

Educational Goods Reconsidered: A Response

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We gratefully reply to our five commentators, responding to their criticisms and comments under the following headings: parochialism and curriculum; rationality and truth; production and distribution; perfectionism, decision-making and disagreement; adultism and parents' interests; non-consequential educational goods; and self-education.

We are very grateful to our commentators for their kind words, for their careful attention and for the opportunity their comments have given us both to clarify some of our arguments and positions and to develop our thinking further. The book was not written for philosophers, it was not written exclusively by philosophers, and—although we spent many years writing it—it was always intended to be quite short (which is partly why it took so long). It would be convenient if these considerations could excuse all its failures fully to defend, or perhaps sometimes even adequately to convey, the various philosophical claims we put forward. Between them, they certainly explain why those claims are set out in such a simplified and summary fashion—and why they are asserted rather than argued for. But we do not pretend that our responses to the comments and criticisms will be simply a matter of explaining what we had in mind all along. Many of the challenges and suggestions are penetrating and insightful; they have got us thinking new thoughts. Space will not allow us to reply to every point, so we have chosen to focus on common themes and suggestions that strike us as particularly important and/or interesting.

PAROCHIALISM AND CURRICULUM

In different ways, worry that our approach might reflect our own parochial prejudices—whether in our list of values, the fact that we frame some of them as ‘goods’ and even our commitment to the intellectual tradition of analytic political philosophy. Thompson (2020) is alert to the possibility that our account reflects just one tradition of normative theorising that might not be susceptible of universal application and thus runs the risk of ‘excluding valuable intellectual contributors/contributions and

overlooking dimensions of the problem that do not readily conform to the prioritized existing traditions', and rightly observes that 'it is rather difficult to imagine the framework's appeal to those who question the validity of the undergirding concepts invoked'. Bagelman (2020) offers a nicely specific example: 'While there may be a temptation to universalise educational and childhood goods, the work of Indigenous scholar Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, speaks to some important discontinuities with western education... Brighouse *et al.*... include "the capacity to function in the labor market, to be a good democratic citizen, to develop healthy personal relationships, and to treat others with respect and dignity", however, Grande points to less anthropocentric goals in Indigenous education (just for a start)... A decolonising geographical imaginary may allow for a more nuanced account of these variegated realities' (p?.)

We do not discuss the method by which we arrive at the list of values that we endorse in the book—indeed, we do not provide much in the way of argument for any of individual items on the list, or consider arguments for and against alternatives.¹ So, the possibility that parochial values have been mistaken for universals, or that other values have been neglected, is certainly present. But, as Tillson (2020) suggests, values can be tested through a process of reflective equilibrium, in which we try, together, to get closer to the truth by proposing items, subjecting them to scrutiny, and adding items to the list, removing others, and revising still others, in the light of the reasons given. ('Reflective equilibrium' is the name given to this process by the analytical tradition in philosophy, but it is really little more than a codification of something that moral agents typically already do. And the answer to Tillson's (p. ?) sceptical question 'Why should we think that the values we favour are actually important?' is something like 'We shouldn't think they are important just because we favour them, but there's really no alternative to trying our best to get our various intuitions—at all levels—into a coherent package by reflecting on the reasons for and against endorsing them'.) Our backgrounds and experiences bias all of us in various ways, giving us insight that others lack but blinding us to insights they possess; so the best procedure is to deliberate about values (and other philosophical matters) with people from as wide a range of backgrounds and experiences as possible. The test of our list, then, is how well it holds up to such a process: it is our best shot but one might think of it as an agenda for such a deliberation. We are not familiar with Sandy Grande's work, but we assume that if she rejects the idea that people in modern conditions need the capacity to function in the labour market, or to develop healthy personal relationships, or does not reject those but seeks to add others to our list, then she would engage in the kind of giving and taking of reasons that reflective equilibrium codifies.

We welcome people from other cultures, or those with neglected perspectives in our own culture, substantively challenging any or all of the items on the list (or the list itself) and helping to improve it: that is the only way forward. Other things equal, the more inclusive the reflective equilibrium, the better its prospects of getting us closer to the truth. Some debate might be substantive and lead to revisions. Other disputes might disappear on closer inspection. So, for example, we would frame Grande's 'less anthropocentric

goals’—such as a concern for people’s spiritual life as expressed in a distinctive relationship to the natural world or a particular place—as ‘personal fulfillment’. That category is designed precisely to leave open the various ways in which human beings can find meaning and fulfilment in their lives. (There is, to be sure, a deeper issue here, about how that way of characterising the value in question relates to the way it is regarded by those for whom it is valuable, and indeed whether our emphasis on its being valuable for human beings is *itself* inappropriately ‘anthropocentric’.) Overall, our hope is that the substance of our list of values will hold up pretty well for people in modern democratic societies. For what it is worth, when Swift presented at a conference in Cameroon, participants found the list apt to their circumstances.

Bagelman (2020, p. ?) raises a related concern about curricular and pedagogical choices when she argues for the need to ‘take seriously what Gayatri Spivak calls epistemic violence ... and Foucault’s articulation of “subjugated knowledge”... This might be a call for distributive values to be considered at the design level (when it comes to curriculum and routine practices like assessment) rather than simply at the decision-making level’. Even if bias does not creep into our account of educational goods, her suggestion is that it may influence decisions about curriculum and instruction in ways that work to the detriment of those who are disadvantaged in one way or another. These kinds of worry underlie so-called ‘critical’ approaches to education, as well as calls for culturally responsive, or culturally relevant, or culturally sustaining education.

The book says very little about curriculum or pedagogy, though both are clearly crucial to both the production and distribution of educational goods. We regard decisions about those matters as no less susceptible to our analysis than choices about finance and accountability; indeed, we look forward to reading others’ attempts to apply our framework to question about what should be taught and how.² We thus dispute Curren’s claim, in the midst of his extremely kind comments, that the book’s ‘limitation is that it does not provide similarly detailed resources for addressing a variety of educational decisions that are significantly different from the kinds of policy choices they consider. These include decisions about the content of education ...’ (Curren, 2020, p. ?). It is true that none of the applications in the second half of the book addresses decisions around curriculum and instruction, so our neglect of such matters is, in that sense, almost complete. But we believe that the resources we provide are no less detailed, and no less relevant to such matters, than they are to those that we use to illustrate the method. Our aim is to have equipped those with more expertise around curriculum and instruction with the resources needed to think through decision points in those areas, combining our normative framework with consideration of the relevant empirical evidence.

Wise and knowledgeable decision makers about content and pedagogy will be sensitive to what is right about the critiques of Spivak, Foucault and others—without getting carried away by them. Students are destined to live in a social environment which is not entirely predictable, and which may not be the one the educator would have chosen for them. Successful teaching

always requires some degree of cultural sensitivity on the part of the teacher and, other things equal, the more cultural congruence between teacher and student the better. But sometimes a dominant culture really does dominate and, even if that is unjust, students who are not of that dominant culture are owed—as a matter of justice—the educational goods that will better enable them to thrive within it.

RATIONALITY AND TRUTH

Hand has a more direct worry about our list of values. This, too, has implications for questions of pedagogy and curriculum. He believes that we have omitted an important and essential capacity that he thinks ‘is more fundamental and wide-ranging’ than the six capacities we identify: ‘rationality, or responsiveness to reasons’. He offers some examples—failure to respond to reasons to support political measures to mitigate climate change and to vaccinate our children—in which, he claims, the incapacity in question cannot properly be captured in the terms we offer. Anti-vaxxers and climate change deniers are often ‘economically productive, personally autonomous, democratically competent and personally fulfilled people who enjoy healthy personal relationships and treat others as equals’ (Hand, 2020).

We are not convinced by the examples, but nor are we certain that he is wrong. In both cases, third parties are involved (others who are affected by climate change, the children who are not vaccinated and the public that is put at risk by the unvaccinated children). Properly to treat others as equals, and/or to exercise democratic competence, an agent needs to be able to respond to the right reasons in that area—to give appropriate weight to their legitimate interests, to listen to and understand other people’s arguments not just when voting but when considering the evidence. Those who lack the capacity to respond to the reasons to vaccinate their children, or to assess in an unbiased way the evidence on climate change, do not have what they need to treat others as equals.

It would have been helpful if we had made this clear in the book. There we deliberately stay at a high level of abstraction, so a reader might get the impression, for example, that we simply think that children should be told to treat others as moral equals, whereas in fact we take the development of that capacity to require a good deal more by way of both of moral education and of competence in assessing empirical matters. We would make similar claims with respect to the other capacities. It is, of course, a big philosophical question whether the value of reason responsiveness can entirely be explained in terms of its significance for human flourishing. There will be accounts on which it may rather figure as an independent value. We think—though we are not sure—that what matters about it indeed is captured by our list of educational goods, but even if we are right about that, Hand has convinced us that it would have been useful if we had said more.

Tillson (p. ?) observes that we characterise educational goods as ‘knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions’ and rightly notes that in order for something to count as knowledge it must be true. He makes several valuable

suggestions about the relation between truth and flourishing and in effect asks whether we think that educators should teach only for true beliefs.

Our theory does not, in itself, provide an answer. It does require that truths be taught (exactly what beliefs can count as knowledge can be disputed, but it is undisputed that truth is a necessary condition of a belief being knowledge). But it does not determine exactly which truths, and it does not require that only truths be taught. If certain false beliefs at certain life stages—Tillson's example is Santa—help produce dispositions and attitudes that conduce to flourishing, then that is a count in favour of teaching them; their falsehood means that it is the dispositions and attitudes that are produced, and not the beliefs themselves, that constitute the educational goods in this case. Similarly, with beliefs surrounding a mythologised Dunkirk spirit.

That said, we are generally queasy about the teaching of falsehoods. Suppose one does, indeed, have to teach false claims in order to produce some of the dispositions and attitudes surrounding the mythologised Dunkirk spirit. Is the game worth the candle? Given that education should aim to dispose students to reflect critically on what they are taught, will the dispositions and attitudes be stable if students subsequently query—as one hopes they will—the falsehoods that have been taught to them? Even if they will be, one is bound to wonder whether the teaching of these particular falsehoods might not produce less desirable, or even undesirable, dispositions and attitudes.

The view that teaching falsehood is always wrong cannot be right—even if some persist in believing the falsehoods they have been taught. The common practice of teaching Newtonian mechanics in secondary schools seems unobjectionable, and it seems so even though few students will go on to study Physics long enough to learn the truth. A better principle may be that teaching falsehoods is something that should only be done with great caution and strong reasons.

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

In different ways, Thompson, Bagelman and Curren also query our apparent preoccupation with scarcity, or with the distribution of educational goods, and the first two suggest that we neglect fruitful ways of thinking rather about their production. Thompson (p. ?) commends to us Fishkin's (2014) work as an example of an approach that shifts focus 'away from attention to *only* the distribution of educational goods' and replaces it with 'a more capacious perception of their possible creation'.³ Bagelman (p. ?) suggests that our 'scarcity framing ... requires serious rethinking, as it leads us down a zero-sum path' which she believes to be unnecessary.

It is true that, as part of our attempt to clarify the various distributive issues that are too often lumped together into a vague notion of 'equity' and 'social justice', we present and discuss three different distributive values: adequacy, equality and benefitting the less advantaged. And it is true that we do not propose assessing policies simply in terms of their tendency to create more rather than less, or fewer, educational goods overall (which Curren,

2020, p. ?), calls ‘efficiency’). But we are puzzled by Thompson’s suggestion that we are insufficiently concerned with their production, creation or development. We say that ‘many aspects of children’s upbringing create educational goods’ and, indeed, justify our focus on childhood in general, and schools in particular, with the claim that ‘public policies, primarily in the form of schooling, have great leverage on the production of educational goods at this stage in people’s lives’ (Brighouse *et al.*, 2018, p. 19). The general point that, other things equal, decisions should aim at producing more educational goods, rather than less or fewer, is clear throughout.

But resources *are* limited, and we motivate the book by identifying various trade-offs that therefore have to be made. For example, decision makers might need to choose between tackling racial achievement gaps and providing support for students with special educational needs. Bagelman rightly observes that decision makers with imagination and wisdom might be able to find strategies that efficiently serve both ends: some trade-offs are more apparent than real. She cites an example in which an image-based curriculum in Canadian classrooms was ‘used to successfully support both SEND students with literacy challenges and also reflect culturally-responsive pedagogy for Indigenous children’; and another in which assistive technologies and inexpensive visual resources developed for hearing impaired and deaf students ‘were also being used in Liverpool schools with high-volumes of new arrival students’, including refugees and asylum seekers (p. ?).

The case she describes are, if you like, found efficiencies: it turns out that the needs of different kinds of students are more congruent than might have been first thought. We like the examples, and suspect that many schools and school systems could resolve some apparent trade-offs through such imaginative pedagogy, as well as by reclaiming resources wasted through inefficiencies. But in such cases the need for trade-offs has not been eliminated: it is just that the particular one that appeared necessary was not, and a different one emerges. Suppose a school finds a strategy for reconciling the immediate and most pressing needs of low-income students with those of students with disabilities. The new strategy effectively frees up resources: but how should those newly available resources be spent? If a new teaching assistant is available, should he work equally with all students, concentrate on those with disabilities, or on those from low-income backgrounds? Should he be used to free up another member of staff who is particularly well placed to develop a whole-school plan for relationship education? As long as resources—financial and human—are scarce, trade-offs are inevitable, even if not the trade-offs that the complacent or unimaginative decision makers think they are stuck with. Any use of a resource has opportunity costs, and resources are always scarce.

PERFECTIONISM, DECISION-MAKING AND DISAGREEMENT

Tillson (p. ?) suggests that we commit ourselves to a kind of perfectionism, which ‘may look like an illiberal imposition of values’. He cites in support of that interpretation our claims that ‘what matters, ultimately, is the creation and distribution of opportunities for people to flourish’ and that

education is important because it can ‘equip people with what they need for their lives to go well’. We tried not to take a stand on the question of whether the state may legitimately act on controversial judgements about the good, so it is not surprising that we are not sure that this evidence warrants his conclusion.⁴

We certainly talk a lot about ‘flourishing’, and about ‘well-being’, which we use interchangeably. Indeed, we present human flourishing as ‘the fundamental value that underlies our discussion of educational goods’ (Brighthouse *et al.*, 2018, p. 21). We can see why that language might suggest that we endorse perfectionism, but in our view the state can provide children with what they need to flourish—with what we think of as ‘opportunities for flourishing’—without taking a problematically controversial view on the question of what flourishing consists in. Our educational goods are intended to be analogous to Rawls’ primary goods: capacities that tend to promote well-being whatever way of living is in fact good for the individual concerned. Even an anti-perfectionist state can care that its citizens flourish—that their lives go well—and attempt to provide children with the educational goods that make that more likely. What it cannot do is take a stand on what would constitute a flourishing life for them.

We do make two key assumptions about flourishing. One is that the correct theory is pluralistic: different people flourish in very different ways. The other is that, at least in the modern conditions in which our target audience will be making decisions, autonomy matters a good deal: one of the aims of education should be to foster the reflective, critical capacities that people need in order to make their own judgements about a wide range of questions about the good, and to act on those judgements. Both assumptions are entirely in keeping with anti-perfectionist liberalism.

Consider, more generally, our attempt to specify the knowledge, skills, disposition and attitudes that people need to flourish (and to contribute to the flourishing of others). We identify six relevant capacities: for economic productivity, personal autonomy, democratic competence, healthy personal relationships, treating others as equals and personal fulfilment. At that level of abstraction, none of these, we believe, would be rejected by any plausible anti-perfectionist view about the state’s proper role with respect to children’s formation and development. Of course, if an educational policy-maker puts in place a curriculum that reflected her view that only sexual relationships between men and women were ‘healthy’, or that only a life devoted to a particular religious ideal—or indeed to religious ideals of any kind—could qualify as ‘personally fulfilling’, then that might indeed be perfectionist—certainly if she were acting as an agent of the state. (Note that our framework is pitched at such a level of generality that it may helpfully guide parents as well as teachers—and indeed, as Thompson (p. ?) suggests, individuals concerned with their own education. Note also that not all teachers work in state schools.) But in our view curricula can be devised that help to develop the relevant capacities while respecting ‘reasonable pluralism’ with respect to such matters.

Tillson (p. ?) raises two further, and somewhat related, questions: who should get to make which educational decisions, and what happens if they

disagree about what should be decided? The hypothetical policymaker with distinctive views about healthy relationships and personal fulfilment dramatises both concerns. Different things can have gone wrong in that case: her substantive views could be mistaken, or it might be wrong of her to have acted on her own judgement—or both. As well as identifying the list of educational goods that decisions should be aiming to achieve, our framework recognises a number of ‘independent’ (i.e. non-educational) values that should also be factored in when deciding what to do. Among those is one we call ‘respect for democratic processes’, which is simply a placeholder for the procedural considerations—including the propriety of collective rather than individual decisions—relevant to all things considered judgements about what to do in any particular case.

We realise, of course, that decisions are often made collectively, and that those involved will often take different views about the best way to weigh the various considerations at stake: educational goods, independent goods and distributive values. They may well also disagree about the likely consequences of any decision, and make different judgements about what outcomes are within the feasible set. We say nothing about the collective character of decision-making as such. Our aim is simply to provide individuals contributing to the decision-making process, at whatever level, with a clearer language and normative framework for thinking about the various values at stake. The clearer—and the more self-aware—individuals are about these things, the better, we hope, collective decisions are likely to be.

Who has the authority to decide what is a huge topic in political philosophy generally, and takes on a particular significance when children’s interests are at stake—witness debate even about the proper role of parents (we list ‘parents’ interests’ as a distinct independent value). It would be an interesting project to use our framework to develop an instrumentalist approach to educational decision-making that evaluated procedures in terms of their tendency to promote particular combinations and distributions of educational goods. (That is how we understand Tillson’s (p. ?) suggestion that we might ‘answer questions of the distribution of decision-making powers by drawing on the framework itself’ which we see also as a response to Curren’s (p. ?) concern that we neglect decisions about ‘the scope and division of educational authority’). Alternatively, one might flesh out ‘respect for democratic processes’ in a way that incorporated anti-perfectionist constraints on the decision-making of certain agents: that would be one way of addressing some kinds of disagreement. Since the book’s intention is merely to identify, in broad categories, the considerations that should be taken into account—to provide a framework within which different substantive positions can helpfully be located and presented—we were careful not to endorse any particular views on such matters.

Sometimes, however, the fact that others disagree is relevant in a different way: it affects the set of feasible outcomes, and hence the desirability of the different options available. One can compromise for moral reasons, as it were, perhaps because that seems the fair way to respond to others’ views, but one can also do so strategically: to achieve the best available outcome, entirely by one’s own lights, in the circumstances. The disagreement of

others can be just another fact, like the social technology available, that the responsible decision maker will take into account when evaluating her options. It seems to be this latter that Tillson (p. ?) has in mind—‘much decision-making is likely to meet resistance in implementation’—when he suggests that we may be missing a set of considerations. We agree entirely that what outcomes are realistically achievable depends substantially on the views of other relevant actors; for us those considerations come into the story as part of our model for combining values and evidence: they constitute the empirical context to be investigated by social-scientific means.

ADULTISM AND PARENTS’ INTERESTS

Bagelman (p. ?) suspects that our theory is ‘adultist’ in a way that disregards the interests and judgements of children about their own experience. While welcoming our category of ‘childhood goods’, she worries that we might lack insight into the early stages of life: ‘Terms like “purposeless play”...seem to highlight the problematically adultist view of childhood experience. A reception student digging and piling sand in a playground sandbox...may have a clear purpose for the child (to divert ants, to hide an object, to build a house), and while the adult looking on may consider [it] beneficial for development, they may not consider these as constitutive of a purpose in itself’.

Our view of children is, probably, adultist though not, we think, problematically so. A good deal of adult treatment of children is unavoidably coercive. This coercion is sometimes very obvious: we restrain a toddler from sticking her fingers in a socket, or from running out into a busy street, or from eating the toothpaste from the tube. But coercion runs much deeper than that: the state and the child’s parents jointly force the child to be raised by the people who raise them and, if she goes to school, to attend the particular school she attends. We believe that such coercion should primarily be guided by appeal to the child’s interests, which include not only the development of the six educational capacities but also the enjoyment of what we call childhood goods. Childhood is part of life, not mere preparation for it, and how well it goes is an important aspect of one’s well-being: the daily lived experience of childhood matters for people’s lives independently of, as well as instrumentally for, the capacities that they develop for adulthood. When we invoke ‘purposeless’ play, we do realise that, for any child at any moment, their play may have purpose. Our thought is that in a good childhood that purpose is not always connected to the adult that the child will become, nor are the reasons to provide the environment in which the child plays. For what it is worth, we also suspect that play that is *entirely* purposeless may be part of a good childhood—partly for developmental reasons and partly because never to experience purposelessness would be to miss out on something valuable.

That is true, in our view, for both children and adults. The category of ‘childhood goods’ is easily misunderstood. We agree with those who point out that what are often regarded as ‘childhood’ goods can also be good for adults—purposeless play is a good example (see Gheaus, 2014; Hannan,

2018). This is different from Curren's (p. ?) well-taken observation that the constituents of a good childhood are not limited to those things that can be experienced or enjoyed only by children. Friendship is no less valuable for children than it is for adults, and we did not mean to suggest otherwise. Our thought was only that, other things equal, it might matter more, to one's life as a whole, to miss out on a form of experience that was available only in childhood and so could not be made up for later in life.

We have said that adults' treatment of children should be guided by children's good (including their good while they are children). But children's judgements are not authoritative when it comes to justifying how adults treat them, because children are not the best judges of their own good. All children have preferences, and they start making some judgements at a fairly young age. An adult is unlikely to judge well how to treat the child without consulting those preferences and judgements. But whereas one should normally (though not always) resist paternalism when it comes to adults, substituting one's own judgement for theirs is often the proper way to treat children. A baby's cry might signify a preference for food, but it is the need for food, not the preference for it, that the adult should respond to. A child might prefer not to attend school, or, when she is older, judge that school is harmful. Perhaps she may be right in the latter case, but the parent who refuses to make her own judgement abdicates a fundamental responsibility. Children's judgements are useful information when deciding what to do to, with and for them, but should not be regarded as decisive. An interesting issue here is the extent to which children are in a privileged epistemic position with respect even to what should count as childhood goods. Of course, they are, at least normally, in the best position to know what they want, or like, or prefer—and perhaps subjective ingredients should weigh more heavily during childhood than later in life. But the reasons to favour objective conceptions of well-being surely remain relevant: one can readily imagine a child realising that something she had initially experienced as positive—an apparent 'friendship' with another child, for example—was in fact cause for regret.

Bagelman's suspicion of our alleged adultism complements Hand's (p. ?) objection to our treating certain kinds of interests of parents as an independent value. 'What I want to deny is that educational decision makers have any reason to value parental interests of these kinds. Far from being valuable, parents' interests in fixing their children's religious beliefs and in giving them unearned advantages in the job market are at best ethically neutral and at worst ethically bad'.

Two of us have written fairly extensively on exactly these issues, and have argued for a very austere account of parents' rights with respect to their children that aligns closely with Hand's thought (Brighouse and Swift, 2014a). On their view, parents' interests often fail to have the status of rights and are usually (but not always) better regarded as a feasibility constraint than as an independent value.⁵ But in this book our deliberate choice not to take a sectarian stand on exactly how to interpret parents' interests—and not to offer an account of parents' rights rather than interests—was over-determined. Not only do we disagree amongst ourselves on these matters but

our target audience will surely do the same. As with other values, taking too narrow a philosophical stand—even if we all endorsed it—would draw readers’ attention away from the ecumenical method we sought to advance and illustrate.

NON-CONSEQUENTIAL EDUCATIONAL GOODS

Tillson (p. ?) offers a couple of insights about goods that are ‘educational’, in some sense of that term, but do not consist in the knowledge, skill, attitudes and dispositions that we conceive ‘education’, by definition, as tending to produce. As he puts it, ‘some processes and relationships might reasonably be considered to be both *educational* and *good*’ where the kind of ‘good’ in question is intrinsic rather than instrumental. Watching Shakespeare, or a relationship with a teacher, for example, might be good in ways that are not ‘reducible to outcomes’. We agree, and clarifying the sense in which these goods are ‘non-consequential’ and ‘educational’ should help us see how those points connect with our analysis.

It is important to note that he is putting on the table what he calls non-consequential ‘goods’ rather than non-consequential ‘considerations’. Our book acknowledges that it talks a lot more about how to produce and distribute good things in people’s lives than about other possible aims—such as respecting their moral status—or about the permissible means by which those good things may be produced and distributed. And in other work, one of us has gone on to extend our approach to consider more fully how taking into account non-consequentialist constraints on decision-making affects what should be decided, all things considered (see Clayton *et al.*, 2018, 2019). But these are not Tillson’s concern. He is bringing to our attention things that *are* good for people, but specifically to the ways in which they are good for them that are unrelated to their consequences.

We readily grant that watching Shakespeare, or student–teacher relationships, may be intrinsically valuable. But in what sense are these things ‘educational’? For us, it only makes sense to think of them as such because—and if—they also produce knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. If watching something, or relating to someone, does not do that, then any benefits that people get from them are not ‘educational’; they are good for them in some other way. Presumably they are good in the same way as ‘childhood goods’, which are defined in such a way as to exclude any developmental benefits. What leads Tillson to describe the processes and relationships in question as ‘educational’, we suggest, is precisely the fact that they are, typically, instrumentally valuable in the ways that we identify. That is quite compatible with his important observation that they may also be good for people by contributing to their well-being in other ways. For us, one might say, the concept ‘education’ is irreducibly teleological—not in the strong sense that it prescribes a specific telos but in the weak one that it necessarily refers to the development or production of something. Tillson is right that educational processes and relationships may have intrinsic value—and right that that value might need to be traded off against their instrumental value. But it is in virtue of the latter that

they warrant the label ‘educational’, so in such cases their intrinsic value is being weighed against their educational value.

SELF-EDUCATION

We greatly appreciate Thompson’s (p. ?) suggestion that our theory might be so extended as to constitute ‘the foundation for a general approach to living well’, and that ‘most choices made in the interest of flourishing within the course of a human life can be understood as educational in the way that they require the actor to ask whether a given option is likely to move her closer or further away from the person she wishes to become’. We were aware that the general methodological approach we advocate—‘combining values and evidence’—might fruitfully be applied to other *policy sectors*, such as housing, transport or health. And, as far as education is concerned, we knew that many things that people do in their lives—including many things that they do as adults—are ‘educational’. (Perhaps *everything* we do throughout our lives has an educational aspect, if only by not disrupting our current constellation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions.) This reply has already emphasised that we wanted to address parents, classroom teachers, headteachers, as well as public officials at all levels of government. But we confess that it had not occurred to us that the advice we offer might be helpful for the individual thinking about *her own* formation and development. What Thompson says seems exactly right. As agents, it is indeed very important to keep clearly in mind the way in which one’s decisions—throughout one’s life—are likely to affect the extent to which one possesses the various capacities conducive to a flourishing life, and the mixture or combination of those capacities. We are very grateful for the (implicit) suggestion that we have (inadvertently) written a self-help book.

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NOTES

1. Brighouse (2005) provides arguments for several items on the list, and Brighouse and Swift (2008, 2009, 2014b) have argued for variants of some of the distributive goals, both jointly and separately.
2. For an attempt to apply a revised version of the framework to the regulation of religious schooling, see Clayton *et al.* (2018).
3. Full disclosure: Swift supervised the doctoral thesis on which Fishkin’s excellent book was based. He was, and remains, inclined to agree with Thompson that what Fishkin offers is not really a theory equality of opportunity at all!
4. For a more extended critical discussion of our alleged perfectionism, see Lindblom (2018).
5. Think of a case in which the decision maker has two options, which both serve children’s and third parties’ interests equally well, but one of which serves parents’ interests better.

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