

COMMENTARY

On the necessary relation between moral development and worldview*

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ABSTRACT

In this article we elaborate on the relationship between morality, moral development, moral education and capitalism. Based on Narvaez's correct critique of the Western way of life, which is destroying the environment and may one day lead to extinction of life on Earth, we argue that this critique should not be stripped of its political side, meaning that it will not be complete if does not explicitly include capitalism as one of its roots. In the remainder of our commentary, we will try to show that in addition to heart, reason has a strong place in indigenous peoples' life that is frequently misunderstood. Finally, and taking all this into account, we maintain that moral and citizenship education need to be critical and intercultural, and explicitly discuss economic and political issues that underlie and affect human moral development.

KEYWORDS

Capitalism; indigenous peoples; interculturalism

We are very happy for the opportunity to comment on Darcia Narvaez's thoughtful Kohlberg Memorial Lecture, titled *Restoring Organic Morality through Indigenous Wisdom*, the main ideas of which we basically agree with. It is with pleasure that we read a paper that explicitly addresses the controversial topics of the Western way of life and its role in moral development and moral education.

Among the diverse and important issues Darcia Narvaez presents in her lecture, we address a few to outline some ideas. We will first focus on capitalism and its influence in morality. We will then address the relationship between reason and heart as a topic that can easily be misunderstood, leading us to an inaccurate depiction of indigenous peoples. Finally, we will discuss the indispensable mutuality needed for a true intercultural moral education, and the need to assume it from a critical perspective.

Capitalism and its role in morality and moral development

First, following Korten (2015), Narvaez makes a strong critique of the 'Sacred Money and Markets' story, of its narrow conception of what a good life is, the deterioration of welfare

and various other forms of wealth, including ecological biodiversity. However, she does not conceptualize capitalism in an explicit way; the term appears in the paper only once in a reference. There is a risk of losing sight of the systemic structural dimension of what Narvaez correctly questioned. That is, it is not a matter of changing a story, but rather the operation of the system in which we are immersed.

In relation to this, Piketty (2014, p. 571) pointed out the contradiction of capitalism's central formula, ' $r > g$ ', namely that 'the private rate of return on capital, r , can be significantly higher for long periods of time than the rate of growth of income and output, g '. This central contradiction favors inequality and the concentration of wealth. In the case of psychology, while capitalism per se and its effects have not been traditionally studied, there is already some evidence of its psychological effects. For example, Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, and Ryan (2007, p. 18) highlighted that the aims and practices of American corporate capitalism (ACC) often:

... conflict with and undermine pursuits long thought by psychologists to be essential to individual and collective well-being. These include helping the world be a better place, having committed, intimate relationships, and feeling worthy and autonomous. Further, we noted that ACC is built upon questionable assumptions about self-interest, competition, and the relationship between wealth and happiness.

In the same way, from a cross-cultural perspective supported by data from 76 cultures, Schwartz (2007, p. 56) stated that 'market-driven economies may increase the importance of the values generally considered less morally desirable [conformity, achievement and power] and decrease the importance of two of the three most morally desirable values [universalism and self direction]'.¹

Data obtained from our work with indigenous peoples from the Amazonian rainforest of Peru provides inputs related to these issues. At the 2015 Association for Moral Education (AME) Conference, we presented qualitative data about the subjective aspects related to the presence of capitalism in the life of the Shipibo-Konibo¹ people, an Amazonian indigenous group (Delgado, 2015). One key finding was the widespread perception of the decrease of practices of solidarity, a core value to the Shipibo-Konibo's culture. For example, Sanken Bina (Filiberto Romaina in Spanish), a 65-year-old Shipibo man, told us:

We practice a life of mutual support, mutual aid, including the food: you went fishing and brought fish and cooked, inviting everyone. All came and ate (...) It was the custom of the Shipibo People (...) but when we came here [Pucallpa city], as everyone walks around with their money, we almost lost the habit; we no longer call our neighbor.

In the Shipibo-Konibo's worldview, shamanism is linked to the diverse beings that populate the worlds that Shipibos recognize, especially with the spirits of the plants. Through various rituals, shamans communicate with these beings to understand or influence different areas of life. But shamanism has been commodified, losing much of its deep meaning. Many people now call themselves '*onayas*' (Shipibo shamans) and practice rites for tourists with ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic plant considered sacred by the Shipibo-Konibo people. However, these *onayas* do not meet the arduous requirements, prohibitions and diets that are necessary to be a true shaman. That is why Ranin Koshi (Jeiser Suárez in Spanish), a 35-year-old Shipibo man, told us that 'before there were *onayas* and *muerayas*.² Now, there are "*ayahuasqueros*", everything is for money' (Delgado, 2015).

The capitalist system, then, has costs and moral implications, both in terms of increasing inequality and the promotion of certain values that are functionally part of the system but

affect wellbeing. The forces of divergence, principally $r > g$, ‘are potentially threatening to democratic societies and to the values of social justice on which they are based’ (Piketty, 2014, p. 571). The nature of capitalism should be discussed by moral educators, for example, noting both positive and negative effects of capitalism and discussing the data considered by Piketty. That is, if we do not explicitly target and explain capitalism, we take the risk of discussing only effects and not causes, or at least not all of them. For education in general, and moral education in particular, these discussions are essential. Education means, among many other things, developing critical thinking. Education is not about training people who reproduce uncritically a system, capitalism or whatever else, but rather about nurturing citizens and moral agents who can question it, improve it or contribute to its transformation.

Reason and heart

Turning to another important point Narvaez raised in her paper, the centrality of ‘heart’ as part of our human heritage visible among indigenous peoples, our own research with Shipibo-Konibo and Asháninka peoples³ in the Peruvian Amazon basin has shown us that not only do we have plenty to learn from indigenous peoples but also that they are interested in learning from us and very much appreciate it when we, Western people, approach them with a sharing attitude. In this sense, a real intercultural encounter entails both learning from the other and sharing with the other our values and knowledge. It means learning and sharing without being naïve, critically remembering that there are unfair social inequalities between culturally diverse groups. There are people who believe that indigenous peoples think in a completely different way to Western people, and regard them as essentially ‘different’. However, our studies have shown that many indigenous peoples, even though illiterate and with very little experience outside their birth communities, reason autonomously and display a moral point of view when analyzing cultural traditions, values and practices (see for instance Frisancho & Delgado, 2014). They value reason as much as they do ‘heart’, and are a very good example of agency, critical thinking and moral reasoning about conflicts and dilemmas, and about their own cultural practices. The Shipibo-Konibo, for instance, use the term ‘*shinan*’ to refer to thought, good memory and concentration, and the word ‘*onan*’ to refer to wisdom—characteristics they strongly value and consider necessary to be a good person. They call such a person ‘*shinan jakon joni*’, somebody who thinks and is able to use his judgment correctly (see Espinosa, 2012).

Moreover, our interviewees from the Shipibo-Konibo people—men and women, most of them illiterate—deeply cherish education, and report making large efforts to provide their children with opportunities to attend school and to learn. The same is true for the Asháninka people. Working with ‘*Sheripiaris*’, the Asháninka shamans, we identified the many moral dilemmas they confronted during the practice of shamanism, and the variety of moral points of view they displayed when critically and thoughtfully analyzing their own cultural practices and the dilemmas they confronted (Frisancho, 2015). Like the Shipibo-Konibo, the Asháninka strongly value education and show a balanced view of human beings that integrates both thinking and ‘heart’. They use the word *Ayorenka* to mean ‘our knowledge, our wisdom’. We recommend being cautious when tackling the relationship between reason and heart, so as to avoid essentialism and to have a balanced view of indigenous peoples. As Piaget (1954/1981), p. 32) maintained, ‘there are not two developments, one cognitive and the other affective, two separate functions, nor are there two kinds of objects; all objects are

simultaneously cognitive and affective'. Among other things, this balanced view is important because indigenous peoples, as anybody else, need to become citizens, and citizenship education is about producing active, informed, reflective and critical citizens. Unfortunately, the idea that indigenous peoples use their heart more than their thinking, even though it is not present in Narvaez's article, is very common in Latin America among academics and activists, and carries within it a fundamental error which is noxious for moral education, interculturalism and for indigenous peoples themselves.

Narvaez maintains in her paper that for indigenous peoples a virtuous life is a life that is led by the heart. It is true that indigenous peoples have a strong connection with earth and have developed cultural practices that allow them to 'live well'. The deep meaning of 'living well' is difficult to translate into English because it comes from a non-colonial language and carries on within a very different form of seeing the world (see De Souza Santos, 2010). Every aboriginal culture has its own version of it; for instance, it is called '*Kametsa Asaike*' in the Asháninka language, '*Sumak Kawsay*' in Quechua, and '*Tiichajil*' for the Guatemalan Mayan Ixil. However, it is also true that these cultural practices change, and indigenous peoples show critical thinking about them. For instance, one of our interviewees, an Asháninka elementary school teacher (Frisancho & Delgado, 2014, p. 154), explicitly brought up the need for using a human rights framework to analyze cultural practices, and made it clear that it is necessary to be reflective upon their own cultural traditions. She says (the translation is ours):

We know culture is not static, it changes. As long as cultural practices allow us to develop, to live well, to feel good as people, we must keep passing them on to our children. But if these practices affect or disrupt our way of living, if a cultural practice does not contribute to being on good terms with our family, with our environment, to live well in our land, we should disregard it. We must identify which cultural practices make us live in conflict, which infringe or violate the rights of children. We have to take that into account to see if a practice is good or harmful.

And she goes on, explaining:

Some people only see their cultures; they are only looking at their particular culture, their communities, because they have not had the opportunity to go out. So, it is important to work with them for them to realize that they have to respect individual decisions. Many times families follow traditions and do not respect personal decisions; for instance, in the Asháninka culture children were not allowed to have a say because it was considered disrespectful to adults. This has to change; people have to understand that it is important to listen to others, not only to children but also to mothers, to women, because they have rights. It is a process; we have to look to our cultures and also look to ourselves to be better. Children have to develop as persons; they are human beings and have rights. I as an Asháninka woman say that we have to work with them, make people go through a reflective process because families have to understand that traditions cannot go against rights.

In the same vein, cultural practices such as punishment also change and are the object of rational discernment. Narvaez discusses parenting practices of small-band hunter gatherer groups, citing the work of authors like Colin Turnbull and Inge Bolin. There is anthropological literature that also shows that children from some Amazonian indigenous communities are not punished (Tassinari & Guedes, 2015). However, as most indigenous peoples no longer live in small groups as hunter gatherers, these cultural practices may be changing. Our own research and work experience with Amazonian indigenous peoples has shown us that they use different strategies to control children's conduct. Punishment is usually not physical, but mostly verbal and aimed at enhancing children's capacity for reflection and

thinking. The important point here is to see that, as an Asháninka teacher and community leader explained to us during an informal conversation, they punish their children ‘as everybody else does, depending on the seriousness of the transgression’, showing reflective processes and variability in the disciplinary strategies and punishments they use to educate their children.

Moral education and interculturalism

Interculturalism means actively maintaining open relations of mutual recognition. This implies going beyond the ‘inclusion’ of indigenous groups into mainstream society, which frequently refers to a process of assimilation of these groups into the ways of life of the Western culture. In this process, because the hegemonic culture is omnipresent and heavily influences them, indigenous groups usually lose their traditional values, views of the world and ways of living (Tubino, 2015). Instead, interculturalism and intercultural education need to treat every person as equal in rights and, at the same time, be sensitive enough to recognize and respect cultural differences.

In many countries intercultural education is still blind to the difference in power between Western and indigenous peoples. Because of this, many educational programs are limited to sharing cultural experiences such as traditional festivities, costumes and food. They do not go into deeper and often controversial questions related, for instance, to the meaning of life, the role money and other economic goods should play in society or how gender relationships should be, much less explore economic trends, the political system of the country or global processes of economic, social and political changes, including the role of capitalism in the commoditization of indigenous values and ways of life. As we know, following Bronfenbrenner’s (2001, 2005); (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) bioecological approach to human development, individuals are affected by the macrosystem, but these systemic processes are rarely addressed during classes.

We are very aware that indigenous peoples suffer cultural oppression and cannot exercise citizenship under equal conditions, which undoubtedly affects moral and citizenship education; neither moral education nor citizenship education is possible when discrimination and asymmetry exist among groups (Cruz, 2014; Tubino, 2004a, 2004b, 2015). We advocate for a kind of interculturalism that critically touches the deep roots of inequality. In this vein, in a global and diverse society such as our current world, moral education needs to integrate cultural, social and spiritual perspectives of both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, which means providing the conditions for a true dialog between indigenous values and mainstream hegemonic values. In search of this goal, we should always be very aware that intercultural moral education needs to be critical, meaning that it cannot remain naïve and functional to the system but needs to critically analyze and challenge the difference of power and the deep roots of social injustice. The goal of education, as we have already said, should be to form autonomous and critical individuals who do not passively accept dogmas imposed on them from outside.

We completely agree with Narvaez when she asserts that the hegemonic culture of ‘wealth’ is being forced upon and is destroying the biological and cultural diversity around the world. It is also true that most indigenous societies typically live sustainably whereas we Westerners do not. They consider the earth to be sacred and have a very intimate knowledge of nature. They emphasize cooperation over competition, know much better how to

maintain a reciprocal relationship between the earth and humans, and are caretakers of Mother Earth in a way we are not. We recognize this, and precisely because of this recognition, we strongly believe that both moral and citizenship education need to be intercultural; there is no other way we can hope to achieve a sustainable future.

We should remember that indigenous communities around the world have historically experienced collective violence, and that this violence has one of its roots in the economic system that has dominated them, dispossessing them of their lands and properties, and destroying their traditional way of living. Peru's indigenous population has suffered historical processes of discrimination, and even today human rights indicators show that indigenous children have the lowest access to health care and quality education, high poverty and high numbers of undocumented individuals (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2010, 2011.) These conditions restrict the possibilities for them to achieve the kind of lives they have reason to value. As Sandel (2012) poignantly explains, many good things in life are degraded if turned into commodities. Critical moral and citizenship education has to take into account the question of power, and the open and violent but also subtle ways in which the dominant Western worldview imposes itself and prevails over the indigenous way of living.

Some examples of neglected topics will illustrate this point. For instance, it is necessary to make traditionally silenced indigenous women's voices more audible, and critically discuss in the classrooms the reasons for this historical silence. Another neglected topic that should be critically addressed is the absence of indigenous heroes from official history. In Peru indigenous heroes are often ignored not only by Westerners but also by indigenous peoples themselves, who are in this way alienated from their own past and their role in the nation's history. Leaders such as Runcato, a Shetebo man who unified the Shetebo, the Shipibo and the Konibo to fight against Westerners who were entering their homeland, or Juan Santos Atahualpa, a Quechua religious prophet and leader of the most important indigenous rebellion in the mid-eighteenth century, which recruited the Asháninka and other Amazonian indigenous peoples for a resistance movement against the Spaniards—a movement which is fundamental to understand the Asháninkas' cultural endurance, identity and survival (see Varese, 2004)—are frequently erased from school textbooks and classes, and go unrecognized by both Western and indigenous peoples, including modern Asháninka and Shipibo-Konibo peoples.

Assuming that ideology is central to maintaining cultural viability (Varese, 2004), we should critically discuss the heavy presence of the concept of the entrepreneur in basic education, analyzing its ideological roots and the hegemony entrepreneurship education is taking both in elementary and secondary education. The Peruvian Ministry of Education is integrating entrepreneurship as an educational goal (Ministry of Education of Peru [MINEDU], 2014), placing it into the curriculum without critically linking it to the neoliberal cultural paradigm or deconstructing it as an ideological mechanism for the reproduction of capital. More than simply financial education, which is aimed at enhancing financial literacy and helping students understand how money works in the world, entrepreneurship education seeks to make students successful entrepreneurs. In doing so, it uncritically assumes the narrative of the self-made person who can develop and manage a business to promote the country's economic growth and development. This is even more worrisome in a country such as Peru, where around 16–25% of the population is indigenous (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2010). Unfortunately, these educational programs, so

fashionable these days, do not analyze the ideological roots of entrepreneurship or critically examine the moral limits of markets (Sandel, 2012), nor do they link entrepreneurial practices to, for instance, historical episodes in which rapacious entrepreneurial initiatives enslaved and killed indigenous peoples and destroyed habitats (the Amazon rubber boom is an example). They also do not address current episodes in which, in the name of progress and national development, indigenous peoples suffer the usurpation of their lands or the violation of their human rights (see, for instance, <http://www.americasquarterly.org/peruvian-protests-explained> for an explanation of the 2009 'Baguazo' conflict, an indigenous demonstration against the opening of a vast area of their traditional lands to private sector development).

Conclusion

In our view, in order to preserve the world so all human beings can continue living in it, moral and citizenship education should not be stripped of its political content. This is of course controversial but, as Magendzo and Pavéz (2015) propose, controversial issues should be included and discussed in moral and citizenship education because rational argumentation about controversies is fundamental for democracy. In this vein, we also believe moral and citizenship education should be intercultural, privilege rational moral argumentation, and be linked to the pursuit of justice. To build a fair society, to respect everybody's human rights and to live in a more sustainable way, we all have to learn to sort out values and principles and engage in conscious discernment to decide what is right or wrong in different life situations. To reach this goal, it is important to learn from indigenous peoples and to enter into dialog with them, being critical of the economic and political systems that erode our moral development and human flourishing of both Western and indigenous peoples.

Notes

1. The Shipibo-Konibo, of the Pano linguistic family, is an indigenous group settled principally along the Ucayali River in the Amazon rainforest in Peru. With an estimated population of 22,000, the Shipibo-Konibo people represent approximately 8% of the indigenous registered population. After the Asháninka and the Awajún, it is the third largest indigenous group living in the Peruvian Amazon region (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2009). As their traditional way of living has changed, the Shipibos now undertake commerce activities, produce and sell handcraft, have developed community-based tourism initiatives, or work for social and educational programs. Because there is no up-to-date official information about indigenous populations in Peru, we can presume that the total number is higher than these data.
2. The highest level of shaman in Shipibo-Konibo's worldview.
3. The Asháninka is an Arawakan language-speaking indigenous group that lives in six different areas of the Peruvian Amazonian rainforest: Junín, Ayacucho, Ucayali, Huánuco, Pasco and Cusco. Because of migration, there are now also Asháninkas in Lima city. They are the largest Amazonian indigenous group, with 67,724 people, which represents 0.3% of the total population in the country and 1.7% of the population with an original language (INEI, 2009). During the armed conflict (1980–2000) they were severely affected. Even though there are not precise data, specialists have estimated that out of 55,000 Asháninkas, 10,000 were displaced, 6000 died and around 30 to 40 Asháninka communities disappeared (Commission of Truth & Reconciliation [CVR], 2003). Currently, the Asháninkas undertake a variety of activities to make a living; as well as cultivating their land, hunting and gathering, which was the

traditional way of living in the communities, they now embrace commerce activities, have developed community-based tourism initiatives or work for educational or social programs. As mentioned before, because there is no up-to-date official information about indigenous populations in Peru, we can presume that the real number is higher than these data.

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