

ACTING OUT CARING: AN ANDROGYNOUS TRAIT

CLAYTON FUNK

A problem in gender studies concerns frequent critique of sex-role stereotypes. But how often do we analyze characteristics that men and women have in common? The notion is doubtful that women must be essentially nurturant and empathic, and that men must be analytical and assertive. The strongest educators possess the best of both, no matter the gender, and are usually capable of modeling a sensibility of caring about learning.

Caring has been discussed psychologically and philosophically. In the psychological sense, Sandra Bem's theory of "psychological androgyny" views masculinity and femininity as two logically independent (orthogonal, perpendicular) and linear, bipolar ends of continua, thus reflecting the concept that one can be both masculine and feminine (Bem, 1976, p. 49). On one end of this scale are the masculine characteristics, one of which is the intellect. On the other end are feminine characteristics, one of which is empathy. Bem might argue that an educator, aware of the tension between intellect and empathy, usually behaves in psychologically androgynous ways. Male or female teachers who can be both analytical and empathic are the most effective.

Just as the above apparatus of androgyny helps us understand intellect and emotion, in a philosophical sense, it is arguable that a complete education balances one's knowledge with one's emotional responses to temper one's "know how." In other words, "know how" or skill informs our decisions, and that knowledge is tempered by an awareness of feelings. This tension is cultivated by educators whose plans usually consider both. Content is stored as knowledge, while empathy and judgments direct the making of choices (Martin, 1981). These informed, careful choices affect the welfare of others and can be generalized as caring. In terms of sex role characteristics, such caring is often seen as a feminine trait, attributable to women alone. However, the acting out of caring is more androgynous; it involves the memory of caring in tension with the spontaneity of sensing *when* to care.

Defined in many ways, caring is evident in traits, like integrity, self-respect and self-criticism, which are usually difficult to explain, yet are considered vital to education. In some settings, such as classes in morals and ethics, these traits are emphasized formally. In other more informal settings, the modeling of these character traits compose the classroom atmosphere. Modeling in this way is a "carefulness" about teaching and learning. Through it, we sharpen our concern for learning. Caring augments our judgments about ourselves and others. To care about a person, or the craft of one's painting involves attention and sensitivity. The caregiver may choose to carry out or to ignore the claim of the Other.

Nell Noddings (1976) argues that direct, externally observable action is not always necessary to caring. The complex delicacy of human empathy can either enhance or annihilate classroom climate. If it does not fall in student's best interest for teachers to draw on a student's drawing, or tell the student which color to choose, then too much involvement may rob a student of their power of decision making. However, if the teacher decides to be patient and allows the student to risk an artistic experiment, then allowing the student to decide is an example of caring that seems appropriate. A quiet discussion afterwards on the consequences of the decision relates the outcome to the student's coping with success and failure later in life. In this way students are afforded a chance to structure solutions to problems for themselves.

Taking the time to deal with basic and vital issues of character promotes caring. As Ryle (1975) has observed, we are often reluctant to,

accept in theory an idea which we accept unhesitatingly in daily life, ... that people can ... learn to want things, ... admire things, ... care about things, learn to treat things seriously in word, deed and tone of voice, learn to be revolted ... to respect, approve and back things, ... scorn and oppose things and so on (p.52).

Such reluctance stems from over-emphasizing abstract thinking or doctrine. Becoming immersed in theory and doctrine distances one from practice and the risk of becoming empathetic with other people. Learning is driven by caring to learn; taking risks heightens our care about what is done. Such qualities are difficult to convey without the teacher's own modeling of caring and critical thinking. So, we can begin to understand why it is so difficult to teach pupils to be critical.

Finally, when we are the *least* aware, we often choose to act carelessly, and constantly obstruct the pathways through which empathy builds into learning. Caring, as complete and varied as it is, carries forth empathy which is central to trust of feeling and thought, both of which impinge on the risk of learning. Caring is difficult to define as a single quality, and yet its absence is vivid. Both men and women act out caring. The degree to which individuals are aware of their positive androgynous traits is the degree to which they are conscious of their caring towards others.

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SELECTED DELEGATE RESPONSES TO "MEN IN FEMINISM"

SARA SNOWDEN

In response to Ken Marantz's remarks, one woman questioned whether he was really "challenging us [women] to knock you off the mountain" because his own academic record revealed an acceptance of women. "This isn't a power struggle," Marantz replied, but added he thought women could be revolutionaries, "otherwise they won't change the [power] structure much."

Mario Asaro complained that he felt like he was in church listening to sermons. He said there should have been an open discussion involving the audience; the panel members spoke for 80 minutes before there was a chance for dialogue. He felt there was a need for the panel and audience to reflect upon and discuss relevant points after each presentation. Panelists' points were "excellent" and "well thought out," but the delivery was dry and sometimes hard to understand, he added.

However, Linda Ettinger of the University of Oregon thought the presentations were "catalysts for thought," with each statement reflecting the character of the panelists in a way she had not seen before. She thanked them for conveying their "passionate" feelings about the topic and responding on a personal level. A second audience member added she too liked the diversity of thought reflected in the panelists' statements and would like to see them published.

Jan Jagodzinski then said that personal discourse often fails to historicize, remaining instead at a phenomenological or interpretive level. He said he wanted "to continue to problematize the discourse of feminism," whereupon an audience member asked what he meant. Amy Brook Snider suggested "we speak so we can all understand." Jagodzinski countered that "difficult arguments can be slowed down by clear, easy language."

Another audience member wanted to know if competition is an issue with feminism, considering how pluralist theories open new ways of problem-solving, according to Kristin Congdon. Heather Anderson responded, "I'm not an Amazon or competitive; I only want some equality."

An audience member said he was disturbed that the panel had not expressed a more global outlook in their comments. But Jagodzinski said he thought that Karen Hamblen had addressed global concerns in terms of "eco-feminism." Marantz objected, saying the NAEA is an American institution which has a lot of problems, and "no way" can it begin to solve problems globally in a pragmatic way.