

ETHICAL COMPASSION IN EDUCATION TO OVERCOME HATRED AND HATE SPEECH

La compasión ética en la educación para la superación del odio y sus discursos

MARIA ORTS GARCÍA*

Universitat de València, Valencia, Spain

<https://ror.org/043nxc105>

maria.orts@uv.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1885-9465>

Suggested citation: Orts García, Maria. (2026). Ethical Compassion in Education to overcome Hatred and Hate Speech. *Sophia, Colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, (41), pp. 245-273.

Abstract

At present, hate speech constitutes a growing social problem that permeates different spheres of public and private life and is deeply rooted in fears and feelings of disgust, both individual and collective. This article offers a theoretical and critical approach to the phenomenon of hatred and the discursive forms through which it is articulated, identifying its main emotional precursors and emphasizing the central role that emotions play in educational and social processes. Drawing on the philosophical work of Martha Nussbaum, the article examines how emotions such as fear and disgust function as driving forces of hatred and why appeals to empathy are often insufficient to counteract its persistence and social impact. In response to this limitation, ethical compassion is proposed as a fundamental moral value capable of guiding human actions toward justice, recognition of others, and democratic coexistence. Furthermore, the article critically analyzes how hatred can disguise itself as compassion, allowing certain victim-centered narratives to appropriate the vulnerability of genuine victims to legitimize practices of exclusion, discrimination, and violence, as occurs in cases of extreme nationalism and xenophobia. From a critical hermeneutic perspective, the article invites a reflective reading of the analyzed discourses and highlights the need to incorporate emotional education and critical thinking into educational contexts, in order to promote compassion as a moral compass against hate.

Keywords

Moral education, Moral values, Critical thinking, Hate speech, Ethics, Civic education.

* She holds a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Valencia (UV) and a master's degree in Ethics and Democracy from the UV and Jaume I University. She is currently a pre-doctoral research fellow in the Department of Philosophy at the UV, thanks to a grant for University Faculty Training (FPU) from Spain's Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities. Her main line of research is ethics and civic education, with a recent focus on issues related to compassion and moral neuroeducation. She is the president of the Center for Philosophy for Children of the Valencian Community, as well as a board member of Escuela de Pensamiento Libre association. She is a member of the GEIMFUS-RIEF Group on educational innovation in philosophy and of the working group for training projects of the UNESCO Chair for Development, both at the University of Valencia (UV).

Resumen

En la actualidad, los discursos de odio constituyen una problemática social creciente que atraviesa distintos ámbitos de la vida pública y privada, profundamente enraizada en miedos y repugnancias, tanto individuales como colectivos. Este artículo propone una aproximación teórica y crítica al fenómeno del odio y a las formas discursivas que lo vehiculan, identificando sus principales precursores emocionales y subrayando el papel central de las emociones en los procesos educativos y sociales. Tomando como referente a Martha Nussbaum, se examina cómo emociones como el miedo y la repugnancia actúan como motores del odio, y por qué la apelación a la empatía resulta, en muchos casos, insuficiente para contrarrestar su persistencia. Frente a esta limitación, se plantea la compasión ética como un valor moral fundamental, capaz de orientar las acciones humanas hacia la justicia, el reconocimiento del otro y la convivencia democrática. Asimismo, se analiza críticamente cómo el odio puede enmascararse bajo una retórica de falsa compasión, permitiendo que determinados discursos victimistas se apropien de la vulnerabilidad de las verdaderas víctimas para legitimar prácticas de exclusión y violencia. Desde un enfoque hermenéutico crítico, el artículo invita a una lectura reflexiva de los discursos analizados y destaca la necesidad de incorporar la educación emocional y el pensamiento crítico en las aulas para promover la compasión como brújula moral frente al odio.

Palabras clave

Educación moral, valores morales, pensamiento crítico, discurso de odio, ética, educación ciudadana.

246



Introduction

In a global landscape characterized by major social challenges—such as the rise of extremist views, a loss of political and social trust, stark inequalities, and polarization—hate speech appears to be gaining ground, threatening social cohesion in our democracies. In this context, it is important to remember that such discourse often stems from deeply rooted fears—both individual and collective—and that it requires only an emotional trigger to spread easily among the public. Given the social impact of hate speech, it is essential to understand it in order to find ways to move toward its eradication. This reality reminds us that emotions play a decisive role in human actions. In this regard, can moral education offer solutions to address hate speech?

The aim of this article is to explore the phenomenon of hate speech by analyzing some of its emotional precursors, such as fear and revulsion, and to shed light on whether an education in and for compassion can serve as a good starting point for countering hate and hate speech. In this context, the argument put forward is that there is a need to reclaim or revitalize key values for our democracy, among which compassion stands out in particular. Thus, emphasis is placed on the ethical potential of compassion as an essential value for our democracies, noted for its moral strength and its capacity to serve as an ethical compass capable of guiding

and counteracting hate and its expressions. To this end, the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum will serve as the primary point of reference.

Based on this framework, the article is structured around several research questions: What emotions foster the emergence and legitimization of hate speech? How do fear and revulsion influence the construction of exclusionary narratives? And can moral education—especially education focused on compassion—provide ethical and pedagogical tools to counteract these dynamics?

The main hypothesis guiding this research holds that hate speech cannot be understood solely from legal or political perspectives but also requires an ethical-emotional analysis that allows for the identification of the affective mechanisms that underpin it. Consequently, it is argued that compassion—understood as a moral disposition linked to the recognition of shared vulnerability—constitutes a fundamental democratic value and a key educational tool for preventing the normalization of hate and strengthening democratic coexistence.

These reflections are developed within a problematic and highly topical context. This refers to situations in which hate is disguised as “compassion,” allowing victim-blaming discourses to usurp the place of actual victims in order to justify and legitimize hate (Gracia Calandín, 2023). A clear example of this dynamic can be found in the rise of extreme nationalism and the resulting xenophobia—a trend that is spreading like a virus throughout our societies, hence the importance and urgency of this issue. In this regard, it is considered essential to incorporate emotional education into classrooms to foster deeply human values, such as the one advocated here.

The importance and relevance of this issue are further evidenced by the increase in research and institutional reports warning of the impact of hate speech on democratic coexistence, especially among young people and in digital environments. The rapid spread of polarizing and exclusionary messages through social media and other digital platforms contributes to the normalization of discriminatory attitudes and hinders the building of relationships based on mutual recognition and respect. In this regard, addressing hate speech through moral education is not merely a theoretical reflection but an urgent social and pedagogical necessity, aimed at strengthening critical judgment, ethical sensitivity, and the capacity for coexistence in increasingly pluralistic societies.

From a methodological standpoint, the article is grounded in critical hermeneutics, an approach that allows for the interpretation of the analyzed texts and discourses and enables a review of the literature across



various works and research studies. The research draws on the analysis and interpretation of philosophical, pedagogical, and socio-ethical texts relevant to the study of hate speech and the moral emotions associated with it.

The choice of critical hermeneutics as a methodological approach stems from its established status as a methodology within the humanities and social sciences, particularly well-suited for analyzing complex ethical, educational, and political phenomena. Its interdisciplinary nature allows for the integration of contributions from philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, and political theory, fostering a comprehensive understanding of hate speech and the emotions that underpin it.

The text is structured as follows: it begins with a general overview of hate, understanding it as a major social challenge. From this perspective, fear and disgust are analyzed as the roots of hate. The analysis then delves deeper into the social impact of hate speech, ultimately focusing on the tension between vulnerability and victimhood, demonstrating how, in many cases, hate cloaks itself in victimhood to legitimize itself. In light of this context, the text highlights the need to restore moral values—specifically compassion—devoting a section to this topic. Finally, it concludes by presenting education as a space in which to cultivate compassion and critical thinking, which are essential for confronting hate speech and strengthening democracy.

248



Hate and Hate Speech as a Social Challenge

Before contextualizing this problem within the ethical-educational framework, it is important to understand hate speech. To this end, this first section will provide a brief overview of hate, exploring its possible emotional roots—namely, fear and projected disgust—in order to understand how hate speech develops.

The importance of addressing hate speech lies in the fact that it constitutes one of the main ethical, social, and educational challenges facing contemporary democracies. Its effects impact not only the individuals and groups directly affected, but also the quality of democratic coexistence, the recognition of human dignity, and the building of inclusive societies. In this regard, analyzing the emotions, narratives, and social dynamics that underpin hate speech is essential to understanding the processes of exclusion and dehumanization that weaken social bonds and erode democratic values.

Fear and Disgust at the Root of Hate

Today, we are caught up in numerous social, political, economic, and cultural pressures that manifest as challenges to our societies and our democracies. One of these is hatred, which sometimes manifests as violence and intolerance, and at other times through so-called “hate speech.” These phenomena have been in the spotlight in recent years, as they pose a “threat to the lives of people belonging to the most vulnerable and traditionally most stigmatized groups” (Gracia Calandín, 2022a, p. 1).

Differences can become the ideal pretext for driving us apart (París Albert, 2020). In fact, these differences are often exploited to foster detachment or distancing from a particular culture or group, which can give rise to what are known as “social phobias.” This term refers to the many social pathologies in which a phobia—understood as an aversion to or rejection of someone or something—is directed toward a specific group, such as xenophobia, homophobia, and aporophobia. This type of aversion is unique, as it targets an individual solely because they belong to or are associated with a specific collective or social group. In other words, “the harm is directed against a specific person or a specific group of people, not because of who they are, but simply because they are one, a few, or a group” (Cortina, 2017, p. 36). That insufferable indefinite article—to borrow the words of philosopher Adela Cortina—is what seems to justify all kinds of aggression against those specific individuals. These phobias, called “social” due to their marked social component, exhibit a series of characteristics that distinguish them from other, less systematic forms of rejection or intolerance.

The distinctive feature of these phobias is that the other person is identified with or reduced to a characteristic or attribute of a specific social group or collective. In this way, the collective becomes the target upon which hatred is directed, thereby creating a collective imagination based on suspicion, rejection, fear, and hatred. Consequently, just as with projected disgust, an asymmetrical relationship emerges between the two poles that are created—“them” and “us”—in which the individual doing the rejecting assumes an attitude of superiority toward the rejected.

The moment this asymmetrical relationship is established—one in which inequality prevails between the polarized groups—it reveals a failure to recognize human dignity, specifically the dignity of that particular person, who is being denigrated and reduced to nothing. This failure to recognize the other leads to rejection and systematic hatred (Cortina, 2017), thereby causing deep social rifts.



According to the *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy* (DRAE), the term “hatred” comes from the Latin *odium* and means antipathy and aversion toward something or someone whose harm is desired. In other words, the person harboring hatred harbors a desire for harm toward the other. This is often accompanied by other anti-moral feelings (Nussbaum, 2010) related to aversion—such as fear and disgust—which are at its root.

From an evolutionary perspective, fear has been key to the survival of species because it helps avoid situations that may pose a risk to one’s own life. However, in humans, fear takes on specific characteristics that make it an emotion distinct from that manifested in other species (Pinedo, 2020). One such trait is that, far from being based on accurate assessments, fear is associated with distorted thoughts and beliefs in which the other is viewed as a real or potential danger (Pinedo, 2021), often simply because they are perceived as falling outside the structures of dominant cultures. Our fears expose our human vulnerability and fragility; we can respond to this cooperatively, but also in a repressive and coercive manner. It is this latter way of confronting fear that generates and reinforces hatred, thus leading us toward the non-recognition of differences and social exclusion (París Albert, 2020). This is how the rhetoric of fear begins to gain ground.

Fear is often accompanied by another emotion that contributes to the spread of hatred: disgust. Disgust also has an evolutionary basis, as it functions as a survival mechanism by serving as a primitive rejection response to anything that could cause harm. This defense mechanism helped our ancestors stay away from certain harmful elements. In this regard, we can draw on the words of Nussbaum (2008) when she explains that disgust has to do with the boundaries of one’s own body, specifically with the idea of a problematic substance being incorporated into oneself. Consequently, what provokes disgust is that which reminds us of our own animality—that which is linked to vulnerability to decay, waste, and finitude.

Although revulsion or disgust has an evolutionary basis—and is thus an adaptive response to protect the organism—this emotion is present in many aspects of human relationships, as it provides a powerful means of transmitting cultural values. Through cultural evolution, the triggers of disgust have expanded to include objects and our perceptions of them that go far beyond human concerns about survival. In this sense, it is understood that disgust is not merely a physiological reaction, but is also a “charged emotion, full of cognitive content, linked to beliefs, associations of ideas, and perceptions (often entirely unreflective), and that has to do with imaginary or metaphorical contamination rather than actual contamination” (León, 2014, p. 28).



From this, disgust is largely influenced by social learning. Consequently, by “teaching what to be disgusted by and how to feel disgust, societies have an effective means of channeling certain attitudes” (Nussbaum, 2008, p. 239). Thus, the emotion takes on strong social, political, and moral dimensions, since “society exerts a tremendous influence on the form and direction that revulsion takes —i.e., in determining the objects that we will find repulsive” (León, 2014, p. 25). Thus, disgust and its projection are influenced by different traditions, social policies, education, and cultural practices.

It is understood, therefore, that cultural forces can foster the association between typically repugnant qualities and certain classes of people, thereby provoking responses of disgust toward specific social groups—a kind of exaggerated disgust that ultimately dehumanizes. This gives rise to a social dynamic based on fear and segregation, in which disgust is no longer merely projective but also moralized, encouraging the classification of others into morally questionable groups (Pinedo, 2020).

These types of emotions—which belong to the family of aversion, such as disgust, fear, and hatred—influence, generate, or exacerbate social distinctions of all kinds, whether based on social status, religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. Such categorization establishes a hierarchy, since one group asserts its superiority over the rest, even coming to feel invulnerable. Hierarchies, although a component of our evolutionary heritage, pose an obstacle to the recognition of equality in human dignity when taken to this extreme of competition for superiority (Nussbaum, 2014).

In order to perpetuate this social distinction —and thereby guarantee that supposed superiority— there is a tendency to stigmatize certain individuals or social groups, associating them with animal-like attributes and characteristics that inspire revulsion. “When a social group is stigmatized, the people who belong to it are identified with what is inferior, contaminated, to be excluded, ignoble, and unworthy [] they are stripped of their humanity and dignity” (León, 2014, p. 33). Through this projection of disgust, stigmatized individuals or social groups become repulsive, inanimate objects devoid of humanity and, therefore, groups with whom contact and interaction are denied.

This dehumanization of individuals through disgust and revulsion has been a mechanism that, unfortunately, has been employed throughout history.¹ Nussbaum explains that “disgust, which always serves the purpose of keeping us at a distance from our own animality and mortality, will easily take as its object other people and groups, who come to represent what is avoided in the self” (Nussbaum, 2008, p. 387). For



this reason, this projected disgust is occasionally conceptualized as a social phenomenon that tends toward the segmentation or splitting of the world, in which there is a self, other beings similar to the self, and others close to animality to whom repugnant properties are attributed.

In light of all the above, it can be concluded that disgust provokes fears and rejection, which quickly degenerate into hatred directed toward other individuals and groups. All of this creates the ideal breeding ground for the spread of so-called “hate speech.”

Hate Speech

At the conclusion of the previous section, reference was made to how this social aversion and phobia manifest through other pathologies such as “hate speech” (cf. Gracia Calandín and Suárez Montoya, 2023), which operates as “a tool that allows the actual realization of the desire to cause harm through concrete actions” (París Albert, 2020, p. 148). The term originates from the English expression *hate speech*, although its translation into Spanish presents certain challenges. Nevertheless, over time it has become established as the standard concept used to describe discourse directed against people who are part of marginalized or stigmatized groups (Gracia Calandín, 2026).

It is worth noting the contribution of Adela Cortina (2017), who clearly and concisely outlines a distinction between three related but distinct phenomena: incidents, crimes, and hate speech. She states that, according to the Ministry of the Interior, the term “hate crimes” refers to:

All criminal and administrative offenses committed against people or property on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or religious practice, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, poverty and social exclusion, or any other similar factor, such as ideological differences (p. 32).

With regard to hate incidents, “they occur when there is evidence of behavior involving contempt and mistreatment of people because they belong to a particular group, but that behavior does not meet the legal threshold to be classified as a crime” (p. 32). In contrast, hate speech consists of any form of expression intended to spread, incite, promote, or justify hatred toward specific social groups, stemming from a position of intolerance. In other words, it targets an individual simply because they belong to a specific group or collective that is stigmatized and denigrated.

This definition can be expanded upon with contributions from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. In its General



Recommendation No. 15 concerning the fight against hate speech, it defines it as:

The encouragement, promotion, or incitement, in any form, of hatred, humiliation, or contempt toward a person or group of people, as well as harassment, discrediting, or stigmatization [...] with respect to such a person or group of people, and the justification of such expressions on grounds of race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex [...] and other personal characteristics or conditions (ECRI, 2016, p. 4).

The same general recommendation states that hate speech is based on the assumption that one group or person is superior to another, incites discriminatory acts or violence, damages social cohesion, and undermines respect for minority groups. Cortina (2017) explains that this type of discourse is typically monological rather than dialogical, since the speaker does not view the other as a valid interlocutor capable of participating in dialogue, but rather as a mere object that does not deserve respect. The very definition of dialogue implies an inclusive activity, and this type of discourse loses that inclusivity by silencing the other and reducing them to a mere recipient of hatred. It is, furthermore, a type of discourse lacking valid argumentation, since its sole purpose is to express contempt and hatred and to incite others to share it.

The philosopher also explains that discourse itself can be harmful, since this communicative act constitutes a performance and, as such, is capable of causing harm in and of itself. Finally, it is argued that this type of discourse undermines one of the basic principles of the *democratic ethos*, since it manifests a relationship of asymmetry and inequality between an “us” and a “them.” Consequently, hate speech can weaken—and does weaken—social cohesion and potential interpersonal bonds among members of a society.

These pathologies reveal certain shortcomings that affect the individuals who exhibit them. On the one hand, their vision is restricted; their lack of open-mindedness prevents them from seeing others without dissociating them from the group or collective. One of the most pronounced shortcomings, according to José Barrientos (2022), is their lack of critical thinking skills; since those who adopt these hateful attitudes, by clinging to the collective imagination, become “passive instruments of the ideology they uphold or blind slaves to their group” (p. 3). Another shortcoming highlighted by the author relates to the individual’s own identity, since



the narrowness of perspective and the walls emerged as a result of that hatred hinder the enrichment that “the other” can provide.

All of this leads to an even greater deficiency, if that is possible, related to affection and care, since these discourses negate the recognition of the other’s human dignity and, with it, the capacity and willingness to care. To summarize, it can be said that these perpetrators of hate exhibit multiple shortcomings related to the narrowness of their vision, the deficiency of their critical thinking skills, and their poor sense of self-identity, since the denial of equal dignity nullifies their capacity and willingness to care.

Hate speech manifests itself in various ways—orally, in writing, and through audiovisual media. The relevance of this issue is particularly evident in the rise of polarizing discourse in digital spaces and on social media, as well as in the surge of extremist movements and exclusionary narratives present in various contemporary political and social contexts. “It is no longer confined to physical, tangible spaces; rather, it has now migrated to the largest space of all time—and the one where it is most difficult to curb—the internet, and specifically, social media” (Martínez et al., 2019, p. 27). Through the internet, these messages spread like an epidemic throughout society. They take deep root, perpetuate themselves, and gain momentum and speed across multiple platforms and social media networks—such as X, Instagram, and TikTok—where it seems that anything goes, even denigrating others and reducing them to less than nothing.

The spread of these messages through digital platforms has multiplied their reach and influence, contributing to the normalization of discriminatory attitudes and the weakening of democratic bonds, particularly among children, youth, and adolescents. For this reason, we are witnessing a surge in hatred toward “otherness” on various digital platforms, as social media and other virtual spaces allow for the public display of attitudes of hatred and rejection toward what is termed the “out-group” (Arcila Calderón et al., 2020).

All of this presents a threefold problem. First, the ease and volatility with which these discourses spread online make them truly difficult to curb. Second, the demographic that uses social media the most—children, youth, and adolescents—consists of individuals who are at a critical stage of growth and character and personality development, and they are exposed to messages where “the word has been devalued by sensationalist narratives, caricatured portrayals of the adversary, and derogatory clichés about members of other groups” (Gracia Calandín, 2022a, p. 2). Thus, these discourses not only endanger social cohesion in increasingly pluralistic societies but also spread and perpetuate their message among



young people. Third, the blurring of the concept of vulnerability occurs to the point where its true meaning is lost, leading to a victim-centered ideology.

These issues highlight the importance of developing educational approaches aimed at strengthening critical thinking, emotional education, and the recognition of human dignity. From this perspective, moral education plays an essential role not only in preventing attitudes of intolerance and exclusion but also in fostering a democratic citizenry capable of coexisting in contexts of diversity and pluralism. From Vulnerability to Victimhood: Hatred Hidden Behind False Compassion

Hate speech often has two sides. While spreading hatred, it simultaneously conveys a message of “protecting our own” against the out-group, which is supposedly the enemy. These exclusionary and hateful attitudes, coupled with this message of assumed protection, trigger a contagious sentimentality that—fueled by word of mouth—spreads perceptions marked by suspicion toward certain individuals or groups, who are perceived as potential threats to the cohesion and balance of community life (Pinedo, 2020). This contagious sentimentality is sometimes legitimized under the guise of false compassion—a disguise that, in addition to distorting the true meaning of compassion, tends to blur the distinction between vulnerability and victimhood.

According to the *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy* (DRAE), the term “vulnerable” derives from the Late Latin *vulnerabilis*, which in turn comes from the Latin *vulnerāre* (“to wound”) and the suffix *-bilis* (“-able”), and means capable of being wounded or injured, either physically or morally. In other words, it indicates the possibility of being hurt, a fact that highlights the ontological vulnerability of every human being. However, this conception has not always been clear or accepted as such, since one of the great myths, as Brown (2016) points out, is the erroneous analogy drawn between vulnerability and weakness. This myth is widespread and highly dangerous because the fear and discomfort that vulnerability—understood as weakness—causes us transform the value hidden behind it into reductive judgments and criticism (Orts García, 2023).

Vulnerability is neither inherently good nor bad; it is not what we call a “dark emotion,” nor is it always a positive or uplifting experience. Rather, vulnerability is the essence of all emotions and feelings. To feel is to be vulnerable. To believe that vulnerability equals weakness is to believe that feeling itself equals weakness (Brown, 2016).

With this idea that “to feel is to be vulnerable,” vulnerability can be understood as an inherent part of our humanity and, in a certain sense,

explains the structural interdependence among people. Gracia Calandín (2022b) also defends this idea when she refers to vulnerability as a fundamental anthropological trait of every human being—one that manifests differently in each person and, therefore, requires distinct needs and forms of care. Recognizing our vulnerability allows us to access a fuller form of humanity. Being aware of and self-conscious about our fragility is an essential condition for genuine human openness.

However, it is important to emphasize that “vulnerability is neither a merit nor a privilege, and being vulnerable does not imply actually being or having been harmed, nor is it enough simply to believe oneself to be vulnerable” (Gracia Calandín, 2023, p. 26). This point is key, since it is vital to distinguish between real victims and those who are feigning or imagining victimhood. This distinction is essential for dismantling the confusion that arises when a victimhood culture appropriates the concept of vulnerability.

Victimhood is not the same as being a real victim. It refers to the attitude by which a person or group constantly presents themselves as a victim. Most of the time, they do so by exaggerating or distorting discourse, appropriating it and the narratives of real victims in order to disguise it as the compassionate sentimentality alluded to above. It is precisely this victimist ideology that, in part, tends to fuel phobic messages and hate speech that project evil onto a specific group.

To move beyond the false analogy between vulnerability and victimhood, we must understand that recognizing vulnerability as a constituent trait of human beings does not mean identifying or defining individuals—insofar as they are vulnerable—as victims in general, thereby attributing to them passivity or resignation (Gracia Calandín, 2023). In fact, the ethical conception of vulnerability advocated here stands in direct contrast to that idea of victimization and passivity. This ethical view of vulnerability recovers the critical and self-critical dimension that is often lacking in those who adopt a victim-centered mindset; by failing to examine themselves, they tend to attribute all responsibility for their situation to a supposed external enemy. This rejection of victimhood should not be confused with a lack of recognition and compassion for real victims (Gracia Calandín, 2023); on the contrary, it aims to be a call to focus attention where it is truly needed.

Hence, it is essential to reclaim the meaning of vulnerability as a constitutive element of every human being—a vulnerability related to feeling. This vulnerability must be framed within an ethics of care, which is what can truly offer us the mutual interdependence that unites us as



human beings and forms the foundation of moral responsibility, which must necessarily take shape or be expressed through care. This is a kind of care that moves away from that contagious yet empty sentimentality, which finds no fertile ground in which to take root. Based on this idea of vulnerability, such care is neither partial nor selective, for it is capable of recognizing human dignity wherever it has been violated.

Restoring Moral Values

The context outlined above highlights several profoundly troubling issues. On the one hand, there is a distinct weakening of democracy, since hate and hate speech—which champion asymmetry and inequalities between “them” and “us”—undermine one of the basic principles of the *democratic ethos*, thereby eroding social cohesion. The significance of this problem lies in the fact that it not only affects certain vulnerable groups, but also undermines the ethical foundations of contemporary democracies, eroding essential values such as equality, mutual recognition, solidarity, and respect for human dignity.

Likewise, this rhetoric based on fear and hatred leads to a failure to recognize the human dignity of others, and with it, a decline in the capacity and willingness to care, as well as a loss of genuine interest in others. All of this gives rise to even greater concern, as it reveals a profound crisis in the way we conceive of the meaning of existence, the most evident manifestation of which is insensitivity to the suffering of others (Pinedo, 2018). Given this landscape, this section will seek to defend the thesis that we must restore the moral values essential to the well-being of our democracies.

The relevance of this debate is particularly evident in a social context marked by political polarization, the rise of extremist rhetoric, and the spread of exclusionary narratives in digital and media spaces. This reality, steeped in undeserved suffering, injustices, exclusion, and rejection, calls for “alternative models of coexistence and moral sensitivity that respond to the essential fragility that defines us” (p. 30). To this end, building a framework of values based on equality is key (Modzelewski, 2016). In this regard, it is considered advisable to strive to rehabilitate fundamental values such as love, solidarity, responsibility, and compassion in order to strengthen the meaning of our democracies.

The term “rehabilitate” is used intentionally because this is not the first time in human history that the aspiration has been expressed to find a guiding principle to steer our societies. In this context, marked by mul-



multiple social problems, it is pertinent to delve into values because they are seen as a source of inspiration for renewing our understanding of what it means to be human and for strengthening democracy.

Achieving this goal, explains Modzelewski (2016), involves moving beyond a notion of justice reduced exclusively to the functioning of institutions. If citizens are expected to be active participants in the pursuit of justice, it is essential to consider the factors that foster their willingness to get involved; thus, special attention must be given to emotions. In this sense, emotions play a fundamental mediating role and must be recognized as a key element in empowering and strengthening individuals to engage in social life, particularly within the framework of a democratic society (Modzelewski, 2016 and 2017). The key will be to discern which specific emotions and values we should reclaim and cultivate for this purpose.

258



Compassion as the Key to Cultivating a Democratic Ethos

Given all of the above, and in light of the contemporary need to strengthen democratic bonds and combat the dynamics of exclusion and dehumanization, there is a commitment to compassion due to the ethical and political force it can exert in public life. Along these same lines, Nussbaum argues for the need to revive concepts such as compassion, understanding them as ethical principles that must be incorporated into moral reflection so that they can guide the functioning of today's democracies. For this reason, the American philosopher serves as the primary reference for this article.

Currently, there is renewed interest in the study of compassion due to its role in social and democratic life. This growing interest stems, to a large extent, from the need to find ethical and educational frameworks capable of addressing contemporary social challenges related to polarization, moral indifference, and the fragility of democratic coexistence. However, terminological confusion persists, which at times obscures or hinders a precise understanding of this phenomenon. This situation is not surprising when one considers the multiple translations and interpretations of the Greek term *éleos*. This historical difficulty has led to a diffuse use of different concepts which, although distinct, have been employed practically as synonyms: mercy, pity, compassion, empathy, and sympathy. It is not the purpose of this article to develop a phenomenological categorization of all these concepts, nor is it to trace a historical account of the

origin and uses of compassion. However, it is worth taking a brief look back to see how the sense of compassion defended here is rooted.

Through its biblical texts, the Christian tradition refers to compassion as a central attribute of God, reflected in a profound concern for the suffering of others that drives the actions of helping, healing, and forgiving—an essential quality that believers must emulate through their deeds. This idea was widely accepted until the Modern Era, when the sentimentalist ethics of the Scottish Enlightenment marked a shift away from traditional Christian piety, giving way to a more fraternal and reciprocity-based philosophical conception of the human being (Pinedo, 2018). From that point on, as the author notes, a philosophical tradition began that sought to justify compassion without relying on the theological categories that traditionally gave meaning to a virtue considered essential for social coexistence.

In recent years, driven by a renewed interest in Aristotelianism as a framework for addressing various contemporary moral concerns, a virtue-centered ethical approach has gained strength. This approach emphasizes character formation, the relevance of emotions in moral experience, and the cultivation of dispositions fundamental to building strong community bonds and a genuine concern for the well-being of others (Pinedo, 2018). In this context, as the author asserts, compassion is perceived and integrated as one of the virtues closely linked to the subject's emotional realm, as well as to their motivations and aspirations in both personal life and processes of public deliberation. It has even come to be regarded as the democratic emotion *par excellence* (Modzelewski, 2017).

Within this new framework rooted in Modernity, as has been noted, Martha Nussbaum undertakes the philosophical task of re-examining and revitalizing the notion of compassion and its relevance to contemporary societies. Drawing on the Aristotelian conception, the American philosopher defines compassion as a painful emotion arising from another person's undeserved misfortune. Nussbaum (2008) explores what she calls the "cognitive structure of compassion," positing that there is a series of beliefs or judgments that serve as prerequisites for its development. The judgments proposed by the author, which are inspired by Aristotle and ancient Stoicism, are:

- The judgment of gravity: An evaluation that the suffering or misfortune is significant and non-trivial.
- The judgment of merit: The belief that the person suffering did not fully bring this misfortune upon themselves through their own fault.



- The judgment of comparable possibilities: The recognition by the compassionate person that they share a similar vulnerability and could experience a similar misfortune.
- The eudaimonistic judgment: The cognitive placement of the suffering person within the sphere of the evaluator's own goals, concern, and sense of well-being.

For Nussbaum, compassion is an emotion closely linked to justice and occupies a fundamental place both in her educational approaches and in her project to promote a renewed culture of public politics (Pinedo, 2018). It is an emotion of great value for ethical reflection, insofar as it can be linked to human deliberation.

The philosopher's conception also aligns with current empirical and neuroscientific studies that incorporate key elements, a fact that lends it even greater interest and validity. These studies suggest that there are a series of components that make up the phenomenon of compassion: the affective component, the differentiation between self and other, a regulatory cognitive element, and, finally, a motivational and intentional component that is latent, prosocial, and aimed at alleviating the suffering of others (Stevens and Benjamin, 2018).

Among these components, the prosocial nature that accompanies compassion stands out, distinguishing it from other phenomena. Based on this idea, one could say that compassion is a feeling that involves, on the one hand, concern for another's suffering and, on the other, the motivation to help and improve that person's well-being (Klimecki, 2015). In other words, the feeling moves us, allowing us to experience another's suffering, and at the same time motivates us to act to alleviate that suffering, thereby taking on the other's pain as a shared responsibility. Thus, it can be concluded that compassion actively drives moral action, seeking to alleviate another person's suffering.

Despite its ethical potential, compassion is not without its critics. In fact, throughout the history of philosophy and moral thought, compassion has been subject to highly contradictory interpretations. These range from the outright rejection by the Stoics and Spinoza to Nietzsche, who considers it a symptom of decadence and a weakening of the will to live, and include Rousseau's view of compassion as the natural source of all virtue and Schopenhauer's identification with universal suffering (Boella, 2004). Such contradiction is not surprising, for as Boella (2004) points out, compassion does indeed raise the classic problem of emotions—their “irrationality” and, therefore, their unreliability and partiality—but also



the problem of the difficulty of transforming them into action, of going beyond their reactive and sentimental nature.

This problem, as the Italian philosopher points out, has today become a pressing social and political issue due to a structural disproportion between affective communication and affective action—specifically between the individual's capacity for intervention and the immense amount of suffering present in the world. This imbalance can even exacerbate the contradictory nature of compassion, leading to its instrumental and selective use. Hence, the need to restore the value and moral significance of compassion is strongly emphasized.

Arteta (2019) argues that compassion, when understood as a mere feeling, is fleeting, since what matters is the immediate moment itself; the other person's misfortune and the compassionate response it evokes tend to occur almost simultaneously. It is selective, partial, one-sided, and superficial because it requires a visible and specific form of suffering and depends on the degree of closeness to the other person. Since it is triggered by a specific form of suffering, it turns out to be a limited form of compassion. It is also a fearful feeling, since, as is clear from Aristotle's definition, compassion involves fear of the possibility of suffering the misfortune that the other person is experiencing. It can be considered, the author asserts, as directly motivated by the desire to alleviate the other's pain in order to thereby alleviate one's own distress.

When one measures another person's misfortune against one's own well-being, an imbalance can arise from compassion, causing it to become one-sided and hierarchical. It is this characteristic that could lead to a sense of superiority in the person experiencing it, thereby creating an asymmetrical relationship with a marked paternalistic component, as some critics point out. Finally, the author argues that, as an emotion dependent on the senses, compassion is passive, reactive, and to some extent involuntary and unconscious. It would therefore follow that, driven purely by this emotion, compassion lacks a reflective process and can cloud the subject's judgment.

In light of these implications, it is important to distinguish between compassion understood as a feeling—as *pathos*—that moves and sweeps us away, and compassion as an “ethical passion” guided by the exercise of reason, through which character (*êthos*) is forged from habits (*êthos*) (Gracia Calandín, 2018). In this latter sense, compassion is not understood as a mere passive feeling that comes over us, but rather implies active, virtuous action. Under this conception, we would be predisposed to restore the ethical value and moral significance of compassion. To elevate



compassion to this explicitly ethical plane, we must recognize its foundations, which rest on two pillars: human dignity and vulnerability—or the idea of finitude. It is this conception that invites us to speak of ethical compassion, insofar as it calls for the recognition of dignity in those whose dignity has been violated (Gracia Calandín, 2018).

It could be said that the foundations of compassion as a virtuous habit are these two concepts: on the one hand, the recognition of human dignity; on the other, the awareness of finitude and of our intrinsic vulnerability, since it is upon these that the ethical foundation of compassion is built. To paraphrase Arteta (2019), only from these two ideas can a theory of the moral nature of compassion and the role it plays in ethics—and even in moral education—be properly developed. In light of the above, it could be argued that at the core of compassion lies a tension between human finitude and vulnerability and human dignity—a tension that helps eliminate bias and partiality, since we are all equal before these very principles.

The moral value of compassion lies in standing with those who suffer and helping those most in need, not as a display of superiority, but to repair the harm they have suffered. It is this specific idea that links compassion to the possibility of countering hatred and its rhetoric, because compassion steps in where dignity has been violated, precisely where one is most vulnerable. It is not a feeling that simply acts for the sake of others, but rather one directed toward those who are suffering and find themselves in a disadvantaged situation.

As noted in previous sections, on many occasions hatred disguises itself as sentimentality—as a false compassion capable of moving and stirring a population on behalf of victims who are not real. In other words, this emotional appeal can be used to trigger a specific emotional contagion that sweeps us along, thereby redirecting the focus of compassion. To prevent this—or rather, to avoid becoming disoriented—compassion must be accompanied by critical thinking. From this perspective, this article argues that ethical compassion, combined with critical thinking, can serve as a fundamental pedagogical and moral tool for preventing the emotional legitimization of hate speech and strengthening a democratic culture based on the recognition of human dignity.

The Indissoluble Link Between Critical Thinking and Compassion

Ethical compassion represents a concrete exercise in discernment regarding the vulnerability of others, which necessarily involves both



criticism and self-criticism (Gracia Calandín, 2023). The author asserts that compassion, in this sense, is not reduced to feeling sorrow or pity for someone—or for oneself—at least not within the framework of the ethical compassion advocated here and considered desirable in the context of education. Understood thus, ethical compassion does not obscure reason or confuse intelligence with empty sentimentality. On the contrary, it constitutes an affective disposition that not only fosters but actively requires the exercise of discernment as an indispensable condition.

This analytical requirement is key to the problem under discussion here—namely, hatred and its discourses—since critical and self-critical capacity must be directed toward clearly distinguishing between concerns that are legitimate and those that are not (Gracia Calandín, 2023). In other words, it is necessary to carry out a rigorous process of selection and discernment, since not every feeling of unease or anxiety is inherently justified. As noted above, concern can occasionally act as a veil that conceals illegitimate motivations. To avoid falling into distorted judgments, it is essential to conduct a rigorous analysis, sharpen one's critical eye, and precisely define the true object of these concerns.

This exercise helps distinguish between illegitimate concern—which reinforces stigmas and fuels derogatory stereotypes—and legitimate concern, which, rooted in ethical compassion, drives responsible criticism and fosters the care and protection of those who find themselves in genuinely vulnerable situations. Ethical compassion invites us to cultivate a lucid and responsible sensitivity to the suffering of others, steering us away from purely reactive emotional responses that can lead to inaction, simplistic solutions, or a distorted focus on false victims.

For all of these reasons, education remains the fundamental vehicle. As Nussbaum (2010) notes, the ultimate goal of education cannot be for children to aspire to invulnerability. Quite the contrary: it consists of accepting and acknowledging our own constituent limitations, which connect us and make us structurally interdependent. It is from this perspective that compassion and care for others can be effectively fostered—a compassion that upholds human dignity, acknowledges the vulnerability that defines us, and maintains a critical and self-critical eye, ensuring we know exactly where to direct our efforts and why.

Education as a Seedbed for Compassionate and Ethical Citizenship

If we wish to counteract hatred and the rhetoric that fuels it, we must promote a conception of humanity and citizenship that places social jus-



tice and equal opportunity at its core. This must go hand in hand with respect for the dignity of all people and the recognition of vulnerability as an inherent feature of our human condition, so that these principles guide moral reflection and political decision-making (Pinedo, 2018). To this end, the idea of compassion advocated here is key, since, as the author argues, understood in this way, compassion acts as a driving force in the formation of moral consciousness and in the promotion of virtuous behaviors oriented toward the common good—not only at the individual level, but also at the social and public levels. It is in this way that we can aspire to a compassionate citizenry—a citizenry whose emotional life drives them to take an active interest in others, particularly those who, due to situations of social injustice, find themselves in a more vulnerable position and have fewer opportunities to develop fully as human beings (Pinedo, 2018).

264



How do these ideas relate to the topic at hand—namely, the idea of being able to reverse hate and its discourses? If hate speech manages to take root in our societies, it is not solely because of intolerant and malicious individuals—though they certainly play a role. Its power also lies in the fact that it feeds on social structures and images, prejudices that have become normalized, and narratives that we have internalized since childhood. Given this landscape, this paper argues that ethical compassion, combined with critical thinking, must be cultivated through education as a pedagogical tool capable of counteracting the emotional, social, and cultural mechanisms that sustain hate speech.

Education in general, and ethics in particular, as a process of holistic formation of individuals, has the power not only to impart technical knowledge but also to foster ethical and affective dispositions. This is why it enables us to recognize the suffering of others while simultaneously questioning the causes of that suffering, with the aim of dismantling the social constructs that underpin exclusionary discourses.

First and foremost, before delving into the subject, it is essential to take a self-critical look at our own educational practices. This issue takes on particular relevance in the educational sphere, since schools are among the primary spaces for moral socialization and the construction of mental frameworks regarding otherness. On many occasions, and almost without realizing it, educational systems can fuel these hateful discourses by reproducing stereotypes, silencing memories, and perpetuating exclusion. In classrooms, hatred and its discourses can be sustained through ignorance about the other, the oversimplification of complex identities, and fear of those who are different. Nowadays, it seems that “the other”

has become invisible and that the rest of us have become desensitized; we have stopped seeing others, recognizing them, and feeling their needs (Tamarit, 2025). Therefore, following Tamarit, it is necessary to first engage in a process of “unhiding” the other—of revealing a reality that exists but that we have stopped seeing—so that we can subsequently begin to recognize the other.

In this regard, it will be crucial for education to begin by conducting a self-examination aimed at dismantling the mechanisms that continue to fuel the perception of those who are different as a threat, since this creates an ideal breeding ground for hate speech. It is also essential to foster the education of the senses so that they do not become numb or overwhelmed, thereby creating spaces for openness, listening, and dialogue (Tamarit, 2025). This can be achieved, for example, through storytelling, as proposed by Modzelewski (2020 and 2017). At the same time, it will be essential to develop tolerance—but an “active” tolerance, which is the kind that can truly lead to mutual respect and the recognition of differences (Gracia Calandín, 2018).

In this sense, it is not merely a matter of fostering compassionate individuals, but of providing them with tools to question and reflect on the structures that generate suffering and exclusion. This is why the previous section referred to critical thinking as an inseparable element of compassion: we must educate individuals to be compassionate, but also critical. This idea ties into what was noted earlier regarding the development of active tolerance, since educating in compassion through critical thinking can also provide us with tools to recognize that invisible suffering—but above all, to recognize our own responsibilities.

Similarly, educating in ethical compassion has social and cultural implications, as it seeks not only the emotional well-being of the individual but also aims to make an impact and leave a mark on the social sphere. In a context where hate speech finds fertile ground nourished by fear and misinformation, schools can become spaces of resistance that help dismantle phobic discourses. Surely schools cannot be held solely responsible for a problem as vast as the one we face here, but they can certainly be the place where alternative narratives and discourses based on justice, solidarity, and active tolerance are built. To this end, the focus must be on providing an education for meaning and the common good—an education that, “from a humanistic and relational perspective, places human beings and their relationships at the center of the educational process, promoting self-determination, mutual care, and action for the common good” (Buxarraís, 2025, p. 90). Building on this idea, we might

envision an education rooted in ethical compassion. This would serve as a seedbed in which to lay the groundwork for subverting hatred and its discourses—not as something anecdotal and/or isolated, but as a commitment, a civic commitment that endures over time, in which habits will give rise to a sustained and sustainable character (Orts García, 2024) over the long term.

These ideas point to the existence of an intrinsic link between education and character development, understood as the set of habits and dispositions that guide us toward certain ways of acting and that are built day by day through our choices. The habits that incline us to act correctly are called virtues (Cortina, 2007). These virtues are habits that can be taught and cultivated (Codina, 2015); therefore, it is essential to reflect on the types of habits promoted through education, since character development—and, consequently, the way we behave—depends on them. “When schools focus exclusively on the acquisition of knowledge, the personal dimension remains neglected, leading to an impoverished character development and the underdevelopment of social empathy” (Effendi, 2024, p. 10).

Given all this, if we understand that to educate is to help cultivate character—the *ethos*—how should we educate? Based on what values? What virtuous habits should form the foundation? In light of the context of hate and hate speech, we should cultivate—as has been argued—those ethical values that help us forge a character that aspires to a more peaceful, just, and compassionate world. Hence, compassion is considered a habit that must be practiced until it becomes second nature, as it is a way to begin subverting hatred and its discourses. Cortina (2007) asserts that compassion constitutes a moral reason in the face of suffering and misfortune—a motive worth developing because it embodies the bond that unites us and that we must strengthen, since the lack of that bond is surely one of the factors that fuel hatred and hate speech.

Based on this premise, there is a whole series of habits that should be cultivated, as they nurture ethical compassion while steering clear of fleeting and empty sentimentality. This refers specifically to dialogue and active listening, civic shared responsibility, and solidarity embodied in the ethics of care, in which respect for others is neither condescending nor paternalistic, but rather a profound recognition of their human dignity.

In the educational process, there must be communication, an encounter, a genuine dialogue without belittling the other [...] the main idea is to bring what is peripheral to the center, as a participant in a whole; it is no longer a part, it is not seen in isolation, but rather as a single organism (Vivas, 2015, pp. 6–7).



Hence, it could be argued that, in the educational sphere, ethical compassion becomes an essential tool for shaping critical citizens—citizens capable of identifying the structural causes of hatred and its discourses, and of actively committing to their transformation. Understood in this way, compassion is not merely a fleeting impulse but a key component of moral education, linking the affective and emotional dimensions with the rational and ethical ones. By fostering critical reflection, ethical compassion also guides us to examine our own practices and biases, thereby promoting an education that strives for justice, solidarity, and respect for the dignity of all, and thus embraces both individual and collective responsibilities.

In this educational and social context, this is relevant because it allows us to direct critical thinking not only toward external analysis but also toward examining our own motivations and judgments. Thus, educating for ethical compassion and critical thinking means forming individuals capable of discerning when concern serves as a driving force for good and when, conversely, it becomes a pretext for hatred and intolerance. Hence, the constant practice of criticism and self-criticism, accompanied by compassion, is considered a fundamental pillar for building more inclusive and supportive societies, as it enables us to distinguish between feigned and genuine victims, and allows us to focus our attention on areas where vulnerability has left—and continues to leave—open wounds and conflicts.

Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article supports the argument that hate speech constitutes one of the most complex ethical, social, and educational challenges facing contemporary democracies. Its spread cannot be understood solely as the result of deviant individual attitudes or as a problem confined to the realm of language; rather, it must be situated within the framework of broader emotional, cultural, and political dynamics that fuel, legitimize, and normalize it. In this sense, hate manifests as a socially constructed phenomenon that finds in discourse a privileged instrument through which it translates into concrete practices of exclusion, dehumanization, and harm.

This article demonstrates that emotions such as fear and revulsion play a structuring role in the origin and consolidation of hate speech. Far from acting solely at the individual level, these emotions function as genuine cultural elements that organize perceptions, delineate moral

boundaries, and reinforce exclusionary identities. Fear triggers narratives of threat that justify defense against an “other” perceived as dangerous, while projected disgust contributes to stripping that other of their humanity, facilitating their systematic marginalization. When these emotions are reinforced by specific social and political contexts, they become a particularly fertile breeding ground for the proliferation of discourses that legitimize exclusion and violence.

From this perspective, hate speech cannot be understood as mere verbal expressions laden with aversion, but rather as social practices with a profound impact. Language not only reflects hatred but actively activates it, channels it, and turns it into action. Through such discourse, the desire to harm others is normalized, justified, and translated into policies, behaviors, and attitudes that directly affect the dignity and living conditions of specific individuals and groups. This observation reinforces the idea that the response to hate speech cannot be limited to censorship strategies, but requires a thorough examination of the emotional, cultural, and moral elements that underpin it.

Within this framework, the article has highlighted the existence of significant shortcomings among those who uphold and reproduce hate speech. These shortcomings manifest themselves, among other things, in limited critical thinking skills, fragile or impoverished identities, and structural deficits in the realm of emotions and care. These limitations hinder the recognition of the other as a dignified person and foster processes of dehumanization. Recognizing these deficiencies does not imply justifying hate, but rather understanding the conditions that make it possible and, therefore, identifying priority areas for intervention, among which education plays a central role.

Special attention should be given to the deceptive nature of certain hate discourses in the contemporary context. As has been argued, these discourses often present themselves as a victim narrative that deliberately confuses vulnerability with victimhood. By appropriating the language of care and protection, hate manages to legitimize itself as a defensive response to supposedly external threats, effectively sidelining real victims and stripping fundamental notions of democratic coexistence of their moral content. This instrumentalization of suffering not only makes it difficult to identify hate, but also contributes to its normalization and the progressive erosion of democratic values.

In light of this scenario, this article has argued for the need to reclaim a profound understanding of vulnerability as a constitutive feature of the human condition. Far from being a weakness or a moral privilege, vulnera-

bility points to our interdependence and the mutual need that defines us as human beings. Recognizing our shared vulnerability allows us to dismantle exclusionary narratives of victimhood and opens the possibility of building relationships based on care, responsibility, and mutual recognition.

At this point, compassion emerges as a key moral value for countering the logic of hatred. Following the thought of Martha Nussbaum, compassion has been understood here as a complex ethical sentiment that articulates emotional openness to the suffering of others and rational judgment oriented toward justice. This conception allows us to clearly distinguish ethical compassion from its misappropriations, preventing it from being reduced to an uncritical emotion or instrumentalized in the service of exclusion. It is precisely in the tight integration of emotion and reason that its transformative potential lies: ethical compassion is capable of recognizing suffering without hierarchizing it or using it as an excuse to deny the dignity of others.

From this perspective, education emerges as a privileged space for cultivating ethical compassion and critical thinking. Educational institutions cannot limit themselves to the transmission of technical knowledge or instrumental skills; rather, they must assume their responsibility for the moral and civic formation of individuals. In a context marked by overexposure to emotional stimuli, polarization, and emotional manipulation, it is essential to provide tools that enable students to critically interpret discourses, manage emotions, and develop dispositions oriented toward care and justice.

Finally, committing to an education in and for ethical compassion entails a commitment that transcends the individual sphere and extends into the social and political realms. This is neither a naive proposal nor an immediate solution to hatred, but rather a normative framework that guides more inclusive and humane educational and democratic practices. In times when hatred masquerades as care and suffering becomes a rhetorical device, ethical compassion emerges as an indispensable moral compass for resisting dehumanization and strengthening the values that underpin democratic life. Cultivating it is, without a doubt, a complex task, but it remains an inescapable ethical imperative of our time.



Note

1. Martha Nussbaum (2008, p. 237) explains that the things that evoke disgust are those linked to one's own vulnerability to decay, since this implies that one's self will eventually become waste. For this reason, in all cultures, the ability to wash

and dispose of waste is an indicator of human dignity. The philosopher cites Rozin and Fallon (1987) in their paper “A Perspective on Disgust,” where they explain how, based on analyses of certain prisons and concentration camps, it has been established that individuals deprived of access to bathrooms or prohibited from washing themselves could be considered subhuman, making it easier to torture and kill them, since they had been reduced to the status of animals.

Bibliography

- ARCILA CALDERÓN, Carlos, VALDEZ APOLO, María & BLANCO HERRERO, David
2020 Rechazo y discurso de odio en Twitter: análisis de contenido de los tuits sobre migrantes y refugiados en español. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, (172), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.5477/cis/reis.172.21>
- ARTETA, Aurelio
2019 *La compasión: apología de una virtud bajo sospecha*. Madrid: Frontera Digital.
- BARRIENTOS RASTROJO, José
2022 La filosofía para niños y jóvenes como prevención y antídoto frente a los discursos de odio. *Isegoría*, 67, e02. <https://doi.org/10.3989/isegoria.2022.67.02>
- BUXARRAIS, María Rosa
2025 Educando para el sentido y el bien común. Un enfoque humanista y relación de la educación. En: Vicent Gozálviz & Patrizia Panarello (eds.), *Horizontes pedagógicos para la igualdad y la justicia social* (pp. 87-105). Valencia: Tirant Humanidades.
- BOELLA, Laura
2004 *Grammatica del sentire: Compassione, simpatia, empatia*. Milán: Cooperativa Universitaria Editrice Milanese.
- BROWN, Brené
2016 *El poder de ser vulnerable: ¿qué te atreverías a hacer si el miedo no te paraliza?* Barcelona: Urano.
- CODINA, María José
2015 *Neuroeducación en virtudes cordiales: cómo reconciliar lo que decimos con lo que hacemos*. Barcelona: Octaedro.
- ECRI
2016 *Recomendación general nro. 15 relativa a la lucha contra el discurso de odio y memorándum explicativo*. <https://bit.ly/43FrP6X>
- CORTINA, Adela
2007 *Ética de la razón cordial: educar en la ciudadanía en siglo XXI*. Oviedo: Nobel.
- CORTINA, Adela
2017 *Aporofobia, el rechazo al pobre*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- EFFENDI, Yulius Rustan
2024 La educación del carácter fundamentada en los valores y normas del sistema filosófico de Indonesia. *Sophia, Colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, (37), 255-282. <https://doi.org/10.17163/soph.n37.2024.08>
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier
2018 *El desafío ético de la educación*. Madrid: Dykinson.
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier



- 2022a Combatir los discursos del odio en sociedades democráticas y pluralistas. *Isegoría*, 67, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.3989/isegoria.2022.67.01>
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier
- 2022b Educación ética para el desarrollo humano y la inclusión social desde la experiencia de la vulnerabilidad. En: Javier Gracia Calandín (coord.), *Educación ética y filosófica para la inclusión social* (pp. 25-43). Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier
- 2023 La vulnerabilidad como condición humana desde la que educar. En: Javier Gracia Calandín (coord.), *Educación ética y filosófica en contextos de conflicto, heridas y vulnerabilidad* (pp. 25-33). Madrid: Dykinson.
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier
- 2026 Contribución de la educación ética en valores para eliminar los discursos de odio. *Sophia, Colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, (40), 51-81. <https://doi.org/10.17163/soph.n40.2026.01>
- GRACIA CALADÍN, Javier & SUÁREZ MONTOYA, Leonardo
- 2023 The Eradication of Hate Speech on Social Media: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 21(4), 406-421. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JICES-11-2022-0098>
- KLIMECKI, Olga
- 2015 The Plasticity of Social Emotions. *Social Neuroscience*, 10(5), 466-473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2015.1087427>
- LEÓN, Eduardo Alberto
- 2014 El asco: una emoción entre naturaleza y cultura. *Saga, Revista de Estudiantes de Filosofía*, (26), 21-39. <https://bit.ly/4egqwkW>
- MARTÍNEZ, Laura, DE SANTIAGO ORTEGA, Pedro, MARTÍNEZ MIRO, Miguel Ángel & HIDALGO RENGIFO, Miriam Sofía
- 2019 Discursos de odio: una epidemia que se propaga en la red. Estado de la cuestión sobre el racismo y la xenofobia en redes sociales. *Mediaciones sociales*, 18, 25-42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/MESO.64527>
- MODZELEWSKI, Helena
- 2017 *Emociones, educación y democracia: una proyección de la teoría de las emociones de Martha Nussbaum*. México DF: UNAM.
- MODZELEWSKI, Helena
- 2016 Fundamentos para un programa de educación de las emociones en una sociedad democrática. *Andamios*, 13(30), pp. 83-110. <https://doi.org/10.29092/uacm.v13i30.4>
- MODZELEWSKI, Helena
- 2020 *Lectores ecuanímes: una educación en ciudadanía a través de narraciones y emociones*. Universidad de la República Uruguay.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha
- 2008 *Paisajes del pensamiento: la inteligencia de las emociones*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha
- 2010 *Sin fines de lucro, por qué la democracia necesita de las humanidades*. Madrid: Katz.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha
- 2014 *Emociones políticas, ¿por qué el amor es importante para la justicia?* Barcelona: Paidós.



ORTS GARCÍA, María

- 2023 La compasión ética: una necesidad educativa ante la vulnerabilidad. En: Javier Gracia Calandín (coord.), *Educación ética y filosófica en contextos de conflicto, heridas y vulnerabilidad* (pp. 51-57). Madrid: Dykinson.

ORTS GARCÍA, María

- 2024 ¿De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de compasión? Hacia un carácter sostenible. En: Javier Gracia Calandín (coord.), *Educación ética y filosófica para el desarrollo de hábitos sostenibles*. Madrid: Dykinson.

PARÍS ALBERT, Sonia

- 2020 Hacia una educación sentimental para subvertir el odio y sus discursos. *Revista de Paz y Conflictos*, 13(2), 145-161. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30827/revpaz.v13i2.15838>

PINEDO CANTILLO, Iván Alfonso

- 2018 De la benevolencia a la ciudadanía compasiva: la recuperación de conceptos claves para el cultivo de la democracia. *Límite*, 13(41), 29-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-50652018000100029>

PINEDO CANTILLO, Iván Alfonso

- 2020 Miedo, asco proyectivo y política de la exclusión: el impacto de las emociones en la construcción de la ciudadanía democrática. *Papel Político*, 25, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.papo25.mapp>

PINEDO CANTILLO, Iván Alfonso

- 2021 Martha Nussbaum: la monarquía del miedo, una mirada filosófica a la crisis política actual. *Ideas y Valores*, 70(176), 202-207. <https://doi.org/10.15446/ideasyvalores.v70n176>

STEVENS, Larry & BENAJMINE, Jasmine

- 2018 The Brain that Longs to Care for Others: The Current Neuroscience of Compassion. En: Larry Stevens & Chad Woodruff (eds.), *The Neuroscience of Empathy, Compassion, and Self-compassion* (pp. 53-83). Academic Press.

TAMARIT, Isabel

- 2025 Educación por el reconocimiento del otro: una propuesta pedagógica basada en el diálogo y el pensamiento crítico. En: Vicent Gozávez & Patrizia Panarello (eds.), *Horizontes pedagógicos para la igualdad y la justicia social* (pp. 169-180). Valencia: Tirant Humanidades.

VIVAS, Jonathan

- 2015 Pensando la educación desde lo plural: el “animal educandum, exdiversitate” en el acto educativo. *Sophia, Colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, (18), 37-54. <https://doi.org/10.17163/soph.n18.2015.02>

272



Author Declaration—CRediT Taxonomy	
Author	Contributions
Maria Orts García	This article was written entirely by the author; as such, the content presented in this document is the sole responsibility of the author.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The author, Maria Orts García, declares that the preparation of the article titled “Ethical Compassion in Education for Overcoming Hate and Its Discourses” was supported by AI for literature search and review, as well as for paraphrasing and proofreading.

Date of receipt: July 3, 2025

Review date: September 20, 2025

Date of approval: November 20, 2025

Publication date: July 15, 2026

