both ancient and Christian moralists recognised this and made the idea of attaining human excellence and developing human potentialities the corner stone of their moral conceptions.

In addition, as was mentioned in the second section, teaching that we have opposing moral inclinations can serve to promote self control. Since the value assigned to it stems from the recognition that there is something that should be controlled, by making people aware that they have an inclination towards the immoral that constantly influences them they are brought to appreciate the importance self control. This will also commonly result in enhanced readiness to exercise it since most people are willing to counter what they perceive as unwanted inclinations. The view that we have a part which is inclined to the immoral, then, can produce a strong internal motivation to exercise self control. Moreover, teaching that we also have an inclination towards the moral can also contribute to willingness to exercise self control. It prevents people from perceiving themselves as inherently bad and from viewing the motivation to exercise self control as only externally imposed. Both of these phenomena can seriously impede self control because they can make it seem futile, unnatural and coercive. Once the formation of a moral character appears more feasible and the control of our immoral inclination more natural the motivation to exercise self control self control is likely to rise.

It follows from the above that teaching that we have an inclination both to the moral and the immoral has some marked moral benefits; it can generate a feeling of accomplishment, it can infuse meaning into having a moral character and it can serve to improve self control. Yet, like in the previous section I do not wish to argue that Vives' proposal should be accepted. Teaching people that they have both an inclination towards the moral and the immoral might have considerable implications.

It might, for example, create a feeling that people are not responsible for their immoral behaviour because it is inherent in them. It is, however, I believe, important to understand what moral purposes teaching it serves, because it might offer some valuable insight into the current state of affairs. Maybe we will discover that if we do not embrace we need to find a way to compensate for the lost benefits.

Conclusions

This article has examined Vives' views regarding three main issues in moral education: the place of teaching about the morally undesirable, the significance of self control, and the self conception of the individual in relation to question of good and evil. Vives, we have seen, offers what today is an uncommon perspective on these issues. By further analysing some of the implications of his views, I have tried to show that Vives ideas have their own marked moral benefits even if do not accept his understanding of human nature that underlies them. My aim here was not to advocate the embracement of Vives' views but rather to raise awareness to the issues examined and offer a different perspective on them. I hope that I have succeeded.

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