

Is Inquiry Learning Unjust? An Ethical Defense of Deweyan Instructional Design

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
under the Executive Committee
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2019

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ABSTRACT

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A long tradition of progressive pedagogy, running from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and through the work of John Dewey, argues that it is ethically and politically important for students to learn to co-direct the process of inquiry. In a series of recent articles, a group of cognitive scientists (hereafter called ‘DI theorists’) has argued that due to the nature of human cognitive architecture, student-led instructional designs are likely to be less effective than fully teacher-led instructional designs and to exacerbate achievement gaps. Were DI theorists correct, contrary to the intentions of many educators, a great deal of progressive pedagogy would be likely to have negative effects on educational justice. In this dissertation, I argue that the framing of the debate in cognitive science misconstrues the ethical and political value of treating students as cooperative designers of educative experiences.

To defend this controversial claim, I advance a Deweyan approach to ethics and justice in instructional design against two recent philosophical challenges. The first challenge, which I call ‘Dewey’s grounding problem’, asserts that Dewey’s appeal to the single ethical and political value of learning is unjustified against dissent and oppressive of reasonable pluralism. The second challenge, which I call ‘Dewey’s problem of elitism’, argues that his call to promote the common good of learning in ethics and politics will sometimes permit or require elitism, aristocracy, or tyranny. Based on the Deweyan ethos I defend, I trace four principles of just instructional design to reassess the claims of DI theorists. I argue that integrating DI theorists’ insights about efficacy and equality as means to create a student co-led community of inquiry confirms many educators’ intuitions: that student-led designs are important parts of developing the skills of inquiry, are well placed as culminating tasks, and are best phased in on a developmental pathway towards greater student independence.

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Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful for the community that has helped this dissertation to emerge. Three groups in particular warrant mention. First, I would like to thank my committee. I am grateful to Richard Jochum for his enthusiasm for this project and sustained engagement with the core ethical and political ideas that animate it. I am particularly excited to hear his thoughts on its implications for art, aesthetics and educational design. As I worked through many of the arguments in this project, Megan Laverty's patience and care in Dissertation Proposal Workshop was immensely valuable. I cannot imagine a more supportive environment in which to try to articulate new ideas than the space Megan created. I am indebted to Bruce Maxwell for the opportunities he's afforded me to work as a researcher at the intersection of philosophy and moral psychology in teacher education. Bruce's philosophical interest in findings of psychology has certainly enriched my own and this project's psychological focus. A significant debt of gratitude is owed to Jennifer Morton, whose feedback on early excerpts of this project led to a substantial reframing and, I believe, improvement of the work. Finally, I cannot say enough about the significance of David Hansen's unwavering support for my work as a scholar and for me as a person. My interest in the ethical value of learning in Dewey's thought and the possibility of its serving as a compass to guide school and society owes entirely to David's treatment of this theme in "Philosophies of Education"—my first course at Columbia University. My attempt to defend Deweyan instructional design against empirical and philosophical challenges reflect my respect for David's own work articulating the phenomenology of the call to teach and the possibilities that such a call opens up, which I take to be in a Deweyan spirit. David, in so many ways, lives this spirit in his practice as an educator.

Second, I would like to thank a number of the friends at Teachers College and beyond who have helped me puzzle through my difficulties with Dewey's teleology and its relationship to recent challenges. Saori Hori, Brandon Buck, Rachel Longa, Rashad Moore, Eileen Reuter, and Stefan

Dorosz have all provided challenging and helpful feedback to sections of the arguments offered in this dissertation in our doctoral writing workshop. Generous support from a MacPherson Fellowship through the University of Wisconsin Center for Ethics and Education led to the development of the argument in the first and final chapter of this dissertation. Through this fellowship I have benefited from valuable feedback from a number of peers and faculty mentors at three workshops: one at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, another at the American Philosophical Association Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, and another at the American Educational Research Association Annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario. Special thanks are owed to Susanna Loeb, Bryan Warnick, Kathryn Joyce, Kirsten Welch, and Lindsey Schwartz for their helpful comments at these workshops. This dissertation has also benefitted from discussion at two talks at Teachers College's Philosophy and Education Graduate Student Colloquium series and presentations at the annual meetings of the Philosophy of Education Society, Association for Moral Education, and Canadian Philosophy of Education Society over the past four years.

A few friends deserve special mention for their work supporting this project. At Teachers College, Tomas Rocha, Brian Veprek, Rene Lesser, Buddy North, and Claire Becerra's philosophical acumen and friendship have been especially valuable in nourishing and sustaining my commitment to engaging with philosophical problems. I owe similar debts to my Winnipeg friends Brian Keenan, Marc Kruse, Aaron Russin, Dylan Proctor, Robert Hamilton, Jarita Greyeyes, Angeline Nelson, and Neil Shah who in different ways, each live the ethos I argue for in this dissertation. Were it not for formative studies in Dr. Keenan's seminars at the University of Winnipeg, I certainly would not have pursued the questions that led me to this project. My work at the Center for the Professional Education of Teachers at Teachers College under Ruth Vinz and Roberta Lenger-Kang led me to engage with the cognitive science literature that drives large portions of this inquiry and afforded opportunities to test the view I advocate in practice in New York Public Schools. I owe a debt of

gratitude to the Philosophy department at the University of Manitoba, where I was first made aware of the force of some of the skeptical problems I carried to Teachers College and that show up for Dewey in this dissertation. Neil McArthur, Sarah Hannan, and Joyce Jenkins were all especially helpful in this regard.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. My parents, Larry and Jean Tanchuk are the educators to whom I owe the most. Your loving and steadfast commitment to helping me design the experiences that would shape my life and that have helped me to flourish as a learner constitute the greatest gift I can imagine. To my sister, Chelsea Hordichuk, thank you for decades of support and laughter as we've figured out how to navigate this world, living and learning together. Finally, to my philosophical role model and best friend, Carly Scramstad: Thank you for inspiring me with your self-discipline, challenging me with your intellect, and helping to grow a love that thrives through its relationship to reality. I cannot imagine a better partner to build community with in all of the spaces we share.

Preface

In this dissertation, I defend a Deweyan view of instructional design based on a fundamental ethical and political interest in learning. Before introducing my argument, I want to acknowledge an alternative way this project might have been developed via Indigenous insights and a set of concerns that could be raised for it. I admire much of what Dewey stood for politically: his commitment to an egalitarian form of social democracy, to a politics of community that works to overcome sectarian divisions, and his effort to try to forge a better world for human flourishing both in theory and practice. I will work to defend these commitments in the pages that follow. As an educator concerned with efforts to live well in my community, however, I cannot but be concerned with Dewey's remarks about "savage" peoples. I have included this preface in an effort to note what I take to be a significant oversight by Dewey in *Democracy & Education* regarding Indigenous ways of knowing and being and to place own my intentions for this project in its broader colonial context.

As Thomas Fallace (2010) argues convincingly, Dewey, for a substantial part of his career accepted a view widely held by social scientists of his day: that societies progress through three stages—savagery, barbarism, and civilization.¹ In keeping with this three stage model, in *Democracy and Education* Dewey dismissed the thought and culture of what he referred to as "savage tribes" as a primitive limitation upon otherwise capable minds. According to Dewey:

In a sense the mind of savage peoples is an effect, rather than a cause, of their backward institutions. Their social activities are such as to restrict their objects of attention and interest, and hence to limit the stimuli to mental development. Even as regards the objects that come within the scope of attention, primitive social customs tend to arrest observation and imagination upon qualities which do not fructify in the mind. (MW9: 66)

¹ See Lewis Henry Morgan (1887) *Ancient Society* for the likely primary source of this distinction in Dewey's work. In Morgan's framework, progress is closely linked to the ability to control the environment, acquire property, and overcome competitors. All Indigenous nations north of New Mexico in what is now called North America were "savages" or "barbarians" according to Morgan (p. 178) at the time of "discovery" by Europeans. Fallace (2010) provides compelling evidence Dewey held the same view and advocated teaching it in school.

Among the signs of limited development, by Dewey's lights, was a willingness to acquiesce to the purposes of non-human nature rather than intervene in the natural environment. As Dewey claimed, "The savage is merely habituated; the civilized man has habits which transform the environment" (MW9: 77). Dewey enjoyed salaried university postings and a great deal of social and political institutional support for his inquiries. There were no equivalent opportunities for members of so-called savage groups to engage with and criticize Dewey's stance in the academy. I will argue later in this project that such inequality is bad on Deweyan grounds.

Now that more opportunities exist for Indigenous scholars in the academy, work in Indigenous ethics and law in the Anishinaabe tradition, for example, casts doubt on Dewey's distinction between savagery and civilization. Many scholars suggest that Indigenous refusals to intervene in ecosystems to control them for human purposes are better understood as a part of a more holistic notion of the bearers of moral value in these traditions. On Anishinaabe conceptions, for example, plants, animals, insects, rocks, lakes, and streams all have inherent value that is to be respected by human agents (Borrows 2016; Craft 2013; Simpson 2017). In such traditions, dominating nature for human expansion would not be seen evidence of social progress, but of moral regress.

Dewey portrays adherence to these sorts of "customs" as superstitions that one would only irrationally try to protect in contact with outside groups. "Savage tribes," according to Dewey, regard "aliens and enemies as synonymous" because "they have identified their experience with rigid adherence to their past customs. On such a basis it is wholly logical to fear intercourse with others, for such contact might dissolve custom. It would certainly occasion reconstruction" (MW9: 117). In light of scholarship on Indigenous ethics and law, what Dewey and many social scientists of his day tended to frame as a failure to achieve civilization may be challenged on the basis that the ethical scale that they presuppose does not rightly capture the shape of ethical and political life. The customs rigidly adhered to by Indigenous nations, one might argue, were adhered to *rightly* as ethical truths and as

progress over Dewey's own anthropocentric account. Just as Dewey rightly and rigidly rejected fascism, First Nations *rightly* rejected dominating other life, one might claim.

Tragically, Dewey was correct that contact with European civilizations led to a dissolution at least in degrees of many Indigenous traditions. Dewey's call for greater openness to this dissolution is rightly regretted. It cannot be plausibly denied, in light of Fallace's (2010) study, that Dewey's embrace of a picture of education, wherein civilization and formal schooling superseded so-called savagery and barbarism, whether intentionally or not, reinforced a set of political practices that at the time of his writing had far reaching harmful colonial consequences. Using Dewey's own letters and the documented practices of Dewey School teachers implementing Dewey's curricular vision, Fallace (2010) makes it clear that Dewey explicitly intended to help students discover that European ways of life were "superior" to Indigenous ways of life and not just different. Students in Dewey Schools were taught, for example, by teachers like Laura Runyon (1906), that "In getting land from the Indians the same methods were used that have prevailed through the ages when a people with *superior weapons and brains* [italics added], in sufficient number, meet an *inferior* [italics added] people" (as cited in Fallace 2010, 473). Similarly, Dewey, in an ethics textbook with James Tufts (1908/1978) explicitly attributed a "primitive" form of ethics to "the so-called totem group, which is found among North American Indians, Africans and Australians, and was perhaps the early form of Semitic groups" (as cited in Fallace 2010, 473). Such peoples, by Dewey's and many of his peers' lights, were a stepping stone to more "fully developed" European ways of life which used industrial agriculture and the written word.

The harmful consequences of these ways of thinking, in my view, should not be downplayed. In Canada and the United States, governments habitually justified schooling policies that forcibly seized and "re-educated" First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children on the basis that these were civilizing practices. The words of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonal, in Canada's House of Commons are representative of the mindset that drove these policies:

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015, 2)

As the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (hereafter ‘TRC’) Report (2015) indicate, throughout the history of Indian Residential Schools, children endured horrific physical and sexual abuse. In the worst periods, just before the publication of *Democracy & Education*, internal documents estimate that more than half of students attending these schools died before graduation due to forced labor, disease, and other forms of neglect and mistreatment. The TRC characterized the practices of the residential school era, which extended at least into the 1990s when the last school closed, as “cultural genocide” (2015, 1).

Dewey fought against racism in many ways throughout his life and, as Fallace (2010) notes, abandoned the hierarchy of savagery, barbarism, and civilization in his later work. Still it is important to acknowledge that Indian Residential Schools that were intended to ‘civilize’ Indigenous peoples in the image of Anglo-American governments and post-Enlightenment Christian ethics almost certainly gained at least some philosophical support from Dewey’s use of the hierarchy of savagery, barbarism, and civilization. As a scholar putting Dewey at the center of his project, I think it is important to acknowledge the horrible effects of these political practices on relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people throughout Turtle Island. Putting these worries in view has implications for my own project. In our present era, many Indigenous scholars point out that colonialism has not ended in liberal-democratic institutions (Simpson 2017; Borrows 2016; Craft 2013; Coulthard 2014). Canadian and American schools do not, for example, standardly teach that humans and their governments have constitutive obligations to plants and animals as bearers of inherent moral value, as many Anishinaabe scholars hold (Craft 2014; Borrows 2016; Simpson 2017). Schools also tend to

teach that it is morally permissible to privately own and sell land for individual human gain. This, too, is contested by Anishinaabe traditions (Hamilton, 2015; Craft 2013; Simpson 2017). As Aimee Craft, an Anishinaabe legal scholar, argues, at the negotiation of Treaty 1 “Chief Ayee-ta-pe-pe-tung spoke to the Queen’s negotiators about his ‘ownership’ and his view that rather than owning it, he was made of the land” (2014, 16). It is not clear, according to Craft that Anishinaabe representatives advocating this view of their moral relationship to the land were adequately understood by British colonial negotiators as making real ethical claims.

If thinking one owns the earth is a moral mistake, then an unjustified colonial displacement continues in our midst, largely uncriticized, wherever schools teach that it is okay for a market economy to extract resources for private human purposes. Chief Ayee-ta-pe-pe-tung and the call for an orientation towards the flourishing of all of our relations is still not heard. In this project, I will not tackle the broader question of what humans owe to a greater than human world, if they are committed to a learning ethic. With Anishinaabe co-authors, I have helped sketch at least some thoughts in that direction (Kruse, Tanchuk, & Hamilton, forthcoming). In this dissertation, I hope to articulate and ground a framework within which to conceive of responsibilities humans have to themselves and to each other in a learning ethic. I will leave open the implications of this ethic for learning from and with other-than-human-life, life of a sort that is not subject to the moral doubts we can identify as we can in human cases. I suspect that the insights of other life bear intrinsic value if we are morally responsible learners, as I have argued elsewhere, but I will leave these questions aside here due to limitations of space. This leaves my project open to a charge of anthropocentrism that I hope to address in the future. I want to insist for now that anthropocentrism in the bearers of moral value is not intended as a constituent of the view I defend nor need it be assumed.

The second problem I want to highlight in framing the relationship of my project to efforts at decolonization is the charge that Dewey is guilty of ‘Columbusing’—discovering something already

known. If Fallace (2010) is correct, Dewey denigrated the thought and culture of Indigenous peoples as he championed his learning ethic. Recent scholarship in the Anishinaabe tradition suggests that Dewey could not have been very aware of Indigenous ethics in his midst. Were he aware, he would have been likely to notice that many Indigenous peoples in the regions in which he lived and worked held something like the learning ethic he recommended. As Blair Stonechild (2016) reports, in Anishinaabe thought, each person can be understood as having an ethical purpose: to fallibly and humbly, seek knowledge (49). As in Dewey's work, in the cosmology of Anishinaabe thought each person is and ought to be seen as a learner, with a fundamental desire to respond to an emerging and ever-changing reality (Stonechild 2016; Kruse, Tanchuk, and Hamilton forthcoming).

In the Anishinaabe tradition, the reality to which each responds is personified as Gitchie Manitou or the Creator—sometimes translated as a great mystery or spirit (Simpson 2011; Simpson 2017; Benton-Banai 2010). Against the backdrop of this mystery we learn, at once enabled and constrained by the laws constituting reality (Stonechild 2016, 49). In the Anishinaabe tradition the world is modelled as thought or dreamed into existence by the Creator (Simpson 2011; Stonechild 2016). Those learning from reality are thus understood as responding to a system of inherently valuable and living thoughts or ideas, rather than brute matter. Such a cosmology is widely shared by Algonquin language speaking peoples who inhabited Manhattan, Michigan, and Illinois—all places where Dewey worked as a scholar. I am not an expert on this tradition of thought, but if a learning ethic similar to the one Dewey recommended was present already in these regions, it is additionally tragic that he did not recognize it. One wonders whether some of the harms thousands of Indigenous people endured in the 19th and 20th centuries might have been avoided had Dewey better heeded his own calls for free communication and exchange of ideas across peoples.

I am not qualified to adequately address the questions I pursue in this project in Anishinaabemowin or in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions alone and so I leave them, at least for now,

to those sufficiently qualified to do so. It is nevertheless important to me to acknowledge the presence of these traditions in my intellectual life and this work. I hope to continue to explore the interrelation between the arguments developed in this project on Deweyan instructional design and the liberal-democratic tradition with the themes that animate my Anishinaabe friends and co-authors in joint future projects. Based on our past efforts, I see that future work as likely to augment the framework offered here towards a more complete picture of the human condition. Those acquainted with the Anishinaabe tradition may see aspects of it throughout my arguments. A few points of overlap, at least as I see them, are worth noting.

In the Anishinaabe tradition of ethical theory, Benton-Banai (2010) argues that non-Indigenous people in our era will be faced with a choice between two paths: one that instrumentalizes relationships as forms of technology, another that captures the path of Anishinaabe spirituality. The teachings of this tradition, Benton-Banai stresses, are to be understood as of potential benefit to all humanity. At the same time, Benton-Banai calls each to respect the insights of other traditions and modes of expression—these too are gifts from reality or the Creator. In this dissertation, I provide an argument that hopes to show that short of refuting moral skepticism, we do not establish normative ethical standards. By way of this argument, I try to show that a great deal of apparent complexity in moral philosophical discourse collapses either into a learning ethic or a morally skeptical stance, where learning is an instrument for private purposes. I then try to present an argument to move from the morally skeptical path to the path of the holistic learning ethic. I owe this way of looking at the discourse, in part, to the powerful image Benton-Banai (2010) recounts in the 7th Fire Prophecy. The recommendation that we proceed amidst disagreement with others by treating them and ourselves alike as fallible learners bearing valuable insights also owes to this tradition (See Craft 2014, 11).

In the Anishinaabe tradition, as Stonechild (2016) and others point out, ethics rightly shapes law and governance, with the latter expressing our ethical responsibilities to each other in community

and to the natural world upon which we depend (Hamilton 2015; Simpson 2017; Craft 2013). Learning from and with all of life is not a private good for individual possession and private gain within Anishinaabe horizons, but a public way of improving and recognizing the value in all of one's relations (Hamilton 2015). Anishinaabe scholars, like Leanne Simpson (2011; 2017) have argued that it is appropriate to treat the Creation Story as an ethical theory. Mirroring what I see in these writers' work, I will argue for a Deweyan picture of ethics that is grounded in responsibilities to bring about a world composed of valuable relations as the primary locus of moral concern. Here too, I am indebted in whatever ways I am successful, to an Anishinaabe tradition that frames human ethical responsibilities in relational terms to a broader world and treats those responsibilities as a basis upon which to guide governance and law.

The grounding argument I employ here on behalf of Dewey's commitment to learning has been offered in other work with my Anishinaabe friends and co-authors, Marc Kruse and Robert Hamilton (Kruse, Tanchuk, & Hamilton, forthcoming). The development of this ethical grounding argument, which appeals to a fundamental love of agents to reflect reality, owes as much to my conversations with Marc and Robert and our efforts to defend a learning ethos in the horizons of the Anishinaabe tradition than to any text of Dewey's. In similar ways, my conviction that Dewey may have been right about some questions is as much informed by informal conversations with staff, community members, and elders in the Summer Indigenous Math Leadership programming that I have been humbled to be a part of at the University of Winnipeg and coaching Indigenous athletes as it has been by Dewey's texts. In serving community and youth, I have learned from Indigenous ways of knowing and being, from ceremonies, and from youth as they learned. The idea that we are and ought to live as fallible learners, as we respond to a great and mysterious reality, a reality that we are often enough confused about and humbled by, owes as much or more to these experiences in Manitoba and stories about Nanabush, the Ojibwe cultural hero, as it does to the books and lectures

I have encountered in Manhattan. I am incredibly grateful for the learning I have experienced in New York but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge these other sources of my thought.

In this project, I hope to address some common political challenges shared by both Dewey and the learning ethic Stonechild recommends in the Anishinaabe and Saulteaux tradition. By addressing these common challenges, I hope to have something to contribute to future efforts to explore the interrelationship between these traditions of thought. There are, of course, also certainly differences, as noted in the case of ecology above, to be worked out. Like Stonechild, Dewey once proclaimed that “learning from all of the contacts of life is *the* essential moral interest of humanity” (MW9: 395 italics added). Dewey’s attempt to ground his vision of school and society on a responsibility to pursue growth through the process of cooperative egalitarian learning distinguishes his work from the most dominant approaches in the liberal tradition. Many contemporary liberals take Dewey’s teleology to be a vice of his political project and many contemporary Deweyans, like Elizabeth Anderson (2006), downplay his learning based ethical teleology (Talissee 2011). Dewey’s teleology is nevertheless much closer to the ethic of learning my friends see in the teachings of Anishinaabe elders than most within the liberal tradition, even if notable differences also exist. Both learning ethics and their attendant politics stand in a similarly tense relationship with anti-teleological forms of liberal political morality.

My goal in this project is to carry the thesis that egalitarian-cooperative learning is the essential moral interest of humanity as far as I can within this dominant liberal-democratic discourse which tends to fragment and privatize teleological conceptions of ethics and governance. I have two primary motives for doing so: First, I am convinced that such a view is true to what matters most for educating students to live well and to create a just society; Second, if my friends and I read the Anishinaabe tradition well, a Deweyan reformation of the liberal-tradition might open up the possibility of

movement towards truth and reconciliation with at least some Indigenous worldviews that strike me as compelling and that might further enrich what is advanced here.

To explore the prospects for reforming dominant liberal-democratic ways of thinking about the ends of education and politics towards a learning ethic, I will draw on Dewey's arguments, augmenting them where necessary to address standard twentieth-century philosophical objections. I will also consider recent empirical objections from cognitive science that challenge the teaching of such an ethic in schools on the basis of considerations of both efficacy and equity. If liberal-democratic discourse can be transformed in ways that make it more conducive to the sorts of commitments at the heart of many Indigenous traditions—a politics of community, a fundamental egalitarian care for all our relationships, a constitutive relationship to a great, mysterious and changing reality, and a conception of good governance that emerges through a process of learning and cooperative action—then the prospects for reconciling some of the fractures of colonialism might be less bleak than they sometimes seem at present. Instructional design, in light of this ethical and political reframing, is likely to look quite different than we standardly assume, with future implications worth exploring in curriculum and assessment as well. Embracing a learning ethic would call us to depart from the widely taught view that values are merely a matter of unconstrained individual preference or choice. Instead we would be called towards an ideal of becoming informed—of learning to learn—where our chief value would be rightly seen as discovered through learning.

Just as when Dewey Schools taught that an instrumental attitude towards much of the natural environment was superior to one that did not seek to control the environment, as educators engaged in questions of instructional design, we stand in enduring relations to colonial fractures. How we situate ourselves in relation to these fractures is central to how we think about instructional design, whether or not we acknowledge the fact. I will try to move us towards addressing some of what I see as ethical oversights in which we may now be engaged. As with any attempt by an historical agent,

these efforts will be fallible and much work will certainly remain to be done beyond this study. I do not aim to end the conversation around these topics but to fulfill my responsibility to contribute to it in light of the truth as I see it. I offer arguments that aspire to universal importance insofar as I see all moral agents as engaged in a common set of ethical questions. I hope to do so, though, with appropriate humility. The remainder of this project places Dewey at the center. I ask the reader to keep in view the possibility, however, that the insights Dewey championed pre-date him in the ethical theories and systems of governance of Indigenous nations. As we think about the meaning of ethical and intellectual progress, the practices of Indigenous nations where women have traditionally led, gender diversity is seen as a gift, and a world of greater-than-human relations is revered, by my lights, anyway, are sources of great hope.

Introduction

A long tradition of progressive pedagogy, running from Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1763/1979), through the work of John Dewey (MW9), argues that it is ethically and politically important for students to learn to co-direct the process of inquiry. For Rousseau and Dewey, the moral purpose of education is to cultivate human freedom and human freedom cannot, for these thinkers, be developed in students without the exercise of their agency. Many contemporary researchers, in keeping with the progressive tradition, champion a similar role for student agency in co-directing the process of learning (See for example Ladson-Billings 2014; Paris and Alim 2014; Emdin 2015; von Glaserfeld 2013; Kolb 2015; Barrows 1986). Against this pedagogical tradition, a group of cognitive scientists, Paul Kirschner, John Sweller, and Richard Clark (2006), argue that empirical evidence collected over the past thirty years provides decisive reasons to reject student directed instructional designs in schools. According to these cognitive scientists, student-led instructional approaches variously called “inquiry learning” “constructivist learning” “problem based learning” “discovery learning” and “problem based learning” (hereafter ‘IL’ or ‘inquiry learning’ approaches), are all likely to be less effective and less egalitarian than “fully guided” teacher-led forms of direct instruction (hereafter ‘DI’ and ‘DI theorists’ to denote Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark).

If DI theorists are correct, a central pedagogical recommendation of many educators committed to social justice may be likely to have the exact opposite of its intended ethical and political effects. From a policy standpoint, the shift towards inquiry learning approaches in jurisdictions throughout the world might appear to be sowing the seeds of an ethical, civic, and economic tragedy. DI theorists’ claims entail that wherever educators use IL approaches, they are likely to create a generation of citizens both less well informed overall and less equal in their capacities to intelligently navigate the world than they might have been had well-designed DI approaches been used instead. From the perspective of educational justice, where teachers use IL approaches, DI theorists predict

there will be (a) fewer total academic benefits to leverage to the advantage of the least well off students over the course of their lives *and* (b) a state of affairs within which the least academically advantaged students are likely to be less well situated *relative* to their peers in competitions for future educational and career opportunities. From the perspective of the least advantaged students, a society using IL approaches is one where, if DI theorists are correct, such students are likely to be less well-off both *absolutely* and *relatively* in the goods academic achievement confers.

In this dissertation, I argue that DI theorists' attempt to "end the debate" (Clark et al. 2012, 6) on the basis of purely empirical considerations and rule out IL approaches may be compelling if the debate is understood as an argument about the all-purpose efficiency of two instructional approaches. Both sides in the cognitive science debate often treat DI and IL as tools or methods to be measured on the grounds of their relative efficacy. Against this backdrop, I defend a characteristically Deweyan view: that the ethical and political goal of education is for students and citizens alike to see themselves as co-designers and co-creators of educative experiences. With the Deweyan tradition, I argue that treating IL as a means to other educational and political ends would be a moral and political mistake. Abandoning IL altogether in favor of a wholly teacher led approach or instrumentalizing egalitarian co-inquiring relationships to other ultimate ends, I will claim, fails to reflect the proper ethical and political goals of education. If the Deweyan view I defend is correct and DI theorists' attempt to eliminate IL were to succeed, then such so-called success would in fact be a great ethical and political loss for education. I will argue that DI theorists' insights are nevertheless appropriately instrumentalized to support the development of students' talents as cooperative inquirers. By instrumentalizing DI theorists' insights to Deweyan ends, I argue that we acquire important correctives to some tendencies in IL instructional design that wish to foreground student agency by minimizing adult support or the importance of educators as curators of valuable content.

To defend this controversial ethical and political position, I start by following recent philosophical work on educational decision making. With this work, I argue in Chapter 1 that the very idea of “data driven” (Brighouse, Ladd, Loeb, and Swift 2018, 81) educational decisions of the sort recommended by DI theorists rests on a confusion. Educational decisions ought to be “evidence informed” (Brighouse et al. 2018, 81). The decisions we make, however, are ultimately “values driven” (Brighouse et al. 2018, 81) insofar as they depend on goals taken to be worth pursuing. In the cognitive science debate there is a tendency to portray fully guided DI as an all-purpose means in contrast with IL methods. Against this framing, I argue that to even determine whether instructional decisions are “fully” as opposed to “less-than-fully” guided presupposes answers to suppressed questions about the goals of instruction. These questions about the goals of instruction, in turn, depend upon answers to questions about the ethical and political value of treating students as co-instructional designers and creators of the experiences and institutions we share in school and society.

To defend a Deweyan approach to conceiving of the ethical and political principles used to guide instructional design, in Chapter 2 I critically assess the dominant liberal pluralist tradition of democratic thought running from Isaiah Berlin (1958) through John Rawls (1993). I grant that the ideal of civic equality between autonomous citizens within this tradition may appear to offer a basis to normatively guide instructional design. I argue that this appearance is misleading, however, due to the inability of defenders of that tradition to coherently ground the unifying values of autonomy and equality against deep ethical and political dissent. The liberal-pluralist tradition’s commitment to the irreducible incommensurability of ethical ideals, I argue, ultimately undermines the possibility of grounding the unifying values of autonomy and political equality, which it calls upon each to respect. The result is that when faced with ethical dissent, this widely influential tradition collapses into what Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/2007) described as a subjective form of “emotivism” in its use of moral language, even if the objective purport of the meanings of the statements used mask this fact.

Once this form of emotivism is discovered to be the basis of appraisals of value for liberal and dissenter alike, one sees that the ability to sustain one's values against others' competing and intellectually irreconcilable pictures of value becomes a central task for each. Might, it turns out, makes right. Prudent parents, awake to this fact, have reason to seek ways to advance their child's power over others, over the course of a life. Under this way of thinking about value, scientific approaches to research that identify individuals' actual descriptive preferences and the practical opportunities for their fulfillment may look like attractive ways to conceive of ethical, educational, and political inquiry to guide decision making. Devoting resources to humanistic scholarship into the nature of values, by contrast, may seem naïve. Value, in the final analysis, boils back down to descriptive data.

To escape this feedback loop between the way we conceive of ethical and political values philosophically and "data-driven" instrumentalizing practices in schools, I argue in Chapter 2 that it is necessary to re-think the value of education as it figures within philosophical inquiry. With Socrates, I claim that to escape an adversarial and instrumental politics where fundamental values inevitably clash and power is the final arbiter, some common and fundamental interest that ethically unifies each even in moments of deep doubt is required.² Otherwise, one might rationally abandon a commitment to what is claimed to be ethics or justice where one's fundamental interests lie elsewhere. Drawing on negative arguments from MacIntyre (1981/2007), I argue that to avoid an explosion of incommensurable moral standards: goods, evils, rights, and duties, equivalent to having none, that, a morally skeptical default stance should be embraced in moral inquiry and practice. I refer to the requirement of refuting skeptical doubt to establish genuinely moral standards as the "Socratic Test" in commemoration. Ultimately, I endeavor to show that the interest in learning that Dewey championed remains as our single foundational interest even in conditions of morally skeptical doubt.

² For attribution of this view to Socrates, see Williams (1985), 30-31

I acknowledge at the outset that it will seem impossible to identify a normative conception of ethics or justice, Deweyan or otherwise, under the conditions I have claimed we should embrace. I refer to this challenge for Dewey of grounding his normative claims against skeptical dissent as ‘Dewey’s grounding problem’. In Chapter 3, I attempt to resolve Dewey’s grounding problem by arguing that when we see our desires in Humean terms as fundamentally conflicting and unstructured, we have not yet fully understood their nature. If the argument succeeds, then we acquire a foundation upon which to start to assess decisions about instructional design in light of the possibility of ethical and political dissent. Towards establishing this conclusion, under the conditions of the Socratic Test, I launch a second-order inductive inquiry of the sort used by J.S. Mill (1859/1978) to establish the full scope of our fallibility. Using this meta-inductive form of argument, I identify a fundamental desire to respond to reality and, thus, to learn, present for each in moments of skeptical inquiry. Each, I argue, rightly prioritizes this interest in learning, once discovered, when determining one’s projects as an agent. The result, I claim, is a fundamental interest in the conception of freedom Dewey identified as the goal of education, ethics, and politics.

With this resolution of Dewey’s grounding problem in view, in Chapter 4 I consider a number of twentieth-century egalitarian objections to Dewey’s approach to ethical educational and political thinking. In different ways, these objections claim that a conception of justice that aims to promote a common ultimate goal—growth in Dewey’s case—will either permit or require aristocratic, elitist, or tyrannical forms of social order hostile to democratic ideals in at least some cases. I refer to this set of challenges as iterations of ‘Dewey’s problem of elitism’. I attempt to resolve Dewey’s problem of elitism in three steps. First, I try to show that the ethical goal of Deweyan learning, paired with the Socratic Test, entails a rejection of egoistic accounts of self-interest that would permit but not mandate inequality. Second, I hope to show that promoting the Deweyan conception of ethics entails an egalitarian relational ideal of co-operative learning between pairs of individuals that rules out elitist

forms of social order in our ultimate ethical and political goal. Third, I show that the Deweyan intersubjective ideal is manifested in three dimensions of distributions of cooperative capacities in a population. Attending to each dimension ensures that when promoting the common good, each gives priority to those least advantaged. I argue that the three dimensions of the Deweyan ideal—the central tendency, the average dispersion, and the range—strongly moderate efforts to promote the common good, ensuring that not just our over-arching ends but the means to them are egalitarian in shape. If the argument of Chapter 4 is sound, then each student and citizen will be shown to have a normatively fundamental ethical interest in egalitarian cooperative teaching and learning. Each, it will have been shown, is and ought to be committed to an egalitarian ethic of cooperative instructional design.

In Chapter 5, I outline four desiderata based on the Deweyan ethic that should guide instructional design and apply these to the cognitive science debate about DI and IL traced in Chapter 1. The desiderata guiding instructional decisions are: (1) *Justice*: the decision advances egalitarian cooperative learning; (2) *Legitimacy*: the decision reflects engagement with those it effects as learners so that they can see and verify whether the decision reflects our common ethical interest; (3) *Priority*: the decision prioritizes those who are least advantaged as learners in the population; (4) *Intersectionality and Epistemic Justice*: In assessing (1-3) the decision accounts for: (a) the intersections of different structures that positively or negatively affect learners and (b) the ways past and current identity based prejudice may wrong students as knowers. The first three desiderata are developed in this project. The last, I sketch and identify as a topic for future work.

Using these four desiderata, I return to the arguments advanced by DI theorists' in Chapter 1. As a matter of justice and legitimacy, I argue that instructional design should treat student co-designed learning as the ethical and political *goal* of schooling rather than a tool for other ends. To advance equality and give *priority* to the least advantaged learners, I claim that a number of insights from DI theorists should be integrated to address anti-egalitarian tendencies in IL designs. I advocate careful

attention to *intersectionality and epistemic injustice* in identifying curricular content to support learners and in correcting for implicit bias in how teachers and students alike engage with and design experiences for each other as learners. To foster equality and respect the *priority* of the least advantaged learners, I draw on existing cognitive science evidence to recommend (a) using student-leadership of instructional design in culminating tasks and (b) phasing student leadership in on a developmental pathway towards independence.

Finally, before turning to the argument, a note about the relationship between Dewey's intentions and my own. Throughout this study, I will refer to the ethic of instructional design I develop as 'Deweyan' rather than 'Dewey's' for three reasons: first, as noted in the preface, given the presence of a similar ethic in Anishinaabe thought, there are real questions about whom it is best to attribute some of the ideas Dewey defended; second, I am less interested in what Dewey himself claimed and haggling over exegesis than I am in solving problems here and now—consistent with Dewey's own spirit; and third, I will extend the account I offer well beyond what Dewey provides. I try to show, for example, that though we may be ignorant of the fact, fostering an interest in learning reflects our evaluative practices as agents, both about matters of fact and value. Dewey explicitly rejects this sort of grounding project in favor of an appeal to consequences, but I argue that it is necessary if we are to articulate why this value ought to be prioritized in school and society. Similarly, to clarify the shape of the egalitarian ideal that I claim is identical with the commitment to growth in one's own case, I draw on an intersubjective form of argument and statistical properties of distributions not present in Dewey's work. Despite these departures, I take this project and its implications for the design and co-creation of educative experiences to be in a broadly Deweyan egalitarian spirit. By claiming Dewey as an ally, I hope to provide a context for educational researchers to understand my position but with attention also to important points of departure. With these caveats in mind, let us turn to the cognitive science debate about direct instruction and student led inquiry.

Chapter 1: Should Students be Instructional Designers?

Every school system has an interest in helping students acquire valuable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions (Brighthouse, Ladd, Loeb, and Swift 2018). A long tradition of progressive pedagogy from Rousseau through John Dewey argues that the best way to educate students to enjoy these goods is by involving them as co-designers and co-creators of the process of learning. Against this progressive tradition of pedagogy, recent research in cognitive science claims that direct instruction (DI)—fully explicit, and teacher-led instructional guidance—is the most efficient way to teach novice learners (Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark 2006; Clark, Kirschner, and Sweller 2012; Sweller 2015; Sweller 2016; hereafter ‘DI theorists’). DI theorists argue that approaches which have students “discover or construct essential information for themselves” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 75), variously referred to as “discovery learning”, “problem-based learning”, “inquiry learning”, “experiential learning”, and “constructivist learning” (hereafter ‘IL’), are likely to be less effective than DI and to needlessly exacerbate achievement gaps between the most and least proficient learners (Kirschner et al. 2006; Clark et al. 2012; Sweller 2015; Sweller 2016). An emphasis on treating students as co-leaders of inquiry continues in widely influential contemporary work advocating culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014), and reality pedagogy (Emdin 2016). To the extent that this is the case, these pedagogies also would qualify as targets of DI theorists’ arguments.

If DI theorists are correct, involving students as co-designers of learning experiences is likely to have the opposite effect intended by many educators concerned about social justice. Rather than fostering social progress and academic equality, IL methods would be likely to lead to a less well educated population overall and a less equal distribution of knowledge and skills in society. A widely cited debate among educational psychologists followed the original statement of these findings, with

some responding to defend IL (Kuhn 2007; Hmelo-Silver, Duncan and Chinn 2007; Schmidt, Loyens, Gog, and Pas 2007) and others rejoining against these replies (Sweller et al. 2007; Clark et al. 2012).

In this chapter, I argue that the central distinction in this debate is misleadingly-conceived such that it elides deeper ethical and political questions upon which the debate turns. In the first section of this chapter, I summarize the main lines of argument against IL and in favor of DI in the recent cognitive science debate. In the second section of this chapter, I consider replies from IL theorists to the initial charges made by proponents of DI and rejoinders to those replies. I argue that DI and IL are sometimes treated in the debate as if they are types of all-purpose *means to instruct* that can be compared in abstraction from the value of *instructional aims*: the valued knowledge, skills, dispositions, or attitudes to be taught to students in a lesson. IL's opponents exploit this framing by drawing on evidence of IL's apparent inefficiency when compared to DI (Sweller et al. 2007).

In the third section of the chapter, I argue against the framing of DI and IL as two value neutral ways to instruct that can be compared for their efficiency. To even determine whether instruction is “fully guided” and “explicit” and thus a case of DI, I claim, presupposes reference to a domain of valued instructional aims. Without introducing such value-laden goals, DI and IL, I argue, are conceptually indistinct—IL can claim to encompass all that DI demands and vice versa. The “general inefficiency” objection against IL therefore fails: there are no distinct instructional methods to compare on the basis of their efficiency alone. In the fourth section of this chapter, I use two cases to show that at the center of the evaluative decision between instructional designs is a suppressed ethical and political question about the value of teaching students to become co-instructional designers in a community of inquiry. I argue that if, as Dewey thought, the ethical and political goal of instruction is to inculcate an ethos wherein each lives as an egalitarian co-instructional designer, then student co-led instructional designs cannot be correctly eliminated from the goals of education.

Proponents of DI aim to “put an end this debate” (Clark et al. 2012, 6) and have educators reject IL in almost every context of instructional design solely on the basis of empirical evidence. My argument in this chapter makes it clear that even if we accept DI theorists’ empirical findings, this aspiration cannot succeed *inter alia* due to the inherently “value-driven” nature of the debate’s key distinction (Brighthouse et al. 2018, 81). To determine how best to instruct and whether Dewey’s view of our ethical goals is correct, an inquiry into our ethical and political values is necessary.

1.1 Direct Instruction & All Purpose Efficiency

Educational decision makers have a fundamental interest in making sure instruction is well designed. Proponents of DI argue that given what we know about human cognitive architecture, explicit “fully guided” instruction (DI) is always a better instructional method by which to teach novice learners than less-than-fully-guided IL approaches (Kirschner et al. 2006). Whatever subject one is teaching, and whether one is aiming to inculcate knowledge, skills, attitudes, or dispositions, the best way to instruct students, according DI theorists, is to “fully explain” the content and procedures to be learned explicitly to students (Kirschner et al. 2006, 75; Sweller et al. 2007; Clark 2012).

To understand the nature of DI theorists’ objections to IL approaches, it is important to understand their empirical basis. DI theorists’ argument rests upon two empirical claims: (a) that human working memory is limited; (b) that due to the limits of working memory, instructional designs producing “higher cognitive load” are less efficacious than those creating lower cognitive load (Sweller et al. 2007, 80; Kirschner et al. 2006, 76-77). According to DI theorists, on the best accounts of human cognitive architecture now available, there are clear differences in the power and role of working and long-term memory that must be accounted for in instructional design. We now know that most information that enters working memory but is not rehearsed within thirty seconds is lost (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77). Furthermore, the quantity of information that can be held or processed in

working memory is highly limited. Some studies, DI theorists report, estimate that people are only able to store seven items in working memory, others find that it “may be as low as four, plus or minus one” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77). When not merely storing information, but also performing operations on the information in working memory, the number of items working memory can manage is likely even lower, as few as “two or three, depending upon the nature of the processing required” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77).

By contrast, “long term memory incorporates a massive knowledge base” upon which our perception of the world and intentional action depends. Our long-term memory, unlike our working memory is of “essentially infinite capacity” (Norman and Schmidt 2016, 795-796). Where working memory is only able to retain and perform operations on small numbers of new information, scientists have not yet identified the upper limit of the capacity of working memory to draw on existing information in long-term memory (Sweller et al. 2007, 118; Haskell 2001, 108). The relationship between short term and long term memory bears directly upon our ability to solve complex problems alone or in cooperation with others (Haskell 2001, 108).

A wide array of studies over the past forty years on the development of expertise has shown that the key difference between experts and novices in solving problems is the amount of well-structured knowledge possessed by each group (Sweller et al. 2007, 76). Where in the past, it was thought that expert problem solvers devised novel strategies using working memory, DI theorists report that this idea is outdated (Haskell 2001, 108-109). We now know that long-term memory is not a passive store of discrete facts but, according to DI theorists, is “the central, dominant structure of human cognition. Everything we see, hear, and think about is critically dependent on and influenced by our long-term memory” (Sweller et al. 2007, 76).

Once one has this picture of cognitive architecture in view, DI theorists argue that we can see that many instructional practices cherished and promoted in schools of education are now out of step

with the scientific evidence. Working memory can easily become overloaded with information that is extraneous to learning objectives in the classroom. Where cognitive overload occurs, less new information gets rehearsed and encoded into long-term memory, resulting in less learning. To reduce cognitive load during instruction and increase encoding of new knowledge in long-term memory, DI theorists recommend providing novice learners with “worked examples” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 80) that model how to solve problems in full and “process sheets” (80) that outline the procedures for solving problems. Anything that should be learned, DI theorists claim, should be taught by teachers in a way that “fully explains” and models what is to be learned (75). To deny this, by DI theorists lights, is simply to deny what we have learned in the last thirty years about the nature of human cognitive architecture and how to support it during learning.

To illustrate what DI theorists have in mind, imagine a teacher who wants to teach single digit addition by counting on. Based on her prior knowledge of students’ abilities, the teacher selects this topic as a reasonable next step in the learning progression either for a group of students or the whole class. After activating the prior knowledge students require for learning the new topic by questioning or review, the teacher might then introduce the new content with an example like “ $2+2=?$ ” She could model how to approach the example by saying “2” with a closed fist and then count on the next two numbers by revealing two fingers, saying “three” and “four” before writing “ $2+2= 4$ ” on the board. The teacher might then try a new example, “ $2+3=?$ ” and have students start by saying “two” with a closed fist and then trying to count on the remaining two steps with her. Finally, she might work through a third example, and have students do it independently. The number of iterations of each step would be appropriately adjusted to reflect students’ accuracy in completing the task to be learned. In this example, the teacher attempts to directly model each of the steps in the addition strategy. Working step by step, with opportunities to rehearse each step along the way, the teacher strives to reduce the

cognitive demands placed on her students that would occur if all of the steps were presented at once or without practice to consolidate each step.

To support students' independent practice of the strategy of counting on to solve single digit addition, the teacher could then provide process sheets listing each step in text or pictures. These sheets could be used to help students perform the skill without teacher guidance, reducing the cognitive load required for the student to retrieve the steps from the lesson, where needed. Such approaches to reducing cognitive load, by DI theorists' lights, are not only appropriate in math classes. In a reading lesson, a teacher might teach decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies through fully explicit guidance and provide process sheets to students as prompts to help remember the procedures or terms when they practice independently. One can imagine modelling desirable attitudes and dispositions in similar ways, providing reasons why they are important, and perhaps practicing by play-acting or deliberating upon various cases where the attitudes or dispositions are to be expressed. Teachers do this, for example, when they are trying to teach students processes of cooperation or respectful interaction or debriefing with a class about behavior incidents.

Reggie Routman's (2008) widely used "optimal learning model" reflects the sort of scaffolding DI theorists recommend. First, the teacher demonstrates a skill, the students then participate in a demonstration of the learning task or skill with the teacher, before engaging in guided practice and, lastly, independent practice. Routman refers to this process as involving a "gradual handover of responsibility" (2008, 2) from teacher to student. At each step the teacher frames students' learning goals for them to reduce cognitive demands, models each of the elements to be learned, and corrects students as they practice to master the skill or learn the new concepts they are studying. By doing so, teachers create opportunities for students to rehearse and encode new knowledge and procedures into long-term memory, towards developing independent mastery of the curriculum.

Educators who do not make the content and procedures students are to learn fully explicit, DI theorists argue, needlessly increase the cognitive load placed on learners who have not yet mastered the content, reducing the efficiency of the instructional design (Kirschner et al. 2006). In the debate, these learners who have not yet mastered content are referred to as ‘novices’. A teacher who asked novice students to guess the solution to “ $2+2=$ ” or create their own new strategies to solve it without directly teaching how to do so, according to DI theorists, would needlessly increase the cognitive demands of the lesson. Leaving novice learners to try to generate a new strategy through unstructured or semi-structured search when the teacher could simply teach the knowledge and skills directly to the students, by DI theorists’ lights, is just a waste of valuable instructional time. As DI theorists stress, students may engage in a great deal of unstructured search and learn nearly nothing (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77).

To understand the effect of IL approaches on inequality within DI theorists’ argument, it is important to understand the differences between novice and expert learners. As noted above, widely replicated findings in cognitive science suggest that what separates experts from novices in a field is large amounts of detailed and structured knowledge of the domain of inquiry. Thus, a teacher wanting students to learn to develop innovative solutions and solve complex problems in a domain of inquiry ought to also insure that students have been taught the knowledge necessary to understand that domain, presumably, in the most efficient ways possible. DI theorists argue that where teachers do not provide direct and explicit support in acquiring all of the knowledge and skills students are to acquire, instruction is likely to be less effective for novice learners than it would be if it were more fully guided, slowing their progress towards expertise and mastery.

DI theorists report a number of well-replicated findings that show that unlike novices, “expert” learners who have mastered the content of a lesson are likely to learn more in less heavily guided learning environments. The difference between experts and novices is related to differences in

long-term and working memory load for each type of learner. According to DI theorists, experts unlike novices can reduce demands on working memory by relying upon knowledge and skills stored in long term memory (Kirschner et al. 2006, 81). For experts but not novices, DI theorists claim, this “knowledge in long-term memory can take over from external guidance” (80). By using knowledge in long term memory, experts free up the needed working memory to learn new knowledge and skills within information rich environments. Thus, where direct instruction and support can help novices, teacher led guidance becomes redundant and can slow down the learning of experts on a topic—what is referred to as the “expertise reversal effect” (81). Good instructors, according to DI theorists, “fade” guidance as students master the knowledge and procedures to be learned and allow them to apply this learning independently, as in the example I have provided above.

The expertise reversal effect has important implications for educational equality. In a review of over seventy studies, DI theorists report that IL approaches tended to “increase the achievement gap” between lower and higher achieving students (Kirschner et al. 2006, 81-82). Across these studies, lower achieving students with less background knowledge relevant to the domain and subjected to high cognitive load educational environments tended to learn less than higher achieving peers, just as cognitive load theory and the expertise reversal effect would predict (Clarke et al. 2012, 8; Kirschner et al., 2006). In many cases, not only did lower achieving students learn little or nothing over the course of studies of IL interventions, in many studies lower skilled students received “significantly *lower* scores on post-tests than pre-test measures” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 81-82). In these cases, a statistically significant *loss* of learning occurred in the IL settings.

To make matters worse for the politically progressive educator who emphasizes student input and choice in mode of instruction, DI theorists cite findings that suggest both low and high achieving students often choose instructional designs other than those that would be most likely to benefit their learning (Clark, 1982, as cited in Kirschner et al. 2006, 82). Thus, even though students may report

preferring an educational activity, according to DI theorists, it does not immediately follow that it is to the student's academic advantage. Students may thus seem happier with a mode of instruction but at the same time be engaged in a practice that undermines the growth of their knowledge and skills.

More recent empirical findings lend further credence to DI theorists' claims about the effect of student and teacher-led instructional approaches on educational achievement and equality. A recent meta-analysis of fifty years of research on a structured DI approach found positive effects overall based on measures of the following outcomes: "reading, math, language, and multiple or other academic subjects; ability measures; affective outcomes; teacher and parent views; and single subject designs" (Stockard, Wood, Coughlin, and Khoury 2018, 479). In Stockard et al. (2018)'s meta-analysis, the overall effects of DI on each outcome across studies were positive and significant, with the exception of affective outcomes, which were found to be positive but not statistically significant. The effect sizes of DI interventions, Stockard et al. (2018) report, are moderate to large when compared to standard benchmarks for psychology and are similar to achievement gaps between higher and lower performing groups of students (502-503). Thus, Stockard et al. argue that

...the effects reported in this analysis, and calculated from 50 years of data on DI, indicate that exposure to DI could substantially reduce current achievement disparities between sociodemographic groups. Moreover, as noted above, at least for the academic subjects, greater exposure would be expected to result in even larger effects. There is little indication that the effects would be expected to decline markedly after intervention ceased; the positive effects are long-term. (2018, 502-503)

Based on this meta-analysis, one might reasonably think well-structured DI is likely to foster educational progress over less heavily and well guided alternatives. Converging with the concerns of DI theorists about equality of opportunity in IL environments, in a study of 56,000 students in 825 Danish schools, Andersen and Andersen (2017) report that "a student-centered instructional strategy has a negative impact on academic achievement in general, and for students with low parental education in particular" (533). If one cares about educational equality and efficacy, then DI theorists'

findings, combined with these more recent results, suggest that IL approaches might be likely to undermine one's educational goals.

DI theorists' arguments seem to fly in the face of central tenets of a longstanding tradition of progressive pedagogical and philosophical thought that is often celebrated in schools of education. In this progressive tradition of pedagogy, figures like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1779), John Dewey (1916), and Paolo Freire (1970), reject pictures of learning that involve the mere transfer of knowledge and skills from teacher to learner in favor of methods that emphasize a more significant role for students as co-leaders of the process of inquiry. In psychology, Jerome Bruner (1961) and many followers of Jean Piaget recommend pedagogical designs wherein students are encouraged to independently discover much of the content they were to learn. Carrying on one strand of this tradition, Django Paris (2012)'s call for "cultural sustaining" forms of pedagogy, argues that students ought to play an active role in both maintaining their local and historical cultures and reconstructing those cultures in response to new circumstances (95). Paris' (2014) work builds off Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) and others' previous calls for "culturally relevant pedagogy" which stressed the need for teachers to see students of color as active participants engaged in guiding the learning process with culturally based insights (See also: Ladson-Billings, 2014). Christopher Emdin's "reality pedagogy" (2015, 29) places a similar emphasis on involving traditionally underserved students in the process of guiding learning. In the debate between DI theorists and IL theorists, these widely influential instructional theorists all would be categorized as defenders of 'less than fully guided instruction'—IL.

If DI theorists are correct, then these approaches where students co-lead the process of inquiry are simply out of step with current scientific evidence in that respect. In the 1960s when Bruner (1961) advanced his instructional strategies, DI theorists claim that "recommending minimal guidance was understandable...because the structures and relations that constitute human cognitive architecture had not been mapped" (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77). The same historical limitation, of course, holds for

Dewey, Piaget, and Rousseau. Given the time it takes for disciplinary knowledge to spread across subfields, it is perhaps reasonable that researchers in curriculum and teaching have not yet incorporated these DI theorists' insights. According to DI theorists, given what we know now, however, such approaches are no longer defensible (2006, 77). As one anonymous reviewer of Stockard et al. (2018)'s meta-analysis put it, "Researchers and practitioners cannot afford to ignore the effectiveness research on DI" (503). The costs to efficacy and equality, in the view of these research findings, are simply too significant.

In education policy there is a widespread and international shift towards IL approaches under the banner of 21st century skills and global competencies (See Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2019; World Economic Forum 2016, 9). If DI theorists are correct, then for those worst off, the political implications of this IL driven policy shift are likely to be tragic. There are at least two significant concerns from the perspective of educational justice under IL policies. First, based on what has been argued by DI theorists, IL approaches can be expected to reduce the total levels of social and economic benefits associated with academic achievement. If DI theorists are correct, then direct and indirect academic benefits are lost under such policies that might have been mobilized or redistributed to redound to those worst off. Thus, to the extent that academic productivity can be used to benefit those who are least advantaged, we can expect the *absolute* position of those worst off to be worse under IL policies than it would have been under a DI policy for novice learners.

Secondly, there are worries from the perspective of educational justice about the position of students who are worse off *relative* to their peers in competitions for other social and economic opportunities. Education is often conceived of as a partly "positional good" that is, one whose value derives in part from how much of it others possess, for example, for the purposes of competing for further opportunities in life (Reich 2013; Brighthouse and Swift 2006). Where education is valued as a positional good and IL policy dominates, then due to the expertise reversal effect, those worst off will

be likely to have the positional value of their education reduced. Thus, even as the total productivity of the education system is reduced, the larger achievement gap predicted based on the expertise reversal effect entails that those worst off will be placed in even worse competitive relationships with their higher achieving peers.

Absolutely and relatively, then, IL may be thought to be contrary to the interests of those who are least advantaged. Less total social, economic, and educational goods related to academic achievement will be available to share with those least advantaged and the worst off can also be expected to be worse off relative to their higher achieving peers in competitions that depend upon academic skills. For anyone committed to equality of opportunity and progress in school and society, an IL approach to instruction may appear like a worst case scenario policy.

1.2 Defenses of IL and Responses from DI Theorists

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006)'s provocative claims have been met with replies from IL theorists. Defenders of IL in cognitive science respond to DI theorists' charges by arguing three main theses: (a) good IL incorporates some elements of DI; (b) a more complete understanding of the ends of education would foreground inquiry learning skills; and (c) that some findings support IL's efficacy over DI (Schmidt et al. 2007; Hmelo-Silver et al. 2007; Kuhn 2007) and suggest positive effects for lower achieving students (Hmelo-Silver et al. 2007).

The first reply offered by defenders of IL is that some scaffolding and direct instruction occurs in all good IL lessons. So, IL theorists argue, some IL approaches are only mistakenly characterized as inconsistent with what DI theorists rightly claim we know about working memory and cognitive architecture (Hmelo-Silver et al. 2007; Schmidt et al. 2007). DI theorists respond by arguing that even if a more directed IL approach does better than a less directed IL approach, a DI only approach is

likely to be even more effective than a partial-DI approach, given the same principles in the extant research. According to DI theorists

We agree that the different scaffolds are effective compared to no scaffolding. However, the only scaffolds they [IL theorists] seem to ignore are providing learners with a problem and a problem-solving procedure that can be used for generating this solution. (Sweller et al. 2007, 117)

DI theorists argue that IL theorists' who embrace a role for more structure and scaffolding to accommodate human cognitive architecture are on the right track, but

stop short of what we see as the ultimate conclusion, namely, a need for the major instructional emphasis to be on direct, explicit instruction such as worked examples, case studies as modeling examples, or just tuition. (Sweller et al. 2007, 119)

A failure to embrace fully guided instruction, DI theorists reiterate, results in unnecessary load on novice learners' working memory, undermining their ability to encode new information and skills into long-term memory—which is necessary for learning to occur.

The second reply from IL theorists, which I will elaborate upon below, asserts (b) that we cannot determine which instructional designs are best independent of the goals of instruction. Among the IL theorists, Deanna Kuhn (2007) is the most explicit in developing this line of reply to the DI theorists' charges. Against DI theorists, Kuhn (2007) argues that inquiry skills might be more important in the long run than content knowledge, given the rapidly changing nature of disciplinary knowledge and studies of student motivation. In passing, Kuhn suggests that perhaps students should even be subject to high-extraneous load settings as they learn inquiry skills (2007, 111). Here, Kuhn (2007) rejects a claim by DI theorists that "the goal of instruction is rarely to search for or discover information" (Kirschner et al. 2007, 77). Perhaps, Kuhn suggests, this just is the main goal, often enough.

Against this second objection, DI theorists argue that (b) the inquiry skills defenders of IL invoke are not well stated and imply that if well-stated, then a DI-only approach would likely be most effective in teaching them, if any instruction in such skills is needed at all (Sweller et al. 2007, 118). DI

theorists point out that Kuhn and other defenders of IL fail to identify any concrete examples of inquiry skills (118). Were a list of inquiry skills to be provided by IL theorists, DI theorists suggest that they would simply restate their general claim about the efficiency of DI: Whatever skills are identified, provided the skills need to be taught, they should be taught by way of DI (Sweller et al. 2007, 118).

In reconstructing this reply, I have added the caveat “provided the skills need to be taught”, because DI theorists signal agreement with a thesis later developed by John Sweller (2008; 2015), which asserts that for biological reasons it is unnecessary and redundant to teach “domain general” skills—those, like generalization and transfer or means-end reasoning that apply to any domain of inquiry (Sweller 2008; Sweller 2015; Sweller 2016). All domain general cognitive skills, Sweller argues, are “biologically primary” which means they are of the sort typical humans develop without instruction (Sweller 2015, 191). Like learning to speak a native language or to listen to others, these biologically primary skills do not require formal instruction because biologically typical human individuals are evolved to simply do these things without tutelage (Sweller 2008, 215; Sweller 2015, 191; Sweller et al. 2007, 121).

By contrast, academic knowledge and skills, like reading literature and history, writing, and doing math, Sweller argues, are “biologically secondary” forms of knowledge that the vast majority of people did not acquire prior to the advent of mass schooling and would not acquire but for the school system and its interventions (Sweller 2015, 191-192). Biologically secondary knowledge and skills, according to Sweller (2016), unlike biologically primary “domain-general” knowledge and skills, are “domain specific”—applicable only within some contexts of inquiry (361-362). The knowledge and skills used to solve an algebra problem or write an essay, are helpful in some but not all problem contexts, Sweller (2016) claims, unlike domain-general skills, such as generalization and transfer (361).

Citing the work of his DI theorist colleagues, Sweller argues that although learning biologically primary knowledge and skills is largely not effected by the limits of working memory, one's ability to learn biologically secondary domain specific knowledge is effected by limitations of working memory (2008, 215). The mistake of IL theorists, according to Sweller, is to infer that without the instructional methods characteristic of mass schooling that reduce cognitive load, people would be likely to acquire biologically secondary domain-specific academic knowledge and skills in the way they acquire biologically primary domain general knowledge and skills, like speaking a native language or generalizing from particulars to principles.

A failure to appreciate this type-distinction and its evolutionary basis, according to Sweller (2008; 2015; 2016), leads many educators to mistakenly try to adjust the educational environment to be more like the environments in which people learn informally outside of school.³ Once the distinction is appreciated, Sweller (2008; 2016) holds that teachers can see that instruction is only needed to teach biologically secondary domain-specific knowledge and skills. Given what we know about cognitive architecture, Sweller argues that teachers should design instruction to be fully guided in the domain specific knowledge and skills they endeavor to teach. Domain general inquiry skills, by contrast, need not be taught at all.

Drawing on both lines of argument in the debates about the role of domain general inquiry skills in instructional design, the IL theorist is presented with a dilemma. DI theorists argue that if domain general inquiry skills can be identified and should be taught, then they should be taught directly and “fully explained” contrary to the IL theorist's method. If such skills cannot be identified or if, when identified, domain general inquiry skills do not need to be taught because they are biologically primary capacities that develop without instruction, then, once again, in all of the areas where

³ This is not to deny that anchoring content within students' background knowledge from life outside of school may be important. Rather it is to suggest that the informal learning that occurs outside of school is not the most effective way to teach the content schools exist to teach.

instruction is required it should be fully guided and explicit. On either arm of the dilemma no room for student co-directed IL remains.

The third and final reply IL theorists marshal against the charges from DI theorists appeals to a set of studies that suggest that (c) IL is sometimes more effective than DI and that in at least three studies, some lower achieving students did better than peers in comparison groups (Hmelo-Silver et al. 2007). Against (c), DI theorists argue that the conclusions drawn favoring the efficacy of IL are unsupported by the evidence in the studies cited (Sweller et al. 2007). None of the studies cited, DI theorists argue, relevantly contrast DI with IL under conditions with “adequate controls” (Sweller et al. 2007, 119). DI theorists once again seem on firm footing on this point. They point out, for example, that while many of the studies suggest that some IL approach or other is superior to business as usual in a set of classrooms, this does not show that business as usual included good DI. Nor does it show that IL methods, rather than the new curricula and other supports introduced with these interventions, were the cause of the relative gains (Sweller et al. 2007, 119). The same sort of reply applies to the three studies cited by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) to try to address equality worries raised for IL instructional designs, though it is not stated explicitly in DI theorists’ reply in the debate.

The first study cited by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007), conducted by Hickey, Kindfteld, Horwitz, and Christie (1999), found that general science students did better in an IL intervention condition compared to honors and college prep students (104). DI theorists’ worry about the relevance of the comparison, however, seems to apply to this study. The authors of the study note numerous sources of variation in comparison classrooms, making it difficult to interpret the results to draw a single conclusion about the effectiveness of IL in specific (Hickey et al. 1999, 42). Conceptually, I will add that there are questions about whether in the computer environment used in the intervention students receive even *more* direct instruction than in a typical DI lesson, only from a computer program instead of a teacher. In a follow up study on the same software, Hickey et al. (2003) note that a number of

other variables may have had an impact on positive observed outcomes—including formative assessments that were added, teacher, and classroom effects (528). Interestingly, one of the factors identified by the researchers in the follow up study as possibly affecting positive outcomes was an effort to tailor instruction to match the assessment, which led to a “reduced emphasis on the more discovery oriented elements of the environment” (529). In the follow up study, effect sizes were larger than the initial study. These facts seem, once again, to favor the DI theorist’s claim about the efficacy of IL designs—the more well-designed guidance the better for student outcomes.

Similar methodological issues apply to the second study cited by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) to address equality worries. In that study, a set of IL units, when compared with business as usual, showed a decrease in the gender gap in achievement between African American boys and African American girls (Geier 2008). The authors of the study, however, like the DI theorists, caution against attempting to “impute the causal contribution” of any single element among the many used in the intervention, which included new curricula and professional development for teachers in addition to a PBL approach (Geier 2008, 984).

In the third study cited by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) to address equity worries, the positive findings for “diversity” groups in the smaller initial quasi-experimental study have since been found not to replicate at scale in a study conducted by the same researchers (Lynch et al. 2012). The PBL curriculum units from the study, furthermore, are no longer in use by the school district studied (Lynch et al. 2012). In light of more recent large scale studies and the earlier findings that DI theorists cite, which draw upon a review of seventy studies, there is at least reason for caution in thinking that IL closes achievement gaps. To the contrary, the balance of evidence seems to suggest that there is at least some reason to think that on the whole, IL as it is often used is likely to expand achievement gaps as DI theorists claim.

The DI theorists' methodological questions about IL theorists' cited studies, to my knowledge, have not been met with subsequent rejoinders from IL theorists. Moreover, further meta-analytic research has added at least some additional support to DI theorists' efficiency based claims. By Hmelo-Silver et al.(2007)'s lights PBL and IL are roughly equivalent with no "dimensions that consistently distinguish" (100) between the two approaches. Although there have been some meta-analytic findings that support PBL's developing clinical skills in medical education, even proponents of the approach have noted that clear evidence of its efficacy for learning is still absent (Norman and Schmidt 2016). In the words of Allen, Leary, and Bernhardt:

Although we would like to be able to claim clear evidence for PBL in terms of student learning outcomes, based on our review of the literature, we cannot state that research strongly favors a PBL approach, at least not if the primary evidence is subject matter learning. (2011, 21)

Combined, these facts suggest there is reason to think that IL is not decisively *cleared* as the best means to academic achievement on the basis of these empirical considerations. At the very least, one has reason to think that there is room for reasonable disagreement on this question between the disagreeing parties about the findings of curriculum and instruction intervention studies. Supposing that the disagreements about (c) at least do not deliver a clear verdict in favor of IL and instead present a picture that is at least mixed, then we are left to the other two lines of argument to assess the debate.

Under these conditions, if DI and IL were two types of value neutral instructional means, then the replies of the proponents of DI may seem to be on solid ground. The first line of argument extends a principle the IL theorist already seems to concede to what seems like its logical conclusion and the second raises a dilemma for the IL theorist that remains unanswered. Combined with the expertise reversal effect findings, which are to my knowledge uncontested by IL theorists, an IL based progressive pedagogy may seem to be in trouble. Educators who include any elements of student directed inquiry when designing instruction might seem to be undermining students' overall flourishing and exacerbating educational inequality in the process.

The analysis provided above provides a direct challenge to shifts in educational policy towards collaborative, student-led IL approaches under the banner of 21st century skills and social justice. Against this emerging, perhaps even dominant trend, at least some governments have initiated a move towards direct instruction based on the research of DI theorists (Davis 2018; New South Wales Department of Education 2017; Ofsted 2017; Muijs 2019; Lilley 2019). If the analysis of the arguments I have offered is correct, a shift in policy towards DI may seem to better reflect the extant scientific literature. So long as the ethical and political goals of fostering intellectual progress and equal educational opportunities held by many progressive educators are worth retaining, it may seem we should reject their favored pedagogical methods.

As it stands, no one in the debate provides a decisive reason to reject the DI theorists' central premise: that when compared directly and holding other variables constant, students are more likely to learn more knowledge or skills per unit of time, when they are shown all of what is to be learned and provided opportunities for practice, rather than expected to discover the learning objectives on their own. Allowing that DI is likely to lead to the faster acquisition of at least a great deal of knowledge and skills, in the next section, I will argue that we should still reject the general-inefficiency objection to IL methods as ill-conceived. To adequately assess the debate, I endeavor to show that its ethical and political presuppositions must be made explicit. By bringing suppressed questions about the ethical and political value of co-operative inquiry into view, I set the stage for further philosophical work necessary to sort out the practical implications of DI theorists' empirical findings. This further work calls us to inquire into questions about the ethical and political importance of regarding students as co-designers of instruction and educators in their own right. Once the possibility that the goal of education is to foster a cooperative ethic of inquiry is placed in view, I argue that DI theorists cannot end the debate on the basis of empirical evidence alone. Further normative ethical and political questions must also be addressed.

1.3 Why Instructional Design is Always About Ethics & Justice

Let us grant the DI theorist's claim that maximally explicit, teacher led, instruction is, in fact, the fastest way to get students to learn new knowledge, skills, and perhaps even to form specific attitudes and dispositions. One can accept all of this and still sensibly resist eliminating student led IL practices from educational systems. One way to show that one can rightly resist a DI-only approach even while allowing that it is a faster way to learn some content is to argue that IL approaches better reflect the goal towards which DI ought to be used. Without reflecting on normative questions of ethical and political value, however, it is simply not possible to establish whether student led IL practices are or are not a part of the proper ethical and political goal of instruction.

For example, if education were ultimately a means to other ends, then it might seem reasonable for parents and policy makers to simply advocate those educational practices that are most efficient for the widest array of purposes. In that case, DI would appear to be on good footing as an effective all-purpose means to help individual students with different ultimate goals acquire the new instrumental knowledge they need to be effective, whatever preferences they happen to hold. Indeed, a parent's securing DI for her child may provide her child with competitive advantages over others who do not have the benefits of such approaches. Much of the cognitive science debate proceeds assuming that questions of efficacy are primary, treating IL as a means, rather than the end of education. Even when questions of goals are noted in the cognitive science debate, sustained normative ethical or political arguments are not offered by either side of the controversy. This scientific detachment from normative ethical and political questions in the debate, I will argue, is both understandable in light of present practices of philosophical inquiry and ultimately misleading.

In the ethical and political tradition of thought running from Plato (380 BC) and Aristotle (350 BC) through Rousseau (1763/1979) and Dewey (MW9) our ultimate ethical and political goals were

not thought to be independent of an interest in learning itself. Instead, on these luminaries' pedagogical accounts, a common ethical goal oriented politics and education alike, informed by the life of the mind. The arguments supporting this alternative way of thinking about pedagogy and politics has largely dropped out of the contemporary debate about instructional design. In Chapter 2, I will try to trace some of the contemporary philosophical tendencies that reinforce this instrumental way of conceiving of pedagogy and the value of education. In this section, I hope to show that a deeper inquiry into ethical and political values cannot be foreclosed in advance if the debate about instructional design is to be settled intelligently. I will argue that the central distinction in the debate between “fully” and “less-than-fully” guided instruction cannot even be drawn without presupposing a difference in the normative goals of education—questions that can only be settled, if at all, philosophically.

To recap: DI theorists present their arguments as if they are claims about the value-neutral efficacy of two all-purpose tools: DI and IL. Cast in this light, IL is claimed to be a less efficient all-purpose “tool” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 77) than DI. To reflect what we know about the limits of working memory and its relationship to long term memory, proponents of DI argue that instruction should always be “fully explained” and “explicit” rather than less-than-fully-explained, as is characteristic in IL designs. Against this framing, I endeavor to show that unless the content to be taught is fixed, DI and IL are indistinct. Determining the content that ought to be taught, however, entails an appeal to normative ethical and political instructional values. I suggest that in light of the role of normative ethical and political goals in determining the content of instruction, DI theorists' two lines of argument to eliminate student-led inquiry learning are insufficient on their own to deliver their conclusion against IL without further philosophical support. The first line of argument claimed that if some direct guidance increases efficiency, then more ought to be better—with DI and not IL as the conclusion. The second argument doubts that there are any domain general inquiry skills to be

taught and suggests that if there are any such skills that they should be taught by DI. By unearthing suppressed questions about the value of treating students as co-instructional designers, I will show that neither argument succeeds without further ethical and political commitments that require a philosophical defense.

To begin unearthing the suppressed ethical and political questions in the debate, it is helpful to consider the central distinction drawn between DI and IL theorists. Proponents of DI insist that problematically, on IL approaches, “learners, rather than being presented with essential information, must discover or construct essential information for themselves” (Kirschner et al. 2006, 75). DI is claimed to be more efficient precisely because it presents such information explicitly. But what is “essential information”? DI theorists allow that students may independently *practice* and *apply* the “essential” knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes acquired through previous “fully explained” instruction by the teacher in novel settings where, presumably, not all knowledge students will acquire is made fully explicit by the teacher (Clark et al 2012, 6). I say “presumably” because in such cases students must surely at least acquire the know-how involved in working on projects, in groups, interpreting novel cases, etc. *without active direct guidance in the context of application*. Allowing that students may engage in “small group and independent problems and projects...not as vehicles for making discoveries, but as a means of *practicing* recently learned content and skills,” (Clark et al. 2012, 6) leaves room for independent learning, however minimal. Students, at the very least, must be able to learn about the content of the novel cases of application, and how to interpret the task demands accurately and solve the new problems with which they are faced. Whether or not DI theorists acknowledge the fact, these too, are discoveries, even if they are limited in scale.

But if this right, then without taking an evaluative stand on the *kinds of capacities* students *should* apply independently and what learning they might achieve or consolidate in so doing, whatever we decide to call it, the defenders of DI leave conceptual space for all of the practices of inquiry and

questioning characteristically associated with IL. IL theorists are willing, after all, to provide direct instruction in all of what they think is essential for students to learn *to become inquirers*. Proponents of IL recommend, for example, that teachers explicitly instruct or model the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes needed by students to pursue their inquiry-based projects. If DI does not necessitate a specific domain of instructional aims, then it is unclear how the DI theorist can distinguish his view from the IL theorist who agrees with explicit instruction in all that is essential but denies that anything beyond what one's IL approach includes is such. Failing such an individuating feature, the simplest explanation is that without appeal to instructional aims the apparently distinct approaches are not two but one.⁴

DI theorists would surely protest that IL fails to take account of demands on working memory that occur when instruction is not teacher led and that this is the key distinction between the approaches. DI but not IL, the objector claims, deals with the problem of “extraneous cognitive load” on working memory by maximizing teacher guidance and this difference in the approaches is motivated purely by instructional efficiency (See Sweller et al. 2007, 116; Sweller, 2015; Sweller, 2016). Even if some instructional designs effect extraneous cognitive load, however, it remains a crucial normative question, whether students or teachers *should* play the primary role of instructional designer in planning to avoid these pitfalls at various developmental stages of a student's learning pathway (Cf. Kirschner et al. 2006; Sweller 2015; Sweller 2016). It does not follow that teachers must automatically take responsibility for organizing, chunking, and delivering content for all students. As Kuhn (2007) suggests in passing, perhaps it is desirable for students to sometimes face high cognitive load contexts, without teacher intervention (111).

⁴ Note that this normative reply forecloses the possibility of the IL theorist's saying both that it is desirable for students to learn the *same* content as the DI theorist but with less teacher guidance. It is instead to foreground with Kuhn (2007) that the education we ought to create may foreground capacities for inquiry and leave the content of inquiry less settled.

If this normative judgment is excluded, however, once again the simplest explanation is that there is no distinction between DI and IL. Both approaches allow direct instruction in content appropriate to one’s instructional goals and allow students to use that knowledge to acquire new knowledge. If DI is to be distinguished from IL, then, it is plausibly on the basis of a normative account of the aims of instruction—about what we want students to learn—and normative arguments are needed to decide between whatever accounts are specified. Such normative arguments call us to consider the relationship between educational goods, human flourishing, and political morality—themes elided within the debate about instructional design by IL and DI theorists alike. As Harry Brighthouse, Helen Ladd, Susan Loeb, and Adam Swift (2018) argue, while educational decisions should be “data informed” (81) they cannot be “data driven” (81) because ultimately determining what works rests on judgments about which “value-informed” (81) goals one pursues. Even if values also boil down to descriptive data—a possibility I will consider in the next chapter—whether or not that is so is a philosophical rather than empirical question to be assessed on the merits of arguments. To decide the roles teachers and students should play in the process of learning, then, we must also reflect philosophically on the values we take to be worthy of pursuit through instruction.

1.4 Two Concepts of Instructional Design & Assessment

To illustrate the role of conceptions of human flourishing and political morality within instructional design, let us consider two cases. In the first, imagine that for ethical and political reasons we value students’ playing an important role as co-instructional designers within a fallible community of inquiry, much as Dewey recommended. In the second case, imagine a community where giving and receiving commands from a ruling class is of chief importance towards maximizing state power. In the first case, teachers rightly desire that students become co-designers of instructional experiences, capable of identifying important problems *worth solving* and ways to co-operatively solve them, as their

ultimate ethical and political end. In light of our fallibility, in the first case, students must learn to examine any commitment due to the possibility of error, including the goals of the educational system. What we must make “fully explicit” for students in the curriculum of this first community will differ from a case where our only goal is to create students who are prepared to give and receive commands from a ruling class to advance the power of the state and its rulers.

To prepare students for life in a society where each simply gives and receives commands within a top-down hierarchy, learning how to co-identify and solve problems with others as equals—including learning to determine which problems are *worth* solving—might seem to be at best peripheral. Equipping students who are not at the top of the hierarchy of state power to reflect together upon which problems are worth solving and whether the goals of the state are in error may be reasonably thought to undermine the goal of making a student into a good receiver of commands from those up the hierarchy. Perhaps selecting the right means to solve problems is a necessary skill in such a top-down social order. Independently determining the topics and values worthy of attention and deliberating about such matters with one’s leaders as equals, however, need not be. The explicit curriculum taught in each community, would therefore likely vary in accord with these different ethical and political goals.

Similar variance would be reasonably expected in the hidden curriculum communicated to students through what is modelled, even if not taught explicitly, across these two political communities. In the top-down authoritarian society, a hidden curriculum that reinforces obedience to the givers of top-down orders about ends would be more consistent with the ethical and political goals of that regime. Such a hidden curriculum, where the teacher leads as the state’s representative and is not to be questioned or directed by students could be reasonably expected to foster the sort of obedient citizen such a social order requires. In a society built on collaborative inquiry, by contrast, where the teachers’ recommendations are to be regarded as the fallible deliverances of inquiry itself, a

hidden curriculum with the effect of fostering obedience to brute authority would be rightly seen as an ethical and political vice. The hidden curriculum in the community of inquiry ought to instead encourage students to see authority as conditional on the deliverances of inquiry and evidence and subject to cooperative scrutiny. In the community of inquiry but not the authoritarian regime, a teacher's modelling that one can call the state and its representatives into question on any topic through the ways that the teacher engages with students is of crucial ethical and political importance.

Notice that educational decision makers motivated by either community's instructional goals might care about cognitive load. They would be likely to use this information, however, in different ways. In the first case, for example, even if students learned slightly less propositional knowledge or individual study skills, it might still be *better* to have them divide tasks co-operatively to reduce cognitive load in part because cooperative inquiry is taken to be valuable in its own right (See Schmidt et al., 2007 for this suggestion in IL settings). Efficiency, in the first case, must be measured with the goal of creating instructional co-designers and assessors who value the very process of co-inquiry and testing others' beliefs on any question. In light of this goal, space to practice and express respect for the value of such collaborative inquiry skills is intrinsically important and cannot be eliminated from sound instructional practice. Even if teacher led management of cognitive load is sometimes used to advance the goals of the community, this cannot always be the case because managing inquiry cooperatively is part of the goal students must learn to master with independence. A failure for students to learn to do so would be a failure to achieve the goal of education.

In the second case, the top-down society, dividing tasks to allow students to reflect on their instructional goals would be undesirable whenever it reduces the efficiency of students' acquiring the means to implement commands. Having a teacher/authority figure manage students' cognitive load by telling each learner what to do, on this second picture, would come without ethical or political cost. An educator in this second case would not care about students' learning to co-identify and solve

problems on *any* topic independently or to see themselves as on equal footing morally with fallible authority figures. Thus, if cognitive load could be reduced more effectively by constant teacher led guidance, then there would be no ethical or political loss in the second top-down society to such an instructional design. Even if students never deliberated on the agenda of inquiry or worked to determine how tasks ought to be divided together as equals, one need not assume that the de facto goals of the ruling class could not be advanced.

If our judgment between these two sets of instructional goals depends upon our ethical and political values, then to intelligently answer the question of how we should instruct and manage cognitive load we must reflect on the values that orient this judgment. A failure to do so leaves us at risk of becoming complicit in reproducing values that we might otherwise reject. Moral reflection is not a guarantee of successful moral functioning. It is a necessary condition, though, for discovering that one's previous values and practices were misguided or finding that one is complicit in unjust practices. If as educators, we are fallible knowers, who may be wrong about any among our beliefs—a claim I will argue for in Chapter 3 following J.S. Mill (1859/1978), then we have reason to at least sometimes consider if we have erred in the account of value we live by.

Of course constraints may limit our ability to reflect ad nauseum. As educators, attempting to spot moral and political errors is nevertheless especially important for at least two reasons. First, the moral judgments we make as educators do not only affect our lives, but also the shape of the public we help to form through our work. Like the media and other institutions that facilitate social learning, education helps create the public and its opinions. Insofar as this is the case, it would be an abdication of moral responsibility to simply blindly acquiesce to the attitudes of the public at present in designing instruction. If the public is currently immoral, then that is in part the result of the education they have or have not been provided. Educators are plausibly at least partly responsible for correcting for such errors, where they are apparent. Second, even if as educators we are constrained in our power to

deliberate and act by factors beyond our control, every educational decision maker will have at least some opportunities to nudge the system one way or another in degrees. By reflecting upon our ethical and political commitments, we may better advance human flourishing and justice in those moments. Ultimately, I will argue in the chapters ahead that we do so, as Dewey claimed, by promoting the value of learning itself.

1.5 Conclusion

To recap: So far, I have argued that a misleading framing of the debate between IL and DI theorists seems to support the latter method over the former on the basis of empirical evidence alone. Against this framing, I argued that our decisions about how to interpret and respond to the empirical findings in this debate rest inextricably upon political and ethical values. I argued that if, as John Dewey claimed, living as a cooperative inquirer is a source of fundamental intrinsic value, then we have good reasons to resist eliminating student-directed learning within educational practice. The next chapter aims to critically appraise the dominant liberal-pluralist tradition of conceiving of the relationship between political and ethical values as an alternative way of justifying an ethic of cooperative inquiry. By revealing a dilemma at the heart of liberal-democratic political philosophy running from Isaiah Berlin (1958) through John Rawls (1993) and his followers, I hope to clear the path towards a Deweyan grounding of the instructional decisions we make in school and society.

Chapter 2: Two Concepts of Liberal Democratic Education

In Chapter 1, I argued that designing instruction presupposes a conception of instructional aims. Deciding which instructional aims are worth pursuing, I claimed, depends upon questions of ethics and political morality. In Chapters 3 and 4, I will offer a defense of a Deweyan set of ethical and political values to guide school and society. This defense hinges upon grounding a commitment to advancing a single ethical and political ideal of positive liberty—the “freedom of intelligence” (LW13: 58) against dissent.⁵ If the argument of Chapter 3 and 4 succeeds, then we will have discovered good reasons to think that the fundamental ethical interest of each is in promoting egalitarian learning for all. An egalitarian interest in collaborative learning is embodied in the student-led learning experiences described in Chapter 1—those defended by progressive educators and IL theorists. If such learning is our fundamental ethical and political interest, as I will argue, then opportunities to embody this ethos cannot rightly be eliminated from practices of schooling, as DI theorists suggest. Teacher led activities may be instrumentalized to this egalitarian cooperative end, but IL practices are not properly understood as instruments to other goals. I defend such an integrated approach to instructional design in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, I engage with a dominant tradition in contemporary philosophy and politics that runs directly against Dewey’s approach to the ethics of public education and politics. Were it viable, this alternative tradition might seem to justify IL practices without relying upon Dewey’s more demanding ethical claims. Dewey attempts to ground ethics and politics in a single foundational interest—the interest in learning itself. Against this claim, the widely influential strand of liberal thought running from Isaiah Berlin (1958) through John Rawls (1993) holds that ultimate values do

⁵ The term ‘positive liberty’ as it is used in political philosophy refers to conceptions of freedom that require the presence of certain conditions for freedom to obtain. Positive liberty stands in contrast to ‘negative liberty’ which refers to conceptions of freedom that require only the absence of certain conditions for freedom to obtain.

not harmonize within a single ideal without oppressive state intervention because ultimate values are many not one. On this ‘liberal pluralist’ alternative, the purpose of education and politics is to cultivate the background conditions for each citizen to autonomously form and revise her ultimate values, consistent with the equal liberty of others to do the same. For liberal pluralists, neither school nor society ought to promote controversial ethical ideals such as Deweyan positive freedom, as to do so would be oppressive of “reasonable pluralism” (Rawls 1993, 36; Talisse 2011). Instead, liberal pluralists opt for a political morality to guide public education that is intended to be distinct from and accommodating of a diversity of thick ethical commitments (Rawls 1993; Levinson 1999; Callan 1997).

The liberal-pluralist approach may appear to provide a better framework within which to justify egalitarian cooperative learning for political purposes insofar as it seems to embrace a greater diversity of ethical ideals than Dewey’s parsimonious monist approach. In this chapter, I argue that this appearance is misleading. In the first section of this chapter, I sketch the contrast between Deweyan freedom and pluralist alternatives, showing how limitations in Dewey’s own approach to grounding his central value seem to favor the latter pluralist sort of view. I refer to this as Dewey’s ‘grounding problem’. In the second section, I show that liberal pluralists have their own foundational problems in trying to ground their unifying conceptions of justice and civic virtue by tracing the dialectic following from Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (henceforth ‘*ATJ*’) and *Political Liberalism* (henceforth ‘*PL*’) with its communitarian critics. Following liberal perfectionists in the philosophy of education, I argue that liberal-pluralist efforts to ground liberal politics and education in the value of political autonomy and equality always entail a substantive claim about the nature of ultimate ideals. Embracing this conclusion raises a question about the value of educating for autonomy when conflicts with other ethical ideals arise. I argue that in such conflicts, either the value of liberal political autonomy is unjustified against cases of dissent, collapsing into a matter of subjective political preference, or that the liberal pluralist is committed to an ethical ideal of positive liberty, whereby autonomous action

aims to promote autonomous action itself, much as Dewey claimed. On the former arm of the dilemma, moral obligations to egalitarian justice are revealed to be subjective and optional. On the latter arm, I claim that the possibility of grounding an egalitarian concern for others in one's self-regarding ethical responsibilities remains open.

In the third section, I argue that we should embrace the skeptical arm of the dilemma as the default view. To explain why, I outline what I refer to as the 'Socratic Test' for normative ethical and political claims based on an analysis of the very idea of an action-guiding ideal. The test has two requirements: First, that we treat normative ethical skepticism as the default position in the dialectic to avoid an explosion of conflicting duties and goods that destroys action guidance; second, that the claimant of ethical insight transform Humean interpretations of our desires to reveal to the dissenter an already present fundamental normative ethical interest upon which to ground moral claims. In Chapter 3, in an attempt to resolve Dewey's grounding problem, I use a meta-inductive form of argument to lead us from the skeptical arm of the liberal dilemma to the Deweyan perfectionist arm. I outline the egalitarian implications of the Deweyan arm in Chapter 4, before returning to discuss some implications of this approach for instructional design in Chapter 5.

2.1 Deweyan Positive Freedom & Liberal Pluralism

John Dewey's view of school and society rests upon a single ultimate moral value: "the formation of a faith in intelligence, as the one and indispensable belief necessary to moral and social life," (LW2: 21). "Since in reality," Dewey asserts, "growth is relative to nothing save more growth there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education" (MW9: 81). As David T. Hansen (2009) argues, for Dewey, the singular interest in growing one's capacities to learn is identical with "the essential moral interest" (129) of humanity and the "public interest" (130). Growing, for Dewey, has a goal: intelligently solving practical problems central to advancing our problem-solving

and learning capacities themselves. Placed within the context of the debate about DI and IL, each on Dewey's ethical vision is called to live as a co-instructional designer and creator of educative experiences for oneself and others. Similar to Aristotle's (350 BC) picture of politics, where each "rules and is ruled in turn," (1261b) for Dewey, each ought to progressively promote the capacity for teaching and learning in turn with one's fellow citizens.

On Dewey's picture, our ethical and political interest in learning is egalitarian in form. Each is to provide others "equable opportunities" (MW9: 115) to flourish as a cooperative designer of educative experience and to recognize a responsibility to promote one's own capacities to grow as a learner with others. If each does her or his part, then to the extent practically possible, each will convert equably afforded opportunities into equable outcomes for learning. To my knowledge, Dewey never identifies an upper bound of his learning ethic. On his picture, however, one can infer that with perfect and unlimited practical power, each would become equal in outcome to all others and all-knowing as a result. Failing omnipotence, on Dewey's picture, each ought to try to grow as equals, knowing that one's efforts will always be limited and successes incremental. If Dewey's ethical view is right, then action has a normative ethical goal: creating the conditions necessary to advance egalitarian learning and cooperative action itself.

Dewey's view of political morality follows from his account of this ethical goal. In modern parlance, his approach to political morality and determining the purposes of education is "continuous" with his account of ethics (Talisie 2011, 510). Dewey's continuous picture of the relationship between political and ethical values follows a tradition of educational and political thought made famous in the works of Plato (380 BC) and Aristotle (380 BC/1998). For these thinkers, justice is continuous with ethics in part because of the character of the latter. For Plato, Aristotle, and Dewey, the ethical interest of each is in living the good life in community with others with the same goal, in accord with their nature. Social institutions, like school and society, are nothing but the product of human judgment

and action in a concrete context. If all human action ought to serve an ethical purpose, as Dewey and other continuous thinkers claim, then school and society, ought to serve that ethical purpose as well, in accord with the nature of each. For Plato and Aristotle, not all humans were of a natural kind fit to rule. For Dewey, by contrast, all human persons share a common ethical goal—learning—under which democratic social cooperation and just interaction might be forged.

Against continuous pictures of ethics and justice like Dewey's, many contemporary thinkers doubt that ultimate ethical interests harmonize into an organic communal whole. Since the decline of Aristotelian biology, the assertion of a generic human ethical goal has been widely thought to be dubious. In the absence of a common ethical goal, some political philosophers and philosophers of education argue for “discontinuous” approaches to conceiving of justice. On discontinuous approaches, the values that define what each citizen owes to others are derived in ways that aspire to independence from the ultimate ethical ideals of any particular individual citizen. Thus, on discontinuous pictures, ethical ideals might differ, while justice remains a constant guide to each in the design of the institutions comprising the public sphere.

For continuous theorists, disagreements about ultimate values must be addressed head on. Anything short of a justification for the ultimate ethical values of the picture will reveal that its political ideals are unjustified. On discontinuous pictures, by contrast, (to be discussed in more detail below) citizens are asked to set aside deep ethical controversies when deliberating about the proper use of the state and its power. Once deep ethical controversies are set aside, the discontinuous theorist of justice asks us to imagine the conditions individuals who hold different ultimate ideals could rightly agree to as a basis for a social contract (Rawls 1971/1999; Talisse 2011; Lecce 2008). Discontinuous thinkers have the apparent advantage of not needing to justify an account of ultimate ideals, but face their own difficulties. For a discontinuous theory of justice to avoid collapsing into skepticism about justice, there must be some way to justify the values of the social contract over ultimate ideals that conflict

with it but without relying upon any account of ultimate ideals. Continuous thinkers doubt that a justification of political rights and duties independent of an account of the best life is possible (Sandel 1998, xi).

To justify his continuous approach to ethics and justice, Dewey considers two alternatives: one where values are nothing but a projection of our desires and another wherein values are objective and known by intuition. When assessing the significance of practical possibilities, Dewey argues that action is not properly oriented by an actor's *de facto* subjective desires nor by objective ultimate moral values for the same reason (LW13: 247-248). Both views, he claims, are incomplete because they fail to appreciate the way in which our current concrete "ends-in-view" (LW13: 247) always become means to the identification and pursuit of future interpreted ends. Despite the rejection of fixed final ends, whether in desires or objective values, Dewey reserves a special place for the self-realizing activity of intelligent agency—the interest in growth. According to Dewey, science, construed broadly to include all human inductive and deductive thinking implemented through human action, is to be employed not only as "a value" but as "the supreme means of the valid determination of all valuations in all aspects of human and social life" (250). Because Dewey's rejection of objective values is not grounded in a worry about the faculty by which such values are known, it extends naturally to later accounts that assert the existence of objective values known by perception or basic judgments in reflective equilibrium with moral principles (See for example, McDowell 1998; Bilgrami 2014; Rawls 1993). To the extent that Kantian moral transcendental arguments like those offered by Christine Korsgaard (1996; 2009) rely upon suppressed contingent intuitions or moral judgments, as many claim, Dewey's arguments against intuitionist approaches would apply as well.⁶

Dewey does not anywhere show that because one's concrete ends become the standpoint from which future problems are addressed that our assessment of consequences *must be evaluated* in light of

⁶ For an overview of the dialectic on constructivist approaches in meta-ethics see Bagnoli (2017).

this fact instead of a standing desire or an intuited ultimate moral value. To establish that evaluative fact, Dewey would need to make clear what *evaluative error* an actor would make in replying that *Dewey's view* is incomplete in failing to take account of an actor's actual fundamental desires and evaluative commitments, which are often not oriented as Dewey recommends. Why, a dissenter might ask, if he desires to live a warrior ethic, some common sense morality, or the dictates of some faith, come what may, might it not be Dewey's view of value that is incomplete in capturing that evaluative fact? Dewey does not provide any reason sufficient to show that dissenters of this sort are ethically ignorant or irrational if they do not reject their actual fundamental evaluative commitments or moral intuitions. When faced with Dewey's purportedly ethical demand, for all that Dewey shows, such dissenters can rightly reject his normative ethical claim as a descriptive preference of Deweyans but one that a non-Deweyan need not embrace. Were a dissenter expected to embrace such a commitment contrary to her actual fundamental values, it would be tantamount to asking the dissenter to arbitrarily abandon her or his integrity (Williams 2008).

Partly due to these sorts of difficulties with identifying moral foundations, at least since Isaiah Berlin (1958/2002), liberal political philosophers have been critical of continuous political visions like Dewey's that champion a single ultimate value or form of self-realization—a "higher," "rational," or "true" self—as the goal of action and politics. For thinkers like Berlin, the purpose of politics and public education is not to identify an ultimate ethical ideal but to secure conditions for individuals to choose and revise their ultimate ideals. "Negative liberty" the freedom *from* physical interference and coercion by other humans, by Berlin's lights, is to be preferred over a politics of positive freedom, "freedom to—to lead one prescribed form of life" (178). The latter, Berlin cautions, is "at times, no better than a disguise for brutal tyranny" (178). The problem with a self-realizing public education or politics, Berlin argues, is that ultimate values are plural, not singular. Faced with the irreducible and

incommensurable plurality of value, each of us must choose between ultimate ends but without any common grounding from which ultimate moral evaluation should proceed.

John Rawls (1993) follows Berlin in arguing that all ought to accept that “the fact of reasonable pluralism” (4) about the good life as the natural product of human reason under conditions of non-oppression (36). By Rawls’ lights, the fact of reasonable pluralism is grounded in a set of epistemic constraints all free and equal citizens ought to accept. Rawls refers to these constraints as “the burdens of judgment” (57). Many of the first five constraints Rawls identifies are general features of inductive reasoning about matters of fact. The sixth, however, asserts Berlin’s value pluralism directly, citing it with approval:

...we note in referring to Berlin’s view, any system of social institutions is limited in the values it can admit so that some selection must be made from the full range of moral and political values that might be realized. This is because any system of institutions has, as it were, a limited social space. In being forced to select among cherished values, or when we hold to several and must restrict each in view of the requirements of the others, we face great difficulties in setting priorities and making adjustments. Many hard decisions may seem to have no clear answer. (57-58)

The burdens of judgment support Rawls’ requirement that each citizen bracket substantive conceptions of the good life when deliberating about the nature of justice in the original position (24). Due to the epistemic facts as Rawls lays them out following Berlin, moral pluralism about ultimate ends just is the best account on offer of moral reality. Thus, to try to ground justice upon an ultimate ideal of the good life would fail to reflect the facts about value as we know them.

Nearly all of the most widely influential liberal-democratic political philosophers working in the philosophy of education accept pluralism about ultimate ethical ideals as an axiom of their theories of the ends of politics and education. Elizabeth Anderson (2007), William Galston (1992), Randall Curren (2000), Deborah Satz (2007), Tommie Shelby (2016), Anthony Appiah (2005; 2006), Meira Levinson (1999), Eammon Callan (1997), Stephen Macedo (1992), and Amy Gutmann (1987/1999), to name but a few, all defend views wherein respect for a plurality of ultimate ideals is an important

feature of their view of political morality. Those like Danielle Allen (2016), who introduce generic human flourishing as a goal of public education are often criticized for lacking justification for doing so (Shelby 2016; See also, Brighouse et al. 2018, for a pluralistic, human flourishing based account of educational decision making).

Robert Talisse (2011) echoes a chorus of many, then, when he challenges Dewey's ethical and political foundational value monism. Drawing on Rawls' fact of reasonable pluralism, Talisse argues that Dewey's ideal of growth—whereby intelligent action is to be treated as its own ultimate end in school and society—is “oppressive” of other reasonable views of value and should be rejected as such (515). The Deweyan, according to Talisse, should agree that ultimate ethical values are many and not one and, thus, agree to “privatize” (515) the commitment to the freedom of intelligent action out of respect for one's fellow citizens in the political sphere. If the Deweyan view of freedom and equality is to be revealed to be defensible, a reply to these charges is needed. Otherwise, for all one can tell, Dewey's view is ungrounded in real cases of dissent.⁷ If Dewey's view is ungrounded in such cases, then the prospects for non-coercive and non-manipulative persuasion in such cases of dissent look dim. Let us call this challenge of grounding the normative interest in learning against dissent, ‘Dewey's grounding problem’.

In the absence of a common ultimate ideal, a wide array of philosophers of education have thought that an ideal of autonomy paired with a respect for the autonomy of others is the proper goal of public education (Rawls 1993; Macedo 1990; Macedo 2003; Levinson 1999; Callan 1997; Gutmann 1987; Gutmann 1995; Raz 1986). Rather than trying to ground education in an ultimate ethical ideal, these thinkers recommend creating the educational and political conditions for students to learn, in Rawls' (1993) words, to autonomously “form, revise, and rationally pursue a conception of the good”

⁷ For Talisse, assuming that one must accept the burdens of judgment, even a demonstration of the truth of Dewey's view would not suffice. I will call into question whether one ought to endorse the burdens of judgment below. For now, I set up the challenge pluralism poses to Dewey.

(30) and to develop an effective sense of justice, whereby each understands and respects the right of others to live autonomously (Rawls 1993, 19). At first pass, it may seem that an autonomy based approach can suffice to justify at least a political interest in cooperative learning for students. If students are to learn to regard one another as free and equal citizens deliberating about issues of the public good, then surely it is at least intrinsically politically important for them to have opportunities in school to stand in these political relations to one another. Why not simply justify cooperative learning on these grounds, without wading into thorny ideals of the good life?

To reveal why an approach grounded in autonomy is inadequate for these purposes, an account of the difficulties liberal-pluralism faces in responding to deep ethical dissent is necessary. The features that make liberal-pluralism a poor framework to justify cooperative forms of civic learning against such ethical dissent, I will argue, reveal problems at the core of the attempt to justify political morality without appeal to controversial ethical ideals. In turn, these difficulties motivate a search for a deeper connection between our identities as ethical agents and our common political projects, one that transcends current conventions of political practice.

Just as a parent may reject Deweyan co-operative learning, a parent may desire that her child learn that there is one ultimate value, perhaps the cultivation of a relationship with God, and to accept this value, come-what-may. Such a parent may reject the liberal state's positive normative ethical demand that each be taught that there are many ultimate values that are politically legitimate and between which one may rightly choose at least for political purposes. For the liberal who holds that ultimate values are rightly seen as many rather than one, such dissent raises a fundamental question of justification analogous to that faced by the Deweyan: By what right does one claim that education for political autonomy and liberal justice is of *higher* value than such competing ethics? If it is not of higher value than such competing ideals, why should one respect autonomy in oneself and others over one's actual fundamental commitments?

In the existing literature, the problem of explaining the asymmetrical justification between liberal autonomy, rights, and responsibilities, alongside the denial of grounding politics in an ideal of the common good, is sometimes referred to as the “asymmetry objection” to liberal-neutralist politics (See Lecce 2008, 167). To understand the nature of the asymmetry objection and possible responses to it, it is worth pausing to reflect upon the development of the dialectic surrounding Rawls’ attempt to establish a commitment to political autonomy alongside Berlin’s value pluralism about ultimate ideals. By doing so the shape of this recurrent and fundamental problem in liberal democratic political discourse, I hope, will become clear.

In the next section, I will trace the way the asymmetry objection emerges and recurs when attempting to justify liberal foundations against communitarian dissent throughout the dialectic following Rawls’ *AJ*. By tracing the recurrence of the problem of grounding liberal democratic values, limitations at the heart of our thinking about the relationship between ethics and political philosophy emerge. If my analysis succeeds, we will discover that liberal-pluralist approaches to morally grounding civic cooperative learning against ethical dissent are ultimately incoherent. Such liberal-pluralist accounts I argue, rely upon a thick ideal of character of the sort that they simultaneously deny can be the basis for political morality. Were this dominant discourse the best we could do, critics of liberalism, who see liberal politics and education to be nothing but the brute imposition of the technical political power of some individuals on others, would not be wrong for all we can tell.

For the defender of progressive pedagogy, the result that egalitarian and autonomy regarding commitments are the mere preferences of some partisan political groups would be a significant problem. Based on this conclusion, the parent who thinks it is appropriate to instrumentalize instructional design for her or her child’s private purposes turns out to have what for all we can tell is a perfectly well informed and rational view of the moral landscape. Given that empirically, it remains

unclear whether high performing students benefit individually from cooperative learning with weaker students, such a parent could rationally reject an egalitarian IL pedagogy as contrary to her or her child's best interests (Hogan and Tudge 1999; Kuhn and Pease 2010; Webb et al. 2002).

2.2 Liberal Pluralism & the Problem of Moral Unity

In the first section, I have traced how liberal-pluralist approaches to grounding political ideals may appear more plausible than a Deweyan approach to grounding evaluative judgments about instructional design. In this section, I outline the dialectic following from Rawls' liberal-pluralist theory of justice in response to communitarian dissent. The goal of this section is to show that the liberal-pluralist picture is itself a form of ethical value monism that is not well grounded against ethical and political alternatives. To assess the limits of liberal-pluralism, it will be important to consider alternatives that it rules out.

In considering the justificatory challenge illiberal groups pose to liberal-pluralist structures of justification, it is important to keep this justificatory challenge distinct from the practices any given illiberal group might endorse or that liberals habitually protect. The same social or educational practice might be justified in different ways and a challenge to the justificatory structure and coherence of liberal-pluralism is not the same as a challenge to all of the social practices liberal theory hopes to defend. One might defend, for example, the view that one should care for one's neighbor as one cares for oneself while rejecting Christian justifications for that practice. Similarly, one might reject religious claimants' practices towards LGBTQ youth, for example, while noticing that certain religious doctrines pose challenges to the ethical neutrality of political justification. Any normative ethical and political view will call some of us to change some of our practice, some of the time. Despite the challenges faced by autonomy prioritizing liberalism, I hope to show that many practices widely valued

by liberal-democrats will find grounding within the Deweyan account I will offer, even as it asks us to grow in new egalitarian ways.

Let us turn, then, to the dialectic examining the relationship between liberalism's pluralism about the ultimate good and various attempts to simultaneously unify citizens under a common conception of justice as it unfolds in the wake of Rawls' monumental *ATJ*. As Fernandez and Sundstrom (2010)'s recent quantitative meta-analysis of civic education literature reports, Rawls remains the most widely cited writer on the political ends of education and is the most heavily prioritized primary engagement partner among scholars working in the field. According to Fernandez and Sundstrom (2010)'s review of literature on the ends of civic education, "in almost half of the articles (27 out of 55) Rawls is the prioritised engagement partner and his work appears in 2/3 of the lists of the parsed articles" (379). By understanding Rawlsian liberalism and its limitations, given its enduring importance, we can gain key insight into the discourse guiding our conceptions of the ultimate ideals of civic education.

Rawls' Comprehensive & Non-Comprehensive Neutrality

John Rawls' account of political morality is developed in two magisterial works, *ATJ* and *PL*. In both, Rawls seeks to maintain a view of justice that is neutral in justification with respect to reasonable but controversial conceptions of the good life. Where Dewey's account is continuous, deriving political morality from ethical ideals, Rawls' account is discontinuous in attempting to derive political morality independent of controversial ideals of the good life. In his later work, Rawls describes this early attempt to articulate a neutral theory of justice as differing from the latter in resting on a "comprehensive doctrine" (p. xv-xvi) of persons and their normative interests. By avoiding reliance on such a comprehensive conception of persons in his later work, Rawls attempts to preserve the justificatory neutrality of his view. Instead Rawls develops a "non-comprehensive" political account

of persons to ground his account of political morality. By tracing Rawls' reasons for revising his account in light of criticisms from Michael Sandel (1982/1998), we can see how the asymmetry objection to Rawlsian civic education played a central role in his reframing of his project. Subsequent critics' attempt to deal with the lingering problems of Rawls' revision reveal the depth of the difficulty the asymmetry objection poses to liberal-pluralism.

To begin, I will sketch out some of the key features of Rawls' account of justice and civic virtue. The arguments Rawls (1971/1999) uses in *AJ* to develop his account of the moral rights and duties of citizens rely upon a hypothetical contract imagined between citizens' representatives. To ensure that the process of choosing the principles of justice delivers moral rather than self-interested principles, each representative is imagined as situated behind a "veil of ignorance" (Rawls 1971/1999, 136) within an "original position" (136) of equality. Behind the veil of ignorance, citizens are barred from knowing, among other things, their highest ethical ideals, their race, class, gender, and ability (136). Without knowledge of these personal characteristics, citizens' representatives are to choose the principles of justice to govern the basic structure of a well-ordered society. The result of this process of identifying the principles of justice is intended to be fair to all citizens because it should not be biased towards the private interest of any in particular. Rawls identifies two principles of justice in the original position that he thinks citizens' representatives would choose. The first guarantees the basic liberal slate of rights and duties. According to Rawls (1971) "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (60). The second, ensures that "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all" (60-61). For Rawls, the result is a well-ordered society, wherein "the concept of right is prior to that of the good" (31)—the rights and responsibilities of justice that citizens would choose in the original position ought

to guide the basic structure of society in its dealings with citizens and regulate society's pursuit of the common good.

Against Rawls' initial statement of his theory of justice, Michael Sandel (1982/1998) argued that the Kantian conception of the self, conceived of as prior to and independent of any among its ends contradicts Rawls' insistence that the principles of justice avoid relying on any conception of the good life. Sandel's deepest objection, though it is not always read as such, is in essence a version of the asymmetry objection. In effect, the asymmetry objection asks, "What establishes the asymmetrical priority of the liberal-pluralist (in this case, Rawls)'s favored autonomous ideal of character and the rights and duties it recommends over those that stand in dissent from it?" If for political purposes we cannot know which highest ideal is best due to the fact of reasonable disagreement, why think that the values that constitute political justice are any different? Liberals characteristically deny that their doctrine can be based on a higher ideal of character—this is just what it means to affirm pluralism about ultimate ideals within the political sphere. But what then justifies over-riding illiberal ethics, for example, those who think that human agency is constituted by some highest ideal of the good?

The point is not merely theoretical. As Akeel Bilgrami (2014) argues, liberalism's denial of a common ethical goal orienting the political community was used in practice to justify displacing what were once existing and widespread leftist political alternatives. Groups like the Diggers and Levelers in the 18th century, championed a politics of community that rejected private property. For these groups the world was rightly seen as suffused with divinity and value to which each was called to respond ethically. Claiming private ownership of the world for individual purposes on these pantheistic groups' pictures was thought to be a confusion. On Turtle Island (North America), an analogous form of liberal colonialism displaced Indigenous conceptions of governance, education, and natural law oriented by a similarly pantheistic rejection of private ownership of the world (See Stonechild 2016; Simpson 2017). A question about whether reality is suffused with value to which all

are called to respond in political community or whether in politics it is a mere instrument to individuals' different and conflicting pictures of value lies at the heart of the standoff between these different world views. Each picture projects a different vision of the goals of education. In one case, reality demands that we learn to see ourselves in relation to a constitutive ethical ideal that governs a politics of community. In the other, communal relationships and political duties, for example, to abstain from private ownership of the land may be eschewed. The asymmetry objection calls us to ask a serious question of ethics, education, and political economy about such disagreements in how we ought to relate to each other and to the world: If liberal principles are to enjoy priority over other ideals, why?

Failing an account of why education and the state may not simply be instrumentalized to other ultimate ends, Rawls' comprehensive political project and its corresponding civic education is unjustified in these cases of dissent. A parent may think education should instrumentally serve her child's individual values, whether those values are construed objectively in communitarian terms or subjectively in individualist terms. Without a justification for prioritizing the interests of the liberal state a dissenting parent is not wrong to reject any of its demands, where it is possible to do so. The challenge that dissenting ethics posed to the coherence of Rawls' view, particularly in the context of civic education, was not lost on Rawls. It was challenges to Rawls' conception of civic education in *ATJ*, that were at the core of his decision to revise his project (see Rawls 1993, p. xv-xvi). In *ATJ* Rawls sought a vision of social stability to be achieved by teaching students to think of themselves as Kantian choosers, who champion an egalitarian view of politics that endorses the priority of the right over the good (1971/1999, 514-516). According to Rawls

Nor can someone in a well-ordered society object to the practices of moral instruction that inculcate a sense of justice. For in agreeing to principles of right the parties in the original position at the same time consent to the arrangements necessary to make these principles effective in their conduct. (1971/1999, 515)

Thus moral education is education for autonomy. In due course everyone will know why he would adopt the principles of justice and how they are derived from the conditions that characterize his being an equal in a society of moral persons. It follows that in accepting these principles on this basis we are not influenced primarily by tradition and authority, or the opinions of others. (1971/1999, 516)

The practical possibility of ethical dissent from the Kantian conception of persons, however, makes plain that Rawls' ideal of persons and equality constitute one ethical ideal among many. That ideal requires a justification over alternatives, otherwise, the simplest explanation is that Rawls' view lacks any *normative* moral priority in cases of ethical dissent.

Sandel's (1998) critique mirrors the practical political concerns about liberal colonialism. Against Rawls' "unencumbered" picture of the self as a chooser of its ends, Sandel provides an alternative picture of the relationship of the self as "encumbered"—partly constituted by responsibilities to fulfill certain constitutive roles. Insofar as the rights and duties of liberalism depend upon the unencumbered conception of the self, which can revise any among its roles and responsibilities, Sandel argues that a controversial ideal of character—of what it is good to be—is built into the original position (122-131). Rawls himself prohibits such ideals of the good life behind the veil of ignorance and, so, appears trapped in contradiction. If as the liberal-pluralist tradition following Berlin (1958) claims, an ideal of the good life cannot be justified as a basis for politics and education, then the prospects of justifying such an ideal of character's priority over other ethics appear bleak. But if liberalism lacks moral priority over such ethics, which it nevertheless displaces, then for all we know, liberal political morality may be nothing but the sophisticated rhetoric of powerful capitalist societies and their imperialist projects. Decolonizing critics who suspect as much, in this case, are not wrong, for all we can tell (For some worries in this spirit see, Simpson 2017).

In response to Sandel's criticisms, Rawls revised his view in the later *PL* (1993) to try to decouple it from the comprehensive Kantian account of persons and the conception of civic education that he sought to use to establish his vision of justice in *ATJ*. By contrast with the first iteration of

Rawls' view, which relied upon a "comprehensive" Kantian conception of persons, his latter "non-comprehensive" version of his account seeks to establish principles of justice without appealing to any such comprehensive doctrine of persons and their normative interests.

In *PL* Rawls (1993) remains committed to the view that the state should remain neutral in justifying constitutional rights and duties between *reasonable* competing conceptions of the good life (193). Rawls emphasizes that no normative theory of justice and civic virtue can coherently aspire to "neutrality of effect" (194). Instead, the demand of justificatory neutrality, as Rawls describes it, asserts that when justifying matters of basic or constitutional justice "the state is not to do anything intended to promote any particular comprehensive doctrine rather than another, or to give greater assistance to those who pursue it" (193). The justificatory neutralist ideal instead requires the state to appeal only to the political conception of persons as free and equal and justifications within the language of public reason to ground its scheme of basic rights and duties (17). Reasons that derive from one's controversial conception of the good life that cannot be translated into terms that free and equal citizens could be reasonably expected to accept are to be excluded from the justification of state action.⁸

The political conception of persons as free and equal, according to Rawls, is one that all reasonable and rational citizens, defined in the terms he claims to extract from the liberal democratic tradition, can and ought to agree to from within their comprehensive views of the good life. Instead of teaching students to become Kantian persons, Rawls' new way to achieve political stability is through an "overlapping consensus" (10) of "reasonable" (10) comprehensive doctrines, each of which might for different moral reasons endorse the political conception of persons. As a basis for a

⁸ For an extension of Rawls' argument to parental decision making about minor children, see Matthew Clayton (2006). Clayton argues that conditions that Rawls notes obtain between the state and citizens also exist between parents and minor children. Thus, decisions regarding children should be justified in terms free and equal citizens could accept. By implication, children's enrollment in comprehensive moral and religious views by parents is prohibited.

theory of justice, some unjust and unreasonable lives, again defined in Rawlsian terms, will be treated unequally by design (194). “Unreasonable” comprehensive doctrines that desire to have their ethical doctrine form the basis of state policy remain ruled out in the original position from which the same two principles of justice Rawls advanced in *ATJ* are derived.

To respect the political conception of persons as free and equal, justificatory neutrality demands only that the state ensure that the basic institutions of society do not appeal to the value of a controversial conception of the good life in justifying such differential treatment (214). Reasonable conceptions of the good life, within Rawls’ (1993) picture, are to be understood as all and only those who respect other citizens as free and equal. Those who respect one another as free and equal, furthermore, accept “the burdens of judgment” (54) noted above when justifying the principles upon which the basic institutions of society are to be justified. Berlin’s value pluralism is built into the burdens of judgment. So, no one on Rawls’ (1993) conception of reasonableness is to expect justice to be based on one’s conception of the good life.

As noted above, in *PL* Rawls (1993) explicitly emphasized the “political” rather than “metaphysical” nature of his project. Where in *ATJ* Rawls appeared to rely on a normative metaphysical ideal of what persons really are and ought to be, in *PL* he clarified that he now intends for his vision of the ideal citizen to be grounded merely in the values of the liberal democratic tradition (46). As noted above, rather than achieving stability by educating citizens to embrace a Kantian view of persons, stability in Rawls’ later project is to be grounded in an “overlapping consensus” of reasonable comprehensive doctrines (1985, 246; 1993, 133). On Rawls’ later (1993) conception of civic education, students are, thus, not to be made into Kantian autonomous choosers but taught to become autonomous and uphold liberal justice only for political purposes (199-200). Rawls’ (1993) revision of his view from one grounded in a normative metaphysical account of persons to the practices of a tradition did not result in his giving up on providing an ideal theory to justify constitutional principles

and political practices. Instead it simply dropped the demand for foundational justification to any who are not “reasonable” in the way his liberalism requires.

Despite Rawls’ retreat from his earlier comprehensive view of civic education, as Sandel (1998) argues, the initial problem of justification remains: Why, given other possible fundamental commitments, should one endorse Rawls’ project? To justify his starting points, Rawls appears forced back into proclaiming on issues of which life is best (Sandel 1998, 196). Alternatively, he may admit that his recommendation is a mere *modus vivendi*—a practical compromise between disagreeing parties, which does not morally guide action, contrary to his stated intentions. Neither option is consistent with Rawls’ attempt to provide a purely political but genuinely moral account of justice.

If Rawls drops the requirement of justifying his approach over dissent, then the pretense that liberalism is grounded in normative moral sources, once again, seems lost. For all *Rawls* knows and shows, in this case, he may permissibly abandon his own view in favor of illiberal alternatives. If liberalism persists in the absence of justification over the alternatives that it crowds out, however, it does so, once again, as the exercise of brute unjustified power. Alternatively, suppose, Rawls’ view could be justified *over* ethical and political alternatives. If Rawls’ defender provides a justification to show why it is better to be a Rawlsian liberal than an adherent to any other political ethic, the liberal-pluralist seems to concede that he too is championing a single highest ideal of the common good, one that cancels out others because it is ultimately higher, precisely as is denied. Neither option seems sustainable. The liberal-pluralist approach appears to be deeply incoherent.

Rawlsians are sure to point out that Rawls’ theory explicitly relies upon a “thin theory of the good” (1971, 395; 1993, 177) restricted to the “bare essentials” (1971, 395) but claim that unlike other ethical views, such a view is not comprehensive. The objector claims that citizens can go to different churches, for example, and believe conflicting moral truths, so long as they agree on the political ideal of persons as free and equal as the basis for political institutions. In the original position, citizens need

only agree on two moral goods. First, good of rationality in forming, revising, and rationally pursuing their own conception of the good. Second, the good of possessing a sense of justice towards others with the same political interest (395; 1993, 19).

In reply, it is important to notice how the thin view of the good transforms some of the different ethical views it regulates, none of which can be rightly claimed as the basis of public morality under Rawls' conception. As Karl Marx (1844/1994) argued, this privatizing of ethical worldviews bars one from seeing the state, for example, as duty-bound to promote what some religious or philosophical adherents see as the true good of humanity. Religious solidarity becomes a private matter, under liberalism, one that each must see as only *irrationally* governing the public life of the political community. For the religious believer this transformation of what might be otherwise seen as the highest ideal of all on pain of immorality is not trivial.

It is due to liberalism's privatizing of the good life that Marx (1844/1994) thought civic rights of a liberal sort transform citizens into egoists in civil society, with each committed to ultimate values that ought to be seen by each as private in nature. Marx allows that many religious doctrines are not egoistic in their content. Marx's point is that by reducing the scope of one's conception of the good to a private matter, the liberal state requires each in the public sphere to see any given religion or philosophical morality as chosen, rather than categorically obligatory to pursue. Publicly, each human in the liberal political community is to embrace a highly permissive moral doctrine over conflicting ideals one might hold. A highly permissive view of the political norms governing our relations with others, however, is no less thick for the person whose deepest communal obligation is canceled out. The thinness or thickness of the view is, after all, surely not a quantitative matter, but one based upon normative considerations about what one takes to be significant and what is significantly ruled out.

It is in the context of these questions of ethical significance that liberalism must justify necessitating permissive ethical relations among citizens, for example, on issues like the extraction of

natural resources for private gain, which some Indigenous groups take to violate central responsibilities to each other and the land (Simpson 2017). Rawls takes it that in the original position, each would rationally want to possess “a greater rather than a smaller share of wealth and income” (1971/1999, 396). From the perspective, for example, of competing Anishinaabe conceptions of justice that take caring for all of one’s relations to a greater than human world to be obligatory, the idea that more material possession is better may seem to be a confused corruption of the meaning of true justice. Given that some hold these different fundamental values in their conceptions of justice, where the liberal state and its education system says it is not politically wrong for other citizens to reject these moral values, what justifies that claim? Recall that the question asked is justificatory, not about what most people happen to think descriptively. An appeal to tradition of the sort Rawls relies upon will be rightly unsatisfying to the dissenter who thinks the liberal tradition is itself ethically misguided and tantamount to a brute colonial imposition oppressive of what is thought to be moral truth.

Despite Sandel’s protests and these real practical risks, Rawls’ revised methodological approach, which grounds justice only relative to a powerful tradition, remains widely influential. Elizabeth Anderson’s (2006; 2010) giving up on ideal theory in favour of a non-ideal approach oriented by solving practical problems within a political tradition mirrors Rawls’ own rejection of the task of identifying a normative ideal of character upon which to ground political ideals. According to Anderson

Nonideal theory begins with a diagnosis of the problems and complaints of our society and investigates how to overcome these problems. Nonideal theory does not dispense with ideals but conceives of their function differently from ideal theory. In ideal theory, ideals function as standards of assessment for any society. They are not subject to testing in practice because they set standards, outside of practice, for the success of practice. (2010, 6)

Attractive as the idea of “testing” values in practice might seem, to test values as solutions to a problem, disagreeing parties must first agree to the nature of the problem or problems to be solved.

Different background conceptions of ethics and justice, however, lead different parties to define what constitutes a problem in different ways. An Indigenous elder may look at a world of greater-than-human life as calling each to take only what is needed from surrounding ecosystems to sustain one's responsibilities to that greater than human world. Looking at the same landscape, a venture capitalist may see mere opportunities for economic development for private human ends. Indigenous ethics to the venture capitalist may seem like a "problem" and vice versa.

The technocratically minded social theorist might want to simply appeal to what "works" in such cases, but one cannot because as outlined in Chapter 1, determining what "works" as an ideal presupposes a purpose or standard that defines success. In the absence of common ethical standards, disputes about what counts as a problem, including whether the liberal-democratic tradition is itself a problem, have no common point of principled retreat; effective force is left to decide whose problems prevail.⁹

Like Anderson (2010), Amy Gutmann (1987) follows the later Rawls in appealing to values of reciprocity and reasonableness between free and equal citizens, while not endeavoring to justify those values on a deeper normative basis than the principles of the democratic tradition itself (21). Rather than establish a normative foundation, Gutmann aims to "defend an internally consistent and intuitively acceptable set of basic premises and principles, basic at least with respect to our society" (21). Martha Nussbaum (2011), after initially defending an Aristotelian human nature-based conception of the ends of ethics, politics, and education, has revised her position, like Rawls, to appeal only to the values immanent to the liberal-democratic tradition (90-91). Similarly, Richard Rorty (1992) applauded the work of the later-Rawls for heeding his own recommendation to carry on the liberal-tradition without "metaphysical" backup (382-384).

⁹ Anderson's call for all to recognize an "imperative of integration" in school and society under liberal ideals does not address questions of colonialism. Given that many of her arguments for black-white school integration seem *prima facie* to extend to racialized Indigenous peoples, these questions warrant exploration in my view.

By tying the normative standards of how institutions *ought* to be governed to the descriptive standards of the past, the later-Rawls' widely adopted methodological revision is structurally conservative, even if its content is liberal. Where traditions clash, on such an approach, there are no appeals to deeper principles: due to lack of an alternative, power rules in the final analysis. Edmund Burke could find much to applaud in such a methodological approach, even if he would have resisted some of Rawls' substantive political recommendations. If normativity boils down to traditional norms, then educational and political decisions are fundamentally data-driven: they reduce to the facts about what people want and the strategic costs and benefits of pursuing those wants. The data-driven tendency in educational decision making that Brighouse et al. (2018) sought to resist, may seem the best we can do after all. On such a traditionalist approach, speaking moral truth to power is ruled out because prevailing power defines moral truth, as Thrasymachus famously suspected in Plato's *Republic* (380 BC/1992).

As some critics have observed, such a traditionalist approach to political philosophy avoids a fundamental normative question for any *within* a tradition: Should we reinstate the tradition or revise it? For the parent told to endorse education in Rawlsian conceptions of egalitarian and autonomy promoting civic virtue, ultimately, because that's "our" tradition, the answer may seem totally unsatisfying. Surely it may not be *her* current view of what the tradition going forward *should* be. Even if east-coast post-modernist American bourgeois liberals like Rorty want to champion Rawlsian values, why shouldn't one try to change that tradition? If one has the economic and political power to push the country and its educational system in other directions, what reason can the Rawlsian give to justify the liberal-democratic tradition's reinstatement? In the context of education: A parent who thinks her child's individual economic interests outweigh egalitarian political values, may rightly complain on a traditionalist view of political and ethical values that egalitarian cooperative instructional practices are just a waste of her child's class time, as DI theorists argue. For such a parent, it may be rational to

instead pursue the maximization of her child's individual power by exiting the public system or demanding reforms to advance her interests within it.

In the political philosophy literature, Will Kymlicka (1991) raises the sort of fundamental objection I have just sketched against Rawls' political-not-metaphysical revision. Kymlicka (1991) argues that without an account of what persons and their normative interests really are it is mysterious why those dissenting *within* the liberal democratic tradition would endorse it (58). As I have just illustrated, an implication of appealing merely to tradition in an account of political morality is that others who claim different traditions at odds with the one that is to be favoured are not wrong. Kymlicka points out that by failing to justify the tradition over alternatives, a traditionalist approach leaves political morality unjustified in all of these important cases of dissent. Considering Rawls' (1993) claim that the political conception of persons within the democratic tradition is one wherein persons possesses a capacity to form and revise their conception of the good life. Kymlicka asks:

If people (in their deepest self-understandings) view themselves as finding a conception of the good which is set for them, rather than forming and revising their own conception, then what is their interest in agreeing to a public distribution intended to promote the development of a capacity they do not use or value? (1991, 58)

Rawls denies that his political account of persons and favored political institutions must be justified by any deeper metaphysical account of persons and their essential interests. But such a grounding, Kymlicka's and Sandel's criticisms reveal, is precisely what is needed to address cases of deep ethical and political dissent, which are the cases that matter if we are to take the demands of justice to be normative rather than the merely widely held descriptive preferences of some but not others. Of course one may insist on describing one's descriptive preferences as "objective values" to a dissenter, but the onus remains on the claimant to show what makes such values normative for others who fundamentally disagree. After all, anyone can make such a claim on behalf of her preferences. Such a source of justification is precisely what is missing in these sorts of standoffs on deep values, without a metaphysical account of persons and their essential interests.

By Kymlicka's lights, the better strategy in response to Sandel and other dissenters' challenges is to defend a liberal account of persons and their essential interests to provide such justifications. If Kymlicka is right about Rawls, then his objection applies also to Anderson (2010), Gutmann (1987), and the later Nussbaum (2011)'s approaches as well. Influential as these theorists' work might be, for all that's been shown, such traditionalist approaches are morally indistinct from the mere rhetoric of a powerful group—political liberals—when faced with cases of deep normative dissent. Were no better justificatory account on offer, then the anti-capitalist or anti-colonialist critic's most cynical accusations of such liberal approaches would not be wrong. For all we can tell, liberalism may appear to be nothing but the rule of the stronger, the favored doctrine of a political elite and their rhetorical defenders.

Comprehensive Liberal Neutrality

To avoid having the demands of liberal-democratic justice collapse into mere subjective recommendations, Kymlicka (1991) and Ronald Dworkin (2002) instead employ a version of the continuous approach to justifying political morality, while attempting to retain neutrality of justification. Were Kymlicka and Dworkin successful in justifying the core liberal-democratic values of autonomy and equality, then those values could in turn serve as a basis for guiding instructional design. If each citizen has an interest in autonomously deliberating on ultimate questions of value alongside others with the same interest as equals, then any mode of instructional design that crowded out these possibilities would come at a moral loss that must be considered in evaluating its success. IL practices, once again, might be on good footing as part of the normative goal of education.

The commitment to neutrality of justification, as Rawls (1971/1999; 1993) was surely aware, is crucial if liberalism is not to expand into a teleological politics of the common good. Keeping with this insight, both Kymlicka and Dworkin try to defend the concept of persons and their essential

interests in autonomy upon which Rawls' account rests, but without violating the ideal of justificatory neutrality. In taking this line, Kymlicka and Dworkin are forced once again to show how liberal ideals can maintain their priority over other ideals of the good life that conflict. Without developing an account that responds to these cases, then for all one can tell, the central values Kymlicka and Dworkin defend, those of autonomy and equality are not justified in cases of dissent. Cases of dissent are the cases that would reveal these values' normative significance. So, without a coherent response to these cases, once again, the dissenting parent who wants to instrumentalize education to advance her child's values without moral regard for the flourishing of her peers, would not be mistaken.

Towards justifying their account of our ethical and political values, Kymlicka and Dworkin argue that our essential moral interest is in living "a truly good life" as opposed to one that is merely apparently so (Kymlicka 1991, 10; Dworkin 2002, 244). For these thinkers, because we live our lives "from the inside"—on the basis of our beliefs, rather than external considerations—the state cannot act paternalistically to try to guide us toward the life that is best (Kymlicka 1991, 34; Dworkin 2002, 268). Instead it must preserve the educational and political conditions not only for identifying and pursuing a conception of the good life, but for revising such conceptions and pursuing a different one where we as individuals find our current view to be inadequate (Kymlicka 1991, 34; Dworkin 2002, 244). I will refer to this position, following Rawls, as 'comprehensive liberal neutrality' as opposed to the non-comprehensive approach to justifying political morality taken by the latter Rawls and his followers. Kymlicka situates this approach directly in line with Rawls' earlier work and endeavors to defend liberal neutrality against Sandel's criticisms.¹⁰

¹⁰ Among the criticisms launched by Kymlicka is that Sandel, MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor never provide a clear account of the human telos that ought to orient an account of the common good. Failing such an account, Kymlicka suggests that communitarian alternatives are either saying the same thing as Kantian liberals or, if they deny the value of liberal autonomy hold implausible views. Chapter 3 and 4 are an attempt to respond to this criticism by Kymlicka to provide a perfectionist communitarian alternative to liberal-pluralist views.

To maintain the critical force of justice, Kymlicka and Dworkin are surely right to see that a justification of liberalism's chief values is in order. The challenge for these liberal thinkers is to show how such a view grounded in an ideal of persons coheres with justificatory neutrality amidst deep pluralism. Kymlicka and Dworkin's solution is to argue that their ideal of autonomy, which is to be promoted over others' favoured conceptions of the good is neutral, if one looks at things *correctly*. This caveat makes the position that Dworkin and Kymlicka recommend, in their view, "normatively non-controversial" (Kymlicka 1991, 97). Neither theorist, however, shows how a moral view's being "normatively non-controversial" is anything but terminologically different from the perfectionist recommendation that one endorse an ideal over any other that conflicts. In the absence of a difference that establishes the need for the distinction, the simplest explanation is that these accounts are simply perfectionist—claiming to advance better values that are not neutral with respect to our highest ideals.

If, as I argue elsewhere, Kymlicka and Dworkin's recommendation boils down to the claim that it's morally better to promote autonomy over other competing values, for example, those cherished by many religious communities or pantheistic Indigenous forms of governance, a justification is required to show that this imposition represents a moral improvement, over such alternative ethical possibilities (Tanchuk 2014, 43-50). But such a justification cannot be neutral in justification with respect to such competing conceptions of the good life, as it aspires to rule some such conceptions out (Tanchuk 2014, 43-50). The claim that one *ought* to recognize a demand to value rational reflection on the good life is one that does not follow from the bare fact that we are capable of such reflection. Whatever one makes of 'ought' implying 'can', 'can' does not imply 'ought'. As Margaret Moore (1991) recognizes, what is missing in Kymlicka's account is some explanation of why the truly good life cannot be illiberal or how liberals ought to respond to cultures that fail to embrace so-called "substantive values which are also necessary for the good life" (682-683) and allegedly consistent only with liberalism.

The sorts of conflicts that arise in justifying the priority of rational reflection on questions of values are especially pronounced in cases of educational law where religious or other moral communities wish to insulate their children from education in liberal values. To explain why a liberal egalitarian education is best for children, a non-question begging justification of the priority of liberal conceptions of freedom and equality is necessary to respond to challenges from groups like the Amish in Wisconsin, the Innu of Labrador, or dissenting Christians concerned about state sexual education curricula (Martin 2014; Tanchuk 2014). By claiming normative neutrality, Kymlicka and Dworkin attempt to sidestep the problem of justifying their conception against such dissent, but, in the end, if the critical force of their approach is to be maintained, they are forced to confront it. One response to such dissent is to claim that liberalism is a perfecting doctrine, one that allows us to live substantively better lives. Let us consider this approach next.

Liberal Perfectionism

Liberal-democratic theorists working in the philosophy of education have been particularly attuned to the difficulties faced by neutralist approaches to understanding the ideal citizen that education aims to produce. Eammon Callan (1997), Meira Levinson (1999), Stephen Macedo (1990), and Joseph Raz (1986) each offer arguments similar to those I have offered above against Rawls' claims that liberal democratic education can be neutral in its justification. Like Dworkin and Kymlicka, these thinkers take a continuous approach to theorizing the ends of education and politics, but explicitly allow that such an approach entails reforming public and private conceptions of the good life. For each of these liberal 'perfectionist' thinkers, we should recognize that liberalism is committed to the idea that liberal autonomy is substantively better to promote than other values that conflict with it and so is in some sense a perfectionist doctrine. Perhaps surprisingly, however, a substantive defense of the priority of autonomy over competing ultimate values has not emerged in any of these thinkers'

work. The charge raised by Margaret Moore (1991) above against Kymlicka, I will argue, stands here as well.

Callan (1997), for example, argues that because Rawls aims only to be neutral between competing reasonable conceptions of the good life, ruling out in advance those that do not accept the burdens of judgment as unreasonable, he fails to establish the justificatory neutrality of political liberalism. The demand that one accepts the commitments built into Rawls' moral epistemology would, according to Callan, destroy many forms of "garden variety" fundamentalist moral and religious practice (38-39). Callan sees that these intrusions on the lives of families cannot be justified with reference to the dissenters' practices as, by hypothesis, those dissenters reject precisely those terms of moral inquiry as the *right* ones.

Callan (1997) thinks that liberal practices can still be justly imposed through institutions, however, if they do not entail a "bad" (67) life for those living under them. While his initial insight about the impossibility of justificatory neutrality is laudable, Callan's claim that liberal lives only need not be bad to justify imposing such norms clearly begs the question against the dissenter. The dissenter, by hypothesis, thinks such a way of life would be, even if not bad, *worse than* the alternative for any who look at things correctly. Furthermore, for all that is shown by Callan, such illiberal alternative ways of life may actually be much *better*. If this is correct, then, liberalism has not yet earned its right to claim its moral priority in regulating the lives of children and their families in these contexts or others.

Following Callan, Levinson (1999) also observes that the priority of autonomy within liberalism practically crowds out other ways of living a human life that are cherished by many (117). Like Callan, Levinson sees that there simply is no way for liberals to avoid claiming that a liberal way of life grounded in the ideal of autonomy is a better one than those that conflict with it. Like the later Rawls (1993), however, Levinson does not aim to show that autonomy is better than the values that

her view, as she admits, crowds out. She instead situates her project within the liberal tradition but does not try to argue nor does she cite arguments for the priority of autonomy as the chief liberal value over traditions that reject this ideal (7). Levinson “takes liberalism's value or significance as a given and works to construct and justify a theory of education within that context. It does not try to provide an independent justification for liberal theory or principles” (7).

The same is true of Stephen Macedo (1990), who perhaps best articulates the requirements of liberal justice for the citizens liberal democratic educators aim to create. According to Macedo, liberal justice aims to regulate both public and private life. For liberals, one cannot violate the autonomy of others in the private sphere under the auspices of one’s private conception of the good (264). As Macedo claims,

Liberalism...rules out certain conceptions of the good life altogether: any that entail the violation of liberal rights. And liberalism positively requires that everyone’s scheme of values include certain features: respect for the equal rights of others, a willingness to persuade rather than coerce, the subordination of personal plans, projects, and desires to impersonal rules of law, and a contribution to the provision of public goods. The coloring of liberal values splashes pervasively over the vast canvass of a pluralistic liberal society. Some things are excluded completely, and everything is limited and conditioned. (1990, 258)

As Macedo sees, liberal justice, for liberals at least, must be prioritized above all other concerns that might conflict. Macedo, however, only aims to show that liberal justice is consistent with a kind of political ideal of community and virtue; like Levinson, he does not aspire to justify the priority of that ideal against robust dissent. Silence on this point, as in the case of Callan and Levinson, makes it mysterious why a parent with other fundamental commitments that bear on the education of her or his child ought to submit to the demands of the liberal state. The populist parent who thinks that all of this talk of education for autonomy and egalitarian values is just bluster, as it stands, is not obviously in error.

Unlike Callan, Levinson, and Macedo, Joseph Raz (1986), aims to show that autonomy is a necessary condition of flourishing, at least in liberal societies where the value of autonomy is central.

“For those who live in an autonomy-supporting environment,” Raz claims, “there is no choice but to be autonomous: there is no other way to prosper in such a society” (391). For Raz, there is no hierarchy of value independent of social forms of life or concealed within such forms (327, 344). Non-liberal societies, as a result, need not become autonomy promoting if they are not. Relative to liberal societies, Raz concludes that it is objectively and intrinsically valuable, however, to pursue an autonomous life. If Raz’s argument succeeds, it would justify autonomy-promoting educational practices within liberal democratic societies but not justify liberal values to “outsiders” to that form of life.

Raz is surely right that it is hard to live a flourishing life in a liberal democratic society, if one does not possess the capacities that society values. A critical limitation of Raz’s justificatory strategy is that this is all that he shows and more than this is needed to guide action even *within* liberal societies. Raz does not try to show that it is best to *reinstate* autonomy-prioritizing liberal practices when faced with the question of whether or not to revise the place of these values in society, nor does he aim to show that others would do well to adopt these values outside liberalism where they do not. Even if it is hard to flourish in a society now without a certain value, that does not preclude moving the society away from that value to a different set of practices. As in the case of Rawls’ traditionalist retreat, Raz’s view, even within liberal societies, does not guide action on the normative questions we actually face.

For each of these theorists, whether or not we go for the values they recommend appears at the most basic level to be a matter of preference between different descriptions of how we might live. In an age of increasingly illiberal democracies where youth show weaker commitments to democratic values than in previous generations, this is no small worry *for the liberal* (Foa and Mounk 2017). Among Americans born before World War II, 72% claim it is essential to live in a democracy (Foa and Mounk 2017). This number has “fallen to 30 percent among millennials” (Foa and Mounk 2017, 6) with large and growing percentages of democratic citizens now open to authoritarian forms of rule (7). If ideals of liberal political morality are equally unjustified in cases of deep dissent, then the very notion of

educational justice in the liberal-democratic tradition may seem arbitrary. Values change and evolve, it might seem, but there is no reason to think that the ideals of autonomous self-governance at the heart of democratic societies are normatively important if one is otherwise inclined. Within this dialectic, liberal values, so far as can be discerned, are indistinguishable from mere descriptive preferences some have for others in cases of deep dissent.

It is important to note that nothing I have offered suggests that the dissenter establishes some alternative normative ethic or conception of justice. Insofar as ethical dissenters fail to establish their alternatives over liberal and other forms of dissent, they too, lack a reason for claiming that they have *normative* justification for their views. Were we to stop here, questions about instructional design may appear to boil down to whatever one can establish practically, given one's present descriptive preferences and power of subjective will. Our decisions may appear to be driven, that is, by *descriptive data*, relative to the individual preferences of the decision maker and her instrumental power rather than by normative moral considerations.

2.3 A Liberal-Pluralist Dilemma

Surveying the recurring challenges that efforts to justify liberalism's moral commitments encounter places us in a better position to assess Dewey's alternative. Based on the resources on offer in the dialectic, neither approach seems able to justify its ultimate ideals against deep dissent. In this section, I will argue that Dewey's view may be more tenable than the attempt to sustain autonomy promoting liberalism's apparent middle ground position against deep ethical dissent. Dewey's view, I hope to show, comprises one poll of a dilemma faced by the liberal-pluralist that undermines the latter sort of view. The dilemma for the autonomy promoting liberal-pluralist is as follows: On the one hand, if the priority of political autonomy upon which many think liberal rights rest is not of higher value than the ways of life held by dissenters, then as suggested above, liberalism is morally unjustified

in claiming priority over those ways of life. In this case, for all each can tell, the dissenter is asked to endorse a life that is worse by her lights over one that is permissibly seen as better.

Alternatively, suppose autonomy is of greater value than any other ethical ideal that might stifle it. On this option, promoting autonomy over other ideals is justified. On this arm of the dilemma, however, it seems that one now ought to practically *promote* autonomy over any other commitment as one's highest end. After all, one ought to act to promote the life that is better over the life that is worse. Autonomy-promoting liberalism, in this case, is revealed to project a monist teleology practically aiming to sustain autonomous judgment itself above all conflicting goals, much as Hegel (1991) and Dewey (MW9) recommended. Such a teleology is not incoherent, if we know anything about which experiences are more or less “educative”—capable of supporting informed rational inquiry, judgment and action, as Dewey argued (LW13: 58). It is at odds with the way most liberals in the 21st century, however, think of the goals of education and politics.

Either arm of the dilemma calls us to revise at least some prevailing practices of ethical and political justification. On the first arm of the dilemma, unless the dissenter has decisive reasons to offer to the liberal to convert to her view, neither side has a good reason to think they have normative justification for their *own* views in the case of dissent. In light of the standoff between competing accounts, either *could* abandon her own practices and migrate to the other view, without any moral error, for all either side can tell.

On this arm of the dilemma, the simplest explanation is that moral and ethical values collapse into what are for all intents and purposes mere descriptive preferences. In this case, decisions about instructional design are driven by the data of our preferences, to which education's value is only instrumental. Again, this, of course, is not to deny that practically one side of the divide can describe their preferences as objective values—simply that there is no reason to think the expressed values are normative at the most basic level of analysis. Certainly many democratic citizens think of values in this

subjective way. A regular complaint of teachers of ethics in universities is that they often struggle to convince students that values are *not* inherently subjective (McBrayer 2015). Indeed, some have argued that the view that there are no moral facts is the *dominant* view in American education (McBrayer 2015).¹¹

The second arm of the liberal-pluralist dilemma calls us towards what is perhaps a more significant revision of prevailing practice. As noted above, the vast majority of contemporary liberals and liberal-democratic educators do not think of their project in teleological terms. A justification is needed if one is to embrace this self-realizing horn of the dilemma over an alternative vision of politics and public education as the product of a subjective *modus vivendi*. On the latter view, neither side in deep disagreements has normative reasons to offer to the other. The result of a justification for the teleological arm, were it to be provided, would be a transformation of our standing ethical and political practices. As instructional designers, we would come to embrace a politics of positive liberty and self-realization of the sort Berlin (1958/2002) famously rejected and that Talisse (2011) criticizes in Dewey's vision of public education. Were such a politics justified, student led cooperative learning would be a necessary part of the ethical and political goal of education. On this teleological arm of the dilemma each is called to learn to cultivate the conditions for sustaining and growing the ability to respond to reality in the future—working together in effect as cooperative designers of educative experiences.

¹¹ As Bruce Maxwell has suggested, one might think that liberal institutions are better understood as mere tools to sustain widely held preferences in response to historical learning about conflict. Without the argument I provide, a set of questions remain unanswered for each individual who thinks they can put aside liberal-egalitarian rules when it advances their individual advantage. In such cases, why shouldn't they? If this is true of each actor, it's unclear that we ever leave a Hobbesian state of nature when we think of moral norms as mere tools for individual preference satisfaction. I hope to explore these sorts of collective action problems in more detail in a future work. The egalitarian learning ethic I recommend here nevertheless does embrace instrumentalizing *legal* rules to sustain moral community through inquiry and problem-solving.

2.1 The Socratic Test: Embracing Skepticism as the Default View

It should be clear that both the Rawlsian liberal-pluralist and the Deweyan democrat need to reject ethical commitments that conflict with the substantive values they claim are weightier. They need to do so, furthermore, without begging the question against dissenters. Standard philosophical methods of moral inquiry make this task difficult. As Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/2007) once observed, it is standard in moral and political philosophy to start with some basic judgment, intuition, or perception that others do not hold and might coherently reject but claim that it is self-evident (or intuitive) and normative. One might offer an example or a thought experiment to try to pump the intuitions of others. In the end, though, one may or may not evaluate the values on offer in the same way. Faced with such dissent, the regress of supporting reasons one offers in favor of the judgment, intuition, or perception, proceeds until it terminates in a basic intuition, judgment, or perception that one might still coherently reject. At this point, where we regress to different axioms, MacIntyre (1981/2007) observes that at least the appearance of a “disquieting private arbitrariness” (8) sinks in. As noted above, if I lack a decisive reason for you to hold my view, then it becomes clear that I also lack a decisive reason not to abandon my view in favor of yours. “Hence, it seems that underlying my own position there must be some non-rational decision to adopt that position” (8). The same, of course, is true of you, if you lack the resources to convert me to your view. We can each see the regress of reasons retreats to different and conflicting possible starting points, where our “spade is turned” (Wittgenstein 2009, §217).

Forced to decide which conflicting and contradictory commitments to embrace, each seems to rely only on his descriptive subjective preferences—precisely as the moral skeptic but not the normative ethicist or political theorist claims. Berlin (1958/2002) thought the choice between incommensurable views of value favored liberalism; the previous section has called into question whether this is so. If the moral sources enumerated above exhaust those on offer, then we have good

reason from the very idea of normative action guidance to treat moral skepticism as the default view of the dialectic: it reflects reality.¹² There is no normative error in someone's rejecting another's mere other-regarding preference for orienting one's life, even if one's interlocutor calls that preference an objective value, if one is otherwise committed. If there is no decisive reason to hold your view over mine and vice versa, for any given value judgment, then the right descriptive account of our situation is that our most basic moral standards are not normative, for all we can tell. A morally skeptical stance appears to be the descriptively right account of our condition. If in practice, our values are ultimately based upon our subjective preferences, though we may be unaware of the fact, then the value of learning and reason, as Hume (2005) claimed, is instrumental—"Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (266).

We land in this problem wherever one appeals to non-fundamental and non-categorical considerations of the sort to which it is widely familiar to appeal in moral argument. If you claim that you have intuitions in favor of educating for autonomy-promoting liberalism while a Chinese patriot favors educating for loyalty to the good of the Chinese state, you might both assert that your intuitions track objective values. The problem is that no contingent intuition is available to show that either of you *should* embrace the other's recommendation, if your fundamental commitments are otherwise. Where asserting that our intuitions are tracking "objective values" is the best we can do to get moral reasoning going, then there is no limit on what one might "intuit". The result is that one is stuck with an explosion of conflicting possible normative standards that in the end is the same as having none. One can commit to any possible moral description and can do so, ultimately, only in accord with one's preference.

¹² Following other critics, I take transcendental approaches such as Korsgaard's (1996) to rely upon such suppressed substantive intuitions or judgments.

As I have argued above and as MacIntyre (1981/2007) saw, what we are *doing* when we use moral language in this way is nothing at base but expressing our subjective will—what he calls “emotivism” understood not as a theory of the meaning of moral terms but of their use. The meanings of our terms, MacIntyre allows, may purport moral objectivity.¹³ The Chinese patriot favoring an authoritarian state and the autonomy advocating liberal can both use language with meanings that purport moral objectivity. I have argued with MacIntyre that what theoretical reflection on the structure of justification reveals is the choice between these purportedly moral views is not impersonal and objective at all, so far as we can tell. Each side of the standoff simply has different descriptive preferences, emerging against the backdrop of different traditions.¹⁴

A critic might object that simply because we lack any decisive reason that we can give to another, it does not follow that we cannot stand by our contingent values “unflinchingly”—precisely as Berlin (1958) once suggested. This is descriptively true. As MacIntyre (1981/2007) observed, we can still use moral terms when we speak and we can act *as if* these terms have normative force that others should live up to. We can also, however, just abandon our terms for those that conflict with them and, for all we can tell, do so without ignorance or irrationality. This is precisely the difficulty. There is nothing in light of which it would be a *normative* mistake to take on our commitments’ negations. Even if the terms we use purport to be normative, the way in which we use them suggests that they are not, given what else we know about the regress of reasons through theoretical reflection. People may do all sorts of things for instrumental reasons, even masquerade as moralists, but that does not mean that we rightly regard them as such for descriptive purposes.

¹³ Here MacIntyre means “meaning” in roughly Frege’s (1948) terms, as the “sense” of a statement under which one acts, as distinct from the contents of its reference.

¹⁴ I take this worry to extend also to MacIntyre’s (1981/2007) positive vision of ethics as a quest for the good, given the possibility of normatively skeptical alternatives.

Just as when the king claims that all have a moral duty to respect his right to rule because he (and many monarchists) have a moral intuition that it is best for us to obey, it is perfectly reasonable for the dissenter to insist on the simplest account, that unless he can establish that we *must* endorse his description over our own commitments, that we need not, from a moral point of view. Such a demand makes moral skepticism the default view in the dialectic. Without showing that possible dissenters have an interest in the normative claim on offer, then the choice between views boils down to a matter of subjective preference, precisely as the moral skeptic but not the normative moralist claims. Empirically, when students encounter conflicting perspectives, especially on matters of value, this is precisely the stance that they most often take—they retreat to thinking no one’s view is more justified or legitimate than any other—and are often reluctant to leave this stance on questions of value (Kuhn and Park 2005). This natural response, for those without academic positions, I want to recommend as the right default view.

In embracing the skeptical stance as the default position in the dialectic, I follow a practice of philosophical and psychological reflection Bernard Williams attributes to Socrates (1985, 31). In homage, I refer to the requirement that to establish a normative standard a fundamental ethical interest in the standard be revealed to the moral skeptic, ‘The Socratic Test’. According to Williams:

[Plato] thought that an account of the ethical life could answer Socrates’ question, and combat skepticism, only if it showed that it was rational for people to be just, whoever they were and whatever their circumstances. (31)

...for Plato and for Socrates, what was first ethically desirable would have to be something that lay in the agent. If anything outside the soul, as they put it, is ethically primary — some rule, for instance, or institution—then we are left with the possibility that there could be a person whose deepest needs and the state of whose soul were such that it was not rational for him to act in accordance with that rule or institution and, so long as that was possible, the task of answering Socrates’ question in a way favorable to the ethical life would not be carried out. (31)

Plato’s aim... was to give a picture of the self of such a kind that if people properly understood what they were, they would see that a life of justice was a good not external to the self but, rather, an objective that it must be rational to pursue. (33)

Few modern philosophers recommend Socrates' or Plato's approach to moral justification. With the fall of classical teleological biology in the Enlightenment, the notion that each person has a natural goal or telos that properly orients their conduct has fallen into disrepute. At most philosophers tend to try to show that one *can* describe the moral landscape in some way, not that one *must*.¹⁵

To most moderns, embracing a skeptical stance towards any ethical or political claim as our default view, failing a refutation of subjectivism, will seem guaranteed to destroy morality. Since Hume at least, it has been widely thought that subjective desires just are many and conflicting within and across individual lives. Assuming the Humean picture of our desires as irreducibly plural and conflicting, treating moral skepticism as the default position in the dialectic will seem to rule out action guiding normative ethics and political justice altogether. No desire, it will appear, is a common and fundamental basis for guiding conduct where one is otherwise inclined and any moral claim will conflict with some possibly fundamental desire or commitment. With merely contingent intuitions ruled out as sources of moral objectivity because they are not normative, grounding the moral and political aims of education will appear impossible. Nothing other than a *modus vivendi* between equally arbitrary and subjective ways of life will remain—we will appear to be trapped on the first arm of the liberal pluralist dilemma I have advanced above.

I will argue in Chapter 3 that this appearance is deceiving as I attempt to ground Dewey's approach against dissent, moving us from the first arm to the second arm of the dilemma. Unlike most thinkers of an ethically and politically morally objectivist sensibility, I will not resist a desire based account of our ethical interests. Instead, in the next chapter, I will challenge the Humean picture of our desires and the subjectivist instrumental view of educational and political value that rests upon it. Emotivism, as it is standardly conceived, I will argue, misconstrues the nature of human emotions.

¹⁵ To my knowledge, thinkers as diverse as R.M. Hare, T.M. Scanlon, and John McDowell are unified on this point—none try to refute the moral skeptic.

The question to ask, I will argue, is not whether our desires “are good” in accord with some intuition held by “most of us” but “What do we desire most fundamentally?” In the next chapter, I aim to pursue this question, towards defending a Deweyan answer—reflecting reality and living by the truth in thought and deed. On the basis of this desire, I hope to then ground an egalitarian ethics and politics of instructional design, appropriate for both school and society based on the commitment to learning.

Chapter 3: The Truth in Doubt

In Chapter 1, I argued that to assess whether and to what extent teachers or students should guide instruction, one must first determine the ethical and political value of treating students as co-designers and co-creators of educative experiences. In Chapter 2, I argued that widely influential liberal-pluralist accounts of political morality may seem like an attractive way to ground an interest in collaborative inquiry but that these approaches come up short in justifying their core values against ethical and political dissent. The liberal pluralist tradition, I argued, relies upon an unstable asymmetry between its unifying values of autonomy and equality and its claimed openness to divergence in ultimate ethical ideals. Faced with deep dissent, I argued that liberal-pluralists must either retreat to a subjectivist moral and political view or grow into a form of ethics and politics with the goal of promoting informed rational action—an ethic of learning-to-learn—of the sort Dewey advocated. The Deweyan arm of the dilemma, I argued, is not well grounded against skeptical dissent. Were it well-grounded, however, it would have the advantage of internal consistency over liberal-pluralism, which unlike the Deweyan alternative, denies that it relies on an ultimate ideal of character as it relies on such an ideal.

Breaking from contemporary philosophical practice, I argued following Socrates that unless one can show that a moral skeptic always has a reason to endorse a purportedly normative standard that it is possible to reject the standard in question without ignorance or irrationality. In commemoration I referred to this requirement as ‘The Socratic Test’. Under moral skepticism, the value of education is instrumental to one’s private interests. So, if the dialectic were to end here, with the moral skeptic unrefuted, then the DI theorist inclined towards eliminating student-led inquiry might appear to be on good footing. If DI helps individual students to acquire more knowledge and skills faster, then a parent looking to prepare her child for a world of clashing subjective wills might reasonably prefer a DI only approach for her child.

In this chapter I hope to show that there is a viable Deweyan alternative to subjectivist ways of conceiving of ethics that rises to the Socratic Test. By way of this argument, I hope to resolve what I have called ‘Dewey’s grounding problem’. In the first section of this chapter, I outline the challenge for justifying an ethical vision of school and society founded upon Deweyan freedom and sketch the second-order or ‘meta-inductive’ method from John Stuart Mill (1859/1978) that I use to meet that challenge. In the second section of the chapter, I use Mill’s meta-inductive mode of inquiry to ground an empirical interest in reflecting reality against practically possible dissent. In the third section, I show how it is possible to both pursue the truth above all in one’s intentional action and, paradoxically, to intentionally act against this interest in trying to pursue it. In the fourth section, I attempt to show that this reflectively discovered interest has action guiding practical significance, once discovered. In the fifth section I respond to two objections to the action guiding implications of the Deweyan view. The first, from David Enoch (2011) argues that fundamentally caring about a project is insufficient to generate a reason for action. The second holds that perhaps more learning is not always better because we can sometimes have “enough” learning.¹⁶

If successful, this chapter provides the first step towards revealing that each person has a fundamental moral interest in cooperative egalitarian learning of the sort IL theorists recommend. I will argue in Chapter 4 that the interest in learning is robustly egalitarian. In Chapter 5 I argue that the interest in learning identified in this chapter requires students to learn content beyond general inquiry skills. The result of these arguments is that a morally and politically sound model of teaching and learning integrates DI theorists’ insights about scaffolding and cognitive load as means to realize the goal of cooperative, egalitarian, and independent student learning.

¹⁶ I’m indebted to Jennifer Morton for this satisficing or “sufficientarian” objection to a maximizing interpretation of the Deweyan learning ethic.

3.1 From Moral Doubt to Deweyan Freedom: Framing the Context of Inquiry

The type of skeptical doubt the Socratic Test calls us to meet is raised by a practical possibility: that one can live by commitments other than those a normative ethical standard purports one ought to respect.¹⁷ Were it not possible to pursue practical goals other than those an ethic recommends, then there would be no sense in which one could fall short of the ethical standard in question. If there is no sense in which one can fail to live up to an ethical standard, then there is no sense in which that standard could be normative—something one *should* respect in one’s conduct but may not. Moral standards are normative standards; they purport to tell one what one should do not merely what many people in fact do or recommend descriptively. At the same time, if one lacks a reason to endorse a purportedly moral standard when one is otherwise committed, then it is unclear why one should think that standard is normative at all. To establish normativity, it seems that we need a reason external to our actual commitments; but a reason external to our commitments seems insufficient to provide a reason for the agent to abandon those commitments she or he actually has. To resolve this paradox, I endeavor to show that each reflective agent subject to moral doubt has a fundamental desire about which she or he is naturally ignorant. This desire I hope to show, is the desire to pursue the truth above all other conflicting commitments and that this desire is present even in the context of skeptical doubt. Once made explicit, this desire, I argue generates an ethical interest in learning-to-learn, what Dewey called the “freedom of intelligent action” (LW11: 253) that any actor facing moral doubt.¹⁸

The actor in question could be a parent, a principal, a student, a teacher, a policy maker or a fellow citizen, so long as she or he is subject to moral doubt. A strength of this approach, if it succeeds,

¹⁷ The form of moral skepticism targeted is thus a form of “practical moral skepticism” (See Sinnott-Armstrong 2015b) which assesses whether there is always a reason to do what a particular moral standard purports. If not, I have argued in Chapter 2 that one need not believe that the purported moral standard is justified.

¹⁸ Based on a draft of this chapter, Jennifer Morton suggested clarifying that I recognize a distinction between an agent’s being responsive to evidence that *p* and an agent’s intentionally pursuing evidence that sustains the ability to be responsive to *p*. In this section, I argue that discovering the desire evinced in the former case provides an agent a reason to embrace the latter sort of commitment over other accounts of our ultimate ethical ends.

then, is that it provides us with a common framework through which to forge cooperative relationships across stakeholder groups to orient the design of our educative institutions and policies. Using the Deweyan grounding argument, educators may acquire a way through education to show dissenting parents, policy makers, and citizens that they already have a fundamental interest in the principles of ethical and just instructional design that the Deweyan approach recommends. These principles, in turn, will rely upon the chief value of schools—the interest in learning. If the value of learning as it is conceived here forms the basis of a plausible account of social justice, then without appeal to external religious or political doctrines, schools might justify a form of social justice oriented education that is both ethical and well aligned to the school’s existing mission.

To recap: I operate here under the earned supposition, argued for in Chapter 2, that normative ethical and political moral skepticism is the correct default description of the world in which we live and educate. It is against this default possibility of living a normatively skeptical way of life that I hope to show that we have a substantive ethical interest in what Dewey called the “freedom of intelligence”—action that pursues fallibilist learning as its own progressively realized end (LW11: 253). Throughout the remainder of this project I will accept the conclusion of MacIntyre’s (1981/2007) critical argument noted in Chapter 2. For all we can tell, I will hold with MacIntyre that despite the objective purport of moral statements, we *use* such statements in contemporary discourse to express nothing but our subjective desires or preferences. Emotivism, understood as a theory of the use of moral language, but not of the meaning of moral language, I will maintain is true insofar as no approach to ethics and political morality on offer refutes the moral skeptic.¹⁹

¹⁹ Unlike MacIntyre (1981/2007), I am happy to hold also that for all we can tell emotivism *always* has been true. MacIntyre wants to hold that emotivism sometimes was not true as a theory of use in history and that reclaiming an Aristotelian teleology is desirable. MacIntyre’s positive position, however, that each ought to embrace a “quest” for the good does not do better than the theoretical alternatives he rightly criticizes, in my view, against the regress of reasons. Few contemporary moral theorists attempt to refute moral skepticism. Christine Korsgaard (1996; 2009) is a notable exception. Following others, I take her approach to come up short in justifying one’s interest in being a rational agent against the Humean possibility of being caused merely by one’s desires without appeal to contingent intuitions. I have suggested such intuitions are not normative due to the explosion of moral standards that results.

Starting with the Humean skeptic's view that values just are a projection of one's desires onto the world (Mackie 1977, 42) in what follows, I will challenge the intuitive Humean descriptive claim that no single desire is fundamental to each of us in guiding our intentional action. Using a form of first-personal reflective inquiry on the possibilities available to us in morally skeptical doubt, I will argue that one can discover a fundamental desire that might not have otherwise been in view: the interest in responding to reality. The inductive form of argument I use to reveal this interest is the same as Mill's for our epistemic fallibility. Both arguments proceed by a second-order or 'meta' induction on our processes of first-order inductive inquiry and belief revision. Rather than merely arguing that one should hold or revise some belief due to the inductive evidence, this meta-inductive argument will call us to reflect on the way in which one changes one's mind about the truth values one ascribes to beliefs when one does induction of the standard sort. It is an induction on inductions. In a standard induction one might discover by way of many observations that, for example, heavy objects under certain conditions tend to fall. In a meta-induction, like Mill's for our epistemic fallibility (to be traced below in more detail), one discovers through induction on inductions, for example, that one cannot rule out the possibility that new evidence may lead one to change one's mind about the conclusion that heavy objects tend to fall.

Like Mill's argument for our fallibility as knowers, the goal of the Deweyan meta-induction is to facilitate an act of learning that provides the inquirer with new self-knowledge. This new self-knowledge is intended to change how one conceives of and evaluates one's life and conduct—it is a form of what is sometimes referred to in education theory as “transformative learning” (Mezirow 1991). In Mill's argument, we are asked to revise our standing view of our justification for our beliefs to accept the extension of fallibility to every belief that we hold. The Deweyan meta-induction analogously asks us to revise our standing account of our *de facto* empirical desires, to reject that no single desire is a fundamental source of evaluative guidance in and across individual lives.

By examining our practices of belief holding and revision, the Deweyan meta-inductive argument endeavors to show that the desire to reflect reality is rightly described as deeper in value than all other desires that stand in conflict. If the argument succeeds, a Humean picture of our desires and an instrumental conception of the value of education to private interests will be replaced with a picture closer to Plato's wherein a love of responding to reality is portrayed as a qualitatively higher desire than those that conflict with it (Kahn 1987; Plato 370 BC/1995, 246a). On the basis of this fundamental desire to reflect reality, I will argue that we have reasons to regard one another as Deweyan instructional designers, prioritizing our interest in learning over other conflicting interpretations of our subjective interests. Both the Millian and Deweyan meta-inductions are modes of psychological inquiry. Many psychologists accept Mill's conclusion in favour of our fallibility. If successful, the Deweyan mirror image of Mill's argument might similarly guide our thinking in the social science of education and morality.

3.1.1 Meta-Inductive Method: Drawing On Skeptical Resources

To ground the ethical interest in the Deweyan freedom of intelligent action, I plan to draw only on the metaphysical presuppositions necessary to raise morally skeptical doubts. By relying only on those conditions, any and all actors who are rightly subject to moral doubt and moral criticism are able to draw upon this argument to address those doubts without introducing further controversial commitments. The reflective actor, once again, may be a teacher, a student, a policy maker, a principal, or a parent—the argument intends to be fully general to anyone subject to morally skeptical doubt. Short of justifying our moral standards with this breadth and depth, I have argued that we lack a reason to believe a moral standard is normative and the moral skeptic prevails. What conditions must be present to have moral doubt and to become convinced by moral skepticism?

Morally skeptical arguments have a goal: to provide reasons sufficient to reveal that one *lacks* justification to maintain the objectivity of one's first-order moral commitments. Morally skeptical arguments ask one to consider, for example, whether and why one has warrant for holding the first order belief that an education that fosters autonomy and equality is right and good. The practical moral skeptic asks: "What justifies the belief in that standard as a guide to conduct?"²⁰ By raising the skeptical question, one reflects on the justification for not holding a different picture of one's first-order commitments. On this different picture, one believes that one might not educate for autonomy and equality and that it might be perfectly okay and in one's interests to do so. The first resource we can draw on, then, without begging any questions is the ability to reflect on these two possibilities: one where we have objective moral obligations that guide our conduct and another where we do not.

As in the discussion of the regress of moral reasons in MacIntyre's critical argument in Chapter 2, one may be inclined to raise other evaluative considerations to attempt to justify the moral commitment or standard that is initially challenged. One might argue, for example, that an education that does not cultivate autonomy will lead to a society without people who think independently about values. Once again, the skeptical question can be restated. Why should one value a society with people who think independently about values, if one is not so inclined in guiding one's conduct? As each new value-based consideration is raised, the skeptical alternative and justificatory question between the two practical possibilities can be reiterated. Immediately it becomes apparent that the problem can arise for *any* evaluative judgment we might use to get moral reasoning about standards of conduct started—the regress threatens the justification of moral standards altogether. The morally skeptical suspicion, which I have witnessed fourth and fifth grade moral skeptics advance, is that we do not have *any* moral justification for the decisions we make between any purportedly moral standard and its negation. This

²⁰ Practical skeptics of the sort to which I endeavor to respond deny that one always has a reason to do what is claimed to be morally required. Practical moral skeptics can be distinguished from a number of other forms of moral skepticism. For an overview, see Sinnott-Armstrong (2015).

conclusion is supported by a second-order induction. At the first order, one considers inductive evidence and reasons to endorse some moral standard or other. Induction across these types of inductions reveals an apparent lack of any basis to commit to one picture of the world rather than another—one with moral standards that are binding and one without such standards—in *any* case.

If this is correct, then we can also draw on the meta-inductive method without begging any questions against morally skeptical practical possibilities. As in MacIntyre's (1981/2007) argument outlined in the last chapter, by tracing the regress of reasons, the inquirer in the grip of skeptical arguments discovers something new by way of this meta-induction. A subjective arbitrariness is found to underwrite what had previously seemed to be morally objective (or that might have become seen that way, had skepticism not prevailed). Such skeptical insight is transformative, where it grips our view of our standing belief in the justification of moral standards that might guide one's conduct. Even if one ironically continues to perform one's prior belief *as if* they are objective standards that all ought to embrace, the ironic performance is different than the naïve realist one. As J.L. Mackie (1977) saw, accepting the skeptical conclusion changes the way one must think about moral learning and therefore education. The naïve moral objectivist thinks that moral truth can be discovered by looking at the world aright through inquiry. The ironic "moral objectivist" by contrast believes this picture of moral education is bogus. The ironic "moral realist" unlike the naïve moral realist is skeptical at the level of ultimate justification that *reality requires morality* of us and that this can be demonstrated against doubt. The ironic "moral realist" can of course still try to persuade others rhetorically to hold his or her preferences but, as Mackie saw, the change elicited must not be the result of looking at the world and "finding out how things are" (1977, 22) but "on the emotive side of the person who acquires it" (22). In the latter case, as MacIntyre (1981/2007) saw, any genuine distinction between manipulative and impersonal reasoned persuasion collapses to the extent that the emotive or desiring sides of persons fail to provide impersonal standards of conduct. It is this last intuitive claim, that our desires

do not call us to recognize an impersonal moral standard, that I will challenge with the Deweyan grounding argument.

The Deweyan grounding argument, like skeptical challenges, requires that one subject to the skeptical question reflect meta-inductively on the practical possibility of living with or without a belief in objective moral values to guide one's life. In skeptical inquiry, reflection may dislodge one's belief in the justification for one's standing moral commitments. In the same reflective space, I will point to a different property of one's situation, towards a different conclusion. The practical moral skeptic cannot deny that there are cases where one reflects inductively and revises one's beliefs about matters of value or where one considers possible revisions to one's beliefs about value on the basis of reasoned arguments. This is just what skeptical reflection and argument involves. In these same reflective moments, I will argue by way of the same method that we are always guided in our evaluative practice by a love of reflecting reality. This love or desire, I argue, is guided by no deeper interest—it is our fundamental source of evaluative orientation in thought and intentional action, even when one suspends judgment due to a lack of evidence for settling a question of belief. The argument, if it succeeds, will show that the right response to morally skeptical students is to compliment them for their commitment to the pursuit of the truth, which I hope to show below is always the ultimate ethical goal of human action, paradoxically, even where we act against it.

Before turning to the argument for our ethical commitment to the truth, I will outline Mill's (1859/1978) meta-inductive argument for our epistemic fallibility and consider some reservations about it. Mill's argument forms the mirror image of the argument I offer for our love of reflecting reality in thought and deed. By combining Mill's argument with the Deweyan meta-induction, I hope to reveal an ethical interest in light of which each is rightly taught to live as a *fallible* designer and creator of educative experience. Mill's argument, like the skeptical challenge, asks us to observe that in response to inductive evidence we sometimes change our mind about what we believe to be true.

The result of reflecting on this fact about our first order belief revisions is that our conviction in what we take to be the truth is not always correct, even if one is confident in the truth of the commitment in question. Unless one can identify when and where one *could not be wrong* not merely with claimed certainty but with “*absolute certainty*” (19), by Mill’s lights, one should regard all of one’s beliefs as fallible, even those about which one is most subjectively certain. By learning to see all of one’s beliefs as fallible, Mill argues that each has a reason to endorse a practical ethical and political conclusion: that all ought to be open to considering challenges, in principle, to any belief and, thus, to a process of free inquiry. Politics, by Mill’s lights, ought to respect this interest by protecting free speech and inquiry against the tyranny of the majority.

Unlike the skeptic who endeavors to establish a negative conclusion, that we *lack* justification for our beliefs, Mill’s argument seeks to establish a positive result under the same conditions: that for all we know, we are possibly wrong about *any* among our beliefs. If we aspire to find out the truth, then we should be open to challenges to any among our beliefs within the space of co-inquiry. Mill’s practical conclusion in favor of free inquiry, as Akeel Bilgrami (2015) observes, is unsupported without a commitment to the “cognitive value” of finding out the truth (14). By Bilgrami’s lights, Mill does not establish our ethical interest in the truth over other standing commitments (14-16). If the Deweyan meta-induction succeeds, then we will have also provided a missing piece in Mill’s argument for free-inquiry—the interest in pursuing the truth. Bilgrami argues that Mill’s argument has other difficulties in addition to lacking grounding for the commitment to epistemic truth. First, Mill’s conclusion in favour of our fallibility, must be something we may be wrong about, just as we may be wrong about the fact that we have been wrong in the past, the intended inductive source of evidence for our belief in our fallibility. But, if this is so, then, Bilgrami argues, Mill’s argument is a “numbing fallacy” (14). If we do not know if we have been wrong in the past, Bilgrami claims, then this makes Mill’s conclusion in favour of our fallibility totally “shaky and uncertain” (14). In light of the shaky nature of our

knowledge, Bilgrami argues that Mill's call to pursue a goal—the truth—that on Mill's own account one never knows one has achieved is a “a very peculiar understanding of what goals are” (15).

As Bilgrami's (2015) objections suggest, Mill's argument for the full depth of our fallibility can seem to support epistemically skeptical results (See also Fish 2008). Mill's argument, it may seem, leaves us without knowledge even of the truth of its premises. It is worth pausing to consider these objections inasmuch as they may seem to defeat any attempt to establish a positive Deweyan ethic of inquiry paired with Mill's own insight. The skeptical reading runs as follows: Mill claims that for all we know, any of our beliefs are possibly false. If so, then one might object that fallibilism does not follow. Instead the correct conclusion, it may be claimed, is that we simply lack knowledge altogether. The argument is meta-inductive: If in any particular case we do not know whether a belief is true or false, then, by generalizing we discover that we never know whether any of our beliefs are true or false. If we do not know whether any of our beliefs are true or false, then, Mill's critic claims, the correct result is that we lack knowledge altogether, including knowledge of *our fallibility*. Bilgrami worries: (a) that Mill's argument seems to be self-defeating and (b) that it seems to undermine the intelligibility of pursuing the truth as a goal both follow from this sense that Mill's argument opens the floodgates to epistemic skepticism.

Against these charges, I want to point out that one is at least not *forced* to draw a skeptical conclusion from Mill's reflections. As Mill himself argues, if we are not in a “desperate state” (21) where we are “incorrigible” (21) and unable to guide our intellectual and practical life at all, then we must know enough to be “corrigible” (21) in our beliefs about the domain in question. There is no contradiction in affirming both that for all I know *any* of my beliefs may be wrong *and* that most of my beliefs must be true in a domain, if I am able to act, inquire, and err in that domain at all. Where beliefs are reliable despite critical scrutiny of the sort Mill championed, then we may hold them with greater relative confidence as candidates for truth. In Mill's words,

There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right. (1859/1978, 20)

If Mill is right, we can probabilistically assess the reliability of our beliefs as candidates for truth and afford greater credence to those that have proven more reliable against scrutiny even while believing that each belief is possibly false. Such a reply does not refute global epistemic skepticism, but it does show we are not logically forced to it by Mill's arguments for our absolute epistemic fallibility. One possible response to epistemic skepticism about the external world is ethical: that we have good moral and political reasons to reject Cartesian skepticism, perhaps even reasons that can be defended in the context of moral doubt.²¹

3.1.2 Living Doubts: Real Moral Doubt Requires Instrumental Agency

Moral doubts, as I refer to them here, are doubts about what, if anything, one is to pursue or avoid. Doubts about what to pursue or avoid, by virtue of this practical orientation, are importantly distinct from Cartesian doubts about one's knowledge of natural scientific matters of fact in the external world. Matters of natural scientific fact need not be pursued or avoided, without establishing some further evaluative purpose or reason to do so.²² Doubts about matters of moral value, by

²¹ In unpublished presentations and papers, I have argued that if our ethical goal is to track the truth, then one can run a version of Pascal's wager to show that each actor subject to moral doubts has a categorical reason to reject external world skepticism.

²² In abstraction from practical purposes, one might rightly claim that not all truths ought to be believed, as well. One can see that not all facts are by their nature "to be believed" by reflecting upon the opportunity costs of some true beliefs. Opportunity costs are just the costs in other opportunities that one might have enjoyed had one not taken some course of action. Believing some matter of fact may carry opportunity costs that are at odds with advancing one's purposes. For example, if believing some truth about the airplane upon which I am currently flying would frighten me out of productive work on this dissertation, it is far from obvious that I ought to believe in that fact in that exact context, given my purposes, which include productive work on this dissertation. In this context, I may not have reason to believe some facts precisely because believing in those facts would undermine my purposes, even if in other contexts such a belief might be central to realizing my aims. In part, this is why questions of value are central even in debates about matters of fact in politics, education, and ethics: advancing our valued aims matters more to us than value-neutral truths. As Jane Friedman (2018) argues, the pragmatic stance I'm taking requires that I reject many "intuitive" epistemic norms—I'm happy to bite this

contrast with Cartesian doubts about knowledge of matters of fact, target our reasons for our evaluative commitments about what to pursue or avoid and those reasons' justification.

I leave intentionally open the metaphysical possibility that we lack knowledge of the external world sufficient to corrigibly guide our action. If we are all brains in vats, with no practical life to live at all, then, borrowing a term from John McDowell (1996), we are morally “exculpated” (23). To illustrate what he means by “exculpation” McDowell offers the case of “someone found in a place from which she has been banished” due to being “deposited there by a tornado” (23). According to McDowell, for the deposited trespasser, “arriving there is completely removed from the domain of what she is responsible for; it is not that she is still responsible, but there is a basis for mitigating any sanctions” (23). The trespasser is “exculpated” because she is not responsible *at all* under the conditions in question.

If we lack sufficient knowledge to corrigibly guide our action, then we are exculpated from moral doubts in the same way as McDowell’s trespasser. If we are all brains in vats or devoid of even instrumental agency, then we simply are not beings who, on a correct view of the world, are *rightly* regarded as subject to any practical question of what to pursue or avoid, even if it seems otherwise to us first-personally.²³ Perhaps an intervention from outside our first person point of view might restore practical possibilities to us. A scientist or a doctor’s labor, for example, might fix our neurocircuitry so that we come to know the world. Until then, we do not have the practical life necessary to be rightly claimed to have practical problems, which arise in light of real practical possibilities. Without practical problems, we are not rightly subject to moral doubts, even if we wrongly believe to the contrary.²⁴

bullet in favor of a set of teleological epistemic norms. I’m indebted to Jennifer Morton for pointing out the Friedman article which articulates this standing commitment I hold.

²³ For example, one is exculpated if one’s mental states are causally inert epiphenomena and one’s beliefs make no difference for guiding conduct in the world. See William Robinson (2015) for a discussion of epiphenomenalism.

²⁴ See Peter Strawson (1962) for an account for how being subject to reactive attitudes of praise and blame is the mark of agency. See Akeel Bilgrami (2005) for a version of this argument that suggests each must be *rightly* subject to such attitudes to be an agent, thus ruling out “cats and pianos” as agents (56).

Working from the descriptive fact of instrumental agency, the Deweyan meta-inductive argument I offer endeavors to show that either one is not subject to any practical question at all (one is exculpated) or that one, rightly viewed, has a fundamental ethical interest in pursuing positive freedom as a Deweyan instructional designer. The conditional justification of the second lemma suffices to refute moral skepticism for all those *rightly* subject to it, even if some forms of epistemic skepticism remain tenable, because *moral* life is obliterated on the dilemma's other arm. Starting with the conditions of moral doubt allows us to assume at least that one's beliefs play a role in guiding one's action and this allows us a non-question begging backdrop of descriptive facts upon which to begin inquiry: we can assume from the start that we are reflective agents, in at least the instrumental sense of the term.²⁵

To avoid begging the question against the moral skeptic one cannot insist at the outset that reflective agents must have normative moral and ethical commitments. The sense in which one is *rightly* seen as subject to criticism about what one ought to think and do at this stage of the argument must be purely descriptive and metaphysical rather than ethical. That is: if a subject *S* is subject to moral doubt, then *S* is capable of reflecting upon the question of what is true about matters of fact and value to guide *S*'s life. *S* can consider whether there are any objective values that *ought* to guide action. But *S may or may not* care about doing so. *S* may, for all we suppose at the outset, prefer

²⁵ Bilgrami (2014), offers a similar but different grounding argument based on the normative perspective of agency. As I understand him, Bilgrami (2005; 2014) takes being an agent to involve being rightly subject to normative *moral* criticism about one's aims. To be an agent Bilgrami (2014) argues that one must be capable of responding to a world that has a normative shape that engages one's agentive stance on the world (159). Per impossible, subjectivist views that take values to be a mere projection of our desires, by Bilgrami's lights, leave us incapable of action, because on such views we can only see the world as containing objects that are "desired-by-us" rather than "desirabilities": properties that are objectively "desirable" (159). According to Bilgrami, only the latter appear to us as to be pursued and avoided, and so engage our agentive perspective, which is the only perspective through which we act. Elsewhere, however, Bilgrami (2014) affords a picture within which one can act consistent with a Humean picture of agency. Looking at the world through ethically subjectivist eyes, Bilgrami argues that the world contains "resources" and "opportunities" that are the means to the fulfilment of desires that we discover within ourselves by encountering these various features of the world (152-155). If, as Bilgrami argues, we can act under such subjectivist views, perpetuating what he sees as the harms of alienation, then his claim that for action to occur there must be value-properties in the world does not follow. The argument here is intended as an alternative to Bilgrami's, toward similar ends.

preserving *S*'s standing commitments, whether or not those commitments reflect the truth about value. If *S* ought to pursue the truth about matters of fact and value, if *S* ought to care about the Socratic Test and look for a view that rises to it, then more needs to be shown to learn why this is true of *S*. *S* of course may deny having any such interest. Short of showing that *S* has such an interest, we lack a reason to say *S* ought to live as a Deweyan instructional designer.

3.2 Grounding the Normative Aim of Agency

Many philosophers think that agency has a formal normative aim—to get things *right*, with respect to matters of fact and value. Were this the case, by virtue of being a reflective actor, one would already just have the normative goal of responding to reality. Carol Rovane (1998) argues, for example, that the normative goal of agency is “to arrive at and also to act upon all-things-considered judgments about what it would be best to think and do in light of everything in [a] deliberator’s rational point of view” (21). Will Kymlicka (1991), following Ronald Dworkin (1983) argues that the essential interest of persons is in living a truly “good life” (Kymlicka 1992, 10) as distinct from the life one currently takes to be best. Like Rovane, by Kymlicka and Dworkin’s lights, we can be wrong not only about the means to satisfy our preferences but also about our ultimate ends or purposes (11). As I have noted in Chapter 2, for Kymlicka, an agent’s concern with arriving at the right ethical theory is to ground the liberal political interest in forming and revising a conception of the good life (58-59). Were it true that all agents have an interest in holding the right beliefs about facts and values, then we could claim that students have this goal as well, where and when they are capable of reflection on their ultimate goals. As the liberal perfectionists in the philosophy of education surveyed in Chapter 2 noticed, such an interest would be an important discovery, given that one can fail to see oneself or one’s child as the bearer of such an interest. Students or parents who claimed not to care about discovering and

living a truly good life would simply be mistaken. Those who seek to stand by their ethos, whatever the evidence shows to the contrary, would be acting at odds with their own interests.

Each thinker who endorses the normative goal of agency sees that usually one at least *can* deliberate about ultimate ends and that not all of the accounts of one's ultimate ends can be true together. If one *ought* to reflect upon such questions when one might not, what needs to be shown is not only that one can but that one must care about succeeding in such inquiries, when one is otherwise inclined. It is certainly intuitive that at least most of the time we desire to know what is truly best for us. But does the goal of responding to the truth about facts and values rightly guide us even when and where we would prefer to reject it? Is there a single, even formal, "proper" goal of agency?²⁶

For all that has been shown, an objector who suspects that agency lacks any single normative goal may claim with Hume that one's interest in the truth is always instrumental. On this morally skeptical Humean view, rather than a source of "higher" rational interests reason "is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (266). The objector asserts that one may not be interested in knowing the truth about facts and values because one may desire other ends. One may, for example, have a stronger preference to live by one's current beliefs come what may, or to live by the way things seem, whether or not the way things seem reflects reality. Depending on the character of reality and its fit to one's desires, the objector may claim that one may happily enter Robert Nozick's (1974) "experience machine" (46) and live a simulation of a life that satisfies one's desires, rather than pursue a life lived in reality, if one so desires and one might do so not wrongly.²⁷

²⁶ Were hedonism the proper goal of agency, as Henry Sidgwick (1874/2017) saw, that goal might not be best advanced by knowingly pursuing hedonism as such.

²⁷ Nozick's intuitions run in the other direction. By Nozick's (1974/2013) lights and some corroborating empirical findings we'd rather have real experiences to mere simulations and would reject getting into the experience machine (Hindriks and Douven 2018). The argument in Chapter 2 casts doubt on whether these intuitions are rightly regarded as normative without further support.

The objector allows that reflective agents are the kinds of beings that *can be* subjected to criticism about what beliefs guide our action with respect to their truth; it still is insisted, with Hume, that such criticism is not normative unless it advances one's actual subjectively desired ends at a time, none of which are shared by all possible agents—even the goal of responding to reality correctly. On this Humean view, the student who claims to sometimes lack any desire to know the truth, even when it helps him to spot errors in his belief set, need not be in any way confused or ill-informed. The same may be said of the parent who doubts his child's education is important for its own sake, given other uses towards which learning might be used, such as economic or political power.

If there is a normative goal that is constitutive of reflective agency, an argument is needed to show that students', citizens', teachers', administrators' and parents' interest in responding to reality is not merely instrumental to a plurality of potentially conflicting desires one may or may not have. How much must such an argument show? For the purposes of guiding action in the actual world, I want to insist that one need not show that any *metaphysically possible* actor must have this goal. If it can be shown that all actual agents rightly viewed as subject to moral doubt aspire to correctness in all of the actual empirical cases of belief holding and revision that we can consider, then we will have all we need and can reasonably hope for to guide action in the actual world. In this case, we will have sufficient inductive reason to say that the normative goal is a constitutive feature of agents who are subject to moral doubts, on our best empirical theory of such agents. For actual agents, such empirical self-knowledge is enough to inform an account of one's interests to guide one's life in the actual world, failing further evidence.

Some moral theorists think that action guidance must be established for metaphysically possible but never heretofore encountered sorts of actors. David Enoch (2006), for example, asks theorists who try to ground normativity in constitutive features of agency, why it is not better to be a "shmagent—a non-agent who is very similar to agents but who lacks the aim (constitutive of agency

but not of shmagency)” (179). Any constitutive goal of agency might be substituted into Enoch’s argument including Deweyan learning. By Enoch’s lights all constitutive approaches to grounding normativity fail, if an agent lacks a reason to be an agent rather than a shmagent. Enoch is happy to allow that there are no actual shmagents. He claims only that these are metaphysically possible. My response to this worry is pragmatic. If the moral question is a practical question about what to pursue or avoid in the actual world, then without an observed case of an actor rightly described as subject to moral doubts but without the ethical goal of agency, Ockham’s razor can eliminate worries about unobserved actors from our theory of ethical life.²⁸

The Humean challenge to which I will respond is weaker in what it demands of proponents of moral standards. It holds that a commitment to getting all-things-considered judgments about what is best to think and do *right* is normatively optional for actual actors. If this is the case, then the value of learning and education will remain instrumental to and contingent upon one’s personal subjective preferences. Dewey’s claim that learning is a fundamental source of moral interest would be wrong and the parent or student who wants to instrumentalize learning to other ends would not be mistaken.

To develop a reply to this Humean challenge, we can turn to Hume himself for the starting point of our defense of the Deweyan view. Hume’s insight can be found in his passages regarding the “unreasonable passions” which are sometimes thought to be inconsistent with his broader rejection of reason’s ability to regulate our desires. In these passages, Hume investigates the effect of discovering

²⁸ Enoch’s (2006) argument aspires to show that it is an open question whether it is good to be an agent, even if one cannot avoid being an agent, forcing an appeal to moral intuitions rather than the agent’s interests. I have argued in Chapter 2 that appeals to contingent intuitions are not normative. If our goal is to answer the question of how one ought to live, then an answer for all empirical agents facing that question will suffice. See Velleman (2005) for a similar response to Enoch. See Matthew Silverstein (2015) for a detailed and expanded defense of Velleman’s (2005) response to Enoch. In taking this line, I reject the view that the intersubjective and fundamental interests of actual agents are insufficient for guiding moral conduct of those agents. I take the tendency to demand a further evaluative fact to have roots in the work of Plato (380 B.C./1992) who thought discovering such a fact was the only way to resolve the problem that not all knowledge is equally valuable. See Book VI, 505 b for the relevant passage. If one accepts that appeals to contingent intuitions are not normative due to the explosion of possible ethical standards, then such a demand for further justification beyond our actual interests is unmotivated.

falsity in one's beliefs upon the will, within one's first-person phenomenological point of view. The changes of mind about which beliefs are true, which Hume considers here, are precisely the sort that Mill uses to reveal our fallibility, but considered in relation to their effect upon the will. In reflecting on these cases of belief holding and revision, according to Hume:

The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desir'd good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, and founded on the supposition, that they are causes of the propos'd effect; as soon as I discover the falsehood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me. (1739/2007, 267)

Presumably one could still desire some excellent relish or other after seeing that some particular fruit is not such that it satisfies this desire. Hume's point, if it is read charitably, then, must be more specific: that where we find our belief about a particular fruit such that it would be of a good relish to be mistaken, then and there we cease to desire *it* under *that* understanding. This fact, for Hume, also applies to the means to our ends. Where we come to find some means unsuitable due to false belief, we no longer see that means *as* a means to our ends and cannot desire it as such, even if we still desire to take the means to our ends in general.

Hume sought to limit the scope of this insight regarding the effect of untrue beliefs on the will to matters of fact alone. Only by denying his insight's extension to matters of value was Hume able to maintain that reason is and ought to be the "slave" of a plurality of *conflicting* passions, rather than the lights by which we realize a qualitatively higher order desire: that of living by the truth about facts and values. It is doubtful, however, that Hume can maintain this restriction consistently, in light of what he denies. Moral skeptics, such as Hume, argue against our knowledge of the existence of obligations and objective goods that others believe can be known to be a part of the world. But in these cases, Hume's insight regarding the relation between what we see as true and the will also obtains, or so I will argue. If I am correct, then our love of the truth and therefore of learning, in the sense of

being responsive to reality, contrary to Hume, is revealed to be not merely instrumental but, empirically, our deepest desire as reflective agents. I will argue that this implicit love of the truth, once discovered, gives each agent a reason to promote this desire or love in intentional action and assessments over conflicting goals and projects. By recognizing that all are implicitly lovers of learning, I will argue we have reason to make this love explicit and to abandon descriptions of our ends that conflict with that fact—to become explicit lovers of learning.

Like Mill's famous arguments for our fallibility as knowers, Hume's argument for the truth tracking nature of the will in response to new knowledge about matters of fact is meta-inductive. Hume's argument identifies by way of second-order inductive generalization what occurs in cases of belief holding and revision in our first-order beliefs as we respond to new inductive evidence. By aiming to generalize across all actual cases, Hume's meta-induction aims to establish an empirical truth: that although reason always is and ought to be the slave of the passions, the contents of the desires that form our intentions cease to animate the will when we find them to be based on untrue beliefs. Hume's meta-inductive insight gives us the seeds of a reply to his own skepticism about moral objectivity in our ends, a reply that forms the mirror image of Mill's argument for our fallibility.

Drawing on Hume's insight about means and descriptions of ends, we can see that the same meta-inductive method appears to show that wherever and whenever we find our belief in a moral obligation or an ultimate standard of ethical flourishing to be untrue—including obligations or goods we take to be higher than mere subjective satisfaction, then and there *the belief in the obligation or ultimate good ceases to guide our will* where and when we act. If the lights by which one assesses one's own goals and the goals of others, as I will argue, ultimately rely upon a responsiveness to what one takes to be true, then pursuing the truth and avoiding error, it will turn out, is one's most fundamental desire, even if one is unaware of the fact. The interest in responding to reality will naturally be thought to be merely formal. In Section 3, I will try to show that discovering our fundamental interest in the truth

ought to be seen as a transformative and action guiding insight for the reasons traced in the liberal-pluralist dilemma developed in Chapter 2.

To inch towards this conclusion, first, let us consider the case of belief revision regarding a moral duty. To illustrate the extension of Hume's point to matters of value, like Hume, I will rely on our powers of meta-inductive reflection but on an example of belief revision about value. Consider the following case: For hundreds of years, hundreds of thousands of people believed and taught their children to believe in an obligation to rid the world of witches. Of specific interest, for our purposes, is the duty-bound witch-hunter, one for whom the aim of witch-hunting is to fulfill an obligation believed to be prior to one's preferences and choices. Such a witch-hunter understands himself, in Michael Sandel's (1984) terms, as a bearer of an "encumbered self"—as embodying a life that includes an obligation that is simply a part of the fabric of the world.

Such obligations are taken by their adherents to be discovered rather than chosen or desired preferentially. For such individuals, a lack of psychological motivation to fulfill such a believed obligation would appear as an ethical *failure* rather than as a matter of indifference. Thus, even if one can believe in an obligation and lack any effective motive or desire to pursue it, in such cases, a witch hunter of this sort would still regard his worth differently than we would now. For him but not us, such a lack of motivation would appear to be a vice, as an ethical *failure* that he embodies and that calls him to live up to a higher demand. If a desire for pleasure or subjective satisfaction detracted from meeting this obligation, it would appear to this agent as *corrupting* rather than as a benefit with respect to his overall ethical flourishing. The interest in pleasure, or mere satisfaction, for this agent, would block becoming who he believes he should become.

Just as with the matters of fact Hume considered above, once we come to see the world as devoid of the obligation to hunt witches, we move from one hermeneutic frame to the other. With the belief in the obligation to witch-hunt abandoned, we can no longer see our action as aiming to

fulfill *that* duty (to witch hunt) because by hypothesis we do not believe that there is any such duty to fulfill. And only with such duties abandoned, can we see the pursuit of mere desire satisfaction or pleasure as a morally unrestricted aim, as the ethical frame worthy of guiding our action in the otherwise duty-bound-to-witch-hunt cases.

The same principle holds if we were to move from the life of the hedonist or subjective preference satisfier to that of the duty-bound witch hunter. By coming to believe that there are duties that restrict the pursuit of pleasure (or mere preferences), our previous unrestricted hedonism (or preference satisfaction) loses its grip upon our assessment of our action. Now, after accepting the duty to witch hunt as a fact, we see cases where we fail to realize the duty to hunt witches as a failure to measure up to a standard that rightly binds our action. The same phenomenology holds true if our witch-hunter sees living such a life as tantamount to realizing the highest good. Any subjective whim that distracted from this ultimate aim, which in effect functions as one's highest duty, would be seen not as a benefit but as a burden by that agent—a threat to that agent's flourishing. Only on abandoning the supposed objective conception of the highest good *qua* witch hunter as untrue can that agent see life pursuing subjective satisfaction, rather than the hunting of witches, as anything but a threat to his flourishing.

From this example, we can generalize. In any case of belief revision about duties or conceptions of the ultimate good, for any agent *S*, *S* abandons beliefs that on the basis of *S*'s evidence *S* takes to be untrue. *S* instead pursues conceptions of value *S* takes to be true, again based on *S*'s evidence. Thus, we can say truly of *S* that *S* pursues what *S* takes to be true and avoids error, on the basis of the evidence at *S*'s disposal. If this meta-inductive generalization is correct, then *S*'s antecedent love of living by the truth regulates the value *S* attributes to any of *S*'s commitments: *S*'s means and ends, facts and values, and is regulated by none. We have discovered a sui generis desire more fundamental than any other that orients *S*'s activity in the world, a desire that in *S*'s evaluative practice

wins any standoff with aims S takes to be inconsistent with its fulfillment. S , by nature, is a learner, trying to reflect reality in matters of fact and value at the most basic level of analysis. I will argue below that S both pursues this ultimate end and can act against it in the same moments because S can misascribe truth values to statements about S 's own ultimate goals and then act under those descriptions. The meta-induction reveals the basis for claiming such ascriptions about S 's ultimate goals are mistaken.

Recognizing this fact about S (who is anyone subject to moral doubt), allows us to see that only on condition of believing a specific theory of the moral landscape, either including or devoid of obligations or objective values one takes to be truly a part of the world, can one assess, for example, the value of one's pleasures and satisfactions.²⁹ Where occasions present themselves to reflect on these fundamental questions, we always aim to get things right by our lights. Without such occasions for reflection, we may be naturally ignorant of this fundamental interest. Because Hume's insight applies to the will in all such cases of belief change, no matter which theory we take to be true, we should see that our love of living by the truth is the empirical condition upon which we hold these other commitments to be rightly motivating and worthy of pursuit. It is a deeper and more fundamental goal to which we are committed in our practice and that we can discover through philosophical reflection.

Skeptical arguments call us to revise our beliefs about our fundamental values on the basis of new evidence: the evidence of the skeptical argument against our justification for our standing commitments. Thus, skeptical reflections only affect one's standing commitments if one has an interest in reflecting reality that is deeper than those commitments. No question is begged against skeptical evaluative possibilities, then, in merely pointing to such an interest's fundamental place in

²⁹ The moral skeptic must claim that certain purported obligations are not-as they purport to be. Negating a moral value need not entail the existence of an objective moral value but it does entail a change in self and world understanding. My point is psychological. One just does care fundamentally about tracking the truth and avoiding error in cases of skeptical revision of one's view of the world and one's goals, just like one's inductions, just are fallible.

our evaluative practices. If this is all correct, then we have reason to accept the extension of Hume's insight to matters of value and the proper goal of agency identified by the ethical and political theorists above. As agents, we share a natural love of responding to the domain of facts and values in accord with reality, a love that is regulated by no deeper interest, within our agentic stance on the world and that is expressed in whatever we intentionally pursue and avoid. As liberal perfectionists rightly saw in Chapter 2, this insight is a substantive and transformative piece of self-knowledge about one's own evaluative goals, with practical ethical implications. Where we intentionally act, we pursue an account of our true goals, ultimately which rests upon our love of reflecting reality.

3.3 How We Desire Reality & Act Against it: Returning to MacIntyre's Emotivist Argument

So far, I have tried to show that no matter what we do, we do it on the basis of our best account of what's true about matters of fact and value in the world. A question will naturally arise: Surely students and teachers sometimes pursue things other than the truth as such.³⁰ In what sense, then, is our interest in pursuing the truth *fundamental*? We can pursue all sorts of other goals, one might think, some of which may even include destroying our abilities to respond to reality. So why shouldn't we read a different conclusion about our fundamental values off of our evaluative practice? Even if we rely upon knowledge to achieve our goals, one still might think the goals themselves may be opposed to the goal of responding to reality. As J. David Velleman (2009) argues, even if self-understanding is the normative goal of agency, surely we do not *pursue* self-understanding *as such*. According to Velleman,

³⁰ A great deal of ink has been spilled on the threat of friendship and other forms of partiality to impartial ethical theories and epistemic norms. See Cocking and Kennett (2000) for an example of the former and Stroud (2006) for the latter. I'm indebted to Jennifer Morton for highlighting this worry. These arguments that pit an agent's integrity against the demands of a normative moral (or epistemic) theory all owe a debt to Bernard Williams (1985) and indeed to Socrates' own worry recounted by Williams that a personal commitment might defeat purported demands of justice. For what it's worth, I'm fully aware that almost no one thinks we pursue the truth as such and that the recommendation I make is at odds with prevailing convention—hence the emphasis I have placed on this philosophical inquiry as a form of transformative learning which calls us to revise our understanding of our priorities and goals.

The aims of our actions... are whatever they ordinarily seem to be: pleasure, health, friendship, chocolate. Self-understanding is not an aim ulterior to these aims—not something for the sake of which we pursue them. It is rather an aim with respect to our manner of pursuing these and other aims, which we pursue for their own sakes. In this respect, self-understanding is like efficiency, we cannot pursue efficiency alone; we can pursue it only in pursuing other aims by seeking to pursue them efficiently...efficiency will never be our ultimate aim even if we pursue it in everything we do. So it is with self-understanding. (2009, 27-28)

In this section, I argue that we should not abandon the premise established in cases of belief revision that responding to reality is our fundamental ethical interest or desire and that indeed this desire animates the pursuit of the truth *as* a goal ulterior and fundamental to the interpreted values we pursue. To show why we should retain this premise, I trace the way in which one can intentionally pursue ends other than the truth even, somewhat paradoxically, as one nevertheless pursues the truth as one's ultimate goal, as claimed in the Deweyan meta-induction. By showing that we always respond to and pursue the truth, I hope to make it clear that to maintain intelligibility and self-understanding after this *discovery* one ought to prioritize the goal of pursuing the truth and the capacity for learning in one's action.

The Deweyan position seems committed to asserting an apparent contradiction: that often one *does not* pursue the truth above all and that *one in fact does* pursue the truth above all in those same instances. To dissolve this apparent contradiction in favour of the Deweyan conclusion, I will rely upon a distinction drawn by MacIntyre (1981/2007) in Chapter 2 between the meaning and use of moral statements. Like MacIntyre, I will argue that one can act under descriptions of one's goals, the meaning of which may deny and conceal what one is doing when one pursues goals under them. Though one only pursue goals under descriptions of them that one takes to be true, the descriptions under which one forms intentions and acts can deny this fact about one's goals as an agent. A more complete picture of our process of evaluating our goals reveals that in light of our actual ultimate ethical goal—reflecting and pursuing the truth and avoiding error—we ought to reject descriptions that deny the ultimate reason we in fact hold such descriptions at all. Otherwise, one holds beliefs that

undermine and pursues acts that militate against one's actual fundamental evaluative interest in thought and deed in one's evaluative practice.

Recall MacIntyre's (1981/2007) arguments from Chapter 2. By way of theoretical reflection on the regress of reasons justifying moral action, MacIntyre argued that the meaning of moral statements might conceal what is done when such statements are used by an actor. Despite the objectivity that the meaning of moral statements may purport, MacIntyre claimed that reflection on the regress of reasons reveals that these statements are often used in modern philosophical debate to express nothing but one's subjective preferences. According to MacIntyre (1981/2007), at least in the 20th century, emotivism is true as a theory of the *use* of moral terms but not their *meaning*, as C.L. Stevenson mistakenly thought (12-13). One may not reflect on the regress of justification and the lack of support for different competing moral standards. If one does not, MacIntyre helps us to see that one may be less likely to know what one is *doing* when one asserts or acts under these moral statements. Where meaning conceals use, MacIntyre points out, "the agent himself might well be among those for whom use was concealed by meaning" (1982/2007, 14).

Like MacIntyre's argument, the Deweyan meta-induction moves us from descriptions of the *meanings* under which one acts in one's first-personal narrative of what one does, to descriptions of *use*—that is, about what one actually does when one asserts and acts under such descriptions. To provide an account of what the agent *does* in using such statements, MacIntyre introduces a broader range of practical possibilities one might have considered but did not. MacIntyre's reflection on the lack of rational foundations for basic evaluative commitments within the context of such practical possibilities led him to conclude that we are using evaluative statements to express nothing but subjective emotions. The Deweyan meta-induction, extends this insight by challenging us to rethink the nature of the subjective emotions one expresses in action, once again, in light of a broader theoretical context of possibilities that not all actors may have considered.

In MacIntyre's argument, a lack of opportunity to reflect on alternative moral possibilities and the ways one might be led through reasoning to hold or abandon different moral views, may make one less likely to know that one expresses subjective desires when one uses moral statements to guide one's thought and intentional action. Analogously, in the Deweyan case, the absence of meta-inductive reflection on other practical possibilities may make one unlikely to know that one expresses a fundamental desire to pursue the truth and avoid error in one's action, due to the misleading meanings under which one may otherwise act. The form of emotivism MacIntyre describes, where the subjective desires are many and conflicting in unharmonious opposition, on the Deweyan view, is one such limited account of the meanings through which we understand our desires and evaluative behavior. Along with the fiction of objective values we 'intuit', this limited picture of our desires should be discarded, much as Dewey recommended.

To illustrate a case of such critical ethical revision, let us adapt an example from Alan Gibbard (1999), and imagine a warrior who only desires to battle fearlessly, come-what-may and is nearly always occupied in war. The warrior may deny caring about ethical truth and profess simply to love battling fearlessly on behalf of his people. The warrior may want his son's education to prepare him to live precisely the same ethos. Even if the warrior does not yet see it, once one has learned to see the foundational value that orients one's commitments to be a desire to reflect reality, the warrior in question is rightly seen as acting on the basis of a description contrary to what the warrior values most in life. The same foundational value is also rightly attributed to his son. It is contrary to the warrior's (and his son's) fundamental interest or value, though he may be unaware of the fact, because a number of statements are true about him (and his son), as we look at him sideways on from a broader perspective:

- (a) He is possibly wrong about his assessment of the facts and values that orient him.

(b) Were he to discover a different self-interpretation to be true, say one including a duty to be a pacifist, then he would abandon his warrior ethic.

(c) Were he to insist that the warrior ethic is grounded in objective values he knows by contingent intuition, he would be wrong.

(d) Were he to insist that he lives a warrior ethic because he has a subjective preference to do so and that satisfying this subjective preference is his present ultimate interest, he would be wrong.

(e) He pursues his warrior ethic only because he takes it to reflect the truth about value, even if dogmatically and unreflectively.

Mill's meta-induction reminds us that our warrior is possibly wrong about his account of his ultimate goals, making (a) true of him. The Deweyan meta-induction shows that (b) is true of the warrior. Were he presented with arguments that persuaded him that there was an objective duty to be a pacifist, and not a warrior, he *would* abandon his ethic. Thus, (b) is true of him, even if he thinks that it's unlikely he will be persuaded of pacifism. The argument against appeals to contingent intuitions in Chapter 2, which showed that we are stuck with an explosion of conflicting values equivalent to none, supports (c) by ruling out an appeal to objective values based on such intuitions to ground his ethic. The Deweyan meta-induction shows that (d) is true of him. His preferences are only interpreted on the basis of an evaluative story he takes to be true. For the warrior to believe that it's okay for him to live his ethic come-what-may, he must not believe that he has an obligation, for example, to be a pacifist. To act under a description where it's okay to battle, the man living as a warrior must believe that the picture where it's okay to battle is true to the way things are, as (e) asserts and as extending the Humean insight showed. Each of these statements hold also for his son.

To account for the truth of (a)-(e), the warrior cannot be one who *rightly* regards himself as truly interested in living as a warrior-come-what-may (i.e. unconditionally). Instead, he is one who,

when rightly viewed, is only conditionally committed to his ethic as a guise through which to pursue the truth, which is always his true ultimate goal. He may not be aware that the description under which he acts is a mere guise for the truth he pursues or that he is only conditionally committed to his ethic, which is merely a guise for his true ultimate goal. Still, meta-inductive reflection reveals these facts to be true of him. Without such awareness, the warrior may pursue the truth as his most fundamental interest through the guise of the warrior ethic, but the guise of the warrior ethic, when described as constituting his *ultimate* goal in the circumstances, denies precisely what is true about what he is ultimately pursuing in that very moment. It is a false description of his ultimate goal in action, the goal for the sake of which he always orients himself, even when he is unaware of the fact due to acting under a limited and alienating theory of his values.

The warrior may think that it is true that a person like him ought to battle fearlessly come-what-may because it is most important for a person like him to be a warrior above all in these circumstances. But this is false. The truth is fundamentally important to the man acting under the guise of the warrior, above all, and he tries to pursue the truth always, in this case, through a description that denies this fact about what he actually values and does. The same is true of the warrior's son and his ultimate educational interest as a developing agent. This, of course, is not to deny that perhaps battling is important in some circumstances to preserve one's actual fundamental interest; one might be a true-warrior courageously defending learning. It is only to deny that the guise of the warrior is not an end in itself in our evaluative practice. Much as Dewey thought, it is rightly seen as a mere means to further pursuit of truth—for learning to learn—to the extent that one ought to promote one's actual ultimate goal in evaluation and action over those goals that are not. Why should we assert that one ought to promote one's actual ultimate evaluative goal over those that are not?

If we have conducted the meta-induction, then we know that the warrior, looking at him sideways on, has an interest in living by and practically pursuing the truth, which is his ultimate goal.

He is alienated from this truth about himself under his current self-interpretation—the guise of the warrior, which he takes to reflect what is true about him and to be worthy of pursuit only as such. If he inculcates this ethical theory in his son’s life through schooling, then if the schooling succeeds, his son will be alienated from his ultimate goal as well and a clear understanding of the ethical nature of education. If we cared about either the warrior or his son and were it practically possible, we would have a reason to engage with both in reflective inquiry. We might engage with the warrior to consider arguments for an alternative ethic, a self-description that affirms his (and his son’s) fundamental interest in reflecting reality in thought and deed. Our goal would be that either he or we may learn from the exchange (perhaps we have erred—we are fallibilists after all). If we are right, then he would better reflect reality in thought and deed, as he fundamentally desires to, by embracing a self-description that portrays him as fallibly pursuing reality in thought and deed above all. The ethic of war he currently lives under and desires to pass onto his son, when treated as his ultimate goal, he would come to see is false and limiting, supposing we are right.

The Deweyan meta-induction provides a way to inquire with the warrior to try to show that we have a common and fundamental interest in reflecting and pursuing the truth, though we may be ignorant of the fact. Just as Mill’s meta-inductive argument reveals that our fallibility runs deeper than one may suppose—indeed to all of our beliefs, the Deweyan meta-induction reveals the absolute depth of our love of reflecting reality. Much as Mill and Dewey seemed to believe, the Deweyan meta-induction shows that we try to make progress when we revise our commitments, towards seeing our place in the world more fully as it is. If the foregoing is correct, each student, parent, teacher, and citizen, is and ought to be a seeker of the truth, even if social scripts often endorsed misleadingly deny this fact and lead us to pursue false visions of our ends. Revising the social scripts we teach accordingly would be an error-reducing move in the practice of schooling. What does this entail for guiding action?

3.4 The Normative Goal of Agency is Substantive

Recall that at the start of the meta-induction, we assumed a state of normative ethical skepticism. Once theoretical reflection reveals that living by the truth is what matters most to each of us, we occupy a deliberative stance with new content. We now deliberate with the new true belief, arrived at by way of the meta-induction that our ultimate goal as agents is to pursue the truth and avoid error in both thought and deed. Alienating social scripts may deny this fact about us as agents. We may be unaware of the fact that we are alienated if we have not considered the basis upon which we revise our ultimate commitments. In our deliberative stance after the meta-induction, however, we ought to see our newly discovered interest in reflecting reality as what it always is: our ultimate goal in thought and deed. Discovering our true goal is a form of transformative learning. Descriptions of our ends that contradict our true goal are rightly seen after the meta-induction as false and alienating. To pursue the truth, we ought to reject these alienating descriptions of ourselves and our goals as we teach and learn alongside one another. Otherwise, we indoctrinate students into a false conception of their ends and their identity, perpetuating alienation. Or so I have claimed.

In rejecting goals other than the pursuit of truth, a critic might worry that I have argued away too much. We will be left, it might be thought, in a state where action is impossible. Without a basis to decide which truths are worth pursuing among the many we might pursue, a critic may claim that one is unable to set practical priorities on which truths to pursue or avoid. Without setting practical priorities an agent cannot form intentions and execute them through action. Just as Velleman (2009) claimed one cannot pursue efficiency as such, pursuing the truth as such might be thought to be an unintelligible goal. With Plato and Hume alike, the critic claims that some further value must motivate us if we are to discern which truths are valuable so that we might act.

Dewey (LW13, 19) provides us with a response to this objection. Dewey saw that pursuing learning, the natural goal of which is to reflect the truth, is not vacuous if one knows anything

empirically about how to sustain and promote learning itself. If we have empirical knowledge of how to promote the process of learning, then we can promote those empirical conditions without appeal to other values to promote those ends as such. We assumed at the outset of this chapter that we have at least some practical life and therefore at least some empirical knowledge of how to navigate the world. If, as we have assumed, we are not globally skeptical about our empirical knowledge, then, we know at least some of the conditions for sustaining learning and for carrying out plans of action.

As soon as we rightly recognize ourselves as actors, thinking and acting in response to the world, then we already have at least some experience of the world. Otherwise there would be nothing we think about or act within. If we lacked such knowledge, we would be unable to rightly recognize ourselves as reflective actors at all, beings who confront moral skepticism about what to think and *do* even instrumentally. If we have any experience of the world at all, if we are not exculpated from all practical questions, then we know that at least those experiences of the world cohere with our capacity to continue to live as beings capable of reflecting at least some of reality under those exact circumstances.

As we learn from further experience, our knowledge of how to sustain our capacities to reflect reality through action becomes more detailed and nuanced. In Dewey's words, we become more able to discern which experiences are "educative" (LW13, 30) and thus to cultivate and grow our deepest love: that of pursuing truth in thought and deed. Where educators help students to have experiences that yield deeper and broader experiences of the world in which they move, growing students' capacity to expand their own horizons, teachers serve this ethical interest. In Dewey's work, this process of deepening experience through the process of intentionally planning to promote educative experience itself is what it means to pursue an "education of, by, and for experience" (33). Through this process of learning, teachers strive to help each student "get out of his present experience all that there is in it for him at the time at which he as it" (48) with an eye towards learning to identify the consequences

of different experiences for sustaining and growing insight in the future. As we learn to better discern ways to sustain intelligence within and across experiences, we are better able to realize the goal of Deweyan freedom—the freedom of intelligence.

In creating the conditions for learning, some beliefs, like those in opposition to arbitrary torture, will be widely shared and rightly held with confidence across contexts as barriers to inquiry. Given what we know empirically, all human learners have an interest in sustaining access to clean air, water, and sustaining ecosystems as supports for learning. Other beliefs, by contrast, are less reliably grounded across contexts and are rightly held to be more controversial or context specific. More controversial matters ought to be held less confidently and those that appear context specific treated with greater openness to contextual variance. Among the former more controversial type are questions of the degree to which certain complex policies, political practices, rituals, and ceremonies, on the whole, promote or undermine the ideal of pursuing truth. Among the latter context specific type are questions about how best to support a learning community within a specific geographic, historical, or linguistic tradition.

As we pursue the truth through efforts to cultivate intelligent action, we can and ought to engage with more difficult and controversial sorts of beliefs through the process of inquiry itself. In forging spaces of co-inquiry we can and should prioritize the sorts of norms for which we have the most reliable evidence—like the opposition to torture or violent threats and in favour of food and shelter—over those for which our evidence is less reliable and decisive. By working to build consensus, we ensure that social practices that guide conduct do so on a basis that agents can recognize as true, in accord with their and our fundamental love of living by and pursuing reality. If the foregoing is correct, then, provided we are rightly subject to the moral question at all, even descriptively, then each of us has a foundational ethical interest in Deweyan freedom—in a transformative ethic of learning-to-learn. We can deny this interest, but even as we do, we rely upon it in guiding our lives.

3.4 Two Objections

The defense of a Deweyan approach offered so far will no doubt provoke further inquiry and challenge.³¹ The intention is not to end the conversation here but to initiate a different frame within which to interpret these further disagreements. With that said, a final pair of objections is worth considering before closing this chapter. First, it is common to object to accounts of our ethical interests grounded in what we in fact care about that even if we do always value some end above all and cannot avoid doing so, this does not show that we *should* do so. David Enoch (2011) argues, for example, that although one may reject and argue against patriotism as a value, one may not be able to avoid caring for his country. According to Enoch, it does not follow from the fact that he cannot avoid caring about being a patriot that he *should* be a patriot. Caring, even unavoidably caring, Enoch argues, is insufficient for having a reason to care.

In Chapter 2, I argued that contingent intuitions about objective values do not generate normative ethical demands. Where such appeals are the best we can do, I have argued that an emotivist interpretation of our use of ethical and political statements, so far as we can tell, is descriptively correct. Enoch's claim that one can both care about and reject patriotism on this emotivist re-framing amounts to saying one can care more about rejecting patriotism subjectively than affirming it. Failing some independent "objective" standard, I think it is fine for agents to guide their lives in accord with what they fundamentally care about. That one cares about a project, I am happy to say, is always a reason for action, even if it is not always a decisive or fundamental reason for an action.

³¹ Bruce Maxwell has rightly pointed out that there is plenty of psychological evidence that humans are not great at tracking the truth, even when they think that they are maintaining objectivity. None of this evidence is fatal to the argument offered here unless we cannot improve our ability to fight cognitive biases through intentional effort. An interesting empirical question to explore is whether those who treat sustaining an ethic of inquiry to be their fundamental goal are more or less successful in avoiding cognitive biases of various sorts, particularly when alongside this goal they are availed of the empirical literature on cognitive biases. For a bit more on cognitive bias in the Deweyan framework I propose, see the end of Chapter 5.

Enoch's patriotism example pumps our intuitions against taking our actual desires as a reason for action in part because we *can* fail to love our countries and often we *should*. On the Deweyan picture, we should not love at least those aspects of our countries' conduct that destroy the conditions for sustaining and fostering our ability to fallibly pursue the truth. On the Deweyan picture, our rejection of such forms of patriotism is grounded in our deeper desire to respond to reality to which the love of country is merely instrumental. On the Deweyan picture, one rightly rejects desires that stifle one's interest in learning as failing to generate reasons to guide one's conduct. We can make sense of cases of weakness of will where one seems to act at odds with one's own deepest interests by appeal to these sorts of considerations rooted in the deeper ethical interest in the truth. A weak willed agent, for example, might be thought to succumb to desires the agent her or himself takes to be at odds with her true self and true interest. In the absence of a further consideration, I see no reason to abandon our actual desires as reasons for action, so long as we keep the love of the truth in view.

A second objection rejects Dewey's maximizing view of the value of learning, where each ought to pursue learning in degrees, always towards gaining a deeper and more complete view. Perhaps one can simply stop when one has *enough* learning, even if learning is more important to each than other projects.³² Were there some level of truth that was sufficient, then perhaps the interest in learning would not guide us in a great many cases. On this satisficing or "adequacy" account of the learning ethic, a number of questions arise: What would be enough learning? In light of what would one make an assessment of what constitutes "enough learning," if learning itself is our highest goal?

As cognitive scientists pointed out in Chapter 1, our long-term memories have no known upper bound. So far as we know, we can always learn more. If more learning is better, as it appears to when it is our highest goal, then failing some further consideration, it is natural to think that we just ought to guide our lives to enable more learning to the extent possible. This is not to deny that on a

³² I'm indebted to Jennifer Morton for this objection.

meliorist but maximizing learning ethic one would still do things other than study in dusty libraries. Such an ethic will call each to eat, to exercise, to engage in and foster interpersonal relationships, to support institutions that provide medical care, to sustain ecosystems that support learning, to engage in politics, and to marvel at thought provoking art, all as part of creating the material context needed for learning to flourish. In the next chapter, I will argue that the goal of learning will also call us to do so while standing in egalitarian solidarity. On the Deweyan picture, the ways in which we pursue the truth, will be manifold and diverse. In our diversity, however, we will always have work to do and a better world to build to grow and sustain intelligent action.

3.5 Conclusion

The argument offered in this chapter endeavored to provide a way to resolve Dewey's grounding problem. The meta-inductive argument I have offered is the first step in a two-stage argument I hope will show that cooperative and egalitarian learning is the proper ethical and political goal of instructional design. As with all inductive arguments, further objections remain to be raised. For now, I have tried to provide good reasons to take such future objections seriously.

To recap: In the first section of this chapter, I outlined how the argument used to ground Dewey's learning ethic draws only upon the conditions of moral doubt. I then traced the way the Deweyan meta-inductive argument mirrors Mill's argument for our epistemic fallibility and free speech. In section two, I extended an insight from Hume to argue that reflective agents always pursue the truth about matters of fact and value. In section three, I showed how one can act against this interest even while pursuing it as one's fundamental concern. In section four, I argued that the goal of reflecting reality is substantive and action guiding, if one knows anything about how to learn at all. I argued that without any knowledge of how to sustain learning, one is not rightly viewed as subject to moral doubts. Thus, to the extent one is rightly viewed as having moral doubts at all, one is

committed to ethical and political goal of learning-to-learn—pursuing the truth. Dewey referred to this goal variously as “freedom”, “growth”, and “the essential moral interest” of humanity. In section five, I responded to a pair of objections—one based on the claim that descriptive fundamental interests are insufficient for normative action guidance and another based on the idea that Dewey’s ethic need not be interpreted in a maximizing way. In the next chapter, I will argue that the Deweyan ethic and instructional designs based upon it are also egalitarian.

Chapter 4: The Sense of Equality: Learning as Justice

In Chapter 3, I defended John Dewey's claim that each person's fundamental ethical interest is in "growth"—the freedom of intelligent action. By virtue of our fallibility and love of reflecting reality, I have argued, following Dewey, that each of us has a fundamental ethical interest in safeguarding and cultivating one's own capacities to learn. Each student, by implication, has an interest in learning to live as a designer and creator of educative experiences that can and should be discovered through learning. Instructional practices that reflect reality ought to reflect this truth about our ethical goals within the goals of instruction. In this chapter, I attempt to address three versions of the worry that promoting Deweyan freedom politically will either permit or require the creation of an aristocratic, elitist, and perhaps tyrannical public. I will refer to this worry in its three forms as 'Dewey's problem of elitism'. The first version of the problem of elitism claims that the pursuit of growth for each egoistically will sometimes make egalitarian concern irrational. The second version of the problem of elitism claims that promoting growth as the common good will sometimes require sacrificing the good of some individuals to maximize growth overall. The third version worries that even if each seeks to promote the growth of equals, some will still be wrongly sacrificed if we seek to maximize this common goal.

In the first section of this chapter, I outline the nature and scope of the problem for equality that arises in promoting Deweyan freedom that I hope to address. In the second section, I draw two objections from Rawls (1971/1999; 1993) to raise the problem of elitism in its first two forms against Deweyan freedom. The first objection claims that each person lacks a reason to advance growth for all, where it does not advance growth for oneself due to the separateness of persons (Rawls 1971/1999, 27-28). Against this first objection, I argue that a commitment to growth alongside the Socratic Test entails promoting valuable states of affairs—advancing *growth full-stop*—rather than *growth for* oneself.

The second objection restates the problem of elitism by claiming that if the interest in growth aims to promote valuable states of affairs—growth *full-stop*—then, as Rawls argued, it may sometimes *necessitate* offensive treatment of poor maximizers. In section three I begin to develop an argument against the second statement of the problem of elitism. I claim the interest in Deweyan freedom commits each to an ideal of ‘reciprocal transparency’ (RT): the capacity of actors to mutually understand one another’s acts to advance growth. Only actors equal in the capacity to perform the same types significant acts for advancing growth are fully reciprocally transparent. Thus, growth in its ideal form always aims at creating equal co-operative capacities to realize growth itself, with departures only justified by advancing it for actual learners. RT suffices to moderate anti-egalitarian relations with pairs of individuals but is open to a restatement of the problem of elitism in larger populations.

Anticipating a third and final restatement of the problem of elitism, in section four, I outline how the Deweyan ethic is a form of rooted cosmopolitanism where each ought to learn to acquire the capacities to co-ordinate globally, while acting locally. On the Deweyan approach, I argue that all have an ethical interest in possessing a set of domain-general capacities to cooperatively advance intelligent action. Domain-specific instrumental knowledge to advance Deweyan freedom, I claim, by contrast, may rightly diverge across contexts. In section five, I consider the third form of the problem of elitism, utilizing a case described by Ursula K. Le Guin (1973). The third statement of the problem of elitism claims that even a focus on maximizing *egalitarian* relations could require egregious sacrifices by a few for only modest gains in overall relational equality. Against this objection, I argue that Deweyan freedom requires educators to attend to three irreducible properties of distributions of RT in populations. Once all three properties of RT are accounted for, it becomes clear that Deweyan approach has a ‘prioritarian’ structure that calls each to afford greater consideration to the least advantaged members of a population, ruling out cases of extreme and unintuitive sacrifice.

Drawing out this three dimensional picture of educational justice sets the stage for a return to the cognitive science debate about direct instruction and inquiry learning in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, I argue for an integrated approach to instructional design, where DI insights about teacher led instruction are instrumentalized towards egalitarian IL ends.

4.1 Towards an Egalitarian Community of Learners

In Chapter 3, I argued that promoting Deweyan growth—the freedom of intelligent action—is the fundamental ethical interest of any agent subject to moral doubt. In this chapter, I aim to draw out robust egalitarian implications of the commitment to growth. Even if the argument of Chapter 3 did not succeed, there may still be reasons to take the present chapter seriously. First, learning-to-learn, at least in educational institutions, is often enough treated as if it were our fundamental ethical commitment, at least for institutional purposes. A mantra of many schools is the commitment to fostering an ethos of life-long learning and this commitment may be advanced as a practice independent of the grounding offered in Chapter 3. Second, as Joseph Stiglitz and Bruce Greenwald (2014) have argued, promoting learning-to-learn may also be an appropriate aim of societies and economies looking to innovate and thrive. Finally, one might think that as citizens, we can always be more or less well informed in our efforts to govern democratically. If so, we may have a standing civic interest in learning-to-learn at least to support knowledge of topics of civic importance. In light of these possibilities, clarifying the egalitarian shape of the commitment to learning-to-learn may enhance our understanding of the purposes of school, economics, and politics, even in the absence of the work done in Chapter 3.

In what follows, I will assume that the argument in Chapter 3 succeeds and that each student and citizen ought to live an ethic committed to the design and creation of educative experiences—Dewey’s conception of growth. I want to show that provided one is committed to the goal of

promoting learning-to-learn as one's essential ethical and moral interest, then schools and societies should also aspire towards equality in the distribution of growth, as a matter of normative necessity. As noted throughout this project, for Dewey, growth and positive freedom are identical. So, if the reconciliation of growth and equality can be delivered, then a longstanding tension between freedom and equality within traditions of liberal democratic thought will be dissolved in favour of a single democratic educational ideal: advancing the freedom of intelligent action towards a relational form of equality.

The argument I will offer, if successful, will show, perhaps surprisingly, that an ethic committed to Deweyan freedom is *identical* to an inclusive egalitarian ethos with the goal of advancing learning itself. To show that these two seemingly distinct ideas are aspects of a single ideal, a biconditional must be established. Promoting growth must be shown to entail a normative commitment to promoting egalitarian learning and the same conception of egalitarian learning must be shown to entail a commitment to growth. If the first conditional can be established, then the second follows due to the meaning of the latter goal. A normative commitment to promoting equality of x always is sufficient for a commitment to promoting x of the sort that entails promoting just that form of equality in that same domain. More concretely: If promoting learning entails promoting learning in a community of equals, then promoting the learning in that community of equals will entail promoting learning of the sort that entails promoting learning in just that community of equals. I will focus on the first conditional, then, aiming to show that a form of equality consistent with social democracy is internal to the commitment of growth. If the first conditional can be established, then I will assume the truth of the second conditional: that such an egalitarian commitment entails the commitment to growth of that egalitarian sort. If the argument succeeds, Deweyan freedom will be revealed to be identical with a plausibly democratic form of equality. The interest in learning-to-learn for each will be revealed to be the interest in egalitarian co-operative learning for all, both in school and society.

The proper purpose of instructional design, I hope to show, is to create the conditions for the realization of *egalitarian* cooperative instructional design itself.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey's most substantial work on politics and learning, both growth and equality are central. As I have highlighted in Chapter 3, for Dewey "there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education" (MW9: 51). Framed as such, growth is our single and highest ethical end: it is subordinate to no other end and is valuable for its own sake—relative in value only to itself. In Chapter 3, I claimed that we should concur with Dewey at the close *Democracy and Education* where he proclaims that "Interest in learning from all of the contacts of life is the essential moral interest" (MW9: 360) and embrace the Deweyan view that "faith in intelligence" is the "one and indispensable belief necessary to moral and social life" (LW2, 21). Growth in the freedom of intelligent action, I have claimed, following David T. Hansen (2009), is rightly read in Dewey's work and in our lives as constitutive of the *public* interest and as the natural aim of public schools and democratic society.

If we embrace this vision of the individual and public interest as a guide to each of our action, then what follows for our relationships with others? In Dewey's democratic project, a crucial part of understanding the public interest is to understand its necessarily egalitarian character. By Dewey's lights, we ought to reject forms of human association "lacking reciprocity of interest," (MW9: 85) promoting instead those that encourage learning not just for oneself but also for others on "equable and easy terms" (88). Dewey claims that this vision always involves a joining of fates: "An environment in which some are limited will *always* in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom for unhindered growth" (LW9: 203, emphasis added). For Dewey, we are *always* committed to the fullest realization of others' capacities to grow, through the content of our own commitment to growth. Thus, we are each to strive to avoid "a

confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others” (MW9: 88).

Towards clarifying the relationship between Deweyan freedom and equality, I will consider three objections to the claim that a commitment to a form of equality consistent with social democracy is internal to the commitment to growth. In so doing, I will draw out the shape of Deweyan freedom in social contexts, first within pairs of individuals and then across pairs in larger communities. The first two objections I consider allow us to see why growth entails a robust egalitarian relation within any pair of individuals considered in abstraction from the existence of other pairs. I then augment the ideal of growth within a pair of individuals by considering a third objection that draws out the implications of the commitment to growth across pairs. By considering the way in which advancing growth unfolds within and across pairs of individuals, I hope to provide an egalitarian moral framework that is neither Rawlsian nor utilitarian to guide instructional design and supporting policy in classrooms, schools, districts and societies. To draw out the form of equality in Dewey’s central ideal, let us consider objections to its egalitarian character.

4.2 Two Problems for Deweyan Growth: Towards an Egalitarian Ideal Within Pairs

Suppose advancing growth is each person’s fundamental ethical interest, as Dewey claims. Should a powerful individual ever undermine the equal growth of others to increase the objectively valuable power to grow in her individual life? Contrary to Dewey’s unargued claim that everyone’s growth is held back by the stifling of any, it may seem highly plausible that more learning of the sort that supports learning is at least sometimes, if not often, created for some where others toil, providing the material conditions for the elite few to realize this end, even if in relative isolation from the labouring many. Is the goal of individually hoarding growth, then, sometimes consistent with Dewey’s highest ideal, contrary to his desired democratic egalitarian frame? Certainly some parents see their

children's educational opportunities this way and no doubt, many students do as well. Why not, then accept the objective value of learning but attempt to get more of what is most valuable only *for yourself*? Without a reply to this charge, once again, a parent may argue that she need not see her child as having any interest in engaging in egalitarian forms of cooperation in the classroom. For such a parent, a teacher led instructional approach, if it maximizes her child's social or economic power and competitive position, might be rightly seen as most desirable.

I want to suggest that hoarding growth would be consistent with the Deweyan ideal, if, as Rawls once argued, the ethical values that guide our lives are only *for* the individuals doing the valuing.³³ In his critique of utilitarianism, Rawls argues that it is an error to apply principles of individual rationality and prudence within a life across lives because the lives of persons and their interests are separate:

This [mistaken] view of social cooperation is the consequence of extending to society the principle of choice for one man, and then, to make this extension work, conflating all persons into one through the imaginative acts of the impartial sympathetic spectator. Utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons. (1971/1999, 27)

Rawls' stated target is utilitarian conceptions of the common good but his objection applies to all other teleological views that call individuals to serve an interest in common. It applies that is, to all views that call each to serve an ideal of the good *full-stop*. The objection claims that values and interests of agents are always and only *for* individuals—that good is always “good for” someone or other, who enjoys and possesses the good (or privation) in question—and never just good *full stop*. The call to advance growth, the objector claims, should always be followed with the question: “For whom?” Couched in Deweyan terms, my interest in promoting the good *for me*, even if defined by growth and requiring some social interaction, need not involve advancing it for all equally. Any categorical appeal to promoting an overarching ideal must earn its moral status *for each* in response to this demand. Based

³³ I am indebted to Larry Blum for raising this objection on a draft of this argument.

on this objection, the parent who wants to maximize her child's relative position over others in educational outcomes may seem on good ethical footing against the egalitarian Deweyan. If education is to be used among other things for competition in labour markets, then a parent who cares about her child's interests may be rational in working to make sure her child has more access to learning relative to others. Is growth-hoarding rational, if our lives are separate?

The separateness of persons may sound like a purely metaphysical thesis of personal identity, but it cannot be without committing the naturalistic fallacy (Hume 2007). A description of one's identity entails nothing on its own about what interests one should or should not advance, without taking a stand on that further ethical question. Rawls' argument from the separateness of persons, then, depends at a deeper level on a theory of value. Rawls (1971/1999) was explicit that it was "distinct persons with *separate systems of ends*" (28 italics added) that undercut utilitarian reasoning. A genuine obligation to work upon a common project regardless of the location of our various human-sized bodies, it should be obvious, would make the descriptive fact of the separateness of persons irrelevant to refuting teleological doctrines. So, what is crucial for Rawls' argument to succeed is the denial of the existence of any ultimate and unifying good that all are called to realize in common. For Rawls, correctly conceiving values in the lives of individual actors must not also lead us to see those values as calling *each* to a common ethical aim. Otherwise, promoting the good for individuals—that is, good in the case of each individual—would lead us to discover a good *full stop* that *in the case of each* is just better to promote.

Perhaps the best way to reject a normative demand of cooperation toward an ideal of the common good is to appeal to the liberal pluralist view that I have challenged in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This view, accepted by Rawls (1971/1993) and by Isaiah Berlin (1958) before him, as noted in those chapters, asserts that we know of *no such common ideal of the good full stop*. On the basis of this denial, the liberal-pluralist can make the separateness of ethical lives rather than mere material bodies highly

plausible. Assuming the pluralist platitude, it is a brute descriptive fact that I am simply committed to what I am fundamentally committed to, where I am located, here and now, which need not be the same as what you are ultimately committed to, here and now. Our conceptions of the good life may rightly conflict and differ, even if we see things correctly. This does not bar the possibility of agreement in values but it entails that no one *needs* to expect it even in principle.

Assuming this pluralist platitude, rational deliberation will always seem to proceed from values *for me*, even if some of my values are about your life and vice versa, precisely because we can rightly differ on the ultimately valuable ends we pursue. For practical purposes, when we look at the world through liberal-pluralist eyes, there is no common scale of ethical value upon which the values of each are rightly seen as harmonizing. Due to the lack of harmony, it follows that *more value full stop* is not always better *for each*.³⁴ The teleological claim that more good is simply better, it will seem, just does not hold *for individual actors*. Each actor, the objector claims, may have a different ultimate scheme of substantive values upon which to assess any state of affairs. Promoting any single ultimate ideal, on this framework, will undermine the values of some and for such actors there will be no reason to endorse the common project. This no-harmony thesis amounts to an assertion of the practical incommensurability of value between agents.³⁵

I highlight the ways in which value pluralism reinforces the apparent separateness of persons even though I have already argued against this dominant background theory because our habitual

³⁴ Bernard Williams (2008) captures this sort of objection elegantly in his objections on the basis of an agent's integrity to utilitarianism.

³⁵ By 'practical incommensurability' I mean to distinguish cases where valuations could stand on a single scale in theory and so be commensurable, but that would not for that reason normatively require cooperative action, due to their substantive content. Suppose, for example, that we believed in a Humean spirit that the satisfaction of subjective preferences constituted the fundamental interest of each, and we could rank the degree to which preferences were satisfied across agents. Under this assumption, from the practical perspective of living a life, the content of our aims could still rightly conflict because of the subjective nature of such a metric of value. I could desire to wage war and you could desire to institute peace and neither of us would do so wrongly on such a practically incommensurable view. We would not do so wrongly, even if we both commensurably measure our welfare in terms of our subjective satisfaction so that we can say that my life but not yours is better if war is waged.

responses and intuitions are likely to remain informed by it until we reflect on these connections. Where we are not attentive to the way the worldview into which most liberals have been habituated can form our intuitions, a kind of egoism may appear to enjoy a normative force that in reality it lacks. If the argument of Chapter 3 is correct and Dewey's commitment to growth reflects our highest normative ethical aim, then I want to show that we are committed to rejecting the separateness of persons with "separate systems of ends" (Rawls 1971/1999, 28). Promoting *growth full-stop*, I will argue, is best due to Deweyan freedom's normative content and the absence of a normative reason to endorse ethical egoism.

As I have argued, on the Deweyan approach, ethical value *in the case of each* and therefore *for each* is just not defined in the practically incommensurabilist way that motivates the separateness of persons and contractualist morality. As noted at the outset of this chapter, for Dewey "...in *reality* growth is relative to nothing" (51) and it is "*the essential moral interest*" (360). If learning to learn is *the* moral and ethical value that guides each normatively, then each is called to promote its content by learning from the world. This, however, cannot be rightly seen as a solitary aim only for one's own sake, where others exist. Wherever one sees an individual learning to learn, then, *to succeed as a learner perceiving that individual*, one should also see *value* in that individual's activity, as part of responding to the reality one perceives. To the extent that the individual one witnesses grasps insights that generate further insight, one should see more value as present in that individual's activity rather than less. For Dewey, it is in these cases that we manifest "more growth" (51) and make moral and intellectual "progress" (46) through our activity within a value-laden world.

On the Deweyan approach our deepest ethical interest calls us to learn from states of affairs and states of affairs, as they are, contain a common scale of value. Without a normative reason to hive-off individuals' interest within the world from which we learn, a reason that passes the Socratic Test, the metaphysically simplest view is that, *for each*, promoting more growth is just better due to the

content of the aim of learning: responding to reality. Unless a normative reason can be given to egoistically restrict one's efforts to advance learning only in one's own material life, then the normative interest in responding to value-laden states of affairs stands to guide our action. Recall that normative ethical and political claims are subject to The Socratic Test. A claim on behalf of egoism that would legitimize restricting one's concerns and growth-hoarding, then, would need to be established *against* the practical possibility of living otherwise. The interest in learning and thus responding to value-laden states of affairs has already passed this test. Does egoism?

A failure to refute the skeptic of rational egoism would show that egoism is just another doctrine that purports normative standards at odds with our actual fundamental normative interest in learning, which calls us to respond to value-laden states of affairs. In those states of affairs, more learning is just better, by definition. Recall that in light of the Socratic Test egoism cannot be normatively established by way of an appeal to a contingent intuition that might be rejected by one with different communal commitments. Egoism, furthermore, is not *constitutive* of our ethical interest in responding to reality. One can track the truth and avoid error without being an egoist. To the extent that this is so, the burden falls upon the growth hoarder to justify limiting her focus to a mere part of reality in assessing what is most valuable to pursue or avoid. Failing an argument that passes the Socratic Test, what Henry Sidgwick (1874/2017) famously referred to as the “dualism of practical reason”—the idea that there is an inextricable divide between the good-for-me and the good-full-stop collapses in favour of the good-full-stop, on the Deweyan approach paired with the Socratic Test. Sidgwick could not rule out contingent egoistic intuitions while using the same sort of contingent intuitions to ground his utilitarian arguments. The Socratic Test does rule out egoism, however, leaving each with a goal—learning—which by its nature calls each to respond to states of affairs in which creating more learning is better.

Failing further considerations, then the normative value of *growth-for-each* on Dewey's view entails that promoting valuable states of affairs—*growth-full-stop*—is best. Dewey, consistent with this reading, explicitly rejects the idea that a group of individuals could have “interests ‘of its own’... so that its prevailing purpose is the protection of what it has got” (MW9: 116). If this is right, then, assuming the fundamental value of growth, each is called to co-operate toward the same end: promoting growth together as a community of learners, what Dewey calls “*reciprocity* of interest” (91). Barring further considerations, wherever we teach students that ethical flourishing is a product of one's possessing a valued good-for-oneself, rather than a function of one's role in building the best possible world, we introduce alienation into that student's life and into the world itself. As ethical teachers and educational decision makers concerned to advance learning, we ought to abstain from these alienating acts.

A second problem owing to Rawls will help us to see that the reply to this first objection does not yet render a plausible notion of *democratic* equality internal to growth. If we aim to promote growth *full stop*, whether in school or society, then Rawls' (1971) student will surely claim that “Among the relevant aspects of the problem are men's different productive skills and capacities... It may happen that maximizing aggregate welfare [growth for Dewey] requires adjusting basic rights to variations in these features” (508). It may require, for example, distributing more resources to those who are better situated to maximize the good of growth. This second form of Dewey's problem of elitism shows that even if one endeavors to promote the common good of learning that one need not be egalitarian in the distribution of opportunities to learn.

If poorly situated maximizers, due to their social or material condition, can be used most efficiently as mere means to promote the elites' educational growth, then doing so, the objector claims, on these assumptions, is *morally necessary*, even if Dewey would protest. This, after all, is what is demanded if we aim to promote the common good without restriction. If more growth occurs

empirically through a hierarchical classed structure, then for all Dewey has shown, we are required to advance it. In such a case, “reciprocity of interest” (116) demands working together on “numerous and...varied” (117) shared projects toward the “full and free” (114) realization of an unequal community—whether in school or society. Rawls’ student may claim that contractualist restrictions are required to protect equality from the aristocratic and tyrannical implications of a growth-based politics of the common good. The moral interest of students in learning, the objector claims, must either be augmented to include a framework of moral rights and duties that restrict the pursuit of the common good politically or we must accept that these anti-democratic implications are demands of justice.

I believe that this second Rawlsian objection stands against Dewey’s view as stated. If the Deweyan does not clarify or augment his account of growth, then he will be forced to appeal to non-growth considerations to address this consequence, introducing questions of where, when, and why to trade growth off for egalitarian distributions of this value. Perhaps worse, he will have to explain why the Socratic Test and the asymmetry objection do not rule out the normative force of these democratic supplements to his account. Alternatively, the Deweyan appears forced to embrace aristocracy and elitism in distributions of the common good. Some elites may welcome this sort of politics. Neither Plato (380 BC/1992) nor Aristotle (350 BC/1998), when they championed a politics of the common good, were particularly fond of democracy. If one’s child is better positioned to be a maximizer of learning, then one might claim that for the sake of the common good it is better for her to be given more opportunities, even if some lose out and must labor on her behalf. To try to show that this apparent conflict between growth and democratic equality, which mirrors the liberal tension between freedom and equality, rests on a confusion, I will augment Dewey’s account.

4.3 Growth as Reciprocal Transparency

The work of this section is to introduce a relational ideal based on the interest in Deweyan freedom. I hope to show that this ideal, once fully fleshed out, has what it takes to avoid tyrannical and aristocratic educational politics. In this section, I begin by considering this relational ideal within a pair of individuals before drawing out its implications across pairs of individuals in the next section. The remainder of this essay aims to show that unlike hedonic or preferential utilitarian views that call us to respond to states of affairs, the Deweyan learning ethic entails a relational ideal that is robustly egalitarian even when maximized as the common good. The result, if all goes well, is that failing further considerations, Dewey's problem of elitism will be resolved by the end of this chapter. Where and when we involve students as designers and co-creators of cooperative IL experiences, the egalitarian nature of the Deweyan ethic will call us to do so in ways that prioritize students who are least advantaged within learning environments. An education that does not alienate students will teach them to recognize this truth about their relationships with one another as well.

Let us recap: Recall that we are committed to the objective value of growth and that more growth is real moral *progress*. A further fact is of great import: Individuals who aspire to grow should also acknowledge that there is objective value in gaining insight into individual *acts* as they are manifest in the world. The world relevant to growing is not only constituted by mere physical *events*, as Dewey well understood. Only if I can discern what other individuals do, which involves knowing why they do what they do, how they do it, the moral significance of what is done, and what it is like for them to act as such, do I fully understand what is occurring in my community. This fact is true of every individual who acts alongside others. So, if our ideal is learning of the sort that sustains learning, then a relational ideal between individuals characterized by the capacity to mutually understand one another's acts for the sake of co-operatively promoting growth follows. This interest in mutual understanding to promote growth is a part of the states of affairs to which our learning ethic calls us

to respond. I introduce the term of art, ‘reciprocal transparency’ (RT) to denote this conjunction of mutual understanding alongside an assessment of the significance for advancing growth of what is mutually understood.

If our goal is to learn about and from our world to sustain learning, then we should recognize that other things being equal, it is objectively better for any two individuals standing in relation to each other to have equal cooperative capacities: capacities to passively perceive and actively engage with others, for the purpose of collaboratively advancing growth. Dewey rightly championed these habits of perception and action within his educational works. Only with such capacities of insight and action, can we become transparent to one another as actors and thus most fully contribute to the intersubjective aspects of learning to which it is objectively valuable, on this frame, to contribute. These capacities involve not only those of scientific and social scientific observation, which are central to knowing what occurs and how, but also the arts of intersubjective interpretation and communication characteristic of the humanities and fine arts, which allow insight into why an agent acts and what it is like for her to do so. If this is correct, then wherever there is a pair of learners, the growth each should aim at in ideal form is always a growth in relations of reciprocal transparency and, therefore, equality of cooperative capacity in this holistic sense.

By attending to the ideal of reciprocal transparency, we unearth the moral truth in Dewey’s ambiguous and often hazy talk about the “evil” of one-sided exchanges of “stimulation and response” (84). Inclusive, balanced exchanges are those wherein we have the capacity for mutual understanding of the sort that most fully realizes growth. But if the best state of affairs is not only one that has the most educational growth, but also that grows *equals* in cooperative capacity, then we can see the second Rawlsian objection is misplaced at least with respect to our goals in a shared world: the ideal of equality of capacity to cooperatively learn is internal to learning as its own end, wherever other actors exist. For Dewey, freedom of intelligent action entails a relational egalitarian ideal *within* each pair of

individuals. To show that Deweyan freedom entails egalitarian concern *across* pairs of individuals, some additional conceptual framing is necessary.

4.3.1 Assessing Reciprocal Transparency: Two-Dimensions of Pairs

What do we need to know to assess the relative presence or absence of reciprocal transparency in relationships within pairs of individuals in school or society? Just as moving from a view focused on the solitary individual interested in promoting Deweyan freedom to a world with others transformed the content of freedom so conceived, I endeavor to show that there are important differences in promoting reciprocal transparency within a single pair and across many pairs of individuals. First, I will consider only the former case, before working up to the more complex case of larger-than-a-pair populations. In the next section, I consider how reciprocal transparency is transformed when we aspire to cooperatively advance intelligent action across pairs. In populations greater than a single pair, our concern as individuals should be directed towards the broader view which looks at reciprocal transparency as a three-dimensional ideal manifest *both* within and across pairs. In both cases, relationships between pairs of individuals are the basic unit of analysis.

Two properties constitute the degree of reciprocal transparency within a pair of individuals. The first, grounded in an empirical theory of learning, assesses the capacities of the actors, their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions, and the probability of those capacities to advance the growth of equals in the context. Call this first dimension, which refers to the potential of various properties for advancing holistic learning between equals the ‘fecundity’ of the capacities. The upper limit case of perfect fecundity is an omniscient and omnipotent actor, one who knows how to do all that one could do to sustain perfect egalitarian learning in any context and who desires to do so perfectly. The lower limit is cognitive death—a non-actor with no capacity to sustain learning from

any experience, an actor, *at best*, trapped in a “solipsism of the present moment” (Putnam 1982, 20). Short of either limit case, we approximate this ideal, always and only in degrees.

The second level of assessment incorporates the first, adding the capacity for mutual understanding at a time. The extent to which each actor in a paired relation can understand the other’s acts weighted by their significance for advancing growth constitutes the completed index of reciprocal transparency within a pair. If in the limit case perfect mutual understanding of an act, as we have suggested above, involves knowing exactly what it is like to perform the act, in the actor’s deliberative context, then the upper limit of mutual understanding is being able to *become* the actor one seeks to understand. So long as two actors are different people, each falls short of this ideal. Mutual understanding, short of the upper limit case, is always a proper subset of the knowledge of each in the pair. The lower limit of mutual understanding, where one is not capable of understanding *any* property of any act, is again, a case of cognitive death, at least in that context with respect to that actor. The upper limit case of perfect reciprocal transparency, then, combines perfect mutual understanding between actors *and* perfect fecundity. The upper limit, in effect, is a kingdom of omniscient actors who sustain perfect growth and who know each other perfectly, *becoming* identical to a single perfect learner sustaining learning. The lower limit, again, is cognitive death. Short of either limit case, we achieve reciprocal transparency in degrees—theoretically as a ratio of the admittedly lofty upper limit.

These two levels of assessment provide the formal structure of the value of growth as reciprocal transparency within a pair at a time and place. By combining measures of growth at times and places with empirical inquiry into the conditions required to promote learning, we may develop predictive measures across times and places and a probabilistic decision theory. Those decisions more likely to advance reciprocal transparency over actual actors’ lives, based on the best empirical evidence at our disposal, within the Deweyan model, would be best. The structure of this two-dimensional ideal within a pair of learners provides for a level of pluralism in the ways a relationship may concretely

enable valuable growth, while at the same time maintaining an egalitarian focus. Some mutual understanding of actors may be more valuable due to the number of commitments understood, some due to the level of significance of only a few commitments. It may be more important, for example, for a student to be able to understand only a few of the Secretary of Education's most significant types of acts or the most important teachings of a great teacher, than many other act types in the student's community for the sake of growing equals. Still, a relationship in which a student can understand many acts of more modest significance may be more important in the end for cooperatively advancing our egalitarian goal.

4.3.2 Two Levels of Fecundity: Domain General & Domain Specific Knowledge

To understand the way in which fecundity is structured within RT, it is important to distinguish the weight that domain general and domain specific knowledge possess due to their roles in forging social cooperation. In Chapter 1, I considered arguments from cognitive scientists who denied that there are any “biologically secondary” (Sweller 2016, 361) and “domain general” (361) inquiry knowledge or skills—those that need to be taught and that are universal to contexts of inquiry. On the Deweyan approach, it should be clear that some knowledge and skills for inquiry that need to be taught are domain general, that is, necessary for cooperative inquiry across any context. At the very least, each ought to learn to identify the ethical goal of co-operation if each is to work together intelligently to advance intelligent action. Each must also have some idea of what progress or regress towards that end looks like in one's own and others' conduct. Each also ought to learn the skills necessary to integrate this domain general knowledge into cooperative practices that can be mutually understood by other collaborators as advancing learning. Arts of communication as well of coordination appear central if we are to advance our cooperative goal. DI theorists emphasized biologically primary processes like learning a first language or to generalize when they spoke of domain

general inquiry skills. The Deweyan approach augments these with some biologically secondary learned knowledge and skills—at least the ability to discern which capacities support inquiry and cooperation across contexts and to respond dynamically to these in one’s own action.

On the Deweyan approach, these domain general goals and skills do not exist without other knowledge and skills that are rightly seen as “domain specific” (Sweller 2016, 361) and useful only for collaboration within some contexts. The goals themselves are not reducible, however, to any given piece of domain specific knowledge or skill. Instead domain general knowledge or skills are better understood as larger categories under which the domain specific sort are unified amidst their diversity. The domain general knowledge and skills used to identify and advance Deweyan freedom—our domain general ethical goal—are always instantiated in some specific context of action. When cooperative learning is advanced, it is because some particular students learn through some unique and concrete acts of insight. It is these particular differences that are unified in the broader common goal of promoting learning.

These domain specific ways of advancing our domain general goal are valuable in virtue of their fit within their specific contexts for that ethical goal. Not every teacher and learner needs to know every other teacher and learner’s particular ways of learning in detail to cooperatively advance the general project of Deweyan freedom. Nuanced discernment of the particularity of expressive and instrumental ways to advance co-operative learning is of great value for each in light of our shared aspiration to learn amidst concrete differences. For this reason, among the domain-*general* conditions for fostering progress in learning is a commitment to exactly this kind of domain-specific nuance and accuracy in perception and judgement, relative to our domain-general ethical goal. Knowing the domain-general conditions for identifying and supporting learning across contexts, however, is more valuable *full-stop* than the domain-specific conditions for the same goal. Recall that I argued above that as learners we are called to respond to states of affairs to assess and advance the *good-full-stop*. If

so, then the knowledge that is more valuable for more learners, cooperating in more contexts to advance learning, is more valuable *full stop* than the knowledge that enables collaboration in the lives of fewer learners, less centrally, or in fewer contexts.

Within a state of affairs, knowledge that is domain generally valuable for advancing cooperative learning, then, is categorically weightier than knowledge that is domain specific. Convergence in understanding the universal conditions for ethical collaboration is valuable for all. Agents may often appropriately diverge, however, in the less weighty domain specific instrumental knowledge used to foster cooperative learning. Knowing the details of concrete ways only *some* actors make progress is less important for each than knowing whether or not progress is made or lost in general. Again, this is not to deny that in any individual teacher or learner's future role in the common ethical and political project that particular knowledge may be absolutely crucial to fulfill her or his role in advancing the common good. Unless her or his individual role is more important than the common project as a whole, however, it does not follow that the domain specific knowledge she or he uses is *more* important than the domain general knowledge necessary to the very existence of the broader cooperative project. Artistic and communicative talents may be of value for all to use and to recognize in cooperative endeavors across contexts, but my particular art form need not be as important comparatively, even if it has local value to teach and learn where I live.

On the Deweyan approach, not all domain general knowledge is equally valuable. Some knowledge on the Deweyan view will be (a) domain general and intrinsically valuable insofar as it constitutes our collaborative goal—cooperative ethical learning. Knowledge of our shared ethical goal, on the Deweyan ethic confers significance on the ways we realize it cooperatively in any context. Other domain general knowledge is (b) merely instrumentally valuable for advancing learning but is plausibly universally significant for human learners. I see no reason not to be open minded about the possibility of non-human learners. For humans at least, though, knowing how to access clean air,

water, and ecosystems that support our flourishing has domain-general utility for learning. The significance of instrumentally valuable domain general valuable capacities, on the Deweyan approach, is balanced in light of the intrinsically valuable ethical goal.

How much food, water, clothing, or shelter we should seek to provide cooperatively, on the Deweyan approach, can be assessed against the common overarching ethical goal of advancing cooperative learning. The Deweyan approach thus provides more guidance in the weighing of valuable capacities than some other ways of theorizing ethics and justice (See, for example, Nussbaum 2011). At the same time, each can diverge in the concrete and domain-specific forms of knowledge and skill used to foster learning—instantiating our ethical goal—in our particular concrete situations in the world. The same act, then, can instantiate (a) a domain general and intrinsically valuable goal—supporting cooperative learning—at the same time as it instantiates (b) a domain general instrumental goal, for example: securing clean water for learners, and (c) a concrete domain-specific goal: removing lead pipes in a school in Canarsie, Brooklyn. Domain general knowledge is learned only through such particular encounters with domain specific acts and events. As David T. Hansen (2007) notes, for Dewey, the process of inquiry and curricular content walk hand in hand. Dewey emphasizes the importance of subjects and their unique insights at the same time as he “evinces a spirit of inquiry, of creativity, of imagination and of hope that he believed had given rise to [these disciplines]” (174).

The Deweyan ethic and its related politics is, thus, a form of “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Appiah 2005; Hansen 2011; Hansen 2009). On the Deweyan ethic, each is called to learn and act locally and concretely, but in light of a shared ethical goal. As we advance the capacity for Deweyan growth we come to appreciate the differences that enable a common flourishing with greater nuance. In the words of Hansen (2011), when we learn together, we “grow closer and closer apart” (2)—appreciating the concrete differences in expressions and practices we use to flourish amidst difference. At the same, as Hansen claims, we are enabled to go “further and further together” (2) achieving more

through cooperation in light of domain general knowledge of a common purpose. Knowledge of our shared and intrinsically valuable ethical goal is the north star or compass of our curriculum and instruction on the Deweyan view, while regional conditions to operationalize that goal will often appropriately differ through the division of our finite unified labour. Both aspects of our condition will be needed to respond to the problem of elitism below—our interest in unity and difference.

To reflect our rooted-cosmopolitan interest in both unity and difference, our account of fecundity must be assessed at two levels, one that looks at the weight of domain general cooperative capacities and the other which looks at domain specific ways we operationalize our ethical project in diverse settings. Convergence in domain-general cooperative capacities is a good thing on the Deweyan approach even as divergence in domain-specific capacities remains necessary and appropriate in many cases. With this structure in view, we are now in a position to note some of the features of the egalitarian position developed so far in relation to existing literature, before considering what it looks like developed across-pairs of individuals. I will consider two important features of RT's egalitarian shape in light of existing debates in the literature on justice in educational provision. First, I will consider how the absolute value of education, on the Deweyan approach, is defined in relation to what others have and is therefore a 'positional good' of sorts but within an inherently non-competitive, cooperative framing. Second, I will show how the Deweyan approach provides resources to respond to the charge of 'levelling down' that undermines some views of equality.

4.3.3 Positionality, Relational Equality, and Levelling Down

On the Deweyan framework, the capacity to learn is in one sense a 'positional good', a good whose absolute value is determined in part relative to others' enjoyment of the good in question. Learning's value on the Deweyan framework is defined positionally in the sense that it is intrinsically valuable to stand in certain kinds of egalitarian learning relations. Those intrinsically valuable relations

require each to possess certain capacities for mutual understanding to advance growth as equals. On the Deweyan account, learning is not, however, to be understood as a *possession* of individuals for the purposes of competing for more individual possessions—like personal wealth or enjoyable jobs. The parent or student keen to hoard learning, I have argued, is alienated from a clear-headed understanding of ethical reality.

The Deweyan does not deny that some may be a better fit for some social roles than others and that we should sort individuals who fit well into roles where they can contribute best. Your enthusiasm for and ability to retain and acquire scientific knowledge may make you a much better fit for a career as a doctor than I would be. As cooperative Deweyans can and should have sorting procedures to identify that you are a better fit for this sort of role than I am. We can also deliberate on how to financially reward, tax, and allocate social benefits to these roles to advance our common and egalitarian ethical project of fostering RT. We ought to use these sorting structures, on the Deweyan approach, always as ways to serve the public goal of cultivating egalitarian learning relations.

This cooperative account of the positional value of learning contrasts with Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift's (2006) treatment of the "partly positional" value of education understood in competitive terms, where I gain and you lose where I have more education and you less in labour markets (See also Reich 2013; Koski and Reich 2006). According to Brighouse and Swift,

[Some positional] goods have a competitive aspect. They are valued, in part, instrumentally, as means to other goods, and their value as a means to the achievement of those goods is determined not by how much one has absolutely but by how much one has relative to relevant others. (2006, 475)

For Brighouse and Swift, 'prioritarians', those who believe a social choice ought to benefit those least advantaged, and egalitarians alike have reasons to level down on positional goods so that all have equal amounts. The reason is that growth in the distribution cannot improve the condition of those worst off in positional goods but leveling down can. Brighouse and Swift argue that "Holders of master's degrees would be absolutely better off, not just relatively so, in terms of their opportunities in the

labor market, if others were deprived of the opportunity to achieve PhDs” (2006, 475). “Leveling down with respect to a positional good,” Brighouse and Swift argue, “improves the absolute position of the worst off with respect to the value of that good” (475).

On the social democratic Deweyan account I am offering, by contrast, competitive acquisition of goods for private purposes is a form of alienation to be recognized by each. If I think the competitive possession of goods for *private purposes* is my primary or even partly legitimate goal on the Deweyan view, then I am alienated in that respect. As Dewey claimed, we do not have separate “interests” of our own, but a common project or moral interest to be carried out cooperatively, when we look at things aright. On the Deweyan account, if you and I are competing for private ends, rather than striving towards a common cooperative excellence and utilizing our talents and the roles available for those cooperative purposes, then we are confused about the nature and value of learning in ethical life. We are, in effect, being miseducated. Brighouse and Swift (2006) rightly argue that the only way to improve the relative *competitive* position of those with master’s degrees is to reduce the number of PhDs—levelling down overall educational attainment. To ensure fairness and to benefit the least advantaged, Brighouse and Swift recommend levelling down in positional goods because on their view “levelling-up” (474) those worst off through growth in these goods is impossible. .

By contrast, on the Deweyan view, the central concern for each even in selective processes is cooperatively maximizing *egalitarian* growth. If those with PhDs contribute better to growing cooperative equality through the selective roles they are identified to fill than those with master’s degrees, then those with master’s degrees also stand to be in a better position by the PhD holder filling the role. After all, the ethical PhD holder will be selected on the basis of her ability to contribute to growing egalitarian learning relations and will strive through her effort to that end. The Deweyan approach thus favors “breaking the causal link” (Brighouse and Swift 2006, 488) between education and competitive advantage by eliminating competition for private gain. As Brighouse and Swift note:

The person with more education has better prospects for income and for accessing interesting and responsible jobs, because there is a causal link between education and labor market prospects. But it is not simply having more education that makes the person's income prospects better. It is having more education in an environment in which that causal link holds. We could eliminate the causal link between relative education and absolute income by equalizing wage rates. We could reduce the causal link between relative education and absolute chances of getting interesting and responsible jobs ... by allocating jobs by lottery, or by reforming the job structure to make jobs more equally interesting and responsible. Since education has a nonpositional aspect, and it is other-things-equal desirable for people to get more education regardless of how much others get, one of these alternative strategies might be preferable to leveling down educational provision. (2006, 488-489)

Deweyans are called to look for ways to share valuable and interesting opportunities of these sorts in egalitarian ways. Still, on the Deweyan view, I have argued that the relative levels of capacities to learn within a state of affairs determine the absolute value of learning and so the value of education remains positional in a non-competitive sense. As I will argue in more detail below, where one gains knowledge that does not result in the growth of equals, the world we share and the learning one has achieved is worse than where such gains advance relational educational equality. Where you are engaged in important activities for advancing growth that are incomprehensible to me, our relation is worse than one wherein we can coordinate.

By calling each with greater social power to leverage that power towards fostering more robustly egalitarian relations in society, the Deweyan relational ideal I propose resembles Elizabeth Anderson's (2007) relational Deweyan call for educational institutions to form a "democratic elite" (596) committed to creating relations of political equality through various 'elite' social roles, ranging from "managers, consultants, professionals, politicians, policy makers" (596). According to Anderson,

In a democratic society, elites must be so constituted that they will effectively serve all sectors of society, not just themselves. They must perform in their offices so that the inequalities in power, autonomy, responsibility, and reward they enjoy in virtue of their position redound to the benefit of all, including the least advantaged. This requires that elites be so constituted as to be systematically responsive to the interests and concerns of people from all walks of life. (2007, 596).

By contrast with the Deweyan approach I recommend, for Anderson (2007; 1999), the relational ideal of equality elites are called to foster is a political rather than an ultimate ethical ideal. Anderson (2007) like Deborah Satz (2007) recommends an account of justice in educational provision that seeks to provide an education that is “adequate” for the purposes of fostering relations of civic equality in dynamic and changing circumstances. The Deweyan approach I recommend is similar but grounds these political commitments in an ethical account of our ultimate ideal as agents.

Due to the aspirational and cooperative core of the Deweyan ethic I advance, moving resources to promote the growth of equals avoids objectionable cases of “leveling down” (Reich 2013, 50; Brighthouse et al. 2018). The objection from leveling down claims that if one aims at equality above all, then making some worse off, for example, by blinding the sighted to create equality with the blind will sometimes be necessary. Such cases of impairing the well off for equality seem intuitively wrong and suggest that somewhere our reasoning has gone astray, particularly where levelling down makes the least advantaged worst off. On the Deweyan view, both because we see learning as our shared project and because of the aspirational role of fecundity in our ideal, we avoid such objectionable forms of leveling down. Fecundity ensures that where we redistribute and trade-off opportunities, we do so only if each better enjoys the presence of egalitarian growth by the trade all-things-considered, projected over actual lives.³⁶ Blinding the sighted and other such absurd harms quite obviously detract from our capacity to grow equals towards better learning. Apparent departures, then, where some with more capacity are provided greater resources, for example, to research medical conditions or to teach their students about conceptual barriers to mutual understanding, are justified on this ideal, only if

³⁶ On some definitions, if no one is made worse off relative to our ultimate ethical metric, then no-levelling down occurs. Brighthouse and Swift (2006) claim that “By definition, leveling down with respect to a particular good cannot make anybody better off with respect to that good” (477). With respect to growing egalitarian relations, on the Deweyan approach we only tradeoff resources and opportunities where it makes *each better off* with respect to our shared ultimate relational ideal.

they are merely apparent. Departures are justified, that is, only if they best advance the growth of those unequally situated towards equality in their lives as reciprocally transparent learners.

Below I will discuss trade-offs in making decisions about allocating resources and opportunities for learning in larger populations (i.e. in classrooms, schools, districts, states, etc.). Bearing in mind that so far we are still thinking only within a single pair of individuals: in a world with only you and me, if I have a brain injury that you may be able to fix but that I cannot at present, then, the Deweyan view is clear about what we should do. To advance the growth of equals in learning, we ought to provide you the resources necessary to learn how to fix my head, in the hopes of putting me in a position to better cooperate with you to advance egalitarian learning. If possible, we should continue to find ways to lead me through rehab so that my learning might lead me to also understand all of the domain-general knowledge needed to coordinate with you and the domain specific knowledge through which I may contribute to our common project by way of a dynamic and coordinated division of labour. It would be antithetical to the growth of equals in learning, however, to injure your brain as well. Levelling down would make us more equal but worse off due to our diminished capacity to grow egalitarian learning together. Inequalities that make us better off with respect to creating robust and equal relationships on the whole are morally permitted on this view as means to equality in growth. Characteristically offensive cases of levelling down, however, are not. Notably, given our relational focus, which rejects growth hoarding, it would also be antithetical to our goal for you to *demand* more resources than is needed to efficiently bring about egalitarian relations given your luck. It would be unethical for you, for example, to try to negotiate a doctor's contract that simply maximizes your private power competitively rather than contributes maximally to forging cooperative egalitarian relations.

4.4 Reciprocal Transparency Across Pairs: Three-Dimensional Equality

So far, we have considered the shape of reciprocal transparency within a pair of individuals and I have argued that each pair ought to strive towards a capacity for mutual understanding of the sort that yields growth. We have then outlined how some types of cooperative capacities are more important to mutually understand by virtue of their domain general significance and others less globally important due to their merely domain specific significance for inquiry. To cooperate effectively across contexts, all need to know the domain general knowledge and skills necessary to do so. To be effective, each within a context will also need domain specific knowledge and skills and to understand others' specific skills to coordinate with them. The latter are necessary for effective cooperation but secondary in value due to their comparatively lower utility across the states of affairs within which we are called to cooperate. Unalienated instructional design ought to reflect these facts about the role and value of learning within students' lives. We ought to prioritize local curricular content that best allows us to collaborate globally, even as we do so in diverse ways.

We are now in a position to consider what the ideal of RT requires when assessing trade-offs that arise as one imagines what this ethic requires of us in populations greater than two individuals—classrooms, schools, districts, cities, states, and nations. As any teacher knows, many of the dilemmas of classroom practice emerge in questions about who owes how much to whom and in how to weigh different considerations. The same, no doubt, is true for policy makers. Teachers grapple with questions about whether to provide more enrichment to top students, to try to spend more of their time off-setting barriers for more marginalized students, or whether just to teach to the middle of the bell curve. To support teachers' efforts to create educative experiences, administrators must decide what sorts of allocations of resources are just within their schools. If we value an ethic of cooperative and egalitarian learning in the classroom above all, then what considerations should a teacher attend

to in weighing social priorities across many students? How should students be taught to think about fair trade-offs and justice as they too live as instructional designers on the Deweyan ethic?

So far, I have shown that the problem of elitism can be diffused in our ultimate goals—each pair of individuals ought to strive towards egalitarian relations. For all that has been said, it might still be objected that Dewey's problem of elitism can be easily restated in the context of larger populations. Some offensive and unjust cases of disrespect, an objector may claim, still seem to remain uncaptured by growth as reciprocal transparency. In a form of argument owing to W.D. Ross (1930/2002), a third objection asks us to imagine two worlds. In the first, imagine a stigmatizing but highly reciprocally transparent community, like the sort depicted in the Ursula K. Le Guin (1973) story, *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*. In this story, the good of the community of Omelas is achieved only by the miserable confinement of a single child. Let us imagine a community like this, wherein the good is reciprocal transparency and the maximization of the good is only practically possible by harm to some child (or number of children). We can imagine another world only minutely worse than the first in overall reciprocal transparency but that lacks this case of egregious sacrifice. Assuming our sole focus is maximizing the growth of equals, it may be claimed that we are blind to at least some morally important forms of harm.

For educators, the risks raised in the Omelas case have real classroom analogues. Some students have needs that are financially costly to support in learning environments. Prior to the movement towards more inclusive forms of education, such students' interests as learners were often neglected in ways that are now rightly thought to be inhumane. To maximize the growth of equals, one might think that the Deweyan approach will sometimes force us back towards a disregard for such students with expensive learning needs as we apply a cruel calculus seeking to maximize the common good of egalitarian learning. Once again, one may think that we have found a sign that something has gone wrong with the argument. Alternatively, if one thinks the argument still holds,

then a commitment to Deweyan growth will sometimes seem to lead to unsettling conclusions. In responding to this objection, I will not consider any particular question of high needs education directly, but will seek to identify general principles from which to consider particular cases.

It should be obvious that the Omelas objection has teeth, if we conceive of reciprocal transparency in a population as maximizing a single index of central tendency as in average utilitarianism. In average utilitarianism, one is simply to maximize a single dimension: the degree of pleasure or preference satisfaction on average in a population (Sinnott-Armstrong 2015). Imagining a teacher's classroom, on a form of average utilitarianism, where knowledge is the good to be maximized, the teacher might have a high overall average, even with a few very low scores. On average utilitarianism, if the overall average turns out to be highest on the option that sacrifices a few students' learning in drastic ways, then that option is the one the teacher ought to choose. As long as the ratio of outputs to inputs per individual is maximized by the teacher's decision, then average utilitarianism will recommend that option as morally best. In my experience, in the absence of other policy incentives many teachers teach to the middle of the class, devoting their scarce time and energy to maximizing overall performance, for example, as measured by average proficiency. Teachers are responsible for many students. With limited power and resources it often seems reasonable for a teacher to do whatever seems to create the most productivity in the group overall; it may even seem reasonable to some teachers in cases where it is to the detriment of the most marginalized students. Forced to choose whether to give time to a student who is harder to reach or a learner who picks up knowledge more easily, some teachers will choose the path of least resistance. On average utilitarianism, teachers will sometimes be justified in making these decisions. I will argue that such a result is a moral mistake that must be accounted for when we teach teachers and students alike to think about instructional design.

Once again the difference in the nature of the goal on the Deweyan ethic—learning—produces a substantive difference in recommendation when compared with preferential or hedonic

utilitarianism. On the Deweyan ethic a unidimensional approach to conceiving of the common good, focused on the average alone, is descriptively incomplete. The reason a focus on central tendency alone is inadequate is because of the relational structure of RT, our ethical goal. It is better for each, on RT, to be able to coordinate with each other individual and pair of other individuals to advance growth across a life. In light of this interest, the central tendency alone does not provide a representative picture of the degree to which the community is reciprocally transparent *across pairs*. Each, however, is called on the Deweyan approach to instructional design to care about coordinating with others within and across pairs to advance learning.

Suppose you and I are working with two other students, Abby and Barak, on a group project. You and I do not only have an interest in mutual understanding to cooperate on the sub-project we are working upon but also in being able to understand and cooperate in light of feedback from what Abby and Barak are working upon. Abby and Barak have the same interest in being able to mutually understand and coordinate their activity in light of what you and I are doing to advance our goals. Other things being equal, if Abby and Barak can coordinate in light of what we are doing, then the state of affairs is better than if they cannot. But this fact cannot be completely captured by the central tendency of each possible pair-wise relation in our group. To capture our interest in mutual understanding across pairs to advance growth (RT), we also need to attend to the dispersion of capacities in our group—the extent to which we converge on the domain general collaborative knowledge needed for our project to move forward cooperatively and relevant domain specific details. This general principle for our small group project with Abby and Barak generalizes to cooperative interest distributed across a classroom, school, district or society. In all cases, we must attend to central tendency and dispersion as constitutive parts of RT as our ideal.

Above I argued that each has a weightier interest in possessing the most valuable domain-general cooperative capacities to advance egalitarian learning from within their specific concrete

context. In a distribution of some good across individuals, the *dispersion* is just the difference or spread in levels of the good across the population. If each has an interest in sharing domain general cooperative capacities, then the dispersion of cooperative capacities matters for RT because a higher dispersion reflects less equal capacities for cooperative understanding *across* pairs. A classroom with less divergence in the domain general knowledge and skills to cooperatively advance learning itself is one that is more fully reciprocally transparent than one with the same class average but a higher dispersion and, thus, more inequality in cooperative capacities. If the strongest and weakest students are more alike in capacity for mutual understanding to advance learning, then the distribution will be more reciprocally transparent *across pairs*.

To capture our interest in reducing the dispersion of domain general cooperative capacities, in addition to a measure of central tendency, two other properties of distributions must be considered. To adequately understand RT as an ideal: the average variance—the mean absolute deviation (MAD) of relations from the central tendency—and the range of the distribution, which describes the most extreme cases of alienation from the ideal in a population, must each be weighed in our account. Each is a property of reciprocal transparency in a distribution of relations that cannot be neglected while aiming to champion the singular Deweyan ethical aim. Ultimately, attention to each property must be integrated into ethically sound decisions of instructional design in any classroom, school, or district on the Deweyan view. I will consider each of these three senses of Deweyan equality in a community of learners in turn by imagining each dimension as a question that an educator could ask of a classroom, a school, a district, state or national system as they either design or support instruction.³⁷ This educator, once again, could be a teacher, a student, a principal, superintendent, or policy maker looking to support instructional progress on the Deweyan ethic.

³⁷ On the Deweyan view, assessment and curriculum ought to be tailored to the goal of instruction: producing educative experience. Some instruction might be autodidactic, as in where I design a course of independent study. Other instruction might be directed towards learners other than oneself.

Suppose for the sake of illustrating the three dimensions of Deweyan equality that our curricular content is well chosen to advance domain-general cooperative capacities in our particular context. The three dimensions of Deweyan equality can be understood as the answers to the following three questions: (1) How is the average pair of students doing? (2) How far on average is each pair of students from the average pair of students in cooperative capacity? (3) How far is the highest performing pair of students from the lowest performing pair of students? In each case, the units are the same: the capacities of pairs of students to mutually understand and cooperatively advance learning, alongside others with the same goal. By promoting convergence towards higher levels of overall cooperative capacity through RT, teachers advance educational excellence and equality. Each question corresponds to a statistical property of RT in a distribution. I will outline each in turn.

Question 1: How is the average pair of students doing? What I will call the ‘simple central tendency (SCT)’ of the distribution of reciprocal transparency is the central tendency, mentioned above, in abstraction from the other two dimensions of RT. It is contrasted with the central tendency (CT) of the three-dimensional ideal, which does not abstract from the other distributive properties. The CT is the overall progress of the classroom, towards educational justice—the “all-things-considered” assessment of how the class is doing across all three dimensions. The SCT can be thought of as the measure of how the average pair of students is doing in their ability to understand one another to advance learning.

Reciprocal transparency is a measure of paired relations of mutual understanding for the sake of advancing growth between and across individuals. The SCT is the central tendency of this relation of convergence or dispersion in cooperative capacity within each pair of individuals. A higher value in SCT entails greater convergence in cooperative capacity for the sake of advancing egalitarian growth within each pair, on average. A grade or class, for example, that raises its SCT would have more equal growth advancing co-operative capacities on average between individuals because by definition RT

increases when individuals can mutually understand each other to advance egalitarian growth. A higher class or grade level average alone, however, does not tell us how similar the cooperative capacities of each paired relation is to the average case. Some relations may be very high in RT and others very low. Alternatively, paired relations might be very close to the same SCT. The other two questions and the properties they identify measure the same pairwise relation, differently instantiated in the distribution. By attending to these two other aspects, we capture the sense in which a greater dispersion of equality-advancing capacities less fully realizes RT.

Question 2: How far on average is each pair of students from the average pair of students in cooperative capacity?

The second question corresponds to the second property of reciprocal transparency in a distribution. This second question asks the instructional designer to attend to the average degree of difference between the average pair of students (the SCT) and each other pair of students in RT. This second property of a distribution is the MAD, the average distance of each paired relation in the distribution from the SCT. A population with a low distance from the mean is more equal in its dispersion of significant cooperative capacities to advance growth *across pairs*. Where each pair is on average more equal to the average pair in its capacity for reciprocal transparency, then each pair is better able to understand each other pair to coordinate activity to advance growth *across pairs* as a set. Each will possess more of the same domain general cooperative capacities that allow pairs to work together. The MAD captures this second sense in which a community can increase or decrease its reciprocal transparency.

As noted above, in cases where the class or grade SCT increases, some may have still have very low scores while other have very high scores relative to the average level of RT. To reduce the MAD, the lowest scores and highest scores, on average in the class or grade, must become closer together, making the population more cohesive in its capacities for intelligent cooperation to grow. Based on this principle, Class A with some average level x of growth advancing equality (SCT), plus a

lower MAD, is one that is more *equal* than Class B with the same average of x but a higher MAD. A decision bringing about Class A is to be preferred as more reciprocally transparent over one creating Class B for that reason.

Recall that intrinsically valuable domain general cooperative capacities are categorically weightier for promoting cooperative action under RT than the domain specific instrumentalities we use to advance realize the cooperative goals. This hierarchy within the fecundity of curricular content allows a population to increase RT across pairs by reducing MAD. By converging in domain general knowledge to advance learning, a population learns to better discern the significance of different acts to coordinate activity. At the same time, while converging on these domain general cooperative capacities the population need not converge in all of its more detailed domain-specific knowledge of how to carry out each of the acts used to advance learning. Understanding these domain-specific acts, as noted above, is often, though not always, rightly differentiated across individuals.

Question 3: How far is the highest performing pair of students from the lowest performing pair of students?

The third question asks educators to consider gap between the best off and most marginalized pair in the distribution. This third sense of RT in a population, the *range*, provides a measure of the most extreme differences in cooperative capacity across pairs. A society where those in the best and worst relations are more equal in their cooperative capacities, on this view, is better than one with the same SCT and MAD but with a larger range because it better enables transparent cooperation across pairs of individuals. Thus, a reduced range constitutes a third sense in which equal cooperative capacities and reciprocal transparency are realized in a population.

To return to our imagined classrooms, Class A could have a high average level of cooperative capacity (SCT) and many students clustered very close to that high average, that is, a low (MAD), but a single extremely bad case (or confidence interval of cases) could also be present in the class that is very far removed from the average. Class B could have the same high average (SCT) and the same

density of students clustered close to that same high average (MAD), but with the worst off pair much closer to the best off pair in the class. The range, thus, captures a different sense in which Class B is more equal in cooperative capacities than Class A across pairs. For this reason, Class B is more reciprocally transparent. Each of these three properties of distributions can vary independent of the others, but each is an aspect of the same unit of concern: the quality of paired capacities for cooperatively promoting egalitarian learning.

4.4.1 Weighing the Three Senses of Deweyan Equality

Any set of relations of reciprocal transparency includes all three properties and each of the three properties is a way in which reciprocal transparency can be enhanced or diminished. Each descriptive aspect of the distribution is still irreducibly distinct from the rest. By Leibniz' Law, only entities with the same properties are identical (Forrest 2016). Each of the three senses of RT in a distribution, however, has different properties: A policy might increase SCT without changing the MAD or the range of a distribution. Likewise, the MAD may be changed by adopting a policy without changing the range or the SCT.

Although it may not be immediately intuitive, I will argue that normative weight, rightly viewed, applies equally to each descriptive dimension of the distribution of reciprocal transparency. The reason normative weight applies to each dimension is because, like the spatial and temporal properties of a physical object, each dimension is an irreducible aspect of the same singular thing. The single thing, in this case, is not a brute physical object, however, but instead is the single ethical *value* we are called to advance on the Deweyan approach. Where and when our fundamental normative goal is promoting reciprocal transparency in our relations, then our goal is composed of all three descriptive properties that comprise the goal, in their descriptive proportions—each of which comprises a third of the ideal at any given time in the same units.

The means we use to reach our goal, of course, may sometimes focus on different aspects of the goal in different instances. If we care for Deweyan equality in a population, however, our care must be divided into even thirds, each representing an irreducible way in which the same ideal is realized in paired relations. To weigh one dimension more heavily or less than the other two would be to treat that dimension as a greater (or smaller) part of the ideal. Such a weighing is distorting if, as is the case, the value just is distributed across these three irreducibly different pathways or dimensions and in the same units. Descriptively, treating dimensions of the ideal in proportions other than the actual ones, that is, other than as even thirds, would be to distort the real shape of the valued communal relation.

As noted above, the units and scale of each dimension of this ideal are identical: the cooperative capacities that form RT exist on a ratio-scale allowing us to look across each dimension and evaluate different trade-offs. When we assess progress in RT we must attend to all three dimensions: An estimate of the central tendency (CT) of growth, the overall expected value of this egalitarian ideal, and in contrast with the SCT, must account for the value of each of these three aspects in a population in descriptive proportion. In the upper limit case, SCT for the set of relations achieves perfect fecundity and mutual understanding, while the MAD and range reduce to zero as cooperative capacities converge. The lower limit is a case with no capacity for growth, cognitive death. Because each dimension measures a ratio scale with the same limits, it is possible to formalize RT as the average of the three dimensions, where the upper bound of SCT (perfect RT) is 1:

$$RT = \frac{(SCT) + (1 - MAD) + (1 - Range)}{3}$$

With the radically imperfect information educators use to advance this ideal, the important takeaways for practice will often be those of non-maleficence and avoiding harm to the group. A myopic focus only on the class average (SCT), on this view, is to be avoided. Similarly, a focus on

producing a distribution that's quite cohesive and high achieving but where some students are really badly off is to be avoided where practically possible (more on trade-offs below). Similarly, only focusing on dispersion—class cohesion and equality—as in cases of levelling down, is to be avoided for neglecting growth in SCT. These lessons are important for teacher and student instructional designers alike as we work to share resources and opportunities to create a Deweyan learning community.

To illustrate, let us consider an example. As research by Jennings and Sohn (2014) has shown, in high-stakes proficiency based exams, teachers and principals often instructionally triage students closest to the pass-line to boost the pass-rate. Different policy structures, however, can incentivize different distributions and decisions. In New York City, policies that reward equality and growth in student achievement encourage teachers to ask: “What will close the gaps between my lowest and highest students, while moving the whole student population forward as learners?” By calling for educators to attend to both the average and two properties of the dispersion of RT, it is the latter egalitarian sort of approach that the Deweyan framework recommends over the former focused on pass-rate or average proficiency alone. Simply by attending to all three dimensions of the Deweyan approach, we arrive at a different and to many, I suspect, a more intuitive policy recommendation that emphasizes a principled commitment equality and excellence.

In the next section, I trace how the Deweyan approach gives greater weight and priority those students who are situated in the least advantaged positions in a distribution. By doing so, the Deweyan approach strongly moderates trade-offs that aim to improve the condition of the broader community at the expense of a poorly situated few. By seeing how the Deweyan approach is prioritarian, we acquire the resources to tackle the Omelas case and other thorny questions about trade-offs for students with costly barriers to accessing education. These lessons of justice in learning, once again, are important for teacher and student instructional designers alike.

4.4.2 Priority in the Deweyan Framework

To grasp how the Deweyan approach moderates extreme sacrifices, one must account for the weight given to those worst off in rendering decisions. There are at least three ways in which the Deweyan framework is a ‘prioritarian’ approach to conceiving of educational justice, that is, an approach that asks teachers and students to afford greater attention and resources to those who are least advantaged (Schouten 2012).

First, the Deweyan approach is prioritarian in the weak sense that it always has the goal of forging equals. Insofar as that is the case, educators are always tasked with raising those below the average—those relatively less advantaged—towards enjoying the same sort of capacities as their highest performing peers. Second, the Deweyan approach is prioritarian in counting the range as an even third of the concern we ought to employ when making decisions about designing educational experiences. The Deweyan approach, thus, guarantees that those in the worst relation (or confidence interval of relations) count with greater weight than any other relation on its own in the population. Progress for the worst off pair, mathematically, counts as much as progress for an average representative of the rest of the population in the other two dimensions of the population (SCT and MAD). So, in weighing trade-offs the worst off are asked to consider their position one-to-one, in a sense, on equal footing with an idealized representative of each other member of the population.³⁸ The result of this relation is that a loss of x in growth to the least advantaged in a population of size n members must be offset by a gain g such that $g=n(x)$ (more on this below). Third, the Deweyan approach is prioritarian in that those in the range also count in the SCT and the MAD. If I am one of the students who is worst off, in addition to counting in the range, I am also among those individuals

³⁸ The least advantaged individual and a representative of each other person—the community—are thus placed in an egalitarian relation, relative to one another, within this framework.

who must be considered to determine the average level of co-operative capacity and the average dispersion of cooperative capacities.

In the absence of other overriding information, these three facts entail that an educator has reason to presumptively prioritize students who are below the class average and in particular those students at the bottom of the range of paired relations. At the same time, a teacher will not ignore the other two dimensions on the basis of the knowledge available to her or him. Expanding the range between the lowest and highest achieving students, on the Deweyan view, is sometimes morally permissible, but only if the achievements of those at the top of the expanded range are converted into future reductions in inequality through growth in cooperative capacity. As Hansen (2007) reports, Dewey had a similarly social view of what one ought to do with knowledge: “a thing is fully known only when it is published, shared, socially accessible. Record and communication are indispensable to knowledge. Knowledge cooped up in a private consciousness is a myth, and knowledge of social phenomena is peculiarly dependent upon dissemination” (179). It is fitting then, that one’s enjoyment of greater knowledge than one’s peers, on the Deweyan view, comes with a responsibility to improve the condition of others so that we all might enjoy a better and more equal world. It is also well grounded: Where such gains for equality do not occur, one enjoys capacities that make parts of the world opaque and worse for one’s peers. Thus, knowledge and community service are thus bound together. On the Deweyan approach, new learning is ethically consummated only when it is shared with others to benefit the community.

Unlike Rawls’ (1993) “difference principle” which allows only those inequalities that make the worst off better off, RT’s prioritarian structure is not absolute. Some decisions that count as improvements may contribute positively to the SCT or MAD without improving or by foregoing much smaller benefits in the range. A virtue of the Deweyan view is its ability to capture these sorts of improvements where no better option for all three dimensions is possible. Elizabeth Anderson

(1999) provides a representative criticism of this limitation of Rawls' difference principle. According to Anderson, "In giving absolute priority to the worst off, the difference principle might require considerable sacrifices in the lower middle ranks for trifling gains at the lowest levels" (326). Gina Schouten (2012) echoes Anderson's worry about Rawls' difference principle's "stringent" mandate, "In designing the basic structure, we are prohibited from foregoing any possible benefit to the very least advantaged even if we could, by foregoing that benefit, provide a much greater benefit to the almost as badly off" (481). In light of these implications, Anderson concludes that "Democratic equality would urge a less demanding form of reciprocity" (326). Schouten (2012), in advancing a prioritarian principle of educational justice, similarly recommends giving priority to those worst of "in proportion to their disadvantage" (481) instead of Rawls' absolute prioritarian approach.

Like these critics of Rawls' prioritarian approach, RT judges some decisions that benefit equality in the population on average but not in the most alienated relation to be legitimate improvements. In a case where in the other two dimensions of egalitarian concern the gain (g) to the average citizen is greater than the loss (x) to the least advantaged multiplied by the number of members in the population (n), a trade-off towards communal benefit is recommended by the Deweyan approach. This rule for trade-offs can be represented, thus, as ($g > n(x)$). As population size increases and n is higher, this raises the bar for a legitimate trade off with the least advantaged by increasing the value of $n(x)$. Other things being equal, a classical utilitarian calculus weighing a trade off with the least advantaged, by contrast, would require the trade if ($g > x$). Thus, the Deweyan approach significantly moderates burdens to the least advantaged with population growth, while allowing for some policy decisions that yield real reductions in inequality elsewhere in the distribution. As noted, the Deweyan approach also recommends egalitarian gains that do not benefit or reduce the position of the least advantaged. A Class A with a higher average degree of cooperative capacities (SCT) or a more cohesive distribution with a lower (MAD) but the same range as Class B , would be judged to be

better by the Deweyan approach. With the ways in which RT is prioritarian in view, we can now start charting a path out of Omelas and towards a robustly inclusive picture of the ethics and politics of instructional design.

4.4.3 How Deweyans Leave Omelas

So far, I have traced the shape of RT in a population and the way in which its three dimensions call us to give priority to those at the lower end of the range of cooperative capacities for learning. If a reduction in the range—the most extreme cases of alienation from the ideal egalitarian relation—counts on a par with a gain in SCT and a decrease in the MAD of a population, then extreme privation will always outweigh modest gains in SCT or decreases in MAD. To be justified as an improvement, the additional degree of hardship borne by the worst off, as a matter of mathematical truth, would have to be offset by an equivalent average growth in egalitarian relationships in either of the other two dimensions ($g > n(x)$). Each of the other dimensions is an average, divided by the number of members in the population. Thus, we have a way to resist the vast majority of offensive cases of neglect.

Returning to the two worlds case used to restate Dewey's problem of elitism, we can see that the world containing Omelas is always objectively worse than the otherwise identical world without that case of extreme harm but minutely or even moderately lower in SCT. The world with Omelas will have a considerably wider range—a greater difference between those least advantaged and the best off in the distribution. For the trade-off in the Omelas case to even count as a gain, never mind the best available option, the loss to the single child would have to redound with as much benefit to *each* member of the population on average as the child loses and no better option would have to be available.

To tragically sacrifice what is in effect a whole life of a child and have it not automatically count as an overall loss the gains would need to be very large in a large population. Each other relation in the population would need to either avoid the loss on average *of a whole life* or result in a gain of *a*

whole life's worth of cooperative capacity to advance learning. No better way to yield the gain in question (i.e. without the sacrifice), furthermore, could be available. Other things being equal, where equality is our goal, having one individual shoulder all of the burden in the community rather than sharing it across many seems to be a sub-optimal choice for expressing our sense that we are all equals. I have focused on classroom sized populations in the examples above. From a moral point of view, however, class and school level decisions on the Deweyan approach are better understood as ways to bring about an egalitarian *world* that includes the many learners beyond the classroom. The Deweyan approach is a rooted cosmopolitan doctrine, as I argued above, calling us to think globally and act locally. If so, it is appropriate to think of our cohort of ultimate moral concern as the global population.

On such an approach it is reasonable to evaluate options with respect to the populations one's decisions directly affect toward trying to foster egalitarian growth within that population. But it is also morally important to create institutional and political structures that track how students are doing across classes in a school, across schools in a district, across districts in a state, across states, and across nations towards supporting all as egalitarian cooperative learners and instructional designers. On the Deweyan approach students, understood as co-creators of educative experience, ought to be prepared for this internationalist institution building political project. Short of such a commitment teachers indoctrinate students into an alienated self-understanding rather than truly educate them.

With this in mind, let's say the whole population of the world containing Omelas and its government is 10,000 and life expectancy is 80 years. The government's policy and law decisions affect all of these individuals. For the sacrifice of the child to count as a *gain at all* the benefit would have to be the addition of 10,000 life-equivalents of contribution towards egalitarian learning (or prevention of the loss of all 10,000 whole lives), the equivalent of 800,000 years of life for 80. If Omelas contains 100,000, it would have to be 100,000 life-equivalents (8,000,000 years for a loss of 80). If one life had to be sacrificed to prevent the death of everyone else in the population, it may be tragic, but it also

may be one of the tragic and regrettable cases where the common good does outweigh the individual good. Vanishingly few situations, though, will be like this in a world with billions of people. The vast majority of situations will call us instead to not make the least advantaged worst off, but to find solutions that make them better off, in moral solidarity. On the Deweyan approach, students, therefore, ought to learn that except in extreme and tragic circumstances, each ought to work to improve the condition of those who are least advantaged. Teachers, likewise, ought to plan their instruction to insure that the community of inquiry is working to not worsen and where possible advance the condition of those least advantaged towards equality.

By contrast, to justify an individual sacrifice on a unidimensional utilitarian doctrine, the total gain would only need to add up to a net gain across any number of individuals. In our example, a loss of one life would only need to result in the gain of one life (80 years) *across* the population of Omelas (10,000 or 100,000 people) to be justified on a standard utilitarian alternative. In a world of billions, one would only need to find a trade-off that creates 80 years' worth of utility gain, for example, in tiny increments to millions of people to justify a sacrifice of an individual life. Where increasing population moderates individual sacrifices by the least advantaged on the Deweyan approach, increasing population makes it easier to sacrifice a few on other single-dimension utilitarian views. In this respect, the Deweyan approach to ethical education is much more robustly egalitarian and prioritarian than classical forms of utilitarianism.

For perspective: It is doubtful that any sacrifice of a young life in war has accomplished a gain of a whole life to every other member of the global population. To the extent that this is so, an ideal of pacifism is a part of a Deweyan education. Faced with extreme and tragic cases where a trade-off is warranted on the Deweyan ethic, we have to ask: Should all live a life as tragic as the sequestered child so one should not, where (for some unspecified reason) no other option is available? Up to the point where a loss to each will be equivalent on average to the loss to the child, humanity is called to

try to improve the condition of the sequestered child. In a more realistic example, suppose that a child had a deadly contagious condition. On the Deweyan ethic, educators ought to teach that each would be called morally to try to cure the sick child until it threatened each on average as much as the expected loss born by the child. Beyond that point, with regret, a quarantine might be justified, indeed out of a respect for equality between each on average and the least advantaged. In any case our ethical response would not be the easy going indifference depicted by Le Guin (1973) in the people of Omelas.

To recap: In educational contexts, on the Deweyan framework, students in the bottom of the range of access to learning count with greater weight in any social decision. Wherever it is possible to improve these high priority students' condition, the gain for ethics and justice will be higher. In ordinary circumstances, each teacher and learner is called to first do no harm to those least advantaged learners and, second, to support them in improving their condition as learners, even as we try to improve the egalitarian condition of other learners as well. In addition, secondary to any legitimate trade-off between those worst off and the community that expands the range, those more advantaged in the distribution will still be called to promote equality especially to the benefit of those worst off. The point at which trade-offs occur treats the least advantaged and the average student on a par—as equals. Up until the point, we treat the interest of those worst off in contributing to equality as of greater weight than the single average representative of each other pair in the population.

At the very least, the Deweyan framework of trade-offs seems difficult to call aristocratic or tyrannical. Instead, treating the least advantaged and an idealization of each other relation one-to-one seems to reflect an intuitive form of moral equality in cases of regrettable and sometimes tragic circumstances. Otherwise, it holds those most-vulnerable in the sort of regard characteristic of social democrats—as a higher priority to be afforded greater consideration in the measure of egalitarian schools and societies. To the extent that this is so, the Deweyan ethic of instructional design is

robustly egalitarian in its vision of the common good and, I hope, at least plausibly consistent with the life of a social democratic society.

4.5 Conclusion

In this section I have argued that the Deweyan view contains a robustly egalitarian vision of educational choice, consistent with an intuitively social democratic view of politics. By drawing out the relational elements entailed by the very meaning of the commitment to learning-to-learn, I have argued that the Deweyan ethic of instructional design escapes many apparent difficulties for its egalitarian aspirations. At the same time, the Deweyan approach anchors our egalitarian commitments in our deepest ethical concern. With these results in view, we can rightly claim that the proper goal of instruction is to help students learn to become *egalitarian* co-designers and creators of educative experience, just as the progressive tradition of pedagogy has long claimed. The common good of fallibilist learning places us in opposition to elitism, aristocracy, and tyranny.

By showing that students' primary ethical interest is in the co-creation of egalitarian learning experiences, we see that DI theorists who treat collaborative instructional design as a mere means to other personal or political ends alienate us from a more complete view of our ethical and political life. At the same time, because the Deweyan approach is egalitarian and not elitist, we have reasons to attend to negative implications of student-led instructional approaches for inequality. In the next and final chapter, I turn back to the cognitive science debate about IL and DI towards drawing out the implications of the ethical and political arguments of these middle chapters for an integrated model of ethics and justice in instructional design.

Chapter 5: The Ethics of Instructional Design: Learning as Justice

In Chapter 1, I argued that our decisions about instructional design rest upon questions of human flourishing and political morality that empirical evidence alone cannot settle. In Chapter 2, I surveyed the dialectic surrounding the most widely influential way of theorizing the relationship between political morality and conceptions of human flourishing in the liberal-democratic tradition. I argued that standard liberal-pluralist ways of thinking about ethical and political value are unjustified against deep dissent. Without an alternative way to ground ethical and political values, I claimed that decisions about ethics and politics reduce to data-driven empirical questions about the descriptive preferences of individuals and the opportunities for their fulfillment. To ground a genuinely normative account of ethics and politics, I maintained that one must meet what I dubbed “The Socratic Test” and refute rather than merely repudiate practical moral skepticism. In Chapter 3, I tried to resolve what I called Dewey’s ‘grounding problem’ by arguing that Deweyan freedom—a form of learning that advances intelligent action itself—can be shown to reflect our most fundamental ethical and political interest as agents. In Chapter 4, I illustrated the three dimensional conception of equality that follows from Deweyan freedom, towards resolving what I called Dewey’s ‘problem of elitism’. Together Chapter 3 and 4 project a picture of moral agents as beings committed to fallibly advancing learning through the co-design and creation of educative experiences.

In this final chapter, I illustrate implications of the Deweyan view for instructional design—perhaps the most fundamental topic of concern for teachers, students, and other educational decision makers. Students, teachers, administrators, public officials, and citizens, on the Deweyan view, all rightly regard one another as co-instructional designers and creators of educative experience. Based on the Deweyan approach, in the first section, I outline four ethical desiderata in educational decision-making: (1) Justice: the decision prioritizes the conditions that are most likely to advance egalitarian

learning; (2) Legitimacy: the decision engages with those it affects as learners with an interest in orienting their lives on the basis of true beliefs; (3) Priority: the decision prioritizes improving the condition of those who are least advantaged in the distribution of capacities to advance learning; and (4) Intersectionality and Epistemic Justice: In assessing (1-3), the decision accounts for the intersecting factors that can both support and oppress individuals as knowers. The first three desiderata follow directly from what has been argued. The fourth, I argue, warrants future research and integration into the framework.

In section two, I apply these four principles to the cognitive science debate about DI and IL to show how a Deweyan ethics and politics of education transforms our interpretation of the evidence on offer. I argue that student led inquiry is necessary for the exercise of an effective sense of Deweyan *justice* and establishing the *legitimacy* of institutions—the first two desiderata identified in section one of this chapter. Contrary to the two arguments DI theorists offer against student-led inquiry, which sought to show all instruction should be teacher-led, there are good reasons to resist that conclusion even while taking cognitive load theory seriously. Part of students’ learning to advance educational justice is learning to subject any institutional commitment to independent inquiry and scrutiny, including the educational system itself. Only by inviting this process of scrutiny, for example, by involving students in critically appraising the nature and direction of practices, do our social institutions ensure their legitimacy. Among the institutions to be assessed are schools themselves.

Drawing on insights from Chapter 4, I argue that if we are to regard students as co-instructional designers, then, contrary to the claims of DI theorists, we have reasons to recognize a number of “domain general biologically secondary” inquiry skills (Cf. Sweller 2015; See also Sweller, Kirschner, and Clark 2007, 120-121). Ironically, among these domain general biologically secondary inquiry skills are those students need to integrate cognitive load theory into their process of inquiry with their peers. On the Deweyan account, I claim that results from the science of learning should be

integrated into practice with the sorts of domain-general ethical knowledge and skills that I argued in Chapter 4 are central to all inquiry. Against some IL theorists, I draw on arguments from DI theorists and the Deweyan view developed in Chapters 3 and 4 to stress that teaching domain specific content knowledge is a necessary part of supporting *justice* and *legitimacy* for inquirers. I also argue that thinking through issues of *intersectionality* and *epistemic injustice* is important in making instructional decisions about which domain specific content is rightly included in curriculum and how it is taught. Finally, in the third section, I argue that to capture the desiderata of *priority* alongside justice and legitimacy for students, that DI theorists' insights are appropriately instrumentalized towards Deweyan ends on an egalitarian developmental pathway. Once again, I stress that for teachers and students engaged in fostering equality, it is important to deliberate on desiderata 1-3 in light of issues of the fourth principle: accounting for *intersectionality* and *epistemic injustice*.

5.1 Four Desiderata of Instructional Decision Making

In the preceding two chapters I argued that we have reason to believe that students' and citizens' most fundamental ethical and political interest is in learning as equals. In Chapter 3, I argued that even when we pursue goals contrary to our interest in learning, we are engaged in pursuing reality under guises that mask what we are doing from us as agents. The meta-induction in Chapter 3 endeavored to show that students and teachers alike strive to track the truth and to avoid error, based on the evidence at their disposal both about matters of fact and value. The meta-induction sought to reveal the interest in tracking the truth by placing the breadth of our evaluative practice in view. In Chapter 3, I argued that due to our fallibility, which Mill (1859/1978) showed extends to all of our beliefs, teachers and learners alike may be wrong about any particular commitment. When combined, the interest in reflecting reality and each person's fallibility provides all subject to moral doubt a reason

sufficient to promote learning and a spirit of inquiry as their highest ethical aim. The goal of learning is always aspirational, I maintained, and open-ended—one that is never fully or satisfactorily realized.

In providing arguments to ground a commitment to both fallibility and to the value of reflecting and pursuing insight into reality, the Deweyan argument reflects what cognitive scientists have found to be empirically true about the effect of epistemic beliefs on valuing learning (Kuhn and Park 2005). When students believe both that they may be wrong about any of their beliefs, but that they may improve their beliefs about a domain through inquiry and argument, they are more likely to value inquiry than when they are either skeptical about knowledge or naïve realists who think they know reality directly (Kuhn and Park 2005). The latter two stages, which Kuhn and Park (2005) dub “multiplist” (113) and “absolutist” (113) respectively, tend to precede the “evaluativist stance” (114) where fallibility is embraced and learning is most valued.³⁹ In Kuhn and Park (2005)’s work, not all students arrive at the “evaluativist” (114) stance nor is it held evenly across questions of fact and value. Values, according to Kuhn and Park (2005) are a domain where participants often have trouble leaving “absolutist” (114) thinking. Once they leave absolutist ethics, students often have trouble escaping “multiplist” forms of moral skepticism that see moral inquiry as fruitless (114). The Deweyan argument, if it works, may provide reasons for students to embrace an ethos committed to ethical inquiry and to help create a virtuous feedback loop between their epistemic beliefs and the ethical value of learning. Even in doubt, the Deweyan argument holds that the skeptical student may discover that we pursue reality through learning; as we learn, we discover that we nevertheless have reasons to seriously consider doubts and objections.

³⁹ Richard Jochum has raised questions about the role of curiosity in this project, which seem natural to note here. The lack of certainty expressed in the evaluativist stance which correlates with the desire to learn seem to me to be at least part of the conditions that empirically support curiosity, which if not identical with valuing learning is closely related. Richard has also wondered about the role of systematicity in this project and whether it can be dangerous or “false”. I take the sort of balance between systematicity and fallibility noted here to be at the core of the ethos I recommend. Systems are not inherently good or bad, but delusion can be dangerous. A fallibilist ethic of inquiry calls each to try to make themselves vulnerable to the possibility of discovering error. I do not see a better antidote to the wrong and harmful kinds of systems that might take root in our lives than this self-reflexive social commitment.

In Chapter 4, I argued that our interest in learning is not individualistic or egoistic but egalitarian in nature, even as it requires attention to concrete individuality and particularity of circumstance. The commitment to learning as our chief value, I claimed, generates an objective interest in being able to mutually understand one another for the purposes of advancing learning. This relational interest—which I called the ideal of ‘reciprocal transparency’, in turn, provides each with a reason to create egalitarian distributions of cooperative capacities for learning. In distributions of paired egalitarian learning relations, I argued that the individuals in the least advantaged relations ought to be given the greatest weight and priority. Except in tragic and extreme circumstances, no teacher or learner ought to make the least advantaged worst off. Other things being equal, each teacher and student ought to prioritize making the least advantaged better off.

Based on the Deweyan arguments I have offered, we can identify four desiderata of ethical and just educational decision making: First, so far as is practically possible, educational decisions ought to advance *justice*, broadly understood as the process of improving the quality of egalitarian learning within a population. Second, educational decisions ought to promote *legitimacy* by engaging with those effected by a decision as fallible learners with a fundamental interest in orienting their lives on the basis of true beliefs. Third, educational decisions ought to give *priority* to those learners who face the greatest barriers to accessing the conditions of ethical learning throughout their lives. Fourth, in assessing (1-3), educational decisions should account for *intersectionality*, the multiplicity of intersecting barriers and supports for learning within a population (Crenshaw 1989), and *epistemic injustice*, current and historical forms of identity prejudice that wrong knowers by either distorting the credibility given to speakers’ testimony or creating gaps in the conceptual resources needed to make self and mutual understanding possible on issues of significance (Fricker 2007; 2013).

The first desiderata, *justice*, states the primary goal of Deweyan decision making: creating the conditions for growing cooperative egalitarian learning. I have tried to outline the principles that ought

to guide our thinking about this first consideration in community with other learners in the preceding chapters. If educational and political institutions are nothing but the expression of human judgment and action, then on the Deweyan approach they ought to reflect the ethical principles contained in the ethical interest in learning. I will not recount the arguments of prior chapters in detail here. I will stress, though, that we need to think holistically about what advancing egalitarian learning involves. What happens in classrooms is of great importance, but attention to the material conditions of informal learning in the background structures of society are crucial as well, for students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, union officials, policy makers, and citizens alike to consider. In short, neither education nor schooling flourishes in unjust societies because the nature of education itself requires justice of us.

Because true education is synonymous with justice on the Deweyan ethic, students ought to learn to critically appraise the background conditions of the society in which schooling occurs and the extent to which they support or undermine learning.⁴⁰ To name but a few important social issues that impact learning: racist policing practices, sexism and transphobia, economic inequality, under-funded school districts, lack of access to medical care, and polluted water, air, and soil, all can be serious barriers to egalitarian inquiry. On the Deweyan ethic, if we are not to miseducate students, then we ought to teach them to identify and assess these sorts of barriers as a part of understanding what learning *is* as an ethical and political project. Short of making this ethical and political commitment to reforming the material conditions of learning explicit, we simply fail to fully educate students, replacing genuine education with indoctrination into a distorted picture of the reality that students desire and pursue. An important part of students' process of assessing institutions, as I will argue in more detail below, is learning to assess the educational system itself as a vehicle for our love of reality. In doing

⁴⁰ In modernity, justice is sometimes thought to be a remedial institutional measure rather than a virtue of character. Here I use the term in the classical sense invoked by Plato as property of good ethics and politics. I am indebted to Jennifer Morton for reminding me to clarify my use of the term.

so, students ought to be involved in critically reflecting upon curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices alike using the four ethical desiderata laid out in this section. These principles simply are aspects of the value of education in community.

The second desiderata, *legitimacy*, understood as the reflective endorsement of a rule or practice by those governed by it, flows from a respect for others' identity as learners outlined in Chapter 3 and 4. If we are all learners with an interest in cooperative egalitarian learning, then the process of implementing decisions should, as I argued in Chapter 3, address those a decision affects from "the inside"—connecting with stakeholders' background beliefs and making clear the value of the decision for intelligently guiding action.⁴¹ Each person, the Deweyan ethic holds, always pursues reality and has an interest in orienting themselves on the basis of true beliefs. To respect this interest, it is important to engage with others' views of the world to try to arrive at common understanding, *through* learning, of the decisions worth implementing.⁴² Where a dissenter does not endorse a decision as reflecting his goals, but is subject to it nevertheless, he sees the world as one in which practices are at odds with ethical truth. The dissenter may be wrong, but on the Deweyan view of an actor's integrity, this concern expressed from his perspective ought to concern all. To *intelligently* guide action, all benefit from transparency of a sort that allows others to verify and ratify the significant judgments decision makers render—to see the truth in a policy or practice or to correct an error. If some stakeholders do not endorse a decision as reflecting their purposes, then for the decision maker who regards him or herself as a fallible learner that dissent is a reason to learn from others and work towards consensus. When many stand opposed to a decision, the decision maker has even more reason to pause and try

⁴¹ Margaret Moore (1991) criticizes Kymlicka and Raz's liberal approaches for expecting each citizen to care about reflective conversion without showing why those with a true conception of the good life might not instead simply want to purge heretics. This Deweyan specification of the interest in maintaining legitimacy may address Moore's worry by showing how an identity as learners calls us to check one another's work reflectively, rather than purge dissenters.

⁴² Richard Jochum has helpfully pointed out that building trust seems to be a core part of this Deweyan vision. By striving to establish the legitimacy of our policies, we create conditions for trust insofar as each strives to make sure acts that effect others are seen by those others' own lights as in their own interest. By working to ensure we create reciprocally recognized relationships and projects, each gains reasons to see others as acting in their own interest.

to work with dissenting parties to sort out the sources of disagreement. Checking our work can take time, but doing so is an important part of building ethical solidarity through learning on the Deweyan view. If we believe any belief is possibly wrong, as Mill (1859/1978) argues, then we depend upon triangulating our beliefs with others to determine their reliability and probabilistic status as candidates for truth. As Mill claimed:

There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right. (1859/1978, 20)

The third principle *priority* is developed in Chapter 4, where I argued that the egalitarian framework that guides decision making on the Deweyan view calls us to prioritize the learners who are most marginalized within a population. In determining curriculum, instruction, and assessment—what we teach, how we teach, and the ways in which we determine if progress has been made—each is called to presumptively prioritize those who are least advantaged. If one can systematically improve access to egalitarian learning relations for those worst off, all three dimensions of reciprocal transparency in a population will improve. In the absence of strong evidence that more egalitarian progress can be made by improving the position of individuals elsewhere in the distribution, instructional designers have reason to prioritize those practices most likely to benefit the flourishing of those who are least advantaged. In Chapter 4, I outlined principles to govern tradeoffs between the most marginalized individuals and the broader human community. Short of extreme and tragic circumstances, I argued that teachers and students ought to learn to reject practices that make the least advantaged worse off. Although priority is included, strictly speaking, in the conception of equality under the desiderata of *justice*, I stress its importance as a further criterion to insure it is not overlooked by decision makers using these four principles as a guide. The most marginalized members of a community of inquiry are rightly placed at the center of our concern and care.

These first three desiderata have been developed at least in outline within the previous two chapters. The fourth, I will sketch here as a topic for future research. To think clearly about ethical priority and progress when making educational decisions, one must attend to the many dimensions upon which a learner might be supported or marginalized. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) has pointed out, marginalization and oppression can occur along more than one dimension. As Crenshaw (1989) argues, simply because a company hires African American people and women, it does not follow that they hire any African American women (141-143). If one's analysis of a decision making context does not attend to the ways in which multiple dimensions of oppression *intersect*, one can miss important factors for making good decisions. Later scholars have emphasized that supports for flourishing can also operate in intersectional ways (Nash 2008; Garry 2011). Thinking about the ways economic marginalization, linguistic marginalization, racism, ableism, sexism, and transphobia, to name but a few, can cross-cut to undermine ethical egalitarian relationships is an important part of educational decision making. Likewise, forms of unjust race, class, and gender based *advantage* are important to keep in view as barriers that can harm our work towards forming robust communities of inquiry. To the extent that this is correct, we ought to ensure that we take both barriers and unequally afforded supports into account when thinking about priority and egalitarian progress.

To identify and address intersecting oppressive barriers to and opportunities for expanding egalitarian learning, each must consider the specific ways in which various forms of identity based prejudice might impair one's ability to seek knowledge with others. Miranda Fricker (2007) has identified two sorts of "epistemic injustices"—ways in which one can wrong a person specifically as a knower—both of which bear on assessing educational progress and priority intersectionally. The first form of epistemic injustice occurs when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (1). Fricker refers to this first form of epistemic injustice as *testimonial injustice* (1). The second form of epistemic injustice Fricker identifies, *hermeneutical injustice*, occurs "when a gap in

collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences” (1). For Fricker, hermeneutical injustice results from the marginalization of some on the basis of identity in creating the stock of social meanings (153). Hermeneutical injustice, as Fricker (2013) makes explicit, can undermine one’s ability to make sense of one’s own experience or to communicate it to others on issues of importance (1319). A hermeneutical injustice occurs, for example, when students in a school are experiencing on-going colonialism, but where the school staff or students lack the concept of colonialism to identify the wrong that is occurring. Students may be unable to understand their own experience due to this hermeneutical injustice or be made unable to communicate it to relevant authorities to address the wrongs in question. Quite obviously, these sorts of considerations bear directly on the effort to apply Deweyan principles within instructional design and educational practice. Teachers make judgements about who merits what response as a learner and epistemic injustices clearly can undermine doing so in a way that reflects reality.

Further inquiry into the relationship between the Deweyan approach, intersectionality, and epistemic injustice is needed to flesh out these important topics as we try to learn in a non-ideal world. For now, I note that where groups have been subject to marginalization due to identity based prejudice, instructional designers have reason to take additional care in creating the material conditions for reflective learning. In particular, as culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogues have urged, part of our goal in creating a learning community is creating material opportunities to learn from and with leaders and youth from communities historically targeted by such identity based prejudices (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014; Ladson-Billings 2014). Where educators designing instruction fail to take heed of insights and leadership from those likely to have experienced identity based marginalization as knowers, educators risk reproducing epistemic injustices that distort our collective understanding of reality. If it is important to learn from and with communities that have

been treated unjustly, it is crucial, on the Deweyan approach, to ensure that members of such communities are materially supported to participate without inequitable burdens in the process of inquiry and instruction. Much more needs to be explored on this topic. For now, I flag the need to allocate extra care to these issues, lest we be too confident in the deliverances of institutional structures that have been forged through colonial, sexist, racist, and homophobic relationships. It is in part because of the care I think exploring these topics requires that I leave them for future work.

5.2 Towards an Integration of IL and DI

In Chapter 1, I outlined the way that instructional design depends fundamentally upon the ethical and political goals of instruction. I claimed that questions such as whether or not instruction should be “fully guided” depend upon one’s ethical and political goals as an educator. If each of us has a normatively fundamental and intrinsic interest in cooperatively advancing intelligent action, as I have argued in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, then decisions about instruction and assessment ought to reflect that interest. The four desiderata identified above are ways of supporting this fundamental interest in educational practice. Drawing upon these desiderata for ethical decision making allows us to assess the debate considered in Chapter 1 between IL and DI theorists about whether and to what extent students should be treated as co-instructional designers. In this section, I will trace some of the main implications that I see following from the Deweyan view for instructional design in light of the four desiderata identified above and extant empirical evidence.

Defenders of IL emphasize the value of supporting students as co-instructional designers and co-creators of educative experiences. In so doing, they respect Deweyan principles of *justice* and *legitimacy*. To the extent that students are provided opportunities to learn to take responsibility for collaboratively advancing an egalitarian community of inquiry, IL designs reflect the core ethical and political goals of the Deweyan framework. If creating these sorts of relationships is our ultimate goal

as educators, then there must be some space in schools for students to co-inquire together as equals. Student led practices, therefore, cannot be eliminated without moral and political loss.

From the perspective of Deweyan *justice*, where we create more robust opportunities for students to become co-inquirers and grow their capacity to sustain inquiry, we should regard ourselves as more successful than where such opportunities are less robust or absent. An important part of allowing students to see themselves as co-designers, assessors, and creators of fallible institutions, is involving them in the critical assessment of prevailing institutional practices through inquiry. As noted above, among the practices students should practice assessing are those of teachers and school systems themselves. Teaching students to critically interrogate the beliefs upon which our educational practices are based respects the Deweyan demand of *legitimacy* in learning. Co-setting the questions, means, products, and assessments of learning are all necessary parts of living an ethic where each checks the work of others in designing educative experience so that we might together reflectively endorse the rules to which we are subject. Where such opportunities are eschewed, educators risk fostering a picture of knowledge as something delivered from infallible authorities to passive recipients. If our authorities are also fallible learners, then it is desirable for them and for us alike to have transparent access to their reasoning in support of practices or beliefs central to education.

By recognizing our interest in justice and legitimacy, we get an answer to DI theorists' first rejoinder to IL theorists. Recall that IL theorists had claimed that many IL learning designs have some DI-style supports to manage cognitive load. DI theorists responded that IL theorists simply stop short of the logical conclusion of the principle they concede. DI theorists pointed out that IL theorists had already allowed that instructional designers ought to reduce extraneous cognitive load. So why not simply go all the way with this principle and institute "fully guided" (Kirschner et al. 2006) teacher-led instruction? On the basis of the Deweyan approach, we can see that DI theorists attempt to eliminate student-led learning practices would exclude the ethical goal of living as fallible co-creators of

instructional experiences. Our shared ethical and political identity calls us to critically co-assess any of the claims or practices on offer, including those of the teacher or school system, with the goal of forging a better learning community. Even if, as DI theorists claim, one can directly teach knowledge and skills that support the goal of independently assessing educational authorities, to *apply* the skill of assessing others' work as a fallible equal, one must actually engage in independent inquiry and assessment that is not teacher guided. One must actually contribute a perspective on the deliverances of authority and whether or not those deliverances are correct by one's lights.

In thinking about how to manage cognitive load, then, we have reasons to stand with IL theorists like Schmidt et al. (2007) who argue that one way to respond to the problem of extraneous cognitive load is to distribute cognitive demands across a group of learners. According to Schmidt et al. (2007), "activating and sharing prior knowledge among group members" (95) can help reduce the cognitive burden of complex learning tasks. When complex tasks are divided and knowledge is pooled, Schmidt et al. (2007) suggest that even small working memories can accomplish great things. In a similar fashion, many widely influential social cognitive theories of learning emphasize the virtues of collaboration as a way of strengthening what each individual can achieve (Ormrod 2012; Vygotsky 1987).

Without appeal to ethical and political considerations, Sweller et al.'s (2007) reply to Schmidt et al.'s recommendation might seem decisive. Sweller et al (2007) argue that co-operatively dispersing the cognitive demands of a learning task is likely to *increase* extraneous load, as students must not only know how to complete parts of the task at hand, but how to co-ordinate with others to do so. As Sweller et al. (2007) point out, "the coordination and execution of communication and interaction in groups is, in itself, often a cognitively taxing experience" (117). Sweller et al. (2007) suggest that a more efficient way to instruct students would be to simply teach them all of the steps and the solution for the problem type and any skills needed for collaboration directly (117). Students could then

practice applying the knowledge and skills they have acquired to new cases of the same type. If dynamic social coordination is internal to the ethical and political goal of education, as the Deweyan approach claims, however, then the demands of social co-ordination are not external to our instructional goals. Rather than counting as extraneous load, practice in social coordination would count as part of the “germane” load which is part of the learning target for a lesson. The objection raised to Schmidt et al. (2007) by Sweller et al. (2007), then, is considerably qualified in its force.⁴³

The Deweyan approach allows us to see that there is merit in DI theorists’ concern for teacher expertise and leadership in managing cognitive demands on students but that this cannot be the whole story. If we ought to be equipped to engage in critical assessment of all authority, then it would be an ethical and political mistake to have students always learn directly from the teacher and never co-inquire independently. By recognizing this fact, instructional design becomes more complex. The question for the instructional designer to consider is not just how best to download content and skills to students. It is now primarily one of where and when teacher led support is most likely to help each student become the kind of expert educator that the DI theorist imagines *leading* a classroom in cooperation with others similarly formed. To sort out where and when direct teacher guidance is most useful in fostering independent inquiry as the goal of formal education, then it is always necessary to think about the developmental pathway of learners within a school-system and across various forms of subject matter. Needless to say, this complex context-sensitive task extends beyond this project, but I will say a bit about it in the next section on equality and priority in relation to some empirical findings from the learning sciences.

⁴³ In recent work, Kirschner, Sweller, Kirschner, and Zambrano (2018) argue that cognitive load theory can be integrated into collaborative learning environments and show how this may be done to distribute cognitive load. Kirchner et al (2018) claim that in many cases it is still simply more efficient to teach students independently (see p. 228). Students with lower levels of prior knowledge may benefit from heterogenous grouping with students with higher knowledge but not necessarily the opposite. Kirschner et al (2018) argue that homogenous groups of students with low or high background knowledge are unlikely to benefit in academic learning from collaborative learning due to transaction costs.

By drawing on the Deweyan argument, we also acquire a reply to DI theorists' second line of objection to IL theorists outlined in Chapter 1. DI theorists argued that if there are any domain general inquiry skills that need to be taught, then they should be taught by the teacher in a “fully guided” and “explicit” way (Sweller et al. 2007). DI theorists doubted that there are any domain general biologically secondary skills, however, to be taught (Sweller et al. 2007; Sweller 2008; Sweller 2015; Sweller 2016). It should be clear from the last few chapters that if we accept the Deweyan view of the intrinsic value of egalitarian cooperative learning for students, then there is a significant set of domain-general biologically secondary knowledge and skills needed to support domain specific inquiries. A core argument of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 was that our primary focus as teachers and students, from an ethical and political point of view, ought to be cultivating knowledge and skills to coordinate inquiry across contexts towards egalitarian ends. All of the ethical arguments I have offered, it should be obvious, are biologically secondary—we are not evolved to know them under usual circumstances. They may be taught and checked by students, however, across a learning pathway using a mix of teacher and student led activities as part of the goal of understanding the nature of inquiry, which, on the Deweyan view, is inseparable from inquiry's ethical purpose.

If part of the goal of instructional design is to create students who are not just learners but expert teachers of their peers, then an additional form of biologically-secondary domain general inquiry skill is evident. Ironically, if students are to think and work together as co-instructional designers, then an important skill for them to learn for any context of inquiry is how to manage and reduce extraneous cognitive load. As the debates between DI and IL theorists makes plain, this set of skills is also one that needs to be taught, otherwise there would be no debate to be had about the appropriate role of cognitive load theory in learning and instructional design. Every biologically typical educator would already be evolved to manage cognitive load when she or he teaches and inquires.

Once again, as DI theorists recommend, it is likely perfectly appropriate to sometimes directly teach and model inquiry skills for students such as those of integrating cognitive load theory and the Deweyan ethical values appropriate to a just learning society. Still, once again, this cannot be the whole story. Given that we have identified domain general inquiry skills that need to be taught, we can embrace the DI theorist's recommendation to sometimes teach those skills directly as they claimed in the dilemma posed to IL theorists in Chapter 1. Due to the nature of our ethical goal, however, students also have an interest in using those skills to critically evaluate the very process of inquiry they have been taught by their teachers—perhaps augmenting the teacher's view in the end. A part of doing so is engaging in independent philosophical and psychological inquiry to check the justificatory work offered on behalf of the Deweyan approach. Once again, then, we must resist the DI theorist's conclusion that no student led inquiry can be appropriate. Including elements of student led inquiry is a matter of *justice* and *legitimacy* that on any topic is a constitutive part of sound instructional design.

The Deweyan approach also provides a corrective to any IL theorist who wants to deny that some domain specific content knowledge is important for sustaining the process of inquiry. Deanna Kuhn (2007) gestures in this direction, arguing that “Beyond basic literacy and numeracy, it has become next to impossible to predict what kinds of knowledge people will need to thrive in the mid-21st century” (110). By Kuhn's lights, educators can focus more on inquiry and argument and less on content knowledge. As the relationship between domain general and domain specific content knowledge outlined in Chapter 4 should help make plain, concrete content is crucial to understanding and realizing domain general goals. In the context of K-12 schooling in particular, the idea that it is “next to impossible” to know what knowledge is central to sustaining learning is quite implausible. Unlike in graduate seminars, much of what is taught in K-12 education is among the most heavily checked and reliable knowledge we have on offer, even if it is still up for revision. Should we really think that all of *basic* science is likely to be overturned or become irrelevant? What about *basic* history

or geography? Of course there will be augmenting and revising to be done—I have argued that this is the case in history due to epistemic injustice elsewhere (Tanchuk, Kruse, and McDonough 2018). But it is rarely a complete abandoning of past knowledge that occurs, even as we decolonize and improve curricula. Defenders of IL methods like Kuhn surely know that there is often a cost in declarative knowledge when teachers are asked to manage multiple strands of student inquiry in the classroom. It is tempting, then, to protect the value of inquiry, to pretend that subject specific knowledge is unimportant for living a life as a learner. DI theorists, who provide a robust account of how expert inquirers rely upon knowledge in long-term memory show that down-playing the importance of domain specific declarative and procedural knowledge is misleading, even if that is not all we care about as educators. This is an important corrective to more monolithically ‘process-focused’ IL educators.

I have argued that there are ethical and political benefits to student-led cooperative inquiry, but these must be embraced alongside a clear-eyed awareness of the potential costs of a too-narrow understanding of our goals. Kuhn offers no argument to overturn DI theorists’ account of the role of knowledge in long-term memory in forging expertise. If robust cooperative inquiry is forged by students’ learning both domain general skills and the domain specific knowledge needed to flourish, then we need to think carefully about the scope and sequence we create to foster student independence. Teacher support and a carefully developed curriculum are an important part of this project of developing a developmental pathway towards student independence. This increases the complexity of the practical art of instructional design, but it is a complexity from which we must not shrink; it is the complexity of ethical and educational reality. As Dewey (LW13: 27; LW11: 253) emphasized, starting inquiry from scratch with each successive generation is likely to undermine the flourishing of learning and learners. Similarly, as Dewey saw, students are unlikely to thrive without any support from caring adults.

Because the older education imposed the knowledge, methods, and the rules of conduct of the mature person upon the young, it does not follow, except upon the basis of the extreme Either-Or philosophy, that the knowledge and skill of the mature person has no directive value for the experience of the immature. (LW13: 27)

The task of the progressive educator is not to jettison the domain-specific content knowledge generated by previous generations but to teach students to discern what is most central to sustaining cooperative inquiry under present circumstances by drawing upon the inheritance we receive from previous inquirers' work. As I have flagged above, in rendering these sorts of curricular decisions, with the goal of reflecting reality, it is crucial to attend to the ways in which *intersectionality* and *epistemic injustice* are likely to distort the tradition we inherit. A distorted tradition fails to reflect reality. For that reason we should commit to doing the hard work of correcting the ethical limitations of past and current practice. In doing so, we better realize the freedom of intelligent action and educational justice.

5.3 Equality on a Developmental Pathway

Considerations of Deweyan justice and legitimacy provide reasons to reject DI theorists' objections, which sought to eliminate student-led cooperative learning. So far I have not said much about the balance of teacher and student guidance in a vision of instructional design with cooperative IL as its proper end. Nor have I said much about *priority* and the risk of exacerbating achievement gaps between higher and lower performing students under IL designs. For both teacher and student alike, DI theorists findings raise questions for the Deweyan approach about how best to foster equality and social progress. If simply leaving students to co-inquire without support leads to rampant inequality and slower than necessary educational progress towards better co-inquiry, then Deweyans ought to recommend against that course of action. Dewey (1938; 1916), for his part recommended against these rather radical "negative liberty" approaches to student learning even while resisting a lock-step form of top-down external teacher guidance. DI theorists provide compelling evidence that

direct instructional support can sometimes help novice learners to progress towards expertise more rapidly in the skills and knowledge they need to inquire collaboratively and independently. To the extent that this is the case, Deweyans ought to recommend DI support from teachers instrumentally for the purposes of growing independent egalitarian inquirers. How much DI and when it is most beneficial to cultivating robust egalitarian co-inquiry across a lifespan is an empirical question that DI theorists' findings can help us to navigate within and across units of study.

As we aspire to create strong egalitarian learners, we should attend to the developmental trajectory of each as we co-design learning pathways. In thinking through the pathways we create for learners, empirical evidence within the learning sciences provides reasons to acknowledge the intuitions of many educators, which favor a stronger role for teacher guidance in supporting young learners than in more mature students. We now know that working memory develops over time. Research in cognitive science suggests that “children typically process unary relations at a median age of 1 year, binary relations at a median age of 2 years, ternary relations at a median age of 5 years, and quaternary relations at a median age of 11 years” (Halford and Andrews 2002; Andrews and Halford 1998; Cowan 2001; Cowan, Nugent, Elliot, Ponomarev, and Saults 1999). In light of DI theorists' findings, we can reasonably hold that expecting very young students to think through highly complex tasks and relationships on their own is less likely to help them grow than at later stages where their cognitive capacities and conceptual schemes are more fully developed. Thus, paternalism and maternalism with young children in the process of learning academic knowledge and skills is more reasonable than it is with adolescents and young adults whose capacities increasingly approach the capacities of their teachers. Importantly this does not entail that we cannot signal respect for students as independent learners and *phase in* the skills of independent inquiry—it's not a matter of all or nothing, but of degree and with respect to contexts and diverse individuals. Exposure to challenging

reasoning, some studies show, correlates with developing these skills even in young learners (Ormrod 2012). The questions we must ask are how much and when with respect to specific learners.

In addition to developing processing power on a developmental trajectory, the arguments of DI theorists have made clear that the content of long-term memory is developed over time and with life experience. The work of the information processing tradition of psychology within which DI theorists and many IL theorists alike work provides strong evidence to believe that as learners acquire knowledge over time it is likely to become easier for them to continue to do so. As Kirschner et al. (2006) reported, well organized knowledge in long-term memory relevant to a task or context can reduce demands on working memory. Students who have developed chunked and well organized knowledge are, thus, more likely to thrive in more complex problem settings than students without such knowledge, due to the expertise reversal effect (Kirschner et al. 2006; De Groot and Gobet 1996; Chase and Simon 1973).

Our scope and sequence within a learning pathway, then, ought to reflect that as we acquire more background knowledge within a context, we are more able to acquire new knowledge (Cromley, Snyder-Hogan, and Luciw-Dubas 2010; Haskell 2001; Shapiro 2004). When learners can chunk and categorize new experiences within categories acquired in previous experience, they are more likely to be able to meaningfully elaborate that information and thus retain the new knowledge in long term memory (Bandalos, Finney, and Geske 2003; E. Wood, Willoughby, Bolger, and Younger 1993). The fact that where students have more knowledge and skill in place they are more able to thrive in high-cognitive demand learning environments provides reasons to look for ways to ensure students have many of the background competencies that they will need to thrive in such contexts when utilizing them on a student's developmental pathway.

Part of the role of education systems is to ensure that older learners have more powerful and organized sets of knowledge and skills to navigate their world than younger learners. If our systems

are not a complete failure, it is reasonable to expect older learners to be better equipped to navigate the process of inquiry more independently than younger students and to be in a better position to engage in the meta-cognitive tasks necessary for students to co-lead instruction and inquiry as equals. By phasing in inquiry skills across a developmental pathway, then, we might expect students to in general better develop mastery of the various ethical and epistemic competencies needed to thrive independently as adult learners.

As Kirschner et al (2006) report, as learners acquire expertise on a topic, the expertise-reversal effect kicks in. Once the knowledge to be gained by students is mastered, full explanations of the topic can actually increase cognitive load and slow the growth of new learning. These facts support the general idea of phasing in ethical and epistemic inquiry skills across a multi-year learning pathway as students mature. In addition, the expertise reversal effect suggests that within a unit of study an appropriate place for collaborative designs that emphasize student independence and direction is in culminating projects. In such projects, at the end of a unit or series of units, students are likely to have had more opportunities to acquire the background knowledge and skills needed to enable independent co-inquiry than at the beginning of a unit of study. If teachers do a good job of scaffolding the background knowledge needed for independent inquiry, then students are more likely to be experts in using that knowledge and more likely to maximize the benefits of learning in a less structured environment due to the expertise reversal effect.

Improving the overall amount of learning that occurs is important in a community of inquiry. On the Deweyan approach, however, perhaps the strongest argument for using student-led activities as culminating tasks is grounded in a concern about equality and *priority*, the third desiderata identified above. Using IL designs in culminating activities provides teachers time to identify who needs what support to access the IL setting on equal footing with their peers on the topic in question. By noting where and when students might benefit from pre-teaching or re-teaching core concepts, students who

are having trouble accessing key knowledge and skills can be better supported. Without this opportunity, students are left to a greater extent to rely upon background knowledge, which may be impacted by differential prior school and life experiences. The findings by Andersen and Anderson (2018) in Chapter 1 which highlighted the role of parental education in predicting success in student-led educational environments is one example of this risk to equality. By holding class time to develop skills for inquiry teachers may better support the least advantaged students in a classroom, much as DI theorists recommend. Even if holding space for such skill development and support does not maximize the rate of learning at the top of the distribution, the prioritarian structure of the Deweyan approach presumptively counts in favor of this practice.

Similarly, even though as noted in Chapter 2, findings on the advantages of mentoring novices for experts' are mixed, on the Deweyan approach, it is ethically important for students to learn about the value of supporting others towards fostering equality. Teachers, therefore, can and should leverage support for the least advantaged learners from high-performing peers in peer-tutoring or heterogenous grouping activities as part of the general effort to cultivate a caring, egalitarian, and mutually respectful ethos. To live an ethos where we hold the maxim: "From each according to her ability, to each according to her need" (See Marx 1875/1994 for the original version)—students need opportunities to practice supporting one another with their relative strengths, which are likely to differ across activities and domains of inquiry.

Here too there are costs to keep in mind that make teaching more complex. As DI theorists often point out, teachers are less likely to teach mistakes to students than their peers. So there is a genuine risk to be kept in view where we involve students in teaching one another (Ormrod 2012). On the Deweyan approach, however, the ethical value of having students learn to teach and support one another, makes peer support an ineliminable part of our educational goals. To become a mutually supportive community of inquiry, learners need to practice sharing their gifts and being mutually

supportive. If so, part of the complexity from which we cannot shrink as educators is in balancing teacher expertise with the development of mutual support between students. It is worth noting that many novice (and expert) teachers also make mistakes that they look back on with embarrassment when they become more experienced. By developing students' abilities to teach each other over time some of these risks may be mitigated. They are unlikely to be reduced without *any* practice.

Finally, due to the concern for equality and *priority*, it is worth noting that as a matter of justice teachers ought to generally allocate their effort and resources to try to increase the rate of learning for those students below the class average to exceed those above it. The concern for priority requires that teachers make even greater effort to identify opportunities to improve the condition of the least advantaged students, failing strong evidence that equality is best advanced in other ways. As teachers do this, the challenge is to keep the whole class moving forward in developing the skills needed for egalitarian inquiry, so that each student might develop the capacity to support others' growth in turn. On the Deweyan account, as in many schools at present, teachers will strategize to move the class towards mastery of valuable knowledge for sustaining inquiry while shrinking the dispersion—emphasizing both excellence and equality. There is no doubt that this work is complex, but it is likely that we will make more rather than less progress when we are at least clear on our goals and reasons to pursue them. This project's central goal has been to help us along on that front.

In determining which domain specific content is most central and in working to address the barriers facing the least advantaged students, it is once again crucial to stress that it is important for educators to attend to *intersectionality* and *epistemic injustices*. An adequate analysis outstrips this project, but an important part of thinking about equality and priority in the Deweyan framework is addressing structural and systemic factors that undermine each learner's ability to respond to reality as an equal. On the Deweyan approach, teachers are called to work to be mindful of identity-based biases that may unintentionally lead to prejudicial treatment of students. Studies in psychology, for example, report

racial disparities in teachers' disciplinary practice (Okonofua and Eberhardt, 2015), the assessment of writing (Reeves, 2014), and teachers' expectations (van den Bergh et al. 2010), that are attributable to implicit and unconscious forms of bias. There are reflective practices that teachers can use to become aware of and counteract these tendencies, (Devine et al. 2012; Dovidio et al. 1997). As Devine et al. (2012) argue, however, "overcoming prejudice is a protracted process that requires considerable effort in the pursuit of a nonprejudiced goal" (1268). The Deweyan framework calls on students, teachers, administrators, and citizens, to engage in this challenging work.

5.4 Next Steps

Much work remains to be done and many questions to be answered—that is both the challenge to and call of this dissertation. My hope is that some of what has been offered in this project spurs responses that help us to better identify the truth and avoid error together as equals. If the argument of this project is mistaken, then the ethic I have recommended will benefit from its self-correcting tendencies. So long as we are fallible and share an interest in identifying where and when we may have erred, then the call to create the material conditions for sustaining the process of checking our inquiries and practical judgments may lead us towards a better view. In this case, the ethic I have recommended is at least instrumentally useful. In future work, I plan to further clarify the picture set out in this project so that it might be made more useful to teachers and researchers alike. Towards this end, more integrated work drawing upon empirical findings about the practices that support learning-to-learn is important to support teachers using Deweyan principles. The Deweyan approach aims to articulate a fully-general picture of the goal of ethics and justice. Here, I have focused on a debate in instructional design. To the extent that the framework is defensible when more fully fleshed out, there remains important work to be done in thinking about curriculum and assessment that is directly related to these questions about instructional design. I leave these projects for the future.

There is also significant work to be done, as noted in this section, in drawing out important considerations in thinking about how to foster Deweyan virtues within unjust historical contexts that may distort our capacities and conceptual resources for cooperative inquiry through intersectional and epistemic forms of injustice. As noted in the preface, an important part of this work in the colonial context of Turtle Island (North America) is examining the extent to which the learning-based-ethic traced in this project reflects Anishinaabe Indigenous thought which predates Dewey's work. Part of the motivation for challenging liberal-pluralist arguments within this project was to clear the way towards a consideration of whether ethical and political forms of life that sustained Indigenous peoples might once again lead institutional practices in Canada and the United States, rather than being ruled out as "unreasonable" forms of pluralism. To explore these possibilities, there is a great deal of work to be done in creating spaces where the distortions that colonialism introduces into our collective conceptual resources can be dissolved and where progress might be made.

Philosophically, my intent in this project was to at least start to motivate a Deweyan approach to ethics in school and society. The meta-normative framework set out here to resolve Dewey's grounding problem and his problem of elitism represent a first broad attempt to trace the joints between a set of philosophical commitments methodological and otherwise that I have tried to show are mutually reinforcing. More work remains to be done in situating this account alongside similar meta-normative approaches, like Korsgaard (1996) and Velleman's (2009) that seek to derive ethics from constitutive features of agency. Similarly, the egalitarian commitments sketched out here stand to be clarified by further more detailed comparison with other approaches to theorizing distributive and relational justice. By placing the Deweyan grounding argument, the problem of elitism, and the Socratic Test in dialogue within the same whole picture, my goal was to show that the Deweyan approach I have traced emerges a stronger contender for political practice than if only one aspect of the view had been considered in greater detail. The cost of doing so is leaving more in each section

unanswered than one might have otherwise. My goal was to give the charitable reader some resources to attempt to answer these further doubts, which inevitably emerge when deliberating about complex question about how to live and learn. I welcome help in adding nuance to these broad strokes and testing them against more detailed objections and inquiries.

My aspiration for the broad framework set out here both empirical and normative is that it will be a useful guide towards these future efforts. Even though there are always new possibilities we might consider, the abiding hope of this project is that we might consider them together, towards greater illumination.

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