

THE TEMPLE SCHOOL: TRANSCENDENTALIST PEDAGOGY AND
MORAL REGULATION IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

Dr. Matthew Schertz
Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences
University of Montana, USA

Abstract:

At the advent of the common school era in the United States members of the Transcendentalist Club directly challenged Lockean pedagogy and traditional, dogmatic religious instruction in favor of a dialogically-driven moral education experience that harkened back to Plato's academy. In particular, the Transcendentalists contested the ascension of empiricism in the common school movement at large and within the spiritual and intellectual life of their own brethren, Harvard's Unitarians. Greek and Latin, languages which had recorded the Western intellectual tradition for thousands of years, were being supplanted by the ascension of the modern sciences from the academy to the university. Many intellectuals were concerned that the liberal and fine arts would no longer shape the outwardly focused minds designing and building the modern industrial state. Wary of any materialistic cognitive scaffolding that could emerge from focusing solely on the empirical world, the Transcendentalists favored Kant and Hegel, upholding rationalism alongside Christian mysticism. A Transcendentalist, in the words of Emerson, "believes in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy....the spiritual measure of inspiration is the depth of the thought, and never, who said it." Schooling should therefore honor perpetual openness and depth of thought through various forms of expression, speech being one of them. In 1834, Bronson Alcott, a member of the Transcendentalist Club, opened the School for Human Culture in Boston, Massachusetts. Alcott sought to provide children with an education that honored personal inspiration and intellectual acumen through a pedagogy, which challenged dogmatic mimesis. Alcott argued that "the child is the book. The operations of his mind are the true system.... Let him follow out his impulses, the thoughts...in their own principles and rational order of expression...." Thirty boys and girls from the ages of three to twelve attended Alcott's school, which was designed to promote the intellectual and spiritual growth of the young. The Socratic method formed the pedagogical core of the curriculum at Alcott's institution. He used quotes from the Gospels, classical philosophy, and literature as jumping points for dialogue. During spelling lessons specific words were discussed to help elicit conceptual understanding and linguistic fluidity. Fortunately, Alcott's assistant teacher, Elizabeth Peabody, recorded many of these conversations. The paper presents an analysis of several of the dialogues presented in Peabody's text. Studying Alcott's specific questions, student responses to those questions, and the ensuing dialogical moves provides a gateway to understanding Transcendentalist pedagogy. In particular the paper focuses on Alcott's attempts at moral regulation, a concept defined by Rousmaniere, Dehli & Coninck-Smith as "the disciplining of personal identities and the shaping of conduct and conscience through self-appropriation of morals and beliefs about what is right and wrong, possible and impossible, normal and pathological." Alcott believed that reasonable deliberation is imperative for the moral regulation of children, because within the dialectical encounter the reflective mind is modeled. Moreover, Alcott argued that the realm of ideas enables one to experience the Good, and thereby avoid of the temptations of the material world.

Key words: Transcendentalist Pedagogy; Bronson Alcott; moral education

La escuela del templo: pedagogía trascendentalista y regulación moral en Estados Unidos de América antes de la guerra

Resumen:

Con el advenimiento de la era de la escuela común en los Estados Unidos, miembros del Club Trascendentalista desafiaron directamente la pedagogía de Locke y de la instrucción tradicional, dogmática religiosa en favor de una experiencia de educación moral dialógica, que remontaba a la Academia de Platón. En particular, los trascendentalistas impugnaban la ascensión del empirismo en el movimiento de la escuela común, en general, y dentro de la vida espiritual e intelectual de sus propios hermanos, Unitarios de Harvard. Las lenguas griega y latina, que habían grabado la tradición intelectual occidental durante miles de años, estaban siendo suplantadas por las ciencias modernas de la academia a la universidad. Muchos intelectuales estaban preocupados de que las artes liberales ya no dieran forma a las mentes enfocadas hacia el exterior, para el diseño y la construcción del moderno estado industrial. Desconfiados de cualquier andamio materialista cognitivo que pudiera surgir de centrarse únicamente en el mundo empírico, los trascendentalistas favorecieron Kant y Hegel, defendiendo el racionalismo, en toda la mística cristiana. Un trascendentalista, en palabras de Emerson, "cree en la apertura permanente de la mente humana a la nueva afluencia de luz y poder, cree en la inspiración, y en el éxtasis.... la medida espiritual de inspiración es la profundidad del pensamiento, y no, quien lo dijo." La educación por lo tanto, debe honrar la apertura perpetua y la profundidad de pensamiento a través de diversas formas de expresión, siendo el discurso una de ellas. En 1834, Bronson Alcott, un miembro del Club Trascendentalista, abrió la Escuela para la cultura humana en Boston, Massachusetts. Alcott buscaba ofrecer a los niños una educación que honrara la inspiración personal y la visión intelectual a través de una pedagogía que desafiaba la mimesis dogmática. Alcott argumentó que "el niño es el libro. Las operaciones de su mente son el verdadero sistema Que siga con sus impulsos, los pensamientos ... en sus propios principios y el orden racional de expresión " Treinta niños y niñas entre tres y doce años asistieron a la escuela de Alcott, que fue diseñada para promover el crecimiento intelectual y espiritual de los jóvenes. El método socrático formó la base pedagógica del programa de estudios en la institución de Alcott. Él usó citas de los Evangelios, de la filosofía y la literatura clásicas, como disparadores del diálogo. Durante las clases de ortografía palabras específicas eran discutidas para ayudar a elucidar la comprensión conceptual y la fluidez lingüística. Afortunadamente, una profesora asistente de Alcott, Elizabeth Peabody, grabó muchas de estas conversaciones. Este texto presenta un análisis de varios de los diálogos que se presentan en el texto de Peabody. El estudio de las cuestiones específicas de Alcott, de las respuestas de los estudiantes a esas preguntas, y los movimientos subsiguientes dialógicos proporcionan una puerta de entrada a la comprensión de la pedagogía trascendentalista. En particular, el artículo se centra en los intentos de Alcott de una regulación moral, un concepto definido por Rousmaniere, Delhi y Coninck Smith-como "la disciplina de las identidades personales y la formación de la conducta y la conciencia a través de auto-apropiación de morales y creencias acerca de lo que es correcto e incorrecto, posible e imposible, normal y patológico." Alcott creía que la deliberación razonable es imperativa para la regulación moral de los niños, porque en el encuentro dialéctico se modela la mente reflexiva. Más aún, Alcott



argumentaba que el reino de las ideas permite a uno experimentar el bien, y así evitar las tentaciones del mundo material.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía Transcendental; Bronson Alcott; educación moral.

A escola do templo: pedagogia transcendentalista e regulação moral na américa antes da guerra

Resumo

Com o advento da era da escola comum nos Estados Unidos, membros do Club Transcendentalista desafiaram diretamente a pedagogia de Locke e da instrução tradicional, dogmática e religiosa em favor de uma experiência de educação moral dialógica, que remontava à Academia de Platão. Em particular, os transcendentalistas contestavam a ascensão do empirismo no movimento da escola comum, em geral, e dentro da vida espiritual e intelectual de seus próprios irmãos, Unitários de Harvard. As línguas gregas e latina, que haviam marcado a tradição intelectual ocidental durante milhares de anos, estavam sendo suplantadas pelas ciências modernas da academia à universidade. Muitos intelectuais estavam preocupados de que as artes liberais já não tinham dado forma às mentes, focadas desde o exterior no desenho e na construção do moderno estado industrial. Desconfiados de qualquer andaime materialista cognitivo que pudesse surgir do fato de se centrar unicamente no mundo empírico, os transcendentalistas favoreceram Kant e Hegel, defendendo o racionalismo, ao lado da mística cristã. Um transcendentalista, em palavras de Emerson, “crê na abertura permanente da mente humana à nova afluência de luz e poder, crê na inspiração, no êxtase [...] A medida espiritual de inspiração é a profundidade do pensamento, e nunca, quem o pronunciou.” A educação portanto, deve honrar a abertura perpétua e a profundidade de pensamento através diversas formas de expressão, sendo o discurso uma delas. Em 1834, Bronson Alcott, um membro do Club Transcendentalista, abriu a Escola para a cultura humana em Boston, Massachusetts. Alcott buscava oferecer às crianças uma educação que honrasse a inspiração pessoal e a visão intelectual através de uma pedagogia que desafiava a *mimesis* dogmática. Alcott argumentou que “a criança é o livro. As operações de sua mente são o verdadeiro sistema [...] Que siga com seus impulsos, os pensamentos [...] em seus próprios princípios e a ordem racional de expressão [...]” Trinta meninos e meninas entre três e doze anos frequentaram a escola de Alcott que foi projetada para promover o crescimento intelectual e espiritual dos jovens. O método socrático formou a base pedagógica do programa de estudos na instituição de Alcott. Ele usou citações dos Evangelhos, da filosofia e da literatura clássicas, como disparadores do diálogo. Durante as classes de ortografia palavras específicas eram discutidas para ajudar a elucidar a compreensão conceitual e a fluidez linguística. Felizmente, uma professora assistente de Alcott, Elizabeth Peabody, gravou muitas dessas conversas. Este texto apresenta uma análise de vários dos diálogos que se apresentam no texto de Peabody. O estudo das questões específicas de Alcott, das respostas dos estudantes a essas perguntas, e os movimentos dialógicos subsequentes propiciam uma porta de entrada para a compreensão da pedagogia transcendentalista. Em particular, o artigo se centra nas tentativas de Alcott de uma regulação moral, um conceito definido por Rousmaniere, Delhi e Coninck Smith como “a disciplina das identidades pessoais e da formação da conduta e da consciência através de auto-apropriação de morais e crenças sobre o que é correto e incorreto, possível e impossível, normal e patológico.” Alcott acreditava que a deliberação razoável é imperativa para a regulação moral das crianças, porque no encontro dialético se molda a mente reflexiva. Mais ainda, Alcott

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argumentava que o reino das ideias permite a alguém experimentar o bem, e assim evitar as tentações do mundo material.

Palavras-chave: Pedagogia Transcendental; Bronson Alcott; educação moral.



THE TEMPLE SCHOOL: TRANSCENDENTALIST PEDAGOGY AND
MORAL REGULATION IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

At the advent of the common school era denominationalism ensured that moral education would remain an enduring topic in the teacher education manuals, parenting periodicals, and editorial columns of a rapidly changing America. Pedagogical methods and curricular choices became a matter of intense debate among those concerned with the moral development of citizenry. While conservative reverends such as John Todd (1839) upheld Calvinistic conceptions of childrearing and mimetic catechetical pedagogy, others embraced the ascension of Locke's methods while still adhering to the creation of acquiescent Christian subjects (Schertz, 2009). Although moral persuasion did find purchase in the common school movement at large (Kaestle, 1983), it adhered to empirically focused moral questions, which featured "close practical application of right principals in motive and conduct" (Chowdery, 1857 pg. v.). Whether they were being led by reverends or reformers, teachers in the common schools were encouraged to focus on promoting right action rather than moral deliberation and the growth of the reflective mind.

Within this turbulent political environment, members of the Transcendentalist Club directly challenged Lockean pedagogy and traditional, dogmatic religious instruction in favor of a dialogically-driven moral education experience that harkened back to Plato's academy. In particular, the Transcendentalists contested the ascension of empiricism in the common school movement at large and within the spiritual and intellectual life of their own brethren, Harvard's Unitarians. Greek and Latin, languages which had recorded the Western intellectual tradition for thousands of years, were being supplanted by the ascension of the modern sciences from the academy to the university. Many intellectuals were concerned that the liberal and fine arts would no longer shape the outwardly focused minds designing and building the modern industrial state. Transcendentalist Elizabeth Peabody (1836/1874) claimed "...in common education as is well known, the attention is principally

directed to the part of the language which consists of the names of outward things...the attention has been bewildered, discouraged or dissipated by a variety of objects, and in the best cases, the brain has become one-sided and narrow" (pg. IV). Wary of any materialistic cognitive scaffolding that could emerge from focusing solely on the empirical world, the Transcendentalists favored Kant and Hegel, upholding rationalism alongside Christian mysticism. A Transcendentalist, in the words of Emerson (1842), "believes in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy...the spiritual measure of inspiration is the depth of the thought, and never, who said it" (pg. 390). Schooling should therefore honor perpetual openness and depth of thought through various forms of expression, speech being one of them. Among the Transcendentalists, dialogical pedagogy found its most ardent supporter in Bronson Alcott (1828/2004), who argued..."the child is the book. The operations of his mind are the true system.... Let him follow out his impulses, the thoughts...in their own principles and rational order of expression...." (pg. 93). Alcott and his fellow Transcendentalists believed that reasonable deliberation is imperative for the moral development of children, because within the dialectical encounter the reflective mind is modeled. Moreover, the realm of ideas enables one to experience the Good, and thereby avoid of the temptations of the material world.

In September of 1834, dialogical pedagogy found purchase when Alcott opened the Temple School in Boston. While Alcott's school has been the focus of previous scholarship by McKusky (1940), Haefner (1937), and Bicknell (2008) I am specifically interested in uncovering Alcott's attempts at moral regulation, a concept defined by Rousmaniere, Dehli & Coninck-Smith (1997) as "the disciplining of personal identities and the shaping of conduct and conscience through self-appropriation of morals and beliefs about what is right and wrong, possible and impossible, normal and pathological" (pg. 5). What is a moral being according to a Transcendentalist? How did Alcott shape the conduct and conscience of the children in his charge? What specific pedagogical



methodologies, curricula and classroom management techniques did students experience in the Temple School?

Fortunately Alcott's assistant teacher, Elizabeth Peabody, who taught Latin to the Temple School students, composed a manuscript entitled "Record of a School," which described Alcott's educational methods and wherein she summarized and in some instances directly transcribed many of the conversations he facilitated with students. Given the intensity of theological debate that swirled among the Transcendentalists and their critics, Peabody was concerned with the reception that Alcott's pedagogical methods would receive from the conservative reverends that upheld Calvinism. The book was published specifically to assuage critics and head off an anticipated media blitz.

Peabody's text offers us a window into the pedagogical world of the children in this unique institution. While there are limitations to any claims that can be made from the book, especially since it was written for public relations, the text does provide insight into Alcott's intentions and opens a window to many of the conversations he initiated with students. I would like to use "Record of a School" and some of Alcott's correspondence to better understand his attempts at moral regulation. Perhaps the most exciting part of this enterprise is that Peabody provides access to transcribed and paraphrased conversations with children, an exceedingly rare record during the antebellum period.

Alcott's Educational Enterprise

In "Record of a School" Peabody (1836/1874) highlights Alcott's claim that dialogue is a fundamental pedagogical tool which children initiate in their quest to understand the world.

The First Cause becomes the immediate object of inquiry. Who taught the hen to lay its eggs, said a little boy to his mother. The hen's mother, was the reply. Who taught the hen's mother? The mother had a mother. But who taught the first hen that ever laid an egg in the world?-he exclaimed impatiently....What mother or nurse, will not recognize that this is the way children talk? It is proverbial that children ask questions so deep, that they cannot be answered.
(pg. V)

While this propensity may be a reasonable response to confounding aspects of existence, Alcott asserted that the vast majority of schools do not support inquiry. Enlightened pedagogues, personified by Jesus and Socrates, are needed in schools to act as directing forces for engaging pupils in the dialectic. Without such pedagogues, children can easily be swayed by nescient empiricism.

Alcott's devotion to inquiry-based pedagogy was promoted by Peabody in particular, who lobbied on his behalf among Boston's elite to build momentum and financial support to start a school. In September of 1834, "The School for Human Culture" opened its doors in Boston. Gura (2007) noted that it soon became known as the Temple School because of its location in a Masonic Hall. Thirty boys and girls from the ages of three to twelve were initially registered at the school. Many of Boston's preeminent citizens, including Mayor Josiah Quincy, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, Samuel Tuckerman, and George B. Emerson enrolled their children at Alcott's institution. Haefner (1970) noted that the school was quite popular at inception, for the number of pupils grew to forty during the first year.

Peabody (1836/1874) opened "Record of a School" by describing Alcott's classroom, which was designed to "address and cultivate the imagination and the heart...he placed up on pedestals, fine busts of Socrates, Shakespeare, Milton and Sir Walter Scott...A fine cast of Christ...fixed into a bookcase, is made to appear just over the teacher's head. The bookcase itself, is surmounted with a bust of Plato" (pg. 1). In his conversations with students Alcott referred to these busts as ideal forms for the development of intellect and character. A ring of chairs faced Alcott's desk from which he facilitated conversations with various groups of students. When they were not engaged in dialogue, students sat at desks which lined the perimeter of the room and faced outwards. Alcott believed this dual seating arrangement would support both collective inquiry and individual contemplation. When not engaged in conversation, the young scholars were expected to diligently work on Latin or some other subject. All discussions were directed by Alcott. He wished to limit idle chatter, which he thought would chain one to an empirically focused reality dependent upon shadows or merely the things themselves.



Alcott's curriculum highlighted a tripartite division of developing faculties within the child. He believed children have a spiritual faculty, which grows through listening to sacred readings, conversing about the Gospel, writing in journals, engaging in self-analysis and self-discipline, and listening to the works of preeminent thinkers. Children also have an imaginative faculty, which is fostered by spelling and reading, writing about and sketching the natural world, creating maps in geography, illustrating words, listening to poetry, and engaging in conversations which focus on concepts and personal expression. Finally, children have a rational faculty which is fostered by defining words, analyzing speech, self-analysis, arithmetic, the study of the human body, and reasoning on conduct and discipline.

Alcott strongly believed that both pedagogical modeling and the very best curricula needed to work in concert to properly shape the conduct and conscience of students. Peabody noted that he was a perennialist. "We have fallen so far below the high standard of these authors, both in thought and style, that we do not appreciate their transcendent power. We do not rise to the apprehension of their beauties of language, their richness and profoundness of thought, their delicacy and humanity of sentiment" (pg. 18). Alcott often chose passages from the Gospels, ancient philosophy and poetry to elicit discussion, focus young minds in silent contemplation and inspire written expression. While the stories and concepts he highlighted reinforced Transcendentalist ideals, it is also important to emphasize that Alcott consistently modeled these ideals in the classroom. As Emerson's definitional quote indicates, depth of thought must inspire the Transcendentalist to overcome conventions and idol worship. In the case of the pedagogue, one cannot simply quote Socrates. Rather, the Socratic Method is mandatory for helping students overcome ideological positions based on shadowy impressions.

Conversational Pedagogy

While Alcott readily discussed inspirational quotes in the classroom, spelling words became the main curricular tool for engaging students in conceptual analysis. This dialectical experience was of utmost importance for

“it makes a great deal of difference in your characters, whether there are beautiful shapes in your mind or not” (pg. 61). Following an initial question by Alcott, students typically would offer potential meanings for a supplied word. After several possibilities were presented, Alcott would usually provide a more specific definition, which often led to more discussion. The following paraphrased conversation exemplifies this pedagogical process:

When they came to the word *brain*, in the spelling lesson, Mr. Alcott asked, what was the difference between the brain and the mind? One boy said the brain, when not used figuratively, means a part of the head, and the mind means the seat of learning and thought. Another said the brain is the soft part of the head, the inside; and the mind is the hard part of the head. Mr. Alcott asked him if he thought that matter could think. He said no. Mr. Alcott said, but you think the mind is matter, if you think it is the hard part of the head. A small boy here said, is not the brain the case of the mind? And another boy answered him, the brain is the seed of the mind. Two little boys said, the brain was the sense; one girl said it was understanding. Mr. Alcott said, I should say, the brain is the instrument by which the spirit acts; from which remark ensued a long conversation, to meet the difficulties of the older children, who had confounded the mind with the organs.... (pg. 96)

Here Alcott chose to introduce an enduring philosophical problem to the students. Alcott deliberately challenged the claim that the mind is the hard part of the head, because he wanted to emphasize the importance of clear distinctions and to promote the idea of the rational mind. What stands out in the conversation is the ingenuity among student answers, which indicates that they can readily engage in reasoned discourse, and that over time the older students have solidified a concept that needs, at least from Alcott’s perspective, to be reconsidered.

Alcott used many of these conversations to emphasize the importance of the transcendental mind. “The word rich was defined. It was decided that there were internal as well as external riches. He asked one boy if he were dying, which he would prefer to have, a whole world, to carry with him, suppose he could carry it, or a mind full of good thoughts and feelings. The boy replied the latter” (pg. 54). While conservative reverends worried that conversational pedagogy would lead to self-aggrandizement and foster impulsivity (Haefner, 1970), Alcott argued that dialogical pedagogy helped to regulate behavior.



Moreover, by guiding students towards “internal riches,” he posited that selfish desire was pathological.

While dialogue did introduce the potential for autonomous moral agency which many reverends feared, Alcott utilized Christ’s teachings and sermons as moral referents and often relied on casuistry to steer conversations. At times the points he made were met with resistance, as the following humorous exchange demonstrates:

Afterwards Mr. Alcott remarked that when they obtained one thought, they possessed more than a person who had earned many thousand dollars. The oldest boy said he thought five thousand dollars was better than a thought. Mr. Alcott said thoughts were the wealth of heaven. Another boy said that he should rather have five thousand dollars than all the thoughts he had had this last hour. Mr. Alcott said, here is a boy that prefers five thousand dollars to his mind. The boy replied that he did not do that, but only the thoughts of the last hour. Mr. Alcott said that the thoughts even of this hour were mind. The boy replied that the thoughts of the last hour were not all his mind. Mr. Alcott said that was very true; and possibly he had thought no thoughts in the last hour....One boy said he should prefer five thousand dollars to the thoughts of the last hour, even if he had had any. Mr. Alcott said “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, but lay up treasures in heaven”....They all said they should prefer the treasures of heaven to money; but some thought they might have the treasures of earth also.
(pg. 31)

In this exchange several students use logic to challenge Alcott’s authoritative statements regarding the supremacy of the mind. After having his initial claim challenged, Alcott responded by equating thoughts with heaven’s wealth. When the original challenge was expanded to include “all the thoughts he had had this last hour,” Alcott fallaciously tried to equate parts with the whole. When this particular fallacy was addressed, Alcott’s counterargument emphasized a lack of mind over the past hour, for if the boy had indeed had thoughts, surely he would have preferred them to the riches of the earth. When yet another challenge arose, which highlighted a desire for wealth, irrespective of whether thoughts were present in the last hour or not, Alcott countered with a biblical quote, relying upon the authority of Jesus to quell debate.

Why did some of Alcott's students resist his consistent pressure to pursue the life of the mind above all else? The majority of his pupils were from prominent Boston families. The enjoyment and pursuit of wealth was most likely promoted within their homes. Furthermore, students may have challenged Alcott because of his insistence on directing inquiry towards questionable, idealistic conclusions. His students sensed this, and responded by parsing his priggish argument. Their comfort in doing so speaks to the intellectual climate of his classroom. While conversations were directed towards a particular conclusion, self-expression was nonetheless encouraged. By emphasizing the rational mind above all else, Alcott set up an either-or fallacy that students were either forced to accept or challenge directly. The vote at the conclusion of the exchange shows that most of the students were able to rise above the fallacy, for both material and spiritual wealth were valued. Alcott, who was consistently penniless and ignored the importance of budgetary considerations both when running his school and taking care of his family, chose spiritual rewards.

Despite Alcott's efforts to deliberately pursue preconceived ends within the dialogical encounter, Peabody maintained that Alcott's own positions "are a secondary object of attention, after the mind has been opened into the region of Ideas through consciousness, by the key of well understood words." (pg. xii). Most of the conversations she recorded did demonstrate that Alcott was focused on promoting the realm of ideas. Other moral values and/or virtues were not his primary concern. He strongly believed that once a rational moral agent is created, future behaviors would thereafter be mediated.

We must recall that Alcott placed Plato's bust above all else in the classroom, for he wanted his students to become rational moral agents who would consistently regulate their own behavior after participating in the dialectic. He utilized moral persuasion to encourage students to internalize rational and spiritual concepts and modeled questioning to promote self-analysis. When students were not engaged in his conversations, they were expected to silently and diligently complete assignments. They wrote in journals, worked on their Latin, and read in absolute silence. "There was a noise. Mr. Alcott turned to the boy that made it, and said that the greatest and



most powerful things in the world made no noise. Did you ever hear the sun make a noise? There was immediately a profound stillness” (pg. 37). Alcott sought to ensure that the perimeter of the room was always conducive to quiet contemplation. This required consistent self-control on the part of the students and attentive monitoring by Alcott and Peabody.

Despite Alcott’s desire to have students internalize self-reflection to monitor behavior, “many boys deemed thoughts to be unreal, it was necessary, for outward things, which they did believe real, to take the side of conscience, and help to make them seem real and visible.” (pg. 76). On several occasions, physical punishment was used to end distracting and/or disruptive behavior. Peabody relayed that “the Ministry of Pain was God’s great means of developing strength and elevation of character” (pg. 22). Alcott himself was initially reluctant to utilize corporal punishment, but he quickly began to rely upon it with several of the older boys. In one particular instance Alcott insisted that the guilty party whip Alcott’s own hand for “they should not escape the pain and the shame of administering the stroke....except by being themselves blameless” (pg. 24).

Alcott’s resolve to have a silent working environment and use of the rod appears to contradict his adherence to the Socratic Method and rational agency. It is important to emphasize that Alcott wished to ensure that contemplativeness, both silent and within teacher-directed dialogue, was expected throughout the school day. While Alcott’s conversational pedagogy was innovative, his institution did promote a classical education, so his students’ experiences were otherwise probably similar to those who attended the Latin grammar schools of Boston. His use of the rod, however, was restricted to a few students. It was not a primary pedagogical tool. He did not rule his classroom through fear “...for nothing is so favorable to frank, open, unsuspecting, transparency of soul, expressed in look and manner,-as never to have been wounded, or ridiculed, or unjustly regarded, during the impressive season of life, when self-estimation is first forming” (pg. xv). Alcott’s conversational pedagogy and his personal dedication to Transcendentalism demonstrate that although he may have been frustrated by a student’s lack of

interest in the mind, he was not one to be swayed by anger or bitterness. Peabody's account portrays Alcott as a compassionate, thoughtful teacher who was well liked by his students. In several quotes many students claimed to enjoy the conversational experience and were thankful for being introduced to the life of the mind. "Mr. Alcott then asked all those who liked to think about their thoughts, better than about how things were made and done, to hold up their hands; almost every scholar held up his hands, for thoughts" (pg. 69).

Conclusion

Ironically, Peabody's effort to assuage critics opened the Temple School to attack. Conservative reverends used snippets from various conversations as fodder for their editorials in Boston's newspapers. They believed that children should not be able to manipulate the sacred and therefore Alcott's conversations were deemed blasphemous. Gura noted that attacks were persistent and relentless, despite the published support of Margaret Fuller and George B. Emerson (2007). Enrollment steadily declined. While some parents continued to support the Temple School for an additional year, Alcott's dedication to the abolitionist movement proved problematic for them. In 1838, Alcott invited an African-American girl to attend the school. With the exception of his own three daughters, the son of fellow Transcendentalist William Russell and the African- American child, all the other children were removed from the institution. Haefner (1970) noted that Alcott could no longer fund his ideal and his tenure as schoolmaster ended in 1839. Ultimately, irrational bigotry ended Alcott's attempt to foster rational moral agency.

Moral regulation was systematic at the Temple School. Within the dialogical encounter, Alcott continually emphasized the transcendental mind and utilized casuistry to steer conversations so the inquiry would ultimately reinforce Platonism and Christianity. In spite of Alcott's desire to often have a preconceived endpoint to inquiry, the children were encouraged to freely express themselves, which was unique to his institution. Students were also regulated by the physical design of the classroom environment. Strategically placed busts of prominent thinkers and Alcott's configuration of chairs created



a liminal space that fostered reasonable deliberation and individual contemplativeness. Throughout this schooling experience, Transcendental ideals were consistently normalized while an empirically focused reality was posed as pathological. Alcott struggled with those students who readily embraced the fruits of the empirical world, and at times relied upon physical punishment and public ridicule to shape conduct and conscience, but for the most part he depended upon the power of persuasion and peer mediation to reinforce his vision of morality. Despite criticism leveled by conservative critics, Alcott's pedagogical methodology did not attempt to perpetuate an autonomous moral subject, but a being whose superego was formed through a contemplation of God and elevating oneself above the realm of the senses. Ultimately, Alcott's school was a temple dedicated to the creation of the spiritually driven, reflective subject.

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