Inland Norway University

Faculty of Education

Eivind Marøy

Master's thesis

Literature and ethics

Spiegelman's *Maus* in the upper secondary English classroom

Master's Degree in Culture and Language Didactics

Spring 2020

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Marit Elise Lyngstad. She has been brilliant in the entire process. She has given good advice, thorough feedback and flexibility when it was needed.

My thanks also go to my friends and family. I like you guys.

Eivind Marøy

Oslo, 2020

Abstract

The core curriculum emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and ethical awareness. The overall aim of this thesis is to discuss how one can use literature to explore issues of ethics in the English language classroom. More specifically, I examine how Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* can be used to discuss questions of ethics. I also discuss how working on ethics through literature can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth.

Two research methods are used in this thesis: a literature review and a close reading of *Maus*. I investigate how a methods-based approach with emphasis on moral reasoning can be used to discuss questions of ethics. Further, I explore the connection between ethics and literature, and review the didactical implications of working in this way. The close reading of *Maus* exemplifies the possibilities of ethical discussion within the graphic novel

My findings suggest that discussing questions of ethics can develop students' critical thinking skills. The use of literature can promote students' affective responses, which can make this process more effective. Ethics is about how we live with other people, and literature can be a way to help students to consider points of view that are unfamiliar to their own. To discuss questions such as these can make students more conscious about how they position themselves in a world filled with other people.

This thesis is based on theory and can mainly suggest possibilities for classroom application. Further research would entail interviewing students and teachers about their experiences of working on literature and ethics in this way.

Norsk samandrag

Den generelle delen av læreplanen vektlegg viktigheita av kritisk tenking og etisk bevisstheit. Det overordna målet med den denne oppgåva er å drøfte korleis ein kan bruke litteratur for å utforske etiske spørsmål i engelskfaget. Meir spesifikt vil eg utforske korleis Art Speigelman sin teikneserieroman *Maus* kan brukast til å diskutere etiske spørsmål i skulen. Eg drøftar også korleis det å jobbe med etikk gjennom litteratur kan fremme kritisk tenking og personleg utvikling

Denne oppgåva baserer seg på eit teorikapittel og ei nærlesing av *Maus*. Eg undersøker deretter korleis ei tilnærming med hovudfokus på etisk argumentasjon kan bli brukt i skulen. Vidare studerer eg relasjonen mellom etikk og litteratur og ser på dei didaktiske implikasjonane denne symbiosen bær med seg. Nærlesinga av *Maus* vil først og fremst vise dei ulike moglegheitene for etisk diskusjon som ligg i verket.

Resultata antydar at det å diskutere etiske spørsmål kan utvikle elevar si evne for kritisk tenking. Bruken av litteratur som utgangspunkt for etiske refleksjonar kan påverke elevar sine affektive reaksjonar, noko som kan gjere denne prosessen meir effektiv. Etikk handlar om korleis vi samhandlar med andre menneske, og litteratur kan vere ein god måte for elevar å sjå ting frå andre perspektiv enn sitt eige. Å diskutere slike spørsmål kan gjere elevar meir bevisste på korleis dei ter seg i ei verd der dei ikkje er åleine.

Denne oppgåva tar ei teoretisk tilnærming, og kan hovudsakleg foreslå didaktiske moglegheiter. Vidare forsking bør derfor innebere å snakke med elevar og lærarar om deira erfaringar med å studere etiske spørsmål gjennom bruk av litteratur i engelskfaget.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **2**

ABSTRACT **3**

NORSK SAMANDRAG **4**

TABLE OF CONTENTS **5**

1. INTRODUCTION **7**

1.1 RELEVANCE OF THE THESIS 8

1.2 THESIS AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 11

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS 12

2. METHODS **13**

2.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY 13

2.1.1 Literature review *13*

2.1.2 Close reading of graphic novels *15*

2.1.3 Justification of the research strategy *16*

2.2 LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS 17

3. THEORY **18**

3.1 ETHICS IN EDUCATION 18

3.1.1 An argument for philosophical ethics in school *18*

3.1.2 Teaching ethics to non-philosophy students *21*

3.1.3 Ethical theories *26*

3.2 LITERATURE AND ETHICS 31

3.2.1 The adolescent reader *31*

3.2.2 Ethical criticism *34*

3.3 DIDACTICAL IMPLICATIONS 42

3.4 INTRODUCING *MAUS* 47

3.4.1 Genre *47*

3.4.2 Literary devices *49*

4. LITERARY ANALYSIS **51**

4.1 MORAL RELATIVISM 51

4.2 ETHICAL EGOISM 52

4.3 A SOCIAL CONTRACT 54

4.4 RULE-BASED ETHICS 56
4.5 UTILITARIANISM 58
4.6 VIRTUE ETHICS 60
4.7 DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES 62
4.7.1 Making promises 62
4.7.2 Anja 64

5. DIDACTIC BENEFITS 67

5.1 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND LITERATURE 68
5.2 VIVIDNESS 71
5.3 MORAL REASONING 74
5.3.1 Scaffolding ethical literacy 74
5.3.2 Multiple perspectives 76
5.3.3 Oral participation 77
5.4 IDENTITY 78
5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS 81

6. CONCLUSION 83

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 83
6.2 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH 86

REFERENCE LIST 87

1. Introduction

Why is ethics important, and why is this something we should teach our students? This is in no way a new question; it was already discussed in Plato's *The Republic* around 380 BCE. In *The Repbulic*, Thrasymachus does not believe that there is something essentially *Just*, but rather thinks that justice is nothing but the advantage of the stronger (Pappas, 1995, p. 39). Is ethics, however, only a reflection of what the powers that be deem important?

Sitting beside a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, Simon Blackburn, a philosopher, was asked on radio about what use philosophy would have been on a death march. He answered that it would be no more useful than literature, art, music or science would have been in such a situation. He asked, however, that we consider the ethical environment that made such events possible: "Hitler said, 'How lucky it is for rulers that men cannot think.' But in saying this he sounded as if he, too, was blind to the ethical climate that enabled his own ideas, and hence his power, to flourish" (Blackburn, 2001, p. 3). This climate, Blackburn continues, included images of primordial purity of race, pollution from 'degenerates', visions of national and racial destiny, and

> It was hospitable to the idea of the leader whose godlike vision is authoritative and unchallengeable. (…) In short, Hitler could come to power only because people *did* think – but their thinking was poisoned by an enveloping climate of ideas, many of which may not even have been conscious. (Blackburn, 2001, p. 3)

To be aware of and critical to the moral substructures of one's own society is no easy feat. We like to think of Norway as peace nation and a tolerant society. It is, however, easy to forget that Jewish people were not allowed entry to Norway until 1851, that women were not eligible to vote until 1913 and that homosexuality between men was considered a crime up until 1972. It is always easier to pass judgement on something that is far away either in time or space. What are our moral blind spots of today? Should we react when popular clothing brands use sweatshop labour, or should it be ok to be passively happy to get cheap clothes? How about meat? Should animals suffer for our convenience? And should our grandchildren suffer from the lack of resolve to address the climate crisis?

Blackburn (2001) argues that human beings are ethical animals. This does not mean that we naturally behave well, rather that we grade and evaluate, compare and admire – "we do not just 'prefer' this or that, in isolation. We prefer that our preferences are shared; we turn them

into demands on each other" (Blackburn, 2001, p. 4). Students are met with moral demands since early childhood and should be allowed to participate in these discourses. Not only as a recipient, but also as a critical thinker. To be able to do this, however, requires practice. To navigate in such a social landscape, students should be given the possibility to discuss right from wrong, even though it might be challenging to venture into conversations where the teacher does not necessarily have all the answers.

1.1 Relevance of the thesis

When discussing important trends in societal development, an official Norwegian report from 2015 emphasises that the Norwegian society is characterised by stability and good living conditions. Notwithstanding this, there is still inequality in Norway and is also part of a world dominated by major challenges (NOU 2015: 8, 2015, p. 20). Among these are globalisation, which "contributes to a growth in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in the Norwegian society" (NOU 2015: 8, 2015, p. 21). It also emphasizes climate change and that society is changing at an increasingly rapid pace. There will be new forms of communication due to technological changes. The ever-increasing access to information, stemming from many different sources, is making sorting through this more complex. Societal development is placing greater demands on the individual, and "When society in many fields is characterised by individualisation, this may provide great freedom to make individual choices, but this might demand more of each individual" (NOU 2015: 8, 2015, p. 21).

To meet these challenges, a new core curriculum was determined 1 September 2017 but is yet to be implemented. The core curriculum has also given great emphasis to critical thinking and ethical awareness. In section 1.3 on critical thinking and ethical awareness, both methods and theories for acquiring knowledge are given attention: "If new insight is to emerge, established ideas must be scrutinised and criticised by using theories, methods, arguments, experiences and evidence. The pupils must be able to assess different sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). The core curriculum goes on to say that "Ethical awareness, which means balancing different considerations, is necessary if one is to be a reflecting and responsible human being. The teaching and training must develop the pupils' ability to make ethical assessments and help them to be cognisant of ethical issues" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 7).

To work with ethics in education is in other words closely related to critical thinking according to the core curriculum. On the one hand, students "shall learn in school to respect the fact that people are different and learn to solve conflicts peacefully" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). This requires that students are able to see norms and behaviours from different perspectives and points of belief. However, while tolerance is important, education should also instil a common ground. Education should also,

> give the pupils an understanding of the basic rules of democracy and the importance of protecting them (…) Democratic values shall be promoted through active participation throughout the entire learning path. School shall promote democratic values and attitudes that can counteract prejudice and discrimination. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, pp. 8-9)

When discussing the new core curriculum, Anne-Britt Fenner (2018, p. 36) claims that *Bildung* has received increased focus compared to the previous core curriculum. For Hild Elisabeth Hoff, *Bildung* is associated with "the development of personal identity, moral values, critical thinking and democratic citizenship"(Hoff, 2018, pp. 69-70). Further, Hoff argues that foreign language teaching in recent years has taken an intercultural turn that focuses on humanistic *Bildung* ideals. These are usually "associated with the development of personal identity, moral values, critical thinking and democratic citizenship" (Hoff, 2018, p. 69). The basic premise of *Bildung* theories, she argues, is that "encounters with otherness are fundamental to processes of self-development" (Hoff, 2018, p. 70).While it is stated quite explicitly in the core curriculum that students should develop an ethical awareness, it is difficult to find any comments as to where and how this should be done in the subjects:

> "While curricula in the latter half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st centuries clearly state that English is a *Bildung* subject, it has sometimes been difficult to recognise this in the subject-specific aims, partly because *Bildung* is not a competence, but a long-term aim, which is difficult to assess" (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018, p. 37)

That something is difficult to assess does not mean that it is not important in education, a vital point in Gert Biesta's *Good Education in an Age of Measurement.* The danger, he argues, is that "we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value" (Biesta, 2010, p. 26). We can find similar sentiments in the purpose of English: "(…) English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight. It will enable the pupils to communicate with others on personal, social, literary and interdisciplinary topics" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013). When discussing this extract and its

relation to *Bildung*, Fenner(2018, p. 225) argues that fictional text can, more than factual texts, open doors to gaining self-knowledge and personal insight.

As stated in the aims for the compulsory English subject in upper secondary school, students should "discuss and elaborate on different types of English language literary texts from different parts of the world" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013, p. 10). The fact that "the competence aims are directly linked to the learners' ability to discuss and elaborate on the text is essential and has implications for the teaching of literature" (Fenner, 2018, p. 227) The implication is that making summaries and answering questions about the texts students read are not enough for learners to reach this competence aim. In the subject area of written communication, literature is covered as such:

> The main subject area includes reading a variety of different texts in English to stimulate the joy of reading, to experience greater understanding and to acquire knowledge. This involves reading a large quantity of literature to promote language understanding and competence in use of text. Reading different types of texts can lay the foundation for personal growth, maturation and creativity and provide the inspiration necessary to create texts. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013, p. 2)

Fenner relates the last sentence here to formal *Bildung*, "as it focuses on the learner's personal growth, maturation and creativity"(Fenner, 2018, p. 226). Discussing this, she makes the case that, as the curriculum does not include ways of teaching or specific content, it will be up to teachers and textbook authors to choose and design tasks that will promote students' *Bildung,* or personal growth (Fenner, 2018, p. 226).

The new subject-specific competence aims that will be in effect from the fall of 2020 are open in a like manner. It is stated that the concept of 'text' is understood in a broad manner, with emphasis given to graphical expressions as well as others (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019, p. 3). Hege Emma Rimmereide advocates that graphic novels are advantageous in challenging both strong readers and reluctant readers. Research has established that readers "exposed to comics and graphic novels not only became motivated to read, but their reading competence and comprehension were about the same as that of people who read other texts" (Rimmereide, 2013, p. 133). While graphic novels are useful for motivation and reading for pleasure, Rimmereide also argues that graphic novels can "instigate discussions on various themes, for instance Spiegelman's *Maus* (1991), which examines Jewish history during the Second World War as well as relations between generations" (Rimmereide, 2013, p. 138). For first year

students in upper secondary school, the new competence aims also require students to explain others' arguments and follow up on others' input in conversations and discussions about various topics (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019, p. 11). Working philosophically with ethics is a perfect possibility to cover this aim.

The subject-specific competence aims are in other words open, and it is not always easy to know how to work with the broader aims from the core curriculum. In my master thesis, I discuss ways in which one can use literature to make students think about right and wrong, that is, question of ethics. Even though we all have our moral intuitions, to be able to express them and make a stand for them considering their consequences is something that is more and more important in an age with an increasingly polarized public discourse. I argue that teachers should give students the possibility to discuss right from wrong, even though it might be challenging to venture into conversations where the teacher does not readily have the answers. As teachers we should both try to socialize our students into existing moral structures and making them independent thinkers. I will examine how working with ethics and literature can cultivate both these qualities. In my thesis, I discuss how one can use literature to explore issues of ethics in the English language classroom.

1.2 Thesis aim and research questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to discuss how one can use literature to explore issues of ethics in the English language classroom. To do this, I will answer the following two research questions:

1. How can Art Spiegleman's graphic novel *Maus* be used to discuss questions of ethics in the classroom?

2. In what ways can working on ethics through literature promote critical thinking skills and personal growth?

1.3 Outline of the thesis

In this chapter, I have so far introduced why working on ethics in the classroom is a worthwhile effort. In addition to this I have presented my overall aim and two research questions.

In chapter 2, I present the two research methods used in this thesis. They are a literature review and a close reading of Art Spiegelman's *Maus.* I reflect on why I have chosen these strategies and elaborate on how I have used them in my thesis.

Chapter 3 consists of my literature review. Here I present and discuss theory on ethics in education; literature and ethics, and lastly the didactical implications of working with literature and ethics together.

In chapter 4 I perform a close reading of Art Spiegelman's (2003) *The Complete Maus*. The main focus is on exploring and showing in what ways *Maus* can be used to discuss ethical issues. In most of the subchapters, I discuss *Maus* through the lens of an ethical theory. This is to make the aspects of the theory more explicit and show how the different theories can be used by students and teachers alike.

In chapter 5 I discuss the didactic benefits of using literature to explore questions of ethics. I show how literature can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth. I also suggest ways of working with literature and ethics in the classroom throughout this chapter.

In the final, concluding chapter, I present my findings. I also discuss some limitations and suggest further research.

2. Methods

Two research methods are used in this thesis: a literature review and a close reading of *Maus* by Art Siegelman. In the sections below I elaborate on how and why these research strategies have been chosen and utilized. I also discuss limitations and possible problems.

2.1 Research strategy

My engagement with ethics in education was motivated by the core curriculum's emphasis on ethics and the impression that it is not immediately self-evident how one should implement these aims when teaching the English subject. It is my view that using literature to discuss questions of ethics is an approach that can be meaningful for students and in line with the overarching aims of the core curriculum and the subject-specific aims of English concurrently. First, I explore relevant theory on ethics and literature. Subsequently, I explore literature on how one can work on these issues in a classroom setting. After this I conduct a close reading of *Maus*, focusing on how certain episodes in the text can be used to discuss questions of ethics. After this, I discuss how working on ethics through literature can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth, with specific suggestions concerning how to teach ethics and literature.

2.1.1 Literature review

The first area of interest is why one should study ethics in education. In this part of the thesis, I mainly conducted a systematic literature search in Oria, using search words as 'ethics in education'; 'teaching ethics'; 'approaches to teaching ethics', and other comparable key words. Why and how one should study ethics in education is relevant in order to ascertain the benefits of working on ethics in education and determine if it is a worthwhile effort. Viktor Gardelli, Eva Alerby and Anders Persson (2014) consider three arguments for teaching ethics, and concludes that philosophical ethics is the strongest approach in all three cases. As 'teaching ethics' has many connotations, it was important to establish which approach (philosophical ethics) was most worthwhile. However, philosophy is a difficult and technical area of study, and students are generally not well-versed in this subject. For that reason, I gathered information on how one should go about working on ethics with non-philosophy

students. Eventually, I selected a methods-based approach that was specifically designed for non-philosophy students. One facet of the methods-based approach is that it advocates a minimized focus on ethical theories. It does, however, welcome superficial knowledge of theories in order to scaffold ways of thinking ethically. After having read broadly in the field, I found Julia Driver's *Ethics - the Fundamentals (2007)* to be most convenient resource. A priority behind this choice was to use a resource that was thorough but highly accessible.

After this I discuss teenagers as readers. Using the ideas of Louise M. Rosenblatt (1995) and J. A. Appleyard (1991), I examine how teenagers negotiate meaning with texts, and to which extent combining ethics and literature can make sense to the adolescent reader. Further, I establish the link between ethics and literature, as this is a topic of discussion within literary theory. Most of the discussion here is based on the introductory reader *Ethics, Literature & Theory* edited by Stephen K. George (2005). This work was chosen as it is the most comprehensive anthology discussing ethics and literature available, with leading theorists in the field discussing the subject-matter from various perspectives. In addition to this, a special emphasis is given to Martha C. Nussbaum (1997) and her concept of the *narrative imagination*. Samuelsson and Lindstrom's (2017) methods-based approach entailed a step termed *vividness.* It was important to translate this step to something that could be relevant and purposeful in upper secondary education. I consider Nussbaum's concept of narrative imagination to a very applicable interpretation when linking ethics and literature in an educational setting.

Thereafter, I move on to study the didactical implications of working on the holocaust, ethics and literature. *Maus* is expounding on a very inexplicable part of history. It was essential to read up on this topic in general before analysing *Maus*, and I found Susan Neiman's (2002) *Evil in Modern Thought* as the most useful source to develop some general knowledge of the Holocaust. Further, Anders Granås Kjøstvedt (2019) has written an interesting chapter in a recent anthology on critical thinking in Norwegian education. His chapter was more specifically about didactical approaches to Holocaust education in Norwegian schools. Section 1.3 in the core curriculum (2017) states that it is important to develop ethical awareness and critical thinking. Working on these general aims jointly is a challenging balancing act between moralization and an effort to make them critical individuals. In this regard, reading up on Gert Biesta's ideas has been enlightening. Especially the distinction between *socialization* and *subjectification* is useful here. The last part in the section on theory will be criticism about Maus to assist my understanding of the text itself. After having reviewed articles from Oria

using search words such as "Maus and ethics"; "*Maus* in education"; "approaches to teaching *Maus",* I ended up mainly using *Considering Maus – Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivors Tale" of the Holocaust (2003)* edited by Deborah R. Geis.

From then on, I move on to analyse *Maus* with a specific focus on how one can develop ethical lines of reasoning from certain episodes of the books. Although they are not the main focus, aspects of ethical theories are used to show diverse approaches to discuss ethical problems. My close reading of *Maus* and the chapter on didactic benefits of teaching ethics through literature both builds on the literature specified above. In addition to this, sections where I give explicit suggestions to classroom application in my chapter on didactic benefits are mainly supported by *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* (Beach, Appleman, Hynds, & Wilhelm, 2006); *Teaching English in the 21st Century* (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018); *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (Harmer, 2015); *Literature for the English classroom* (2013) edited by Anna Birketveit and Gweno Willians, and *English for secondary school* (2017) written by Juliet Munden and Christina Sandhaug.

2.1.2 Close reading of graphic novels

As stated above, I conduct a close reading of *Maus* with a special focus on segments that can be of moral relevance. Here, close reading is understood as an examination of the relationship between a text's formal elements and its theme (Tyson, 2015, p. 135). There are, however, some aspects of close reading that are genre specific to a graphic novel compared to novels in the traditional sense.

First, there is some terminology that is important to be aware of if one has not read graphic novels extensively. A page is divided into panels. These are snapshots of the story. Panels are divided by a gutter and moving from one panel to another usually shows a passage in time. Speech is signalled through a speech bubble but can also be located in a caption box. In addition to this, letters in speech bubbles can have onomatopoetic qualities: bigger and bolder letters signify louder speech, whereas smaller and thinner lettering suggest characters being more quiet and subdued (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 9).

The main difference between a novel and a graphic novel is that a graphic novel relies heavily on visual representation in addition to written language. While literacy most commonly refers to reading and writing skills, Rimmereide (2013) argues graphic novels call for *visual literacy*. Visual literacy's most essential concept is that "images can be "read", and that their meaning can be communicated through a process of reading" (Rimmereide, 2013, p. 134). While

reading comics and graphic novels usually is a preconscious effort, there are many clues on a page to consider if one wants to analyse comics critically (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 8). A lot of our meaning-making is grounded in bodily experiences of the world (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 9), and this can help us to know where to look for meaning in a graphic novel. Whereas a novel has this information spelled out by a narrator or through dialogue, a graphic novel can in addition convey this through visual signs. For instance, one way to work out "what is going on within and between panels are the gazes of the characters. If characters look at something, chances are it's important" (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 13).

Kukkonen also argues that the facial features of characters in graphic novels often are stereotyped, i.e. "formed according to cultural prejudices, and give you information on what kind of character you are dealing with" (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 15). This is something that is especially true of *Maus*. Further, visual facial features are clues to reveal inner feelings such as sadness, happiness, anger, and so on. These facial expressions does not signify anything on their own, but must always be read in the narrative context to make sense. (Kukkonen, 2013b, p. 16) Above all, the difference between a close reading of a novel and a graphic novel lies in a decoding of visual signs in addition to the written word. Visual details are rarely accidental and should be taken into consideration when analysing a graphic novel. When discussing ethical issues in *Maus*, identifying emotional responses can be an important part of decoding the text. This is usually signified visually rather than spelled out by an omniscient narrator in graphic novels, which is something one has to be attentive to in this effort.

2.1.3 Justification of the research strategy

The English subject curriculum and the core curriculum are changing from the school year 2020/21. This brings about new possibilities for teaching English, but it is also challenging to adjust and carry out a new reform. This thesis is an effort to show one possible way one can translate the developments in the curricula to the classrooms. I believe that a literature review and a close reading of *Maus* is both sufficient and necessary to explore ways to discuss questions of ethics through the use of literature and its didactic benefits. The literature review is on the one hand the groundwork informing my close reading of *Maus* and the exploration of ethical issues within the graphic novel. At the same time, the literature review serves as the foundation of my discussion about the didactic benefits of working with ethics and literature in general. In this way, the findings in my literature review and close reading of *Maus* inform

my discussion on how ethics and literature together can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth.

2.2 Limitations and potential problems

The research methods applied in this thesis are purely theoretical. The lack of empirical evidence as concerns classroom application is a limiting factor. As such it can only make assumptions and give suggestions about its didactic benefits. In my view, there also lies a potential problem in how to balance reading for enjoyment and reading for a practical purpose. Too much focus on either one can counteract the purpose both pursuits. This is something I believe will require serious considerations if one should try to apply the methods described in a classroom setting. Another limiting factor is that using literature to discuss questions of ethics is a complicated exercise. For that reason, this thesis' target audience is mainly students in upper secondary school. To use literature to discuss ethics will be a very strenuous task for struggling readers. Teachers need to be cognisant of this and responsibly decide whether working with this is applicable in their own student groups.

3. Theory

This section has three parts. First, I examine the relationship between ethics and teaching in general. Subsequently, I explore the relationship between ethics and literature. Finally, I review the didactical implications of working with literature and ethics.

3.1 Ethics in education

In this section, I first argue for philosophical ethics as the most advantageous approach to working on ethics in education. Subsequently I establish that a methods-based approach focusing on moral reasoning is the best course of action when teaching ethics to non-philosophy students. In addition to this, moral reasoning is discussed as a critical thinking skill. Finally, I introduce some aspects of the ethical theories that are used to discuss *Maus* in my analysis.

3.1.1 An argument for philosophical ethics in school

Gardelli, Alerby and Persson (2014) present three common arguments for doing ethics in education, these being 'the socialization argument', 'the quality of life argument' and 'the tool argument'.

> *The socialization argument:* The school has an obligation to foster students to become good citizens (Dill 2007). Ethics in school would benefit to this. Hence, we should have ethics in school.
> *The quality of life argument:* The school has an obligation to help students to be able to live better lives or has an obligation to foster the students to become persons who act in a morally correct way (Rowe 2006). Ethics in school would benefit to this. Hence, we ought to have ethics in school.
> *The tool argument:* The students' results in other subjects would improve if the students had ethics in school (compared to more of the same) (Lovat and Clement 2008). Hence, there should be ethics in school. (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 19)

There are, however, different ways of doing ethics in education. Gardelli et al. (2014) further discuss these arguments in relation to the three most prevalent approaches to doing ethics in education. 'The descriptive facts about ethics approach' (the DE-approach) focuses on what people actually do. 'The moral fostering approach' (the MF-approach) is aimed at making people adopt a certain way to behave. Lastly, the primary focus of 'the philosophical ethics

approach' (the PE-approach) is critical thinking and the reasons why this or that is morally right or wrong (Gardelli et al., 2014, pp. 17-18). Neither the DE-approach or the MF-approach is given strong support by the arguments put forward, the DE-approach being the weakest of the two (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 25).

More interesting to this thesis, however, is that they regard all three arguments (socialization, quality of life, tool) for doing ethics in school 'strong' when the philosophical ethics approach is taken. In general, this type of approach will focus on the students' ability to evaluate moral standpoints and evaluate the strength of arguments. The PE-approach's main focus is not to learn about what other people think is right or wrong, nor is its focus to foster certain ways of thinking in students. It is rather to cultivate a response in students; a certain way of engagement with critical thinking. This notion of engagement is important, Gardelli et al. argue, because

> it is not so much a question of teaching students theories about normative ethics – which would rather be a question of having the DE approach – but rather of the students themselves doing normative ethics (or metaethics) in the sense of engaging in trying to answer the moral questions themselves, of scrutinizing different arguments and positions, and so on. (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 18)

In other words, students will have to do more than just learn facts or acquiesce to some set of norms when studying philosophical ethics.

First, the socialization argument states that ethics would help students to become better citizens. They find a lot support in literature that engaging in philosophical dialogue is a way of educating children to reflective citizenship. They also argue that the critical perspective taken within the PE approach is likely to promote abilities of critical thinking needed for democracy to function well. This is because working with the PE-approach in classrooms calls for social skills such as a willingness to let other students speak and actually listen to them. The PE-approach in this way, they argue, boost students' respect for others' opinions and values, and is this way promoting values of great centrality to democracy (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 22). In addition to this, learning basic argumentation skills can, for instance, make students able to identify and reject when someone is using a personal attack to avoid an argument.

The quality of life argument asserts that schools should help students to live better lives or foster students to become people who act 'morally correct', and that ethics would benefit this. In this, they again consider the PE approach as a discursive and critical undertaking. When

students are encouraged to examine their own and others' moral standpoints and actions, they build up ethical awareness which they see as important to leading a good life (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 23). They suggest that developing autonomy of thinking is one of the benefits of doing philosophical ethics. This is given support by Semetsky (2009) as she critiques the Australian National Framework for Values Education. The framework lists values the Government of Australia has determined should be transmitted to students, but similarly to the Norwegian curricula "any pedagogical/methodological approach are noticeably missing in the current framework" (Semetsky, 2009, p. 70). The value program, she insists, cannot be presented in a reductionist fashion, where students gain values as if they are ingredients used in a cooking recipe (Semetsky, 2009, p. 78). It is much more important to cultivate an ability to choose intelligently and ethically between alternatives, and she concludes that "The need for developing a sense of value-judgment – rather than simply learning a given set of values – is what moral education should focus on" (Semetsky, 2009, p. 78). Choosing an action because one has been told that this is the right thing to do, can at best make us act morally by chance. And it does seem reasonable that being able to make up one's own mind based on own judgements might give rise to more deliberate actions and a more autonomous life.

The tool argument states that students' results would improve in other subjects by doing ethics in school. This argument is considered to be 'strong' when doing philosophical ethics. Gardelli, Alerby and Persson (2014) argue that doing ethics in a critical and evaluative sense helps students acquire abilities such as critical thinking, logical thinking and argumentative and evaluative abilities (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 24). All of these skills are important to learning in general and doing philosophical ethics would thus improve their performance in other school subjects as well.

Furthermore, Topping and Trickey (2007) argue that philosophical enquiry bring about more oral participation by students in the classrooms. In one of their studies followed four intervention classes, where the main focus was the topic 'What is truth?'. They found that, on average, the percentage of time students contributed to discussion increased from 41% to 66% (Topping & Trickey, 2007, p. 79). While the number of student utterances did not change to a great degree, the utterances tended to become longer and more elaborate. While Topping and Trickey admit that longer utterances do not necessarily mean better utterances, they maintain that students gave more reasoned support for their own views and see this as an important step towards developing critical thinking skills.

Eidhamar, Leer-Salvesen and Hølen (2007, p. 309) report a similar experience when doing philosophy in the classroom. They found the results rather surprising, as students who were preconceived to be weak scored rather well, and typically "strong" students had not really understood the point of discussing a topic without a clear-cut answer. Eidhamar, Leer-Salvesen and Hølen suggest that our limited view of what counts as knowledge may to some degree explain the discrepancy between the expectations and results. They further problematize strong student/weak student dichotomy, indicating that the predominance of factual knowledge in education forms our basis of what counts as competence (Eidhamar et al., 2007, p. 310).

What Topping and Trickey (2007) and Eidhamar et al. (2007) show is again in line with the tool-argument for doing philosophical ethics. To use the philosophical ethics approach will interrupt the pervasive focus on remembering facts and knowledge and will also cater to students who crave for more ambiguous discussions. This way of education will compel students to delve deeper into arguments and discussions and thus promote critical thinking skills.

3.1.2 Teaching ethics to non-philosophy students

It is important to remember that most students will be new to philosophical thinking and ethics. It is not a field of study they in any way are experts in, and this has got to be kept in mind when introducing the subject matter to them. Lars Samuelsson and Niclas Lindstrom (2017) criticise the most commonplace way students in higher education learn about ethics. The most standard approach, they argue, entails presenting students with a set of moral theories with a short description of each theory and maybe its criterion of rightness (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, pp. 4-5). They dubbed this approach the 'smorgasbord approach' to teaching ethics, because they see doing ethics as something more than "simply picking from a set of theories, based on personal taste or the like" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 6). When teaching ethics to non-philosophy students, the main focus should not be on the ethical theories themselves. To do that, they argue, would require at least some philosophical foreknowledge and is not something that is possible in the allocated time given to non-philosophy students learning about ethics for the first time (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 6).

Instead, Samuelsson and Lindstrom suggest a methods-based approach, where they would like to shift focus from the moral theories to moral reasoning. It is a more generalized way of approaching philosophical ethics, and what they set out to show is that there "are in fact certain valid, basic and fairly uncontroversial methods for moral reasoning – although these methods are rarely explicitly formulated in the ethics literature" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 8). They contend that there are three cornerstones to moral reasoning, these being *information*, *vividness* and *coherence*: "1. *Information:* Collect all relevant (correct) information (and get rid of false information) 2. *Vividness*: Represent (mentally) the relevant (correct) information as vividly as possible. 3. *Coherence*: Reason coherently" (Samuelsson and Rist, 2016, in Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 10). If someone defending a moral position fails to satisfy one of these requirements, they argue, the person would be open to legitimate critique.

The first important aspect of moral reasoning, 'information' states that one should try to base one's moral decisions on correct information. "Accordingly, one ought to investigate the relevant factual matters as thoroughly as possible in order to make a justified moral decision in a certain situation" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 8). This part of moral reasoning hardly needs defending, they argue, as moral decisions based on incorrect or incomplete information obviously are open to criticism.

The next aspect, 'vividness', asserts that information as such is insufficient, and that "simply possessing the correct information is often not enough for making moral decisions that can be justified to those affected by them" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 8). In addition, one's mental representation of the relevant information should be 'vivid'. Citing Shelly Cagan, Samuelsson and Lindstrom admit that it is not entirely clear how vividness should be understood: "It seems possible that vividness simply is a matter of having a wealth of details. Or it might be more directly a matter of how adequately the belief is displayed in the representational system of the mind (…)" (Kagan 1989, in Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9). A facet of vividness may be that our moral judgements might change with our position in a given situation. Discussing moral attitudes to war, Jonathan Glover (1990) considers it a truism that we accept some actions or policies because of a failure of imagination. Having experienced war as a soldier would give rise to other judgements than being in a position of the armchair-philosopher. But he also makes the case that one does not have to experience everything oneself, but that films or novels can also help us to respond in a more sensitive or imaginative way (Glover, 1990, p. 26). In my understanding, 'vividness' necessitates an active processing of the situation. I believe that the more immersed one is in the situation at hand,

the easier it is to make a judgement that respects the requirement of *universalizability* described below. Vividness requires that one do more than an offhand reading of a situation, and an active involvement with all sides. If one is to discuss the moral position of 'the other', it seems like a minimum requirement to try to place oneself in the given position or situation (see section 3.2.2 on Martha C. Nussbaum and her concept of *narrative imagination* for more information on how vividness is understood in this thesis).

Maybe the most important aspect of moral reasoning is 'coherence'. A central feature of moral reasoning is that we try to provide reasons for our actions and decisions. One such reason can be that the action that provides more happiness than pain is the way to go. That the intention of the moral agent is more important than the consequences might be another.

> However, in order to justify one's decision, one also has to reason coherently on the basis of this vividly represented information. That is to say, the reason one proposes has to be coherent with the reasons one proposes in other situations as well as with one's overall set of beliefs and reasoning. (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9)

What is meant by this is that the immersion in, or making-vivid of, a given situation should not be the only factor determining moral judgements. It is again an insistence on the importance of universalizability – if we do deem a situation morally impermissible partly because we took the time to put ourselves in the position of the other, we should make the same judgement-calls of similar situations, even if we do not put in the same effort of imagination.

It might be easier to say what one should not do than do when reasoning coherently. Samuelsson and Lindstrom show some ways in which one's reasoning may fail. For instance,

> (i) one's reasoning may be grounded in concepts that are blurred or incoherent; (ii) one's reasoning may be logically flawed (some fact which is cited as a reason for some claim may not be relevant to that claim (…) (iii) there may be previously unnoticed consequences of one's moral views that one is not prepared to accept. (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9)

Samuelsson and Lindstrom (2017, p. 9) add some other ways our reasoning can be incoherent. For instance (iv) *ad hoc* assumptions, or assumptions that do not fit with the rest of one's beliefs and judgements, and by "(v) not respecting *universalizability* in at least a minimal sense" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9). Integral in this concept is that there should be no different standards to moral justification when it comes to oneself rather than other persons.

It does not mean one has to be impartial, but if something should apply to one group, it should also be possible to apply this to oneself, and vice versa.

So, what is their methods-based approach to teaching ethics to non-philosophy students? Samuelsson and Lindstrom (2017) uphold that the most important part is to convey the methods of reasoning demonstrated above, adjusted to the student group in question. However, they stress that it is not enough to present and explain the methods to the student-group, they also need time and possibility to practice the methods. Samuelsson and Lindstrom give many examples as to how one can engage in this. One can for instance let students work with realistic moral dilemmas where the students should find the most justifiable decision. Another possibility they give is to defend or criticize a position, which is not necessarily their own – such as a mock debate. "[T]he point here is merely to stress the importance of finding some way for the students to practically work with these methods" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 12).

Eidhamar, Leer-Salvesen and Hølen (2007, p. 309) have made one attempt. Their study was a one-time experiment, where a philosopher led a lesson in Christian and other religious and ethical education. The methodology was Socratic dialogue, and the student either agreed or disagreed to certain propositions. The students quickly understood that they were not only to agree or disagree, but also had to support their views with arguments. The students were later tested in the subject matter. The test had few factual questions and relied heavily on reflection. Topping and Trickey's study (2007) focused on the topic 'What is truth?'. The classes were discussing one of Aesop's fables, "Mercury and the Axe" and the sessions were video recorded. The intervention classes used common prompt questions, such as

1. Do you think this is a true story? Why?
2. What do we mean when we say something is true?
4. What is a lie?
6. Which man in the story was honest? What does 'honest' mean?
8. Is it better to tell the truth or to tell lies? Why?
10. Is it ever right to tell a lie? Is it ever wrong to tell the truth? (Topping & Trickey, 2007, p. 78)

The main elements in these interventions are open-ended questions and a subject-matter without easy answers. What is interesting when students inquire about ethics philosophically is not their answers per se, but rather how they are able to build arguments and if they are able to determine whether these are good or bad.

It is important to keep in mind that thinking skills is not something that is acquired and internalised after one instructional experience. In his extensive summary of research on thinking skills, Barry K. Beyer stresses that learning thinking skills requires multiple exposures: “whereas some novices require as few as five or six such learning experiences to develop a level of independent proficiency in a thinking skill, some may require as many as fifty or more instructional experiences to do so” (Beyer, 2008, p. 225). It will, in other words, be important to be patient when introducing the method-based approach described above by Samuelsson and Lindstrom. Beyer’s research shows that thinking skills are best learnt when connected to a subject-matter (2008, p. 229). It is in other words it is valuable to have literature as a focus of attention when learning to follow the steps of moral reasoning. Students need quite a few learning experiences to become proficient in a new thinking skill. Beyer welcomes the symbiosis between subject matter and learning thinking skills, as it “provides repeated opportunities for instruction in thinking skills while students apply them in the natural course of subject-matter learning” (Beyer, 2008, p. 229).

Ferrer, Jøsok, Ryen, Wetlesen and Aas (2019a) consider two approaches to teaching critical thinking skills. The first approach emphasizes that thinking skills is something that one can acquire independently of a subject matter. This approach suggests that one should teach critical-thinking explicitly and directly (Ferrer et al., 2019a, p. 15). This is what we will do when we instruct students in Samuelsson and Lindstrom’s (2017) steps and requirements for moral reasoning. This is advantageous, Ferrer et al. argue, because thinking skills are transferable and possible to put to use in other subjects and fields of knowledge (Ferrer et al., 2019a, p. 15). The other position Ferrer et al. (2019a) examine is more in line with Beyer (2008), arguing that thinking skills always have to be connected with a topic – you have to think about something. This view argues that problems we meet in our daily lives are not solved with logic alone, and are complex issues requiring subject-specific knowledge (Ferrer et al., 2019a, p. 15).

Ferrer et al. (2019a) propose a middle ground between these alternatives. On the one hand, they recognize that what counts as sound and justifiable reasoning will differ from the humanities to the natural sciences (Ferrer et al., 2019a, p. 15). On the other, they believe that thinking skills to some extent are general and possible to utilize in different situations. For them, critical thinking is not just one variety of thinking among many. They argue instead that it represents the quality of thinking itself. They turn to John Dewey, who defines reflective thought as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of

knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910/2012, p. 6). This means, Ferrer et al. argue, that one ground rule for critical thinking is to have an active and reflective attitude rather than passively accept information or make conclusions without deliberation (Ferrer et al., 2019a, p. 12).

Alec Fisher also builds on Dewey, and contrasts critical thinking with *unreflective thinking,* which is "the kind of thinking which occurs when someone jumps to a conclusion, or accept some evidence, claim or decision at face value, without really thinking about it" (Fisher, 2011, pp. 13-14) Contrary to that, Fisher (2011) defines critical thinking is a skilful activity. For him, critical thinking requires interpretation and evaluation of observations and other sources of information. It has to meet standards such as clarity, relevance, adequacy, coherence and so on, and it is in this manner something that is possible to do well or badly. (Fisher, 2011, p. 14)

Focusing on the ethical aspects of a text will probably be a new experience to many teachers as well as their students. The bottom line is that it is important to give students time to learn and explore a method of moral reasoning if one chooses to give the exploration of ethics through literature a try.

3.1.3 Ethical theories

While Samuelsson and Lindstrom reject the *smorgasboard approach* when teaching ethics to non-philosophy students, they do not advocate that students should not learn about these theories at all. Rather, they think that it is a good idea to "let the students know that there exist a variety of moral theories, defended by different philosophers, and that some of these theories focus on consequences, some on respect, some on rights, some on virtues, and so on" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 7). Their main point is that one should not dwell extensively on these theories and that the focus should not be about learning in-depth details about the theories themselves. However, I believe that to learn about some aspects of a theory can help students in recognizing how it is possible to think, thus scaffolding them in their future attempts at moral reasoning. A general knowledge of some theories can also be beneficial for teachers, giving insights into which questions it make sense to ask.

Moral relativism and moral universalism

Moral relativism is in philosophy a problem that has to be taken seriously. It has valid points that can be difficult to overcome. Moral relativism argue that morality ”is just a construct of various societies and cultures, each with its own set of norms and not subject to criticism or praise from outsiders” (Driver, 2007, p. 17). It more or less states that what one counts as morally permissible or impermissible is contingent on which moral framework one applies – in one culture something is done in this way, in another it is done in another– and both ways are equally good in the eyes of those accustomed with the tradition.

Universalism is the claim that there are some moral truths that are universal. This entails that no matter where you may have been born, there are some things that simply are morally impermissible and some things that are allowed. While moral universalism contends that there are some moral ‘facts’ that always applies to everyone, moral relativism is a denial of this view. Julia Driver thinks part of moral relativisms appeal is because some people believe that one has to reject universalism and ascribe to relativism in order to convey a tolerant attitude. (Driver, 2007, p. 17). This is of course not true, and there is unquestionably some things one should not tolerate.

Ethical egoism

An egoistic view is “one that either explains or justifies something in terms of the agent’s self-interest (Driver, 2007, p. 31). Julia Driver distinguishes between psychological egoism and ethical egoism. Psychological egoism, she argues, is a descriptive and non-normative view that simply holds that all human action is motivated by self-interest. It is, in other words, a belief in how things are, and not how things should be. Ethical egoism is a normative view that contends that “all actions ought to be motivated by self-interest” (Driver, 2007, p. 32). This view does not need to build upon psychological egoism, but the theory usually stems from a belief that we should act this way because egoism is hardwired in our evolutionary biology – we really cannot do otherwise.

Social Contract theory

Social contract theory does not require a belief in a god or a belief in moral ‘facts’ that are either true or untrue. It usually compares a society with norms and laws with a *state of nature*. This state of nature is to be considered as a pre-social state of affairs, where there are no laws, no norms – no justice or injustice (Driver, 2007). This is a world where your goods can be stolen, your brother killed, and you are all alone in your efforts to survive. However,

> Given that life in the state of nature – the state of people living without any rules, laws, or government enforcement of norms – is "nasty, brutish and short," it is in the interests of individuals to band together and agree to rules of behaviour to avoid the state of nature. (Driver, 2007, p. 103)

In general, social contract theories will argue that the reason people band together and form societies with norms, laws and other kinds of rules for human conduct, is to avoid this state of nature that is random in its essence. Some social contract theorists deem this state-of-nature to be a description of a historical past. Others, such as John Rawls, uses it as an abstract concept.

John Rawls' theory of justice wants to find common ground for what is fair in a society. Let us assume that one lived in this state of nature with no rules whatsoever – what rules would one want to create in a new and just society? To make people give an honest answer to what would be fair, his theory of justice requires us to remove as many prejudices as possible. To achieve this, the answer should be given under a *veil of ignorance* – "that is, where they are unaware of factors such as their own social standing, race, and so forth that might have a distorting impact on their judgements of what is fair and just" (Driver, 2007, p. 113). So, when deciding which rules should be the bedrock for society and basis for morality, one should do so in a position where one does not know whether one is a man or a woman, Jew or German, one's own level of education, sexuality and so on. The idea is that not knowing anything about one's own particularity would lead to a fairer and less discriminative society.

Kantianism

Immanuel Kant's ethical theory is deontological. This means that whether something is morally permissible or not will be judged by whether the action adheres to a rule. Most students will have met rule-based moralities before. For instance, most religions have some rules about which actions are allowed and those that are not – e.g. the Ten Commandments. Many will have met the Golden Rule in one variation or another – do onto others as you would have them do onto you. Kant has also made a moral rule. His does not depend on religion, but human rationality. According to Kant, you only act morally on the occasions when your actions conform to his moral law. This moral law has several formulations, and we look at two of them below.

The first formulation of his moral law goes like this: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a moral law" (Kant, 1785/2002,

p. 37). If one should translate this to teens, one could repeat it as meaning something like 'it should be possible to want that everyone should do the same thing as you'. When judging something to be moral or not, students should try to universalize the act and assess if they would want this to be a general thing. For instance, is stealing wrong? Students would then have to imagine the generalization of that rule – that everyone stole in general – something that would lead to bankruptcy for shops, and so on. And when you stole something from someone, others could as easily steal it from you. Since the generalization of the act leads to a contradiction – one would obviously not want a breakdown of commerce – it does not pass the moral law, and thus it is morally impermissible. This argument is also a good defence against the threat of relativism. It requires one to consider the full extent of one's actions when debating if something is morally permissible or not.

The second formulation of Kant's moral law goes like this: "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means" (Kant, 1785/2002, pp. 46-47). We use things as means all the time. For instance, students use the computer to write paper, to get a grade, and so on. In addition, we use people as means as well – a student will use a teacher to get knowledge, and a teacher will use students' need for an education to get food on the table. However, when it comes to people, because we are rational beings with wants and needs, it is not permissible to use someone solely as a means – one has to respect their humanity, which "entails a respect for them as autonomous, rational, beings" (Driver, 2007, p. 91). So, in a situation where one uses someone to achieve something else, one would have to ask oneself if one at the same time respects the other's integrity and humanity – do you respect that they are human beings with their own wishes and needs? If not, you do not act morally according to the second formulation of Kant's moral law.

Utilitarianism

Act utilitarianism is based on the ideas of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism is a consequentialist approach to ethics. But how are we to judge the consequences of an action? Bentham believed, "that the morally right action for the individual was that action which produced, on balance, the greatest amount of *pleasure* overall" (Driver, 2007). His was a hedonistic moral philosophy, we tend to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Note, however, the emphasis on 'pleasure overall', which is anti-egoistic in its sentiment. This implies that utility,

that is pleasure, is a matter involving more than oneself. John Stuart Mill's is more meticulous in his definition:

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or the "greatest happiness principle" holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by happiness, pain and the privation of pleasure. (Mill, 2001, p. 7)

Utilitarianism has some aspects that can seem a bit emotionally detached. Nevertheless, it is a widely used theory in politics and decision-making where hard choices and limited resources are at stake. Act-utilitarianism looks at an action and tries to determine which course of action lead to the most overall happiness. Rule-utilitarianism is another approach that is more general in its nature. While overall happiness is still the main ambition, rule-utilitarianism "holds that the right action is that action which is performed in accordance with a rule, or a set of rules, the following of which maximizes utility" (Driver, 2007, p. 64). Driver wants us to consider the rule 'Do not hand over innocent person to mobs' as an example: "A rule-utilitarian could plausibly maintain that this rule is a good rule because following it maximizes utility overall" (Driver, 2007, p. 64). It could be argued that overall happiness in that one instance could be improved by handing over the innocent person, avoiding an uprising that lead to further destruction. Be that as it may, a rule-utilitarian would argue that it would lead to more overall happiness in the long run if one followed the rule, because people would not live in constant fear of being wrongfully used but to appease a mob.

Virtue ethics

Virtue ethics most important tenet is the good life and what constitute good character. Why should we be virtuous? Julia Driver argues that, "On Aristotle's account of virtue, virtue is seen as a quality that leads to *eudaimonia*, or human well-being" (Driver, 2007, p. 138). So, the reason one should be virtuous is that this is the road to a good life.

'What should one do?', will often be answered by looking at what a virtuous person would do in that situation. Rosalinda Hursthouse's definition of a right action, states that "An action is right iff [if and only if] it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances…" (Rosalinda Hursthouse, as cited in Driver, 2007, p. 138). The well-known phrase 'what would Jesus do?' is virtue ethics in action. Virtue ethics gives more attention to

character than individual actions. One way to find out how one should act is essentially to find someone you think has fundamentally good character and emulate them.

However, virtue ethics gives some guidance to actions as well. It can be more useful in discussions with students to introduce *the doctrine of the mean.* This doctrine states that to be virtuous is to act in a mean state. The virtuous act "lies between two opposed vices" (Driver, 2007, p. 140). One should neither choose the action that is deficient, nor the path of excess: So, bravery lies between cowardice and foolhardiness; temperance lies between gluttony and abstinence; and so forth" (Driver, 2007, p. 140). Virtue is a matter of temperance and is also more general in its nature than the other theories discussed above.

3.2 Literature and ethics

In this section, I first examine the adolescent reader and how readers negotiate meaning with texts. Subsequently, I examine the relationship between ethics and literature. First to establish that combining ethics and literature is a worthwhile effort, but also to gain insights about how this endeavour can promote students' personal growth. Martha C. Nussbaum's thoughts on *narrative imagination* is given additional attention. The reason for this is that the concept provides an understanding on how *vividness* in the methods-based approach can be understood in an educational setting.

3.2.1 The adolescent reader

One could ask why one should focus on ethics when working on literature. Why not stick to literary analysis through conventional means? Why not let the students simply read for enjoyment? This thesis does in no way argue that one should stop doing these things nor try to be a replacement. It is simply an exploration of one way among many to work with literature. As a preliminary note, I would argue one should give it serious thought before one chooses to work on the ethical aspects of literature with students.

Louise M. Rosenblatt (1995) discusses the teaching of literature in her book *Literature as Exploration.* She argues that it is easy to see how beginning readers draws on past experience to make sense of the written word. At the same time, she makes the observation that teachers who work with older students in school and college do not always recognize that their students

are in a similar position, and that they too struggle and continuously negotiate with the text for meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 25). The teacher's task, according to Rosenblatt, is to foster fruitful interactions between individual texts and readers. To do that it is important that the adolescent encounter literature he or she possesses enough intellectual, emotional and experiential equipment to understand most of the text (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 25-26). If one's students struggle with basic decoding of text, working with ethics through literature might not be a good idea. The effort should then be put in elsewhere. The main gist is that it is important to let students be in their zone of proximal development to safeguard that the interaction between text and reader remains a fruitful one.

According to J. A. Appleyard (1991) teenagers tend to give three different responses when questioned about their reactions to stories. First, they usually explicitly mention the experience of involvement or identification with the characters, an aspect that echoes their inner lives. Secondly, they talk about the realism of the story, giving responses such as "("it was true to life… believable," the characters have flaws like a normal person," "I know kids just like that")" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 100).Realism is in other words important for adolescent readers. While the realism of a story earlier in life was not an issue, now "they have discovered that a story's truthfulness to life is not something a reader can take for granted but must make a judgement about" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 108).

Lastly, the adolescent reader typically gives the response that a good story makes them think. What is typically meant by this, is that the student likes to discuss the *meaning* of a story, and "Meaning is often perceived as expressing the author's purpose or what the author is "trying to say" and is formulated as a metaphysical or ethical statement about the way things are" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 111). Appleyard stresses that adolescents, even though they discover that a story can have multiple levels of significance, want meaning to be a set of objective and decipherable facts (Appleyard, 1991, p. 112). To get the students on a higher level of reflection, the next step would be to make the student discover that meaning is an act of interpretation by the reader (Appleyard, 1991, p. 112). It is not something they get for free, or whatever their teachers say the story is about. Meaning is a constructive process, and we undermine students' possible progress if we do not let them partake in this activity.

In the process of getting the students there, teachers need to strike a balance between what Rosenblatt coined an *efferent* versus an *aesthetic* reading of a text. When one reads a literary work of art for a practical purpose, "Our attention is primarily focused on selecting out and analytically abstracting the information and ideas or directions for action that will remain when

the reading is over" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 32). This is what we will do when we are abstracting a situation from a text to illustrate an ethical problem. An aesthetic reading will, on the other hand, give more attention to the affective aspects of a reading. Rosenblatt stresses that sound literary insight and aesthetic judgement can never be taught by imposing above notions of what a work ideally should mean (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 33). She rather looks at it as a transaction between reader and text, recognizing that both the reader and text impose themselves on the other (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 34-35).

What does this mean for us? Turning to Appleyard's adolescent reader again, Appleyard urges us to avoid two pitfalls. In the same vein as Rosenblatt's distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading, Appleyard is afraid that students will lose their involvement with meaning and significance if we give "literary devices, symbols, genres, ambiguity, point of view, and so forth" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 116) an excessive focus. At the same time, Appleyard cautions that an exaggerated focus on interpretation and judgement will inhibit adolescent readers' affective responses to literature (Appleyard, 1991, p. 116). Appleyard argues that when adolescents say that they like a book that makes them think, they say something along the lines that "they have discovered that their own judgement and feelings, the motives of other people's actions, indeed the whole intelligibility of the world are up for grabs and that they need to sort these things out and that reading helps" (Appleyard, 1991, p. 116).

There are, according to Scholes, three important competencies students need to become good readers of fiction. The first is simply to be able to construct an imaginary world when reading a text, which happens rather unconsciously. An excess of meaning in the text and lack of knowledge in the reader will usually lead to a second skill, which is the active and conscious process of interpretation – for instance when students reflect on what they consider the theme of the story to be. When it is the other way around, a weakness in the text and excess in the reader, students apply the third competence, *criticism* (Scholes as cited in Appleyard, 1991, p. 117). Here,

> The reader's human and ethical and political responses, having been shaped by a social context, by membership in groups that share values and interests, ultimately require a critique of the themes of the text or a critique of the codes out of which a given text has been constructed. This act of criticism does not privilege extraliterary values over literary ones, but it creates an indispensable dialogue between them; it opens the way, Scholes argues, between the literary text and the social text in which we live. (Scholes as cited in, Appleyard, 1991, p. 117)

It is at this third and most challenging level we will exist most of the time when studying ethics through literature. It is therefore important to consider if one's students are up for the task of working on ethics through literature. Appleyard stresses that the educated reader will learn to balance these three ways of reading, and while their full use will probably be out of reach for most adolescents, teachers should still help them practice all three (Appleyard, 1991, p. 118).

3.2.2 Ethical criticism

What exactly is ethical criticism? As an opening acknowledgement, I would like to point out what, in our regard, it is not. There is a tradition within ethical criticism that states that the reading of literature should have a clear and positive moral effect. Already in Plato's *Republic* were the poets shunned from his utopia, as poetry would corrupt its citizens (Pappas, 1995, p. 179). John Gardner follows Plato in that literature can have negative effects on the reader. He does, however, hold the opposite true as well, and argues that one should strive to read literature for the betterment of oneself. It is, for Gardener, the critic's job to point out whether a book has positive or negative effects on the reader (Gardener, 2005, p. 8). He thinks the most important question one can ask about literature is "who will this work of art help?" (Gardener, 2005, p. 9), and the raison d'etre of the literary critic is to be a pathfinder for which books to read. Ethical criticism in this thesis will not follow suit Gardener's wish for moral guidance. I will leave whether one ought or ought not to read this or that book in the background, as it is an entirely other discussion. I do accept the sentiment that literature can have both negative and positive effects on a reader, as would be true of all other kinds of experiences. I do, however, think one should be ready to touch upon controversial issues if one wants to foster critical readers and students.

Our focus is how one can work with literature to discuss ethical questions. But what is the connection between ethics and literature? That a work of art has an ethical component is essential and necessary if we are going to use it to discuss ethical problems. According to Wayne C. Booth (1988), there has been a reluctance against connecting art to real life in literary circles, contending that the ethical and literary are two domains that should have nothing to do with one another. Be that as it may, he argues, when feminist critics problematize male dominance in the literary circles – that is ethics! When neo-Marxists explore class-biases in literature – that is ethics! When, as Booth writes, Chinua Achebe concludes that Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim is racist - it is all ethics (Booth, 1988, p. 6). Even though ethical criticism has been somewhat out of favour in theorist circles, Booth promotes the view that theory *is*

ethics. Whether it is called postmodernism, feminism, Marxism or postcolonial criticism is of minor importance. What is important is again to strike a balance between focusing on art for art's sake and to what extent one should focus on the social and ethical. Booth's stance is that

> Defenders of ethical and other ideological criticism have rightly deplored the temptation of purists and "textualists" to ignore the real ethical and political effects of even the purest artistic form. Defenders of aesthetic purity have rightly deplored the temptation of moralists to judge narratives by standards they might use in teaching a Sunday school class. (Booth, 1988, p. 7)

One should, in other words, not go to the extremes but find a middle ground. However, in "Why Ethical Criticism Can Never Be Simple", Booth restates that he cannot think of any published stories that "does not exhibit its author's implied judgments about how to live and what to believe about how to live" (Booth, 2005, p. 26). For instance, Booth affirms, there is no good reason to read *1984* simply as a novel primarily arranged to yield excitement about its plot. In like manner, "To discuss the movie *Dr. Strangelove* without addressing its satirical message might pass in some cinematographic quarters, but the makers of the film would feel simply bypassed" (Booth, 2005, p. 30). If one is to take ethical criticism seriously, we do not follow New Criticism that the content of the story is what fits best in its organic unity (Tyson, 2015, p. 130). There is more to the story than the text itself, and Booth does not like stories with simple truths. It is the stories that manage to make us engage in serious thought on ethical matters and at the same time ensnare us into plots that are integral to that thinking that are interesting for ethical criticism:

> The plot, in such stories, does not just present virtue and vice in conflict; the story itself consists of the conflict of defensible moral or ethical stances. The action takes place both within the characters in the story and inside the mind of the reader, as she grapples with conflicting choices that irresistibly demand the reader's judgement. (Booth, 2005, p. 33)

Abraham B. Yehoshua (2005) spells out five reasons why literary criticism traditionally has avoided ethical discussion. The first is the considerable focus that has been given to psychology in interpretations of literature. It is too easy to say that a character is acting morally wrong. Literary characters are rather "disturbed, deprived of love, paranoid, frustrated, filled with all sorts of complexes inherited by his or her parents or surroundings" (Yehoshua, 2005, p. 15). We are looking more for *why* something was done, rather than looking at the moral implications of an act in literature. The second reason, he believes, is the growth of the legal system. Living in a democratic society, we have become accustomed to let the judicial system do the ethical work for us – even though laws may be unethical. The third reason he associates

with the speed of new media, and that a lot of the moral work is done there as well. The fourth reason coincides with the one described by Booth above, that art is best judged according to its shape. The last reason why he believes that there is an anxiousness towards moral discussion in literature is because it in some way could sneak in a kind of ideological censorship (Yehoshua, 2005, pp. 16-17). No matter the reason and whether we like it or not, Yehoshua contend that all art that deals with human relations has a moral aspect, as all human relations can be evaluated against moral categories (Yehoshua, 2005, p. 18). He is apprehensive towards the notion that moral discussions should be left to the media and the legal system as these two in no way can induce the same level of empathy. Yeshoshua argues that there is a significant difference between the ways media and literature create moral catharsis. While journalism wants to make us understand, literature rather expects us to identify. The significance of this identification, Yehoshua underlines, is that the moral issue does not remain on the cognitive level in literature, but becomes a part of the reader (Yehoshua, 2005, p. 19).

Martha C. Nussbaum also questions why ethical theory has been so absent in literary theory. In “The Absence of the Ethical: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory”, she observes that philosophy has a close interdisciplinary partnership with psychology when discussing emotions. Likewise, philosophy does not steer away from anthropology when working on moral relativism. And when discussing rational choice theory, collaboration with economy seems only natural. She insists that one should expect that literature and literary theory, which offers insights in all these questions, also should participate in these debates (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 100). This, however, has not yet happened. Literary theory is much more secluded in its endeavour. When literary critics discuss these issues, it is mostly tied to the authors and works of art themselves.

Some discussion of a texts’ social and ethical implication does of course happen, Nussbaum recognizes, but even here she perceives that to discuss ”a text’s ethical or social content is somehow to neglect “textuality;” the complex relationships of that text with other texts” (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 100). This is something, she adds, that rings even more true if one turns from criticism to more theoretical enterprises. What she is criticising is the tradition within literary theory that texts are about other texts and do not deal with real life by and of itself. There are many moral philosophers who have criticized standardized ethical theory in ways that have led them to turn to literature (Nussbaum, 2005, pp. 100-101), and she is baffled by

why these are yet to receive attention in literary circles. One of literature's main goals is to make sense of the world we live in. However,

> The sense that we are social beings puzzling out, in times of great moral difficulty, what might be, for us, the best way to live – this sense of practical importance, which animates contemporary ethical theory and has always animated much of great literature, is absent from the writings of many of our leading theorists. (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 101)

Nussbaum wants to bridge ethical theory and literature because ethics can make us see new things in a work of art and can raise questions that a work of art does not explicitly ask itself (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 103). It is another perspective, making it possible to see things which traditional literary theory cannot. But what is the problem with letting economists deal with decisions about distribution of food and social well-being? Why is it not enough that legal theorists decide our basic rights? And is it not sufficient that ethicists deal with problems such as abortion and euthanasia? Nussbaum's hope is simply that more people will recognize and perceive these issues if they also are a part of the literary debate (Nussbaum, 2005, p. 105), and thus make for both a better society and better citizens.

Another reason why we cannot separate fiction from ethics, Marshall Gregory (2005) argues, is because of our very nature as human beings. Our actions are imagined and chosen rather than instinctual. This brings about an element of choice in everything we do, and our "conduct is always subject to moral and ethical evaluation" (Gregory, 2005, p. 40). Human beings are not the only fundamentally social animal. However, as far as it is known, we are the only animal whose sociability is cultural rather than programmed and genetic. Our social nature is not merely a part of being human, but an essential facet of our species (Gregory, 2005, p. 41). Gregory does not try to make the case that the content of the moral categories is universal. His proposition is only that to be human is to think in moral categories, whatever they may be. When we meet someone for the first time, he assumes, we try to make some sense of who this person is. Likewise, characters in fiction can be treated the same way, and it is possible to ask questions and turn to criteria such as "better/worst, good/bad, honest/dishonest, fair/unfair, liberated/oppressed, just/unjust, inclusive/exclusive, kind/cruel, humane/inhuman, generous/selfish, self-controlled/self-indulgent" (Gregory, 2005, p. 42) and so on. What Gregory asserts is that if we cannot withstand living without these categories in real life, it is not possible to ignore these categories when it comes to fiction either. Gregory questions theorists who dismiss ethical criticism due to poststructuralist perspectivism. He does not understand those who consider ethical judgements as 'just another perspective', but who at the

same time undoubtedly would speak up against political brutality, ethnic cleansing, racial genocide and so on (Gregory, 2005, p. 44). An ethical judgement is not simply one perspective among many, or just to engage in a language-game,

> Acts of genocide, for example, are usually described as "crimes against humanity," not just crimes against ethnicity. To say that the Holocaust was a crime because it destroyed only Jews implies that a holocaust that destroyed some other ethnic or racial group might be less objectionable or even laudatory. Our deep impulse to define what the Nazis did to the Jews in Germany or what the Bosnian Serbs recently did to the Muslims in former Yugoslavia as a crime against human beings as such clearly implies that we view some moral standards as genuinely substantive and authoritative, not just as rhetorical ploys or cultural contingencies. (Gregory, 2005, p. 44)

At some point to insist on moral relativism or perspectivism becomes unseemly. It is of course acceptable to uphold and argue for the view that your moral is dependent on the culture you grew up in, or whichever ethical framework one adopts. However, one should still be able to argue for what kinds of actions should be approved and which should be denounced, even if your moral judgements only make sense in your own moral framework. It is exactly this conversation that drives us towards change and makes us ashamed of past atrocities. And it goes without saying that literature can be a part of this discourse.

Nina Rosenstand (2005) sees stories as a tool for ethics. She also admits that philosophers have tended to steer away from fiction and that literary scholars with a training in philosophy is a rare occurrence. Notwithstanding this, her argument is that moral theory is enriched by fiction, and that one would enjoy fiction to a greater extent if one has a basic grasp of ethics. Her argument is that stories essentially are ethical. Stories has been an integral part to humans as long as we have formed societies. One reason we started making and listening to stories, she argues, is that it gives existential meaning. It explains the obscure and demystifies the strange. A story helps us makes sense of the world. In a narrower sense, "stories are a kind of cultural glue: they confirm our belonging to a group and our commitment to the values of our society" (Rosenstand, 2005, p. 157). In this way, stories are a part of our cultural traditions that keep chaos at bay. But stories can do the opposite as well. They are a great way to challenge the culture and present conditions: "Disagree with the powers that be? Then write your own counterstory about social abuses and uprisings – satires ridiculing those in power and serious stories about good women and men living and dying to make things better" (Rosenstand, 2005, p. 157). The *narrative* ethicist, Rosenstand contends, will use stories to

explore ethical issues. *1984* by Orwell, for instance, problematized a future that has become eerily similar to the present-day. Her point is that these kinds of stories express what the storyteller wants us to consider. They are not only entertaining stories that make us forget life for a while, but serious moral arguments that are trying to persuade us to look at life in another way (Rosenstand, 2005, p. 157). That is not to say that we cannot disagree with what we think is the authorial intent in the text, nor is it implausible to find ethical considerations that were not intended.

These are but a few reasons why one should not be afraid to mix ethics into literature why it is a rather good idea. Marshal Gregory also argues for the vicarious imagination literature offers. When we read, "we apply temporary foreign citizenship in other times, places, and modes of being. We become citizens of the world that the literary characters inhabit" (Gregory, 2005, p. 56). Vicarious imagination, he contends, is a forceful and important form of learning, which can influence us as human being and be constitutive of our character (Gregory, 2005, p. 56).

Martha C. Nussbaum has also worked on vicarious experiences through literature, and more specifically we will look at her understanding of *narrative imagination*. Narrative imagination is the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another. It requires one to be an intelligent and honest reader of another person's story. It demands that one acknowledge the other's emotions, wishes and desires this someone might have (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 11). This is not to say that we have to be uncritical, Nussbaum continues, because we always bring our own judgements to these encounters; we will "inevitably (…) not merely identify; we will also judge that story in the light of our own goal and aspirations" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 11).

The narrative imagination is an ability that we can cultivate through the arts, and Nussbaum contends that this is especially true of literature (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 86). A child deprived of stories, Nussbaum begins, is a child deprived of certain ways to view people. Children who are allowed to appreciate stories get to wonder about other people in ways those who do not are deprived of. Reading about Peter Rabbit welcomes them into his way of thinking and looking at the world. Her point is that very often, people in stories are easier to get to know than people in real life: "The habits of wonder promoted by storytelling thus define the other person as spacious and deep, with qualitative differences from oneself and hidden places worthy of respect" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90). In these ways, she argues, narrative imagination lays a fundamental groundwork for moral interaction. As children grow older, she argues, the moral and social aspects of these stories become more and more sophisticated, and they

"gradually learn how to ascribe to others, and recognize in themselves, not only hope and fear, happiness and distress (…) but also more complex traits such as courage, self-restraint, dignity, perseverance, and fairness" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90).

When readers grasp such complex aspects of life through imagination, Nussbaum maintain, they become capable of compassion. One of the most important facets of compassion is the readiness to consider and believe that the suffering person might have been oneself (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 91). However, "compassion requires demarcations: which creatures am I to count as my fellow creatures, sharing possibilities with me?"(Nussbaum, 1997, p. 92). For instance, the dehumanizing actions in the Holocaust were exactly a mechanism to make the Jewish people unworthy of compassion. Nussbaum believes that the vicarious experiences literature allows us, can broaden and expand our boundaries of compassion. We cannot, for instance, change our ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or the colour of our skin at will. But we can read stories where these issues are examined and, while not replicating real life in its completeness, experience some aspect of 'the other' with the help of literature.

Nussbaum draws on Whitman's thoughts, who argued that the poet's ability to 'see eternity' "is especially important when we are dealing with groups whose humanity has not always been respected in our society: women and racial minorities, homosexuals, the poor and the powerless" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 96). Whitman's view of literature was that it should develop our sympathies toward the outcasts and oppressed in society. Nussbaum follows him in this, and though literature not necessarily changes society immediately, that does not take anything away from its moral worth (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 97). If one accepts that the literary imagination develops compassion and that compassion is important for civic responsibility, "then we have good reason to teach works that promote the types of compassionate understanding we want and need" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 99). And this compassionate understanding could be directed towards the groups society urgently needs to understand, such as people from other cultures, racial and ethnic minorities and sexual minorities. Returning to the debate on ethics and literature, it is important to spot that those who take a strictly formalist view against this – that students should not discuss political and ethical questions, but rather focus on literature for literature's sake – immediately make a political point themselves. They do, in this, make the argument that the invisible or oppressed should still have no voice (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 106).

It is, however, not enough to imagine and immerse oneself in the lives in others for this to have the desired effect. To produce students who are truly Socratic [1] "we must encourage them to read critically; not only to empathize and experience, but also to ask critical questions about that experience" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 100). Literary works are not free from prejudices. While the works of Virginia Woolf may be sensitive towards middle-class women, Nussbaum points out that they render working-class people invisible (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 101). To identify and discuss these blind spots of a text is important and takes nothing away from the benefit of narrative imagination. Nussbaum argues that we learn most from a curriculum that contains dissent and an interaction of opposing views. In this it is important that we try to get our students onboard when making sense of a work of art. Often teachers have some idea of the educational outcome they want to foster in students, and more than often students readily wait for the blueprint of meaning to be given to them. It is critical that we try to sidestep this pattern, and rather invite for opposing views and interpretations. Nussbaum makes a beautiful point in that we do not avoid the political dimension just by pretending that it is not there. And if we do, we drain the work of art from much of its meaning and urgency (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 107).

How does narrative imagination deal with relativism? When it comes to postmodern critics who deny the objectivity of value judgements, Nussbaum welcomes this discussion into any classroom where it would be natural to discuss arguments for and against cultural relativism (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 109). More difficult, perhaps, are those who argue against the possibility that one can imagine and be sympathetic outside one's own group. Education for Nussbaum should instil an inclination towards world citizenship and is in this regard in strict opposition to identity politics. To hold that one's "primary affiliation is with one's local group, whether religious or ethnic or based on sexuality or gender" (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 109-110) goes against what Nussbaum's wants to achieve with *Cultivating Humanity*. Difference is not something one should affirm or compete for, it is rather something that should be understood (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 110).

Nussbaum emphasises that literature should not preach the oversimplified message that we are all alike under the skin. She accepts that both culture and our experiences shape our identities, and thus we will be different from each other 'under the skin'. But it is because of this very reason she is adamant that literature is important. It is because of 'difference' that literature

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[1] here 'Socratic' is understood as leading an examined life – "Socrates depicted "the examined life" as a central educational goal for democracy" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 28)

needs to work as a catalyst – to expand our sympathies and experience the other while remaining ourselves, revealing both similarities and differences – and in this, hopefully, making the lives of others more comprehensible to us (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 111).

3.3 Didactical implications

The Holocaust and the core curriculum

Working with ethics through literature is both an exciting and challenging undertaking. There is, however, something essentially intimidating with working with the Holocaust in this regard. Holocaust is just so incontestably wrong. Using Susan Neiman's words, "Adorno, most famously, wrote that poetry after Auschwitz would be barbarism; Arendt said the impossible became true. To seek understanding, explanation, catharsis, consolation – all goals of philosophical and literary reflection about earlier forms of evil – seems out of place" (Neiman, 2002). Right after the second World War II, she writes, the sense that we had left a point beyond no return was more captured by *Hiroshima* than *Auschwitz*. But while the fear against atomic warfare quite possibly was a bigger threat to humanity's continued existence, Auschwitz posed the greatest threat to our souls (Neiman, 2002, pp. 251-252).

There were two common ways to dismiss the particular evil nature of the Holocaust right after the war. The first evoked a religious explanation, making this about God's punishment more than the abhorrent nature of the Nazi's actions. Another, and more common way to deny the gravity of Auschwitz, was to view the Nazis as a particularly evil kind of humans: "We are horrified, after all, not when beasts and devils behave like beasts and devils but when human beings do" (Neiman, 2002, p. 254). One effort was to make the barbarity of Auschwitz something essentially German. If it was a national problem, it told something about 'them', rather than a possibility that lay within mankind. Auschwitz was conceptually devastating, Neiman argues, "because it revealed a possibility in human nature that we hoped not to see" (Neiman, 2002, p. 254). What described Auschwitz as a new form for evil was not simply a matter of relative quantity or relative cruelty – for instance the "gas chambers were invented to spare victims more agonizing forms of dying – and the murderers sights that might trouble their consciences" (Neiman, 2002, p. 256). Humans have had a history of creativity when it comes to torture long before Auschwitz. Neiman argues that it was rather "the perverted mixture of industrialization undergirded with a claim to humanity that made the death camps

horrifying" (Neiman, 2002, p. 256). The problem with the Nazi murders, Neiman argues, was not that they were "either particularly brutal or particularly heartless – but precisely that, by and large, they were not" (Neiman, 2002, p. 252). Auschwitz obtained significance because of the belief system surrounding it. The camps were not made only to make corpses, but also to destroy souls. From the long rides in train with standards beneath what one would allow animals, to the eliminations of names in favour of numbers and the indifferent disposal of lifeless bodies – everything was put in order not only to kill them, but to dehumanize their enemy (Neiman, 2002, pp. 266-267).

In the core curriculum (2017), the importance of *human dignity* is described as a core value of education and training (and in society). *Human dignity* is also a central concept in ethics. When discussing ethical issues in the classroom, it is important that educators do not consider this only as an argumentative experience to develop critical thinkers, but also accept their role as an intermediary between the core curriculum and their students. No matter how convincingly a student can put forward an argument, schools and teachers "shall ensure that human dignity and the values supporting this are the foundation for the education and training and all activities" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4). The human rights must be a core understructure of education and can in no way can be taken for granted. More than a theoretical exercise, the universal human rights have been fought for and our role as teachers is to continue to fight for them, even if they are topic of discussion.

The question remains – how should one teach something as obviously abhorrent as the Holocaust? In contemporary Norwegian education, Kjøstvedt (2019) contends, the Holocaust works as a metaphor for what happens if prejudices against and stereotyping of minorities remain uncontested. Holocaust education in Norway gets an extra dimension, where the aim is that students should support antiracism and develop a positive attitude towards multiculturalism (Kjøstvedt, 2019, p. 158). To learn about the historical Holocaust in education becomes, in other words, education in human rights and democratic citizenship. In general, Norwegian teachers want students to learn something 'more' when teaching about the Holocaust. They want students to empathize with the victims, and this is usually done by using first-hand sources (Kjøstvedt, 2019, p. 160).

However, educators can meet some difficulties when they use a single life story or witness to say something general about right and wrong. Firstly, the educational outcomes teachers want to achieve working this way are often unexpressed. Many teachers expect students to obtain knowledge or undergo a change of attitude simply by being exposed to the extreme cruelty

Holocaust entailed. Kjøstvedt also contends that the historical incident is frequently decontextualized in a way that makes it difficult to understand what could lead to the atrocities (Kjøstvedt, 2019, p. 161). It is simply put important to think about how students should develop positive attitudes only by being exposed to Nazi cruelty. If educators use the Holocaust as a warning of what can happen if democracy crumbles, one should be specific about this and not expect this lesson to come on its own accord. Section 1.6 in the core curriculum declares that education should "promote belief in democratic values and in democracy as a form of government. It shall give the pupils an understanding of the basic rules of democracy and the importance of protecting them" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 8).The core curriculum furthermore maintains that the idea of a functioning democratic society is not only based on citizens having equal rights, but also the importance of protecting minorities: "All the participants in the school environment must develop awareness of minority and majority perspectives and ensure that there is room for collaboration, dialogue and disagreement" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). Democracy is more than the rule of people. There is not something inherently better with injustice if it derived from majority rule instead of dictatorship – 'democracy' by and of itself is an empty concept if it does not at the same time safeguard the outnumbered voices. Working on minorities and human rights can be one approach to develop a specific educational outcome. Still, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey (2010) implore educators to do more than just present lists of rights to remember. They encourage teachers to engage critically with students "to examine the underlying principles of human rights and apply them to everyday living" (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 29). Transmission of knowledge by and of itself is not enough to understand – we need to compel students to use their faculties in both a critical and affective manner in order to make something as ineffable as the Holocaust even slightly tangible.

Ethics and critical thinking

Discussing ethical problems can be a remarkable balancing act. On the one hand one should safeguard certain values, on the other hand one should avoid moralization. It can seem like this conundrum has puzzled the Ministry of Education and Research as well, as ethical considerations and critical thinking are put in the same section. Section 1.3 in the core curriculum states that education "shall help pupils to be inquisitive and ask questions, develop scientific and critical thinking and act with ethical awareness" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6). Critical thinking is defined as "applying reason in an inquisitive and systematic way when working with specific practical challenges, phenomena, expressions and forms of

knowledge" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6). Working with ethics and literature, critical thinking will be developed dialectically through arguments, where students must both build arguments and consider if they are ready to accept the consequences of their own thoughts and ideas. Ethical awareness, according to the core curriculum, means to balance different considerations against each other. This is necessary if, "one is to be a reflecting and responsible human being. The teaching and training must develop the pupils' ability to make ethical assessments and help them to be cognisant of ethical issues" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 7). Further, the core curriculum states that critical thinking and ethical awareness together are "a requirement for and part of what it means to learn in different contexts and will therefore help the pupils to develop good judgment" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 7).

Gert Biesta argues that there is a danger for educators to "valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value" (Biesta, 2010, p. 26). We have to make room for questions of ethics and critical thinking, even if these domains are difficult to assess and measure. According to Biesta, good education is a multi-dimensional question, consisting in *qualification, socialization* and *subjectification. '*Qualification' has to do with the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions. 'Socialization', on the other hand, is about initiating "children and young people into traditions, and ways of being and doing, such as cultural traditions, professional traditions, political traditions, religious traditions, and so on" (Biesta, 2016, p. 81). The last domain is, according to Biesta, the one that is most often neglected. 'Subjectification', or how education impacts on the students as a person, has to do with the ways "in which children and young people can come to exist as subject of initiative and responsibility (rather than as object of the actions of others)" (Biesta, 2016, p. 81). For Biesta, teachers should arouse students to want to live their lives as subjects. To exist as subjects, Biesta argues "means trying to come into dialogue with the world" (Biesta, 2017, p. 83). As teachers, this should be understood as helping students to find a middle between,

> not to overshoot in their ambition to want to be in the world and, on the other hand, that we should help them not to walk away too quickly when they encounter the frustration of the world. (Biesta, 2017, p. 82)

In my understanding, that means that teachers should stimulate students' understanding that they have intentions that they can and should impose on the world, but at the same time to make them aware that they live lives amongst other human beings with equally important wishes and aspirations. Commenting on Biesta's threefold view of good education

(qualification, socialization and subjectification), van der Wateren and Amrein-Beardsley (2016, p. 28) also point out how subjectification is opposed to socialization; whereas socialization is educating students to be part of existing traditions, subjectification refers to the process of becoming autonomous, responsible and critical adults – this, they argue ”makes education an instrument of enlightenment (‘Bildung’) and emancipation” (van der Wateren & Amrein-Beardsley, 2016, p. 28). Once again, however, the balance between socialization and subjectification is observed as something that it is important to be attentive to.

Dianna E. Hess and Paula McAvoy has worked on the *political classroom,* which for them is an approach to democratic education. The aims in their political classroom are political equality, tolerance, autonomy, fairness and political engagement. They want us to notice that “the focal question of the political classroom is, ““How should we live together?” and not, “What are my political views?”” (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 78). One thing that is important before one ventures into these types of discussions in a classroom setting is to decide whether the topic at hand is an open or settled (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 160). By ‘settled’ they mean an issue that is no longer controversial and has pervasive support in society. For instance, discussing whether women should have the right to vote is no longer relevant nor interesting. The arguments that were used back when this still was a controversial issue do not grasp our attention, quite simply because it is a non-controversial issue today. An ‘open’ issue, however, is a topic that is unsettled and controversial. They further divide issues into empirical and political, and “While empirical questions have an important place in decision-making about policy, virtual all policy questions require much more than empirical evidence to answer” (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 161).

Why is it important to be aware whether the questions we pose in classroom are ‘open’ or ‘settled’ issues? One example E. Hess and McAvoy give, is when 2000 eight-grade students in California were “assigned to write an argumentative essay about whether the Holocaust actually occurred or was “merely a political scheme created to influence public emotion and gain wealth” (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 163). The School Board President apologized for the assignment but tried to explain it was intended to meet Common Core standards for teaching critical thinking. The main problem was that “it presented an empirical truth (the Holocaust happened) as a question that could conceivably be open to interpretation” (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, pp. 163-164). In this case, E. Hess and McAvoy argue, giving the assignment implied that it could be reasonable to believe that the Holocaust did not happen, and further substantiate the stereotype of ‘the greedy Jew’ (E. Hess & McAvoy, 2015, pp. 163-

164). It is, in other words, of utmost importance to be cognisant of the type of question we ask in these kinds of discussions with students. When working on ethics through literature, one should be positive that the issues put forward really are of an ambiguous nature – discussing topics as controversial when they unquestionably are not will only lead to unnecessary conflict.

3.4 Introducing *Maus*

Art Spigeleman's *Maus* is a two-volume graphic novel. It was serialized from 1980 to 1991. The first six chapters were published as a volume in 1986 as *Maus: A Survivor's Tale – My Father Bleeds History, by* Pantheon Books. The second volume was published in 1992 as *And Here My Troubles Began.* It is commonplace to refer to either volume I or volume II in academic studies about Maus - for instance, '(II: p. 14), referring to page 14 in volume II. In my reading of Maus, I have used *The Complete Maus* which issued volume I and volume II together and will cite page numbers in that edition.

3.4.1 Genre

What, exactly, is *Maus*? Firstly, it is the first graphic novel to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Its critical acclaim led to commercial success. When it was originally placed on the bestseller lists in the fiction category, this made Spiegelman protest:

> If your list were divided into literature and nonliterature, I could gracefully accept the compliment as intended, but to the extent that "fiction" indicates that a work isn't factual, I feel a bit queasy. As an author I believe I might have lopped several years off the 13 I devoted to my two-volume project if I could only have taken a novelist's license while searching for a novelistic structure. (Spiegelman, 1991)

Reiterating Adorno's dictum that to write poetry after Holocaust is barbaric, some would suggest that the comic book format of *Maus* would disqualify itself as something to be taken seriously. From a traditionalist point of view, one could ask exactly what is so comical about Auschwitz? The work has been criticised, Thomas Doherty begins, because "it seems ill-equipped for the moral seriousness and tonal restraint that have been demanded of Holocaust" (Doherty, 1996, p. 71). Neither comical nor a novel, *Maus* has been put in the category of

'comix', which is "a comic book that is literally a graphic autobiography" (Bosmajian, 2003, p. 26).

The story in *Maus* alternates between a present time where Art Spiegelman is conducting an interview with his father about his past, and flashbacks to a past where Vladek's experiences are illustrated. Here we get to learn about Vladek's life before the war and the Holocaust. The story also depicts the relationship between Art and his father. In this way we also experience the inner life of Art and his struggles as a son of a survivor, who "consider his pain and deprivations insignificant in relation to the disastrous history of the Auschwitz" (Bosmajian, 2003, p. 27). It is a conscientious portrayal of the considerably challenging relationship between father and son. Spiegelman is in *Maus* at one time trying to recount Vladek's history as objectively as possible as testimony, at the same time we participate in Art's guilt and sensitivity towards the impossible issue of portraying the Holocaust.

Kukkonen (2013a, p. 69) argues that it lies within the nature of autobiographical comics to be both playful and self-reflexive. Throughout the story, Art Spiegelman as the character art "suggests that the requirements of storytelling already distort a rendition of the events as they actually took place. However, in the very act of highlighting this problem, he is honest with his readers and authentic as an author" (Kukkonen, 2013a). In this, he is not making any concessions about the events that unfolded. Rather, these conversations emphasise that rather than trying to write an objective account of the Holocaust, he is inevitably retelling a subjective one. This does not, however, make it any less true.

In the same vein, Fish Wilner (2003) contends that readers are at the same time given the possibility to comprehend the Holocaust with the help of *Maus*, and also that it is a continuous reminder that any totalizing view is impossible. This is, she argues, first and foremost evident in the combination of the childish nature of the comic book form and the monstrous subject-matter. While Rosenstand (2005, p. 157) argued that stories were told to make sense of the world around us, Bosmajin (2003) makes the case that "The Shoah [the Holocaust], in particular, has made the search for meaning ontologically and ethically problematic" (Bosmajian, 2003, p. 36). The telling of Holocaust resists interpretation because of its abhorrent nature. For instance, it would be deeply problematic if Vladek's story was told as a hero's journey, where Vladek survived only because of his skills and wit. Bosmajian argues that Spiegelman does not fall in this trap. *Maus* is, in her view, portrayed the Holocaust as suitably devoid of meaning: "murderous death remains murderous death; suffering remains suffering" (Bosmajian, 2003, p. 36). *Maus* is in its subtitle described as 'A Survivor's Tale',

and it is important that one does not forget all the silenced voices of the Holocaust when partaking in his testimony.

In addition to the way the story is told, it is also important to be conscious about what is not told. Kukkonen (2013a) points out that there are several distinct gaps in the way the story is told: “Vladek has burned Anja’s diaries; he is inconsistent about timelines and he claims that there was no prisoners’ orchestra in Auschwitz.” (Kukkonen, 2013a, p. 67). This, Kukkonen argues, furthers highlights the problems of truthfulness in narrative, as well as suggesting that some events simply are too traumatic to conform to the meaning-making powers of narrative (Kukkonen, 2013a, p. 67).

3.4.2 Literary devices

Perhaps the most striking graphical element in *Maus* is how ethnic groups are depicted as different animals. Most importantly, the Germans were portrayed as cats and Jews as mice. This, without a doubt, carries the implications that “*Maus* begin to mean not just “mouse” but “Jew,” and not just “Jewish mouse” but “plague-infested vermin” (G. Levine, 2003, p. 68). Using animals to depict ethnic groups in this way is a daring device, but the brilliance of this decision, Arlene Fish Wilner (2003, p. 108) argues, lies in its multitude of effects. For one, the use of animals points to the fable tradition in which “might makes right, the strong exploit the weak” (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 108). Further, she argues

> The fact that Jews are humans, not rodents, is made emphatic by the portrayal of them with mouse heads, just as the truth that Nazis are *not* instinctively predatory animals but human agents responsible for crimes against humanity is made more persuasive by the comparison with cats. (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 108)

Portraying human characters as animals also has the effect of further distancing the reader from the gravity of the subject: “the animal heads attributed to humans in this narrative reflect “our sense that this story is too horrible to be presented unmasked”” (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 109). In this way, Fish Wilner argues, can Spiegelman’s ‘masked presentation’ allow the reader to confront the Holocaust more easily. In the same vein, this artistic strategy is mediating “between us and a reality too stark to bear representation” (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 110). Vladek’s story is important to tell, and perhaps a realist or ‘un-masked’ representation would make the story, ironically enough, more invisible in the public realm.

Kukkonen (2013a) points out that the masked representations of faces has another purpose as well. She argues that Spiegelman sometimes problematizes the idea that our identity is consider innate with the use of animal faces. For instance, when Vladek and Anja "pretend to be non-Jewish Poles, they don pig masks. Art wonders how to draw his wife Françoise, who is French but converted to Judaism. Is she a frog (Spiegelman's animal species representing the French) or a mouse?"(Kukkonen, 2013a, p. 68). Kukkonen contends that Spiegelman destabilizes this assumption of identity as something essential and innate in these episodes where Art Spiegelman shows that identities can be assumed.

Another juxtaposition creating tension in *Maus* is the psychological complexity in Art, Vladek and other characters, while at the same time portraying them stereotypically: "Vladek, for example, is both an individual of extraordinary heroism and a neurotic, bigoted old man" (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 106). Further there is the tension between private history and public history (the Holocaust). On the one hand this is Vladek's story, his eyewitness testimony – we know what happened in the Holocaust, but we do not know the individual story of Vladek and how that will end. Spiegelman also makes use of shocking analogies to make the horrific intelligible – for instance when Vladek compares the mass graves dug for victims of gas chambers to the size of swimming pools from a hotel both he and Art knew about. Another example Fish Wilner gives is the juxtaposition of the intense human suffering and petty obsession, such as Vladek's neurotic pill counting or his omnipresent stinginess (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 107). The ubiquitous linking of heterogenous elements, she argues, works against "the psychological "closure" of the comic strip format" (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 107). In this way, she makes the case that *Maus* is succeeding in on communicating the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust and the unattainability of presenting it within a logical narrative (Fish Wilner, 2003).

The story world we enter in *Maus* is a deeply tragic one. It takes place an increasingly savage world "that is both arbitrary and cruelly systematic" (2003, p. 115). While it is possible to tell Vladek's story because he survived, it is important to remember that most people in his situation did not. Vladek was put in a myriad of impossible situations. Fish Wilner argues that Vladek never abandons his belief that he at the very least has a choice, no matter how dire the situation, and in this maintain his moral stature (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 115). Choice is a central concept in ethics, and in the section below we will take a look at some episodes in *Maus* where people have to make choices – some easy, some difficult and some impossible.

4. Literary analysis

In this chapter I explore in what ways *Maus* can be used to discuss ethical problems in the classroom. To do this I focus on certain episodes in the text and discuss possible pathways for ethical discussions. In the next chapter, I further discuss its relevance for teaching and classroom implications.

When working on ethical issues with non-philosophy students, Samuelsson and Lindstrom (2017) provide a methods-based approach that concentrate on moral reasoning (see section 3.1.2 for more details). There are three steps to this method: "1. *Information:* Collect all relevant (correct) information (and get rid of false information) 2. *Vividness*: Represent (mentally) the relevant (correct) information as vividly as possible. 3. *Coherence*: Reason coherently" (Samuelsson and Rist, 2016, in Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 10). Step two, which entails to mentally represent something, is a step that must be performed by the students themselves and will not be covered in this chapter (see section 5.2). Step 1, which calls for collecting relevant information, is achieved through a close reading. By looking at how various theories can be applied to discuss different episodes ethically. I also demonstrate how step three, which entails moral reasoning, can be carried out in my reading of *Maus*.

4.1 Moral relativism

As educators, the core curriculum gives us specific directions concerning human dignity (see sections 1.1 and 3.3). Moral relativism has questions that are difficult to answer for professional philosophers. It is nonetheless not a very productive theory in an educational setting – we must do more than making the case that right and wrong is only a matter of one's moral framework and be content with that. While the theory has its points, I offer some segments from *Maus* that make it difficult to maintain that right and wrong is only a matter of frame of reference.

Maus is Vladek's testimony. In the mass-deportations from Srodula, Vladek describes how kids around two or three years old were incessantly screaming. What happened to them, Vladek describes rather lifelessly, was that "the Germans swinged them by the legs against a wall… and they never anymore screamed" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 110). Vladek bear eyewitness to past atrocities: "the Germans didn't want to leave anywhere a sign of all what

they did", Vladek starts, "you heard about the gas, but I'm telling not rumors, but only what really I saw, for this I was an eyewitness" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 229). Vladek goes on to describe the cremation pits:

> The holes were big, so like the swimming pool of the pines hotel here. And train after train of Hungarians came.
> And those what finished in the gas chambers before they got pushed in these graves, it was the lucky ones.
> The others had to jump in the graves while they were alive…
> Prisoners what worked there poured gasoline over the live ones and the dead ones.
> And the fat from the burning bodies they scooped and poured again so everyone could burn better. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 232)

To describe the total dehumanization that took place in the Second World War as just yet another point of view seems absurd. In the following, I make a reading of *Maus* using aspects of theories that I contend are more advantageous to in an educational setting.

4.2 Ethical egoism

In the very beginning of *Maus,* Art is reminiscing a childhood-memory from when he was around ten or eleven years old. He is roller-skating with two of his friends, but they left him alone after he fell and hurt himself. When he comes home, he finds his father Vladek fixing something in front of their house. Art is looking for consolation, and Vladek asks his young son what is the matter: "I-I fell, and my friends skated away w-without me" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 6) he mumbles out. His father stopped sawing, not able to give the comfort Art is looking for – "Friends? Your friends?... If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week… then you could see what it is, friends!..." (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 6). This episode is in some ways very telling about what kind of relationship there is between father and son in the story to come. Art's troubles will always be diminished by his father's past and experiences.

The episode can also raise a moral question – why are we friendly? Are there any inherently good reasons to act friendly, or let us say, morally? Vladek's answer to the question is that when people are pushed to their limits and their basic needs are at stake, there is no such thing as friendship – people will only look after themselves. His ideas on the matter is of course coloured by his experiences before and throughout the second world war. And perhaps he is

right? One could argue that Vladek's utterance here is displaying a belief in psychological egoism. This view is explaining an action in terms of an agent's (the one doing something) own self-interests. This passage can be used to generate a discussion about morality itself – can people behave altruistically or are all actions, in one way or another, possible to trace back to one's own self-interest? If we argue that all human action is motivated from self-interest, Julia Driver argues, "we're making a strong, universal claim. We're denying that altruistic actions are ever performed" (Driver, 2007, p. 32). Altruistic actions will here be understood as actions that are performed solely for the sake of others.

Using Vladek's interactions with a kapo in Auschwitz (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 190), it is possible to make a case for egoism. A kapo was a prison guard, but also one of the prisoners. A kapo worked to alleviate the SS in Auschwitz and was compensated with privileges. Treating his fellow inmates badly to keep them in line for better treatment, a kapo is the epitome of someone doing something only to serve their own self-interest. From Vladek's memory, we see that these kapos could enforce unnecessary brutality, ordering prisoners to stand up, lay down, standing up again, and beating those who failed to comply – even until some dropped dead from the activities. One day the block supervisor asked if anyone knew English. Vladek, at first a bit apprehensive to get to close to the kapo's beating stick, became the perfect fit after it became apparent that the Polish kapo would prefer someone who knew both Polish and English fluently. Vladek started to give English lessons to the kapo. A bit curious as to why he wanted to learn, the kapo's reasoning was that "I speak German as well as Polish – that's why I'm a kapo. Otherwise I'd be a nothing like you… now the allies are bombing the reich. If they win this war, it will be worth something to know English!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 192). But Vladek also get something in return. For one, the kapo is using his name and not only his number, treating him like a human being; he gets lots of food and clothes that fit – even leather shoes instead of wooden (Spiegelman, 2003, pp. 192-193). The relationship between the kapo and Vladek is clearly a transactional one. The kapo is thinking of his possibilities after the war and Vladek does whatever he can to survive as long as possible. It is a relationship where they treat each other only as means to achieve a goal, and they are both acting in accordance with egoism.

One can, however, question Vladek's belief that everyone is left on their own. At least following from his own actions. Vladek got his rewards by helping the kapo, but he also took a risk in asking the kapo for something extra for his friend Mandelbaum. Not only did he get Mandelbaum a new spoon – something which was worth half a bread (Spiegelman, 2003, p.

189) – he also got him a leather belt and a pair of wooden shoes that would fit him (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 194). Of course, an ethical egoist could argue that the reason Vladek did this was only to feel better about himself, and to keep a friend alive and earning favours. On the other hand, a spoon, leather belt and a pair of shoes would also have quite high trading value in Auschwitz. Under the extreme conditions in Auschwitz, one can quite as easily argue that Vladek here does demonstrate friendship and altruism in a way that goes against his own scepticisms. In any case, the egoism displayed by the kapo who mistreat his fellow inmates and the egoism Vladek surrenders to for survival seem to be of quite different natures. Along these lines, one can argue that egoism exist on a continuum and is not necessarily an unambiguous phenomenon.

4.3 A social contract

Vladek is living in a society where he experiences that rights and protections are taken away from him and fellow Jews day by day. The first account of this is when Vladek and his wife are travelling to the sanatorium in Czechoslovakia. On their way there, Vladek sees a swastika for the first time, and a fellow passenger tells about the situation in Germany, where Jewish people had to sell their properties without getting money and how they were humiliated in the streets. Another passenger tells about how his cousin had been taken away by the police without ever getting to know what happened to him (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 35). About three months later back in Poland, Vladek is telling his wife Anja about yet another riot in their hometown Bielsko: "everyone yelling, "Jews out! Jews out!"… even two people killed. The police just watched!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 39). Their Polish neighbour thinks it is the Nazis who stirs up the citizens, while Anja bitterly comments that the poles do not need much stirring up when it comes to the Jews. In other words, the situation for Jewish people has been exacerbated in Poland as well. They are now not getting protection for their rights from the police in the manner of other citizens. Vladek does his duties as a Polish citizen and fights for his country when the Germans attacked. He was captured as a prisoner of war. In Lublin, Vladek got news about some other war prisoners who had been released. They had been marched into a forest, and the German had killed 600 of them. "I thought you were **released** as a prisoner of war!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 63), Art exclaims. The sorry truth Vladek gives him is that "International Laws protected us a little as Polish war prisoners. But a Jew of the

Reich, anyone could kill in the streets!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 63). This prompts Vladek to escape, and when he is reunited with his family, he learns among other things that his family's factories have been seized, German soldiers cut devout Jews' beards on the streets and it had been instated a curfew only applied to Jews (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 67). After having returned to his in-laws, the family-members discuss how they are going to make do with their limited resources at hand, and if the black market is an option: "It's dangerous, though. The Nazis take you off to a work camp for breaking any minor law", "worse – even if you don't break any laws!", "…and those that are taken away – they're never seen again!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 77).

A moral relativist could claim that, of course this is problematic for Vladek, but not surprising relative to the moral framework of Nazism. Relativism could argue that this is line with what one would expect to experience when being Jewish living in the cultural climate of Nazism. In the following we are going to look at social contract theory, and how John Rawls' idea of *the veil of ignorance* makes the relativist claim less plausible. The veil of ignorance is a thinking tool used to figure out how a just society would look like if one does not take one's own privileges into account when one is seriously considering what constitute a just society. Thought experiments are useful to indicate to what extent one is ready to accept the consequences of one's own ideas or actions. What Vladek describes in the different passages above is a deeply discriminatory society that is worsening day by day. Would one, under a veil of ignorance of one's own standing in society, accept the discrimination against Jewish people if one did not know whether one would belong to that group oneself? Some people did enrichen themselves through the misfortune of Vladek and other minorities. Some probably tried to justify their greed and phobia, too. Would they accept the injustices as they occurred if they were ignorant to which part of society they belonged to themselves? Or would they argue for a change if they had to make a wager? The 'veil of ignorance' is of course an abstract position, but it can challenge one's own conception of what is fair and just. In this way, these passages combined with Rawls' concept of discussing justice behind a 'veil of ignorance' can be useful to identify inequalities one would not accept to face oneself. One benefit of this theory is that it can make injustices become more evident. Another is that it is a good starting point to discuss exactly what would constitute a just society, which is something that I discuss further in the next chapter.

4.4 Rule-based ethics

In this section, I discuss how morality can be considered from the perspective of duty, mainly through ideas based on Immanuel Kant’s theory of morality. In the following discussion I examine how two formulations of Kant’s moral law can be used to examine possibilities for ethical discussion in *Maus*.

As Vladek’s family was moved from Sosowiec to the ghetto in Srodula, the situation had gradually worsened for Jewish people. The fear of being deported to the gas chambers seemed more imminent than it had up to this point: as Anja and Vladek enters they house they find a crowd around Persis: “you’ve all heard the stories about Auschwitz. Horrible unbelievable stories”, Persis begins, “they can’t be true!” someone else exclaims, “one thing is certain – as bad as things are in the ghetto, being deported is even worse”, Persis warns them (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 109). The situation has become so dire that Anja finally agrees to let someone else take care of their son’s safety. The Germans carried out raids to deport Jewish people to Auschwitz more often than ever before, and Vladek shows how they made hiding spots under coal bins (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 112) and another where they had made a false entrance in an attic hidden by a chandelier (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 114).

In Srodula, the family hid in a bunker behind a false wall in an attic. They only left their refuge for food in fear of deportation. One day when they were going to look for food, they found a (Jewish) stranger in the living room underneath the attic. When confronted he is pleading that he has a starving baby and is only out hunting for scraps. The Spiegelmans are afraid he is an informer and are considering killing him for their own safety. However, Vladek’s family did not have it in them – “what had we to do? We took on him pity” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115). The day after, “we gave him a little food to him and left him go to his family…the Gestapo came that afternoon” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115), Vladek recounts to Art. From the perspective of the stranger, he has now told to the Germans where they could find other Jews in hiding. Working as an informer he gets privileges and rewards. He is, in other words, using the Spiegelmans only as a means to get rewards. Where the stranger fails Kant’s test is in clearly not using them as an end in themselves. The stranger knows, without a doubt, that they will be sent to their doom by his actions. In this way, he is obviously not respecting their humanity as he is using them as a means for his own survival.

After they were caught, his family was put in a "ghetto inside the ghetto" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115). Trying to escape this situation, they have to deal with Haskel Spiegelman. Haskel was Vladek's cousin, who also was a chief of the Jewish police force in the ghetto. Haskel was a *kombinator,* or in Vladek's words "a schemer.. a crook" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 118). When Art asks Vladek if Haskel would not have helped them for free since they were family, Vladek again repeats his gloomy sentiment on friendship: "At that time it wasn't anymore families. It was everybody to take care for himself!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 116). When Vladek met with Haskel, Haskel admitted that he could get him "and your wife out – even your nephew. But your in-laws are too old. They'll never get past the guards" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 117). As Vladek, Anja and her parents watched his nephew get smuggled out, his in-laws begged him to make Haskel reconsider: "You must get Matka and me out too. Give your cousin this gold watch, this diamond – anything!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 117). A few days after having been smuggled out themselves, Vladek and Anja could see her parents still in the apartment when the trucks came to deport those inside: "Haskel took from me father in-law's jewels. But, finally, he didn't help them" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 117). In this case, Haskel is using Vladek's in-laws only as a means. He is offering them a service, for which he requires payment. This is perfectly permissible. However, when he is leaving Anja's parents to their own when they are awaiting deportation to Auschwitz, he is no longer respecting their humanity. He is using them only as a means to enrichen himself, thus failing Kant's second formulation of the moral law.

Vladek does also have to make many uncomfortable decisions during this period to survive. However, Arlene Fish Wilner argues, "Vladek's moral triumph is to have been sharp-witted and pragmatic without descending to exploitation, present-minded but not a *kobinator"* (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 116). Unsafe and on the run, about twelve people including a crying baby were hiding in yet another bunker. As people were starving, a few became certain that the best course of action was to take a chance and desert the bunker. One of the Jews in hiding, Pesac, had spent a fortune in bribes to make the guards look the other way. Vladek, however, did not trust that the Germans would honour the deal. One guy came to Vladek, "he said, 'tell me when *you* will go out, Vladek. Then I will know it's safe'. He and his girlfriend wanted to pay me to advise" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 126). Vladek accepted payment, thereby using this couple as a means. However, what Vladek says in the following makes a difference: "They had still 2 watches and some diamond rings. I didn't want to take. They needed these to live. So I only took the small watch" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 126). Here, I would argue that Vladek passes Kant's test. He is using them as a means, but he is also treating them as ends in themselves.

He is respecting that this couple wants to live as much as he does and is requiring less payment than he could have because he wanted them to live. While looking after himself, he was at the same time respecting his fellow fugitives' humanity.

4.5 Utilitarianism

If you had the possibility, would you kill Hitler before he had a chance to set in motion all the evils that transpired? If you ask Kant, the answer would be 'no'. We would not respect Hitler's humanity, autonomy and rationality in doing so. There are, however, other theories that put weight to other considerations. Utilitarianism emphasizes the consequences of an action. A utilitarian would not have the same inhibitions to kill Hitler as Kant. There is not something inherently immoral in doing so, if his death would lead to less pain and overall more pleasure or happiness. In this section, we are going to explore how utilitarianism can be used to discuss ethical questions.

First, let us go back to the example where Vladek and his family hid in an attic. As we know, they took the stranger on his word, gave him food and let him run away the day after. In hindsight, to let him go was an obvious mistake. They suspected that "he may be an informer. The safest thing would be to kill him" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115), and, unfortunately, he was. Analysing the situation in hindsight, the stranger will get some pleasure by the rewards from the Germans if they let him go. On the other side of the scale, there is a whole family who will experience the pain of deportation if caught. Using a utilitarian calculus, the choice is easy: the informer must be sacrificed – his pleasure does not outweigh their pain.

But is it always this easy? Utilitarianism can feel like a theory that is possible to use in real life. On the other hand, it can sometimes be perceived as rather mechanistic and detached. More difficult is the situation with the crying baby. When they arrive in Miloch's bunker, the group is initially afraid that the starving and crying baby will tip off the Germans about their hiding place: "Gutcha, You've got to keep the baby quiet!", "WAAH! I'm hungry!", "We'll have to keep him under blankets until he calms down" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 125). What happened was that people took a chance and eventually ran away. But what if the baby did not stop crying. What if they noticed that German troops closed in, and they became increasingly sure that the baby's incessant crying would lead to their doom? Would the choice be as simple as in the case with the informer? An obvious difference in the situation is the fact that the

informer without doubt wanted to do Vladek's family harm, whereas a child is the embodiment of innocence. The question still remains – what should one, according to act utilitarianism, do?

The theory is cold. But Jewish people were put in impossible situations many times. As Vladek recalls, "several times came the Jewish police to our house" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89). Their records showed that Anja's grandparents lived in their household still, and the Jewish police wanted to give them to the Germans. Art does not understand why the Jewish police would ask for this, but Vladek points out that "Some Jews thought in this way: If they gave to the German's a few Jews, they could save the rest. And at least they could save themselves" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89). Here they thought in terms of consequences, although as ethical egoists when doing the utilitarian equation. Later, as the Jewish police came to their doorsteps once again, Vladek's father-in-law was arrested in his grandparents' stead: he had not yet yielded and given them to the Jewish police. After a few days in prison he sent them a note where he wrote that they "had to give over the grandparents. Even if they took only him away now, next time they would grab his wife, and then the rest of the family" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89). When Art prods on what happened, Vladek tells the truth as it was: "What happened? We had to deliver them!", "They thought it was to Theresienstadt they were going. (…) But they went right away to Auschwitz, to the gas" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89). It was an impossible choice, of which there were many in World War II. The family thought in utilitarian terms; rather a few than everyone.

The example above is a choice between two evils. One could argue that a problematic aspect with utilitarianism is that it can be used to oppress minorities in a society. What if discrimination of one group would lead to overall more pleasure to the majority? For instance, when the Jewish were forcibly moved from Sosnowiec, Vladek recollects that "the Poles of Srodula, We Jews had to pay to move them to **our** [emphasis in text] houses in Sosnowiec" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 107). Could one, if one thought that discriminating the Jews would lead to overall happiness, really argue that this would be the moral thing to do? This is where the difference between act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism becomes relevant. Assume that 10 Polish people from Srodula got better lives because 5 Jewish got evicted from their houses – and that the happiness the Polish got was equal to the unhappiness of those evicted – in this case one could, on utilitarian grounds argue that this was the right thing to do. Rule-utilitarianism, on the other hand, does not think that one should look at each individual case in that way. If one think that the rule "Do not discriminate based on ethnicity" is a rule that

would maximize utility (happiness) in the long run, the actions made by Germans and others complicit in World War II are easy to condemn on utilitarian grounds as well. Notwithstanding this, it makes no sense to argue in act-utilitarian terms that the discrimination of the Jewish people before and through World War II led to overall more happiness either.

4.6 Virtue ethics

We can use the last paragraph of section 4.4 as a starting example to discuss virtue ethics. One could argue that Vladek is showing a positive personality trait in his dealings with the couple who wants help from Vladek. The transaction between him and the couple wanting his help seems fair. Some would perhaps argue that he should have helped them for free, others could argue that he should have taken what he could when he could – what Vladek did was something in between. And in virtue ethics, the mean in between extremes is of central importance.

It is, of course, difficult to be virtuous under the extreme conditions of World War II. In many ways it is unfair to apply this theory to someone having survived those extreme conditions. Vladek is, however, quite an unusual character. Fish Wilner (2003) lists some of the capabilities Vladek shows throughout the graphic novel:

> His knowledge of languages and his skills as a craftsman gain him privileges and extra food. He scavenges and saves, "organizes," and makes deals with other prisoners, including kapos. He is willing to take calculated risks (as when he communicates with Anja through Nancie and supplies her with food packages) but is never foolhardy (he is unwilling, e.g., to join his comrades in trusting the German guards to let them escape in exchange for bribes as the war nears its end [II:83]). Vladek prides himself on his foresight and resourcefulness (…). (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 114)

Art regularly goes to his psychologist Pavel, who is another survivor of the Holocaust. Art has, as shown regularly throughout the book, a difficult relationship with his father. One of his troubles is that he feels that whatever he does, his achievements can never compare to surviving Auschwitz. Pavel thinks, perhaps, that his father always needed to be right because of his own guilt for surviving Auschwitz. "So do you admire your father for surviving?", Pavel asks. "Well.. sure. I know there was a lot of luck involved, but he was amazingly present-minded and resourceful…" Art admits. However, Pavel raises an important question, "Then

you think it's admirable to survive. Does that mean it's not admirable to not survive?" Not having given that perspective much thought, Pavel continues, "Yes. Life always takes the side of life, and somehow the victims are blamed. But it wasn't the best people who survived, nor did the best ones die. It was random" (Spiegelman, 2003, pp. 204-205).

Earlier in the dialogue between Pavel and Art, they are discussing whether Art's anxiety is because of a fear of having exposed his father to ridicule in the first volume of *Maus*, and Art concedes this might be troubling him, "But I tried to be fair and still show how angry I felt" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 204). In many ways, Vladek is a man of excesses. As noted above, he is displaying super-human resourcefulness throughout his own recollection of World War II. This continues, however, to be his mode after the war too – as a husband and father. He is always careful with his money. Vladek's second wife, Mala, is almost driven to insanity from his stinginess, claiming to Art that Vladek gives her a meagre allowance and even tried to give her Anja's clothes instead of buying her new ones (Spiegelman, 2003, pp. 132-133). Art also needs space from his father, and one time he pretended to have a heart attack just so Art would call him back quickly enough (Spiegelman, 2003, pp. 172-173).

The most striking episode that points to Vladek's character flaws, however, might be when Art's girlfriend picks up a black hitchhiker back in the United States. Vladek urges her to "Push quick on the gas!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 258). However, she does not. The rest of the trip Vladek is moaning and groaning in the car. As the hitchhiker has arrived at his destination, Vladek exclaims: "What happened on you, Francoise? You went crazy, or what?!". Vladek continues, "I had the whole time to watch out that this shvartser doesn't steal us the groceries from the back seat!" Not being able to hide her disbelief, Art's wife Francoise calls him out, "That's outrageous! How can you, of all people, be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way the Nazis talked about the Jews!". Vladek is adamant in his beliefs nonetheless: "I thought really you are more smart than this, Francoise.. It's not even to compare the shvartsers and the Jews!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 259).

So Vladek is not an example of the virtuous super-hero. Especially many of his encounters with friends and family after the way can be discussed in the light of virtue-theory. As stated earlier, the reason one should lead a virtuous life is to live a balanced life leading to well-being. However, Vladek is a bit self-reflexive on his vices as well:

> Always I saved…,
> I saved only so I can have a little for my old age.
>
> So, now I have my old age, and look what I have…,
> I have a tank with oxygen and I'm so weak with my heart and my diabetes, I can't live anymore alone (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 262)

However, the question is whether or not his admissions are only made to guilt Art to move to his place. And is that what a virtuous person would do?

4.7 Divergent perspectives

In sections 4.1-4.6, I discuss *Maus* with a specific focus on each of the individual theories to exemplify their use as explicitly as possible. These are examples of ethical argumentation students can follow with minimal previous knowledge necessary. In an ethical debate, it is however natural to discuss aspects of a situation from diverging positions simultaneously. In this last subchapter I explore how one can develop different lines of argumentation from the same situation

4.7.1 Making promises

In the first chapter of *Maus*, Art and Vladek meet for the first time in a long time. In the very first caption of the text, Art expresses that they have a somewhat strained relationship: "I went out to see my Father in Rego Park. I hadn't seen him in a long time – we weren't that close" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 13). Even so, they now meet, perhaps mainly because Art wants to "draw that book about you…", "the one I used to talk to you about…", "about your life in Poland, and the war" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 14). Vladek is initially a bit apprehensive about the project: "It would take many books, my life, and no one wants anyway to hear such stories" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 14). Still, Art compels him to start at the beginning, with how he met his mother. Despite his hesitation, Vladek starts to tell his story on his exercise bike while Art is listening. When Vladek begins his story, we jump back in time to before the war when he was working in the textile industry. He also reminisces how he at that time was "young, and really a nice, handsome boy" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 15). The initial dialogue between Vladek and Art is mostly about Vladek's personal life. He talks about an on and off relationship with Lucia, a girl who was more infatuated with him than the other way around. He recounts how he met and got serious with Anja and ends the first session with Art with how he eventually

married her and became a part of her family. When back in the present moment once again, Vladek abruptly becomes more apprehensive again and expresses to Art that "(…) this what I just told you – about Lucia and so – I don't want you should write this in your book" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25). Art tries to convince his father that it needs to be in the book he wants to draw, making the case that it makes everything more real and human. Vladek, unfortunately for Art, is adamant. Vladek insists that: "But this isn't so proper, so respectful", "…I can tell you other stories, but such private things, I don't want you should mention" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25). Eventually, it seems like Art is yielding. In the very last panel of the chapter, Art gives his word to his father that he will leave these parts be: "Okay, okay- I promise" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25).

As readers we know that Art Spiegelman, the author of *Maus*, did not keep his promise. Having read about Lucia and his personal life a moment before we learn that he gave that promise, we experience the sort of self-reflexivity Kukkonen (2013a, p. 69) argues is ubiquitous in *Maus*: at one time we learn about Art breaking his promise because his story include the details his father wanted to keep for himself; on the other hand we only know about Art breaking the promise because he chose, as the author, to include himself giving the promise to his dad.

So – the ethical dilemma at hand is that Art has broken a promise he gave to his father. His father thinks the details about Lucia should be left out, maybe because he did not wish to tarnish the memory of his late wife Anja. Art, on the other hand, obviously chose to break the promise to make his father's story more real and more human. How can one explore this issue along ethical lines of argumentation?

What could Kantianism's rule-based theory say about breaking promises? Repeating the first formulation of the categorical imperative, it says that one should "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a moral law" (Kant, 1785/2002, p. 37). Again, this has to be translated to something meaningful to younger readers, and as stated in section 3.1.3, it could be interpreted along the lines of 'it should be possible to want that everyone should do the same thing as you'. To 'will something to become a moral law' really means that we should try to universalize it. What is it in this situation that we should attempt to universalize? In this case that is that everyone should break promises if they think this is for the best. But what happens when everyone starts to break promises? If everyone starts to treat promises as something optional, people would eventually stop making promises. If one universalizes Art's action, the concept 'promise' becomes meaningless and

empty. Thus, according to Kantianism, what Art is doing here is not morally permissible. Since he cannot at the same time want to universalize his action, he should abstain from retelling the details about his father's affair with Lucie and rather keep his promise. Doing otherwise would according to this rule be immoral.

Utilitarianism would argue for the action that in total leads to more happiness. It is difficult to calculate happiness. But in the totality of things, the inclusion of the passages Vladek wanted to omit affects only Vladek negatively. With the inclusion, we get the story as Art wanted to tell it, possibly in part leading to its popularity. Art emphasised that he wanted to include those passages because "it makes everything more real – more human" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25). Perhaps Art thought it was more important to show that Jewish people lead lives just like everyone else. Art asks his father if she was "(…) the first girl you – uh –", where Vladek answers "Yes.. we were more involved. So like the youths here today" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 17). One's first love is such a universal and relatable experience. To display this aspect of his father is to display his humanity. He shows that Jews are human beings like everyone else, thus fighting against the dehumanizing strategies from the Nazis, which he knows he has to illustrate later on. So even though breaking the promise he gave to his father has negative consequences, one could argue on utilitarian grounds that the positives outweigh the negatives. If this is the case, to break the promise he gave to his father would be the correct thing to do – even if it hurts his own father.

4.7.2 Anja

Vladek and Anja were separated most of the time in Auschwitz. Vladek got his hopes up that he could get closer to her when it was built new barracks to move some women workers from Birkenau to where he was quartered. Vladek saved a fortune in bribes to ensure that Anja was transferred adjacent to his camp. Vladek describes this time as the only time he was happy in Auschwitz: "When nobody saw I went back and forth until I saw her from far going to make munitions…", "She went also back and forth until it was safe to approach over to my food packages…" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 225).

Anja's camp also had kapos – female prisoners who acted as guards. One day, a kapo saw Anja getting a package from the other camp. Anja ran all she could and hid into her own block. The only other person in the barracks was a friend of Anja who was cleaning the room. When asking her friend for help to hide, her friend urges her to get under one of the blankets quickly.

Shortly thereafter, the kapo enters the room: “I know you’re in here someplace, and when I find you, I’ll kill you right here on the spot!” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 225). Vladek continues to tell that Anja’s kapo “for maybe an hour, like crazy she ran from room to room, throwing upside down the beds” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 226). Luckily for Anja, there were hundreds of beds and the kapo did not find her. However, in the evening appel (a ‘roll-call’) the kapo had not calmed. After having gathered all the women in the barracks, the kapo ordered that the prisoner who had ran away from her should step forward. But Anja did not. The kapo continued: “It will be better for you if you step out than if I find you!” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 226). But all the prisoners looked the same when in uniform. As Anja still did not come forward, the kapo started to threaten the whole group: “If you know who she is push her forward or you’ll all suffer!” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 226). But none of Anja’s friends turned their back on her: “She [the kapo] made them run, to jump, to bend until they couldn’t anymore. Then more, the same.”, “For a few appels it went so, but nobody of Anja’s friends gave her out. You can imagine what she went through” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 226), Vladek reveals to Art.

Here we can begin to repeat Vladek’s words from the beginning of this analysis: “Friends? Your friends?... If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week… the you could see what it is, friends!...” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 6). An ethical egoist should surely give up Anja in a situation like this, both for the possible reward and to end the suffering that lasted for quite some time. That Anja’s friends did not give her up even after being pushed to their limits physically and mentally in collective punishment is a blow against an egoist’s disbelief in altruism – maybe there is room for friendship, after all?

Let us imagine that a student has really become fond of the ideas behind Kant’s moral law. It is rule-based and easy to apply – simply universalize and see if you would accept the action if everyone else did it too. Here I would like to keep in mind one of the ways Samuelsson and Lindstrom’s contend that moral reasoning can fail: “(iii) there may be previously unnoticed consequences of one’s moral views that one is not prepared to accept” (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9). Anja’s friends covering for her when the kapo is demanding that those who know anything should come forward is an interesting example in this case. Let us again look at Kant’s first formulation of the moral law: “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a moral law” (Kant, 1785/2002, p. 37). Should it be possible to lie to the Kapo to save Anja’s life? This is one place where Kant’s theory often goes against most people’s moral intuitions. Here you would have to imagine that

you lived in a world where people lied all the time. This would not be a society that you could want to live in, so lying is thus morally impermissible. If one accepts Kant's rules, one would also have to accept that Anja's friends should not lie, and actually give her up to the Kapo. This goes against our intuitions, because the consequences of the action seem unreasonable. But this way of thinking is rule-based and does not look at consequences.

Utilitarianism does look at consequences. The kapo screams that "If you know who she is, push her forward or you'll all suffer" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 226). And that is exactly what happens. All of Anja's fellow inmates were met with corporal punishment because Anja had managed to hide from the kapo. Utilitarianism argues that one should choose the action that leads to overall less pain and promotes well-being. In this case, one could on act-utilitarian grounds argue that they should give up Anja, cause the net-utility (happiness) would rise if this was the course of action Anja's friends decided to do. This also shows that, perhaps, there should be other considerations than net-happiness when discussing morality. If one base your actions on a rule-utilitarian basis, the course of action might be different. One could argue that the 'happiness' in the group of inmates will rise if they agree on the rule that 'we don't rat out other inmates to the kapo'. This would lead to less stress in peaceful times, even though they would have to endure collective punishment in some cases.

How could one argue on virtue ethics grounds? Compared to Kant's absolute rules, virtue ethics is more cooperative to our moral intuitions. Where one should never lie in Kantianism, virtue ethics is not that black and white. Remember the doctrine of the mean. This doctrine states that virtuous acts lie between excess and deficiency. Thus, the question 'should one always tell the truth?' would be more dependent on the situation. To go around and always tell the truth would not be what a virtuous person would do and would end up in hurting your friends unnecessarily. Likewise, to never tell the truth and always lie would neither be a road to virtue. It is possible to make half-truths and harmless untruths in virtue ethics. In this case, I argue that Anja's friends took the path a virtuous character would do. To stand up to one's friend, even if one has to endure hardships, certainly seems like what a virtuous person would do.

5. Didactic benefits

The English Subject curriculum states that students should "discuss and elaborate on different types of English language literary texts from different parts of the world" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013, p. 10). In this thesis, 'to discuss and elaborate on' has been understood as exploring the ethical issues within *Maus*. Further, the subject-specific aims that will be implemented from fall 2020 state that students should explain others' arguments and follow up on others' input in conversations and in discussions about various topics (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019, p. 11). Discussing ethical issues is a perfect way to cover this subject-specific aim.

The core curriculum specifies that teaching and training should develop an understanding that what we experience is influenced by the methodology we use. Further it declares that established ideas be "scrutinised and criticised by using theories, methods, arguments, experiences and evidence" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6) if we want to cultivate students' capacities for new insights. The core curriculum also states that students should grow into ethically aware individuals, who are able to balance different considerations against each other. Students should be cognisant of ethical issues and be able to make ethical assessments (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6). In addition to this, respect for human dignity is recognised as a fundamental value for school and society (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4). This, among other things, require that education and training must comply with human rights, and that students should develop knowledge about these rights (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4).

Combining ethics and literature can fulfil the goals stated above. When working on ethics with non-philosophy students, Samuelsson and Lindstrom (2017) argue that a methods-approach to ethics is most advantageous. This is important, partly because students do not have the necessary preconceptions but also because of the limited time allocated to English in Norwegian schools. An approach based on moral reasoning rather than a comprehensive study of ethical theories seems like the only feasible way to approach ethics in education. The method has three parts and consists of: "1. *Information:* Collect all relevant (correct) information (and get rid of false information) 2. *Vividness*: Represent (mentally) the relevant (correct) information as vividly as possible. 3. *Coherence*: Reason coherently" (Samuelsson and Rist, 2016, in Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 10) (see section 3.1.2). Rosenblatt makes a distinction between making an efferent reading and an aesthetic reading of a text. When

reading *Maus*, Samuelsson and Lindstrom's first and third step (to gather information and reason coherently) coincide with making an efferent reading. Their second step, vividness, goes along with making an aesthetic reading of a text, which focuses more on the affective steps of reading a text. Thus, in order to use Samuelsson and Lindstrom's threefold method for ethical reasoning in combination with literature, we have to balance between doing efferent and aesthetic readings of the text. To follow Samuelsson and Lindstrom's method-based approach, efferent and aesthetic readings of a text should be considered as complementary efforts, and not separate approaches to reading literature. In the following, I demonstrate how working on ethics through literature can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth, and in which ways this goal can be achieved.

5.1 Human rights education and literature

When discussing human rights education, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey make the case that the common approach to present lists of rights for memorization is not sufficient. Instead, they advocate that students are engaged critically when they examine the underlying principles of human rights and try to apply them to everyday life (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 29).

One novel way to work on human rights education is to combine literature and ethics as a starting point. The development of human rights occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War, "because human beings felt the need, in the light of human vulnerability, for agreement on moral, political and legal principles that might protect individuals" (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 29). The concepts of universal human rights developed as a consequence of the abhorrent atrocities that transpired during WWII. In this regard, using *Maus* is appropriate for this discussion.

In section 4.3, we learn about how Jewish people gradually lost rights and to a greater extent were openly discriminated and abused in ghettos. The passages identified as relevant in the discussion in section 4.3 was when Vladek and Anja travelled back home after their stay at the sanatorium (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 35), when there was trouble in their hometown Bielsko (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 39), stories about Jewish prisoners being released because they had more rights as prisoners of war than they would have with freedom (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 63), when Jews' properties were seized and stories of public humiliation (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 67)

and also how officers have started arresting Jews for minor infractions and stories about abductions (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 77).

In the ethical discussion of Maus, John Rawls' *veil of ignorance* was introduced as a thought experiment to identify what one considers a fair and just society. In the ethical analysis, the main intention was to show how one could use it as instrument against moral relativism. It forces one to make judgement about fairness in a position where one does not know which group one belongs to. The *veil of ignorance* was mainly used to identify those aspects one would not accept to befall oneself. As Nussbaum contends, one of the most important facets of compassion is the readiness to consider and believe that the suffering person might have been oneself (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 91).

John Rawls rather uses the veil of ignorance mainly as a starting point to develop an actual political analysis of what constitute a just society. He tries to make a compelling and politically relevant answer to how a society should be, based on what he believes most people would answer to be fair if they did not know which group-identities they had. According to Rawls, the most important elements we would demand under a 'veil of ignorance' would be those that made us able to pursue our ends and be treated with respect:

> In case we turn out to be a member of an ethnic or religious minority, we don't want to be oppressed, even if this gives pleasure to the majority. (…) we don't want to find ourselves as victims of religious persecution or racial discrimination. In order to protect against these dangers, we would reject utilitarianism and agree to a principle of equal basic liberties for all citizens, including the right to liberty of conscience and freedom of thought. And we would insist that this principle take priority over attempts to maximize the general welfare. We would not sacrifice our fundamental rights and liberties for social and economic benefits. (Sandel, 2009, p. 151)

In other words, Rawls' understanding is that most people would maneuver towards something that protects fundamental rights. It would, however, be interesting to test out this with students in a classroom setting. First, one should have read chapter 2-4 of *Maus* and identified how Jews were mistreated and abused in the wake and beginning of WW2. This could either take the form of a short lecture from the teacher or by asking students to look for injustices against Jewish people in these chapters. After this, one could introduce the concept of veil of ignorance. One could then determine possible facets of people's identities. This is not necessarily obvious to students, so it is important to map different parts of our identities, such

as gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity and so on. Subsequently, one would have to instruct students to try to forget all of these aspects of one's own identity, and try to figure out rules they would find most important if they could create their own society from the vantage point of the veil of ignorance This would be a rather new and challenging experience for most students, so a *think-pair-share* or a variation of that would be helpful. The main idea is that students get time to think before they continue to discuss the topic with a classmate or a group. And only after deliberate thought should they share their findings with the class (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 279).

The principles that students develop under a veil of ignorance are interesting in and of themselves and can probably lead to many stimulating discussions. However, this is also an appropriate time to progress in the direction of human rights education. In 1946, a small planning group under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt worked on this problem in much the same way that the students did: philosophers, lawyers, academics and theologians from many different traditions joined together in much the same way "to explore how various insights, traditions and beliefs might be synthesized to encapsulate fundamental standards and principles acceptable across the globe" (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 34).

To develop fundamental human rights was one of the first tasks carried out by the United Nations. In my view, after having decided which rules their own society should have is a convenient time to move on to work on the human rights education. They could compare their own rules of a just society with the human rights and look for similarities and differences. Their own ideas are probably slightly different from how the human rights are formulated, so they will have to be aware that their articulation should not be identical, but rather of a similar nature. Osler and Starkey urged educators to make studying human rights something more than rote memorization (2010, p. 29). They believe that schools can ensure that human rights are known and understood as something more than as standards for developing pro-social behavior, but also as a set of principles to critically engage with social and political realities (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 29) Connecting human rights education to both a reading of *Maus* and the making of their own universal rules for justice can make students more personally invested and critically engaged.

In this way, working with ethics and literature can fulfil several of the aims in the core curriculum. For one, it can develop students' ethical awareness, which "is necessary if one is to be a reflecting and responsible human being" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6).

Blackburn (Blackburn, 2001, p. 3) draws the attention to the ethical climate that led to Hitler's rise to power. In the same vein, Kjøstvedt (2019, p. 161) indicates that the Holocaust as a historical incident is often decontextualized too much to make sense to students. The focus is frequently on the wrongness on what happened, rather than what could lead to a methodical genocide. I believe that using the passages showing the deteriorating conditions before the war can be a possible approach to contextualize the horrific crimes against humanity. The passages can be a starting point for further research as well as discussions about how ethical climates can influence actions. When discussing right and wrong actions, it is quite easy to focus on the agent performing the action and its consequences. It is important to remember that everyone who passively accepts injustices, even if they do not actively partake in them, in some way are responsible. The core curriculum states that "The pupils must be trained to act in a considerate way and develop awareness of their own attitudes" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 10). It is important to work on discursive practices and how they can influence actions. Hopefully, this can make students more sensitive about the way they speak and act. The core curriculum also emphasizes that protecting minorities is important for democracy (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 8). When discussing literature and the Holocaust, Beach, Appleman, Hynds and Wilhelm (2006) argue that "Connecting these texts to the plethora of information on current atrocities and genocides around the globe could bring immediacy to the topic of injustice in present-day society" (Beach et al., 2006, p. 38). I believe that that working in the ways as stated above can aid teachers and students in discussion of minority issues – both historically and in contemporary society. In addition to this, it can make us more perceptible towards the vulnerable and less fortunate in contemporary society – are there people we 'forget' and turn a blind eye to today?

5.2 Vividness

Samuelsson and Lindstrom's methods-based approach to teaching ethics in education has three parts. The first and third steps (information and coherence) are in their understanding easy to implement: the first step is to gather all relevant information and the third is to reason coherently. The second step, vividness, is that "the mental representation of this information [step 1] should be "vivid" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 9). They do, however, admit that it is not entirely clear how vividness should be understood. They hint towards the adequacy of one's mental representation of an ethical issue. In this section, I elaborate on my understanding of 'vividness' when one uses literature to discuss ethics.

Samuelsson and Lindstrom's method for teaching ethics to non-philosophy students is not a method that is geared towards the English subject in particular. It is simply a method that is adapted to non-experts of philosophy. In that regard, the possibility of working with literature is advantageous regarding the realization of the second step – vividness. Vividness has to with the way we are able to mentally represent a situation. Trying to understand a situation one has not taken part in always requires an act of interpretation. In my understanding, Samuelsson and Lindstrom's step two, vividness, is a caution against moving from information about an ethical issue to making judgement about it too hastily. Marshal Gregory considers how literature can offer vicarious experiences (2005, p. 56), where we become citizens of the world we read about. Martha C. Nussbaum has treated a similar concept with her notion of the narrative imagination. For her, the narrative imagination is a serious effort to put oneself in the shoes of another, which requires serious consideration of the other's emotions and desires (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 11) (see section 3.2.2).

So, how can we help students develop an ability to put oneself in the shoes of another when reading literature? Let us start with a relatively innocent ethical dilemma from *Maus.* In section 4.7.1, I discuss the situation where Art is breaking a promise through the lens of Kantianism and utilitarianism. Following Samuelsson and Lindstrom (2017) and Nussbaum (1997), I believe it can be effective to mobilize their imagination before starting an ethical discussion about this ethical issue. To activate *schema* as a pre-reading activity can be useful in this regard. A schema is "stored knowledge of how things happen in the world" (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 292). Further, Munden and Sandhaug argue that we "can use schema to make sense of a text if we know which one to activate" (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 292). In this case a relevant schema to activate would be one's own secrets. Everyone has things they would like to keep to themselves. Most people have been confided in and told their own secrets to other people. There are many ways one can make students ready to work on this passage: students can be told to write down one thing that they would not tell anyone (without sharing with the teacher or other students); they can be asked if they remember breaking a promise themselves or if they have experienced that someone else has broken a promise given to them; they could sit in groups and discuss (in general terms) how it would feel if someone told something you wanted to keep to yourself to (1) a friend they have in common, (2) to the class, or (3) more publicly on Facebook/Instagram or other social media, and so on. The most important point in this prereading strategy is that students are more attuned to Vladek's point of view when they finally begin to discuss the ethical implications of the episode when Art

breaks the promise he gives to Vladek in *Maus.* (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25). I believe students will discuss the topic in a less hurried and more deliberate way when trying to appreciate the situation more vividly in this manner.

Munden and Sandhaug (2017) argue that there are three questions one should ask any text: "Why was this written? How is it written? In what other ways could this have been told?" (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 303). So how could the story be told? Fish Wilner argues that one of the reasons *Maus* works is because of the use of animal faces in Spiegelman's drawings. In this way the reader is further distanced from the gravity of the subject. This masked representation [animal faces], she argues, allows the reader to confront the Holocaust more easily (Fish Wilner, 2003, p. 110). It could be interesting to discuss the difference in style between the main story of *Maus* and the more human like story "Prisoner from Hell Planet", where Art has illustrated his experience of his mother's suicide (Spiegelman, 2003, pp. 102-105) How do we experience the stories differently due to its style? As Fish Wilner argues, in one way, Spiegelman's use of animal faces makes the story more approachable. But it is important that students are aware about the actual historical atrocities that transpired. To combine a reading of the second volume, *Maus – And Here My Troubles Began,* with historical accounts can be a way to recognize that this is more than a comic. In doing so, teachers must be conscious about the emotional maturity of students and how explicit the documents should be. To work on *Maus* with parallel readings of pictures and other documents can help with making the story more vivid in its entirety. The HBO miniseries *Band of Brother*'s ninth episode "Why We Fight" has a scene where soldiers encounter an abandoned concentration camp. This is also a fictional account, but it balances between showing the stark realities of the genocide while also being adapted for the consumer market. In this way it spares students from the worst scenes. In any case, using other sources that have a more realist style in its representation can make the serious nature of *Maus* more understood. At the same time, as Kjøstvedt (2019, p. 161) argues, it is important that teachers do not believe that students learn something simply by being exposed to Nazi cruelty. It is necessary to have a well thought out plan with specific learning outcomes ready.

Nonetheless, to make what one reads vivid is an important part of making the imagined palpable. To fully take something into account requires empathy. As the core curriculum states, "The ability to understand what others think, feel and experience is the basis for empathy and friendship between pupils" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 10). Yehoshua (2005, p. 19) argues that literature can help with identification in such a way that moral issues

do not remain on the cognitive level, but becomes a part of the reader. This is again to do with the distinction between making efferent and aesthetic readings of a text. To help students to take the position of the 'other' and identify, we have to facilitate aesthetic readings and let students focus on the emotions that are evoked in this process.

The examples I have given above are ways I understand 'vividness' when working on the method-based approach in combination with literature. I believe that these types of additional readings can make the story more vivid and stimulate students towards taking the perspective of 'the other'. Working with ethics and literature in this way can help students to recognize the positions of other people and be less quick to judge. This can be beneficial to promote *Bildung*, as "encounters with otherness are fundamental to processes of self-development" (Hoff, 2018, p. 70).

5.3 Moral reasoning

Working on philosophical ethics in education calls for oral participation. Samuelsson and Lindstrom's methods-based approach to teaching ethics will be an unfamiliar way of thinking for students, so it is important to take things slowly. As noted in section 3.1.2, Berry K. Beyer emphasizes that learning new thinking skills depend on multiple exposures, ranging from five to fifty (Beyer, 2008, p. 225). To use literature as a starting point for discussion is beneficial by giving repetitions of this thinking skill without repeating oneself too much. The method's three steps are: "1. *Information:* Collect all relevant (correct) information (and get rid of false information) 2. *Vividness*: Represent (mentally) the relevant (correct) information as vividly as possible. 3. *Coherence*: Reason coherently" (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 10). Chapter 4, the ethical analysis of *Maus*, gives examples of various pathways one can take when discussing some ethical issues within *Maus.* In this section I elaborate on how possible ways to work on moral reasoning with students and the didactic benefits thereof.

5.3.1 Scaffolding ethical literacy

It is not teachers nor this master thesis that should 'reason coherently' – it is students. Using aspects of ethical theories can be a way to scaffold possible ways to think ethically. It is important recognize that to learn about these theories is not the main objective of any lesson (Samuelsson & Lindstrom, 2017, p. 7), but it can help students examine an ethical issue from various perspectives.

To make this a worthwhile experience for adolescent students, I advocate that one makes these introductions as simple and connected to their daily lives as possible. For example, when introducing virtue ethics, it can be productive to make students think about who they admire the most. Let them afterwards try to figure out some reasons why this is someone they admire – what is it they do? How do they act towards other people? Are they reliable? In the same vein one can discuss types of actions. Is it, for instance, always a good thing to be generous? Could it be that exaggerated generosity can be problematic both for the giver and receiver? To be a good student is important – but should one focus on schoolwork at all times? The point is that it is important to use the students' experiences and their world when working on something as foreign as ethical theories.

Simple thought experiments can be beneficial and a fun approach when introducing utilitarianism. The most famous thought experiment in philosophy is possibly *the trolley problem,* with its different variations. First ask students to imagine that they see a runaway trolley heading towards five people who are tied to the tracks. If they do nothing, the five people tied to the tracks will die. However, they could also pull a lever that makes the trolley run over to another set of tracks where there is one lone construction worker. Should you pull the lever and let the one construction worker die to save the five others? Or should you let the trolley run its course and kill the five people tied to the tracks? Given this problem, most people intuitively argue from a utilitarian perspective and kill the one to save the five. Judith Jarvis Thompson (1985) has introduced a similar thought experiment. Following her experiment, one should ask the students to imagine that they are a very skilled surgeon. They have five dying patients who are all in dire need of an organ transplant: "Two need one lung each, two need a kidney each and the fifth needs a heart" (Jarvis Thomson, 1985, p. 1396). Then, a perfectly healthy patient walks in for a yearly check-up. Should the surgeon now sacrifice this individual to save the five patients in need of transplants? Most people would now argue 'no', in contrast to the trolley problem. But where, exactly, lies the difference? Introducing utilitarianism in this way is an engaging way that effectively display the theory's advantages and disadvantages. It can also help to make students aware that there are many things to consider when making judgements about right and wrong.

I firmly believe that using theories can be beneficial to scaffold ways of thinking ethically. It is also in line with the core curriculum emphasis on critical thinking and "that the choice of methodology influences what we see."(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 6). Using theories as a tool for moral reasoning is also a way to develop students' skills in logic. Creating

premises and making arguments based on the theories one use is a beneficial way to train students' critical thinking skills. And if the argumentation seems sound, but they cannot accept the conclusion – maybe they should take a second look at the premises and judge whether they are true.

If one wants to introduce ethical theories to students, it is important to be aware that it will be quite a new and foreign experience to many students. With this is mind, it is critical that one makes the scope of technical details limited. What I suggest with the examples above is that it is essential to find the most engaging and down to earth ways possible to introduce ethical theory to students for this to be a worthwhile experience.

5.3.2 Multiple perspectives

Beach et. al. (2006, p. 183) argue that *critical lenses* is a way to read literature that offer students a way to read and think critically. Working with critical lenses requires teachers to create assumptions and strategies related to different theories. For instance, one ready-made assumption for utilitarianism could be that 'the action that leads to most happiness is the right action' and a strategy to check this assumption could be to make suggestions about the consequences. For Kantianism, one possible assumption could be that 'it should be possible that you want everyone else to do the same thing always'. A strategy to check this assumption could be to require the students to describe what such a universalization of the action would entail. An assumption for virtue ethics could be that 'It is a good action if it is lies in-between too much and too little' or 'this is what someone really good and virtuous would do'. Appropriate strategies could be to compel students to figure out if the action is virtuous or closer to the vices (excess or deficiency). Or make them discuss if they think a virtuous person would/would not perform the action. These are of course simplifications and one can create other assumptions and strategies. Students can then move from one episode in *Maus* to another. For instance, one appropriate episode to use critical lenses is when the Spiegelmans had to decide if they believed the Jewish stranger was an informer or someone they could trust (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115). Or when Vladek had to deal with Haskel, the kombinator who did not uphold his part of the bargain (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 117). They could apply the critical lenses to when Art Spiegelman (author/character) broke the promise he gave to his father (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25) to when the Jewish police came for Anja's grandparents (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 89).

Nonetheless – in this way, students can test different ethical approaches to various situation in *Maus*. They get multiple exposures to think ethically, using the method-based approach, and can work with this thinking skill in their own tempo. This is especially important when working with mixed ability-classes (Harmer, 2015, p. 145). The use of critical lenses when reading is meant as an activity that can be performed alone or in groups, written or in group discussions. In any case, identifying how different theories can lead to different results is another way to work with the aims about ethical awareness and critical thinking in the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, pp. 6-7).

5.3.3 Oral participation

Working with philosophy calls for oral discussions. As Topping and Trickey (2007, p. 79) learned in their study, oral participation from students increased from 41% to 66% when working philosophically. Eidhamar, Leer-Salvesen and Hølen's (2007, p. 309) intervention was based on Socratic dialogue, and led students to more complete justifications for their answers.

To work on literature and ethics in a classroom setting calls for some planning. Samuelsson and Lindstrom's approach has as previously stated three steps. The first step can be done individually or together in class. This would entail to figure out which aspects of *Maus* we look at – exactly what is happening and what is relevant for our discussion? When performing the next step – vividness – I suggest asking the class open-ended question (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 302) about how they believe the characters felt in the specific situations. What do they think that the characters were thinking about? How does it feel to be hungry? Asking these kinds of questions about literature can help students in using their narrative imagination and become more involved readers. This can be beneficial both to attune their ethical sensitivity as well as to make reading fiction a more enjoyable experience to them.

The next step is to reason coherently. One approach to do this is in a classroom setting is through debate. For debates to work, a fair amount of planning is required. Munden and Sandhaug (2017, p. 245) argue that students need to be invested both in the topic and activity for this to work. Students should also be given adequate time to prepare. After this the class can be divided in three different groups – one that is focusing solely on the ethical aspects of rule-based theory (Kant); another should work solely on consequentialism (utilitarianism), while the third group should focus on character (virtue ethics). They should then, in groups,

become experts on their approach. Having to argue from one point of view limit students to some extent. On the other hand, I believe many students can experience this constraint as liberating, as it not necessarily their own views they are expressing. This will make it easier to participate in a full class discussion for some students. The core curriculum states that dialogue ”is crucial in social learning, and the school must teach the value and importance of a listening dialogue to deal with opposition” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 10). This is something that can be practiced, and Munden and Sandhaug maintain that it is important to review appropriate ways of expressing agreement and disagreement when facilitating debates. In addition to this, students should listen actively and help them to find ways to acknowledge their opinions and arguments (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 245).

It is also important to remember that it is mainly teachers who should decide which episodes from *Maus* that are apt for discussion. As E. Hess and McAvoy (2015, p. 160) argue, it is important that the issues discussed have some moral ambiguity – that is, they should be open and controversial and not settled/uncontroversial. One difficulty with working on *Maus* and ethics is that it exemplifies many issues that are settled. Some things are simply wrong (e.g. the Holocaust). Sometimes it can be educational to identify how something is wrong and what one should do instead (e.g. the gradual removal of rights and the fight for universal human rights), but these issues are not appropriate for a debate. Still, the skills developed by the activities described above are important to develop if one want students to learn “to respect the fact that people are different and learn to solve conflicts peacefully” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). To make classroom discussions and debates a constructive experience, it is nonetheless essential that teachers do not compel students to debate the right and wrongs of settled issues.

5.4 Identity

While Fish Wilner (2003, pp. 109-110) argues that the use of animal faces enable readers to distance themselves from the atrocities, Kukkonen (2013a, p. 68) argues that they serve another purpose too. Portraying Jewish people as mice plays into the Nazi propaganda, where “*Maus* begin to mean not just “mouse” but “Jew,” and not just “Jewish mouse” but “plague-infested vermin” (G. Levine, 2003, p. 68). Kukkonen (2013b, p. 15) maintain that facial features in graphic novels often are stereotyped. Despite this, Kukkonen (2013a, p. 68) also argues that Spiegelman destabilizes the assumption that of identity as something essential, for

instance when Vladek and Anja pretend to be Poles by wearing pig masks (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 138). In the same manner, Art is discussing (in *Maus*) with his wife Françoise whether he should draw her as a frog (French) or mouse (Jewish identity marker in *Maus)* (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 171). This play on identities makes the episode where Vladek displays his own racism even more effective: "A hitch-hiker? And – oy – it's a colored guy, a shvartser! Push quick on the gas!", Vladek exclaims. When Françoise confronts Vladek with the irony of talking about blacks the same way Nazis talked about Jews, Vladek offhandedly retorts that he "thought really you are more smart than this, Françoise… It's not even to compare the shvartsers and the Jews!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 259). Even Vladek, who has personal experience of discrimination, racism and genocide, reproduces these attitudes.

How can we approach the issues about ethnicity in Maus in the classroom? One important observation Fenner (2018, p. 230) makes is that students have a tendency to answer questions in a way they believe will please their teachers. She urges teachers to stray away from asking closed question and instead genuinely ask for the learners' personal views. From a *Bildung*-perspective, it can be more effective to discuss what they actually think and feel rather than what they purport to. As Appleyard (1991, p. 111) contends, adolescent reads often view meaning as authorial meaning, i.e. trying to figure out what the author is trying to 'say'. To answer closed questions with limited possibilities of interpretation does not demand enough of the students for them to learn anything valuable One should rather, as Fenner suggests, ask open questions to compel students to use their own thoughts and ideas. This can be everything from simple questions about what feelings the texts evokes to "more advanced questions about how they react to the language used by the author, narrative voice, metaphors and images, etc" (Fenner, 2018, p. 231). This require closer interactions with the texts and personal interpretations, which denies students the possibility to only look for the authorial meaning or what they believe the teachers want to hear.

As Neiman (2002, pp. 266-267) describes, Nazism's dehumanization was methodical in nature: from the substitution of names with numbers (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 186) to long train rides where people were stuffed together rather like commodities than humans (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 245), and the total indifference to human slaughter (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 232). This fate befell many simply because of their ethnicity. Following E. Hess and McAvoy (2015) this is an example of a settled issue. That this is wrong is not interesting to discuss with students. But it can be educational to examine aspects of our humanity to combat racist attitudes. Racism often entails that people are viewed categorically, where some groups are given negative

essential features (Bangstad & Døving, 2015, p. 16). This is something we should work against. Munden and Sandhaug argue that our tendency to 'culturise' other people comes from the fact that we deny them individuality and sees them rather as representatives of a certain culture (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 386). They further argue that working on literature "can puncture stereotypes by offering up stories of particular individuals, whose characteristics and idiosyncrasies are personal instead of collective" (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 386) I believe the reason Art wants to include the passages where Vladek is dating Lucia is to oppose this tendency. As Art points out: "it's great material. It makes everything more real – more human" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 25).

A way to work on Art Spiegelman's use of stereotypical characterization (and his play on this) in the classroom can be to discuss aspects of identity. Let students examine their own identity in greater detail. One approach can be to make students draw a circle with their own name in the middle. Then they should try to map their identity through the use of as many categories as possible, for instance: music; hobbies; sports; religion; food; friends; family; what makes me happy?; what makes me sad?; education; work; appearance, clothing and so on. Making a mind map in this way can be helpful to demonstrate how multifaceted one is as an individual. This can help them to recognize that this applies to other people too. People are more than one sees at first glance, and this can illustrate why one should be hesitant to immediately act on one's own prejudices. This topic can also lead to a discussion about roles and how our behaviour changes in respect to the company we keep. One can make students consider how their own identity has changed with age, further demonstrating the complexity of being human. Munden and Sandhaug (2017, p. 387) argue the same point: identity is in general unstable and shifting. People define and redefine themselves all the time, which I believe is something especially teenagers can acknowledge.

To accept that other people are as complex as oneself is only possible through an act of imagination. We do not have immediate access to other people's minds but working thoroughly with this should at least give some idea that to reduce someone to a single aspect of their person is problematic. If one can use this to enable students to put themselves in the shoes of the 'other' we are working on their narrative imagination. If one wants others to accept one's own complex nature, one should do this to other people as well. That means to "be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 11). Nussbaum (1997, p. 111) is making a noteworthy point when she argues that one should not oversimplify identity and

pretend that we are all alike under the skin. Culture and cultural experiences are a part of us, and it is more important to understand each other than to be identical to one another. This is in line with the core curriculum's "ideals of inclusiveness and diversity" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 5).

It is nonetheless important that we develop students' ability to recognize the humanity in other people. Nussbaum argues that compassion requires demarcations: "which creatures am I to count as my fellow creatures, sharing possibilities with me?"(Nussbaum, 1997, p. 92). As Nussbaum reminds us, the dehumanizing actions Nazis did towards Jews were nothing but a way to make them unworthy of compassion. It is our duty to oppose racist attitudes and instil a respect for human dignity in education. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4).

5.5 Concluding remarks

Working on ethics and literature together is an interesting and challenging endeavour. One will have to plan carefully and approach the subject-matter from many angles. Working on ethics and literature develops students' abilities to ask questions, explore and experiment, and is thus aligned with the core curriculums ambition of in-depth learning (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 7).

I believe it is important to introduce ethical concepts slowly and not try to accomplish too much too quickly. As Rosenblatt argues (1995, pp. 25-26), it is vital that adolescent readers encounter literature that are suited to their level to foster fruitful interactions between them and the texts they read. It is equally important that the ethical issues we make students consider are suited to their level too. If the ethical problems are too technical or removed from their lives, the interaction between reader and learning aims can fail in a similar manner.

Ferrer et al (2019a, p. 15) suggest that one can teach critical-thinking skills explicitly and directly. It can in other words be beneficial to instruct students in Samuelson and Lindstrom's (2017) methods-based approach explicitly before connecting it to literature. In view of this, it can be convenient to practice the method when one is introducing an ethical theory. This can scaffold students' ability to think critically, by use of thinking tools that are probably new to most students.

Our main concern is nonetheless to connect ethics and literature together. When doing this, it is essential to be mindful of the balance between doing efferent and aesthetic readings. They should work together, and the combination should reinforce learning outcomes rather than inhibit them. I find it reasonable that students should get time to complete a chapter fully before one start discussions about ethics. After this, teachers can choose which issues they would like to focus on in the text and which activities that are most convenient and beneficial. I urge teachers to not overestimate students' proficiency in discussing questions of ethics and to rather be mindful about how to best differentiate to make this an enjoyable experience. Some of the activities described in this chapter can be carried out as one reads the chapters consecutively, whereas others are better suited to work on after one has completed the graphic novel in its entirety.

This is a reading of *Maus* aimed at upper secondary school students. My overall aim has been to explore how one can use literature to explore issues of ethics. I hope that my thesis can inspire other teachers to work on *Maus* in the ways described above. At the same time, my ambition has been that it should be possible to transfer the methods and ideas examined to other works of literature as well.

6. Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to examine how one can use literature to explore issues of ethics. I employed two research methods: a literature review and a close reading of *The Complete Maus (2003)* by Art Spiegelman.

The research questions I have investigated are:

1. How can Art Spiegleman's graphic novel *Maus* be used to discuss questions of ethics in the classroom?

2. In what ways can working on ethics through literature promote critical thinking skills and personal growth?

6.1 Summary of Findings

To answer the research questions stated above, I first needed to explore how one should approach ethics in education. The first aspect I explored was in which way one should understand 'ethics' when teaching upper secondary students. Out of three approaches, the literature I reviewed suggested that a philosophical ethics-approach would be most advantageous overall. This is an approach that focus on students' ability to evaluate moral standpoints and arguments, and that aims to cultivate an engagement with critical thinking.

The literature review also showed that it is important to take certain precautions when working on ethics philosophically. It is not constructive to adopt the strategies practiced by professional philosophers when teaching non-philosophy students. Rather than becoming experts about different ethical theories, the methods-based approach gives emphasis to moral reasoning. It outlines a general approach based on collecting all relevant and correct information, to mentally represent this information as vividly as possible and to reason coherently with this in mind.

The methods-based approach I advocate in this thesis is general in its nature. It is not specifically aimed at upper secondary school or English as a subject. This thesis' aim is to explore how one can use literature to discuss question of ethics. With this in mind, I had to interpret the methods-based approach to better work in an educational setting. When using

literature to discuss ethics, I have understood the first step of the methods-based approach as making a close reading of *Maus.* To mentally represent the information as vividly as possible has interpreted as focusing on affective responses in the reading process. Nussbaum's concept of narrative imagination has also been considered useful in this regard. To 'reason coherently' does not require interpretation in the same way (see section 3.1.2 for more information about moral reasoning). To give students short introductions about aspects of ethical theories has in this thesis been understood as useful to scaffold ethical literacy. To help students comprehend that there are alternative ways to discuss ethical issues is presumed to help with their critical thinking skills.

The close reading of *Maus* has explored various approaches to discuss question of ethics. The analysis has aimed at illustrating how one can use episodes from *Maus* as a basis for moral reasoning. The different subsections in chapter 4 have chiefly applied one ethical theory at a time to exemplify how one can achieve this. When discussing ethical issues within *Maus*, I found the distinction between *settled* and *open* issues important to be conscious about. It is vital that one does not make an uncontroversial issue (settled issue) into something that is up for discussion in a classroom. I do, in this regard, emphasise the importance of teachers being the ones who facilitate discussions when working on *Maus* in this way.

As stated above, I exemplified the ethical possibilities that lies within *Maus* in chapter 4. Teaching does not happen in an ideal world, so I make suggestions on how to work with the graphic novel with students in chapter 5. Some of the approaches are general in their nature and best applied after having read the complete graphic novel; other approaches can be applied as one reads. However, I emphasise that it is very important to be mindful of the complexity of working on ethics and literature together. Teachers should foster fruitful interactions between readers and texts. Working on ethics and literature together requires teachers to do more than making sure that the literature chosen is suited to their students' level. Teachers should also ensure that the ethical concepts they introduce are not too technical and should be adapted to their students' age and interests.

I also suggest some possible ways working on ethics through literature can promote critical thinking and personal growth. To introduce a new thinking skill requires many exposures. In this regard, using literature to practice the methods-based approach is beneficial in facilitating multiple possibilities to practice this skill.

The use of ethical theories to discuss ethical issues can also be beneficial in developing students' critical thinking skills. Students can experience that different theories can bring about different answers to the same question. People sometimes end up maintaining one's position and look for evidence to support it. Working on ethics can develop students' capacity to rather focus on where the evidence leads them. In this way it can make them less rigid in their beliefs if they find that they are at fault. Working on ethics through literature can in this way demonstrate how conclusions can change based on our assumptions. This can further make students cognisant about the role assumptions play in arguments.

At the same time, this thesis has tried to explore why it is necessary to connect ethical issues to students' emotions. A stone does not care about right and wrong. Ethics is about people's lives – how we live together. Using literature can help students to understand other people and to empathise. This thesis has also tried to show that combining ethical discussions with literature can increase students' active involvement with the issues at stake. As students grow aware of the multitude of ethical considerations one must deal with, and as they become better readers of literature, it is my hope that they become better readers of people too.

Working on ethics and literature place demands on students. E. Hess and McAvoy (2015, p. 78) remind us that the focal point of working with difficult issues in classrooms should not be about political views, but rather on the more existential question of 'how should we live together?'. To discuss questions such as these can make students more conscious about how they position themselves in a world filled with other people. Biesta (2017, p. 82) argues that educators need to help students to find a middle ground between their ambitions to be in the world and that they should not cower too easily either. To develop as a subject in the world is to resist being treated only as an object of the actions of others. I believe that working on ethics and literature together can aid students in the process of growing into as subjects of initiative and responsibility (Biesta, 2016, p. 81). Even though it can be difficult to venture into discussions where one does not necessarily know all the answers, I believe that much has been achieved if we are able to make students recognize themselves and others as subjects worthy of respect and dignity.

6.2 Limitations and further research

In this thesis, I have suggested possible ways one can use *Maus* to discuss questions of ethics. I have also provided strategies that can promote critical thinking skills and personal growth. One limitation of this thesis is that it is entirely theoretical. My literature review and close reading of *Maus* make it possible to make suggestions and assumptions about ways it can be beneficial to work with literature and ethics together. However, this thesis does not indicate whether my suggestions will be effective when applied to the real world. There are two matters I think it is important to examine further:

I suspect that how to balance between efferent and aesthetic readings can be one aspect of the methods-based approach that can be challenging. While I discuss possible ways to do this, it is in the end teachers meeting real students who must strike a balance between these two modes of reading. How students and teachers experience working on literature and ethics together in this way, will to a great extent depend on a skilful ability to change between these two approaches of reading literature.

Also, Eidhamar et. al. (2007, p. 310) found that students who were preconceived to be 'weak' did well when working on ethics in their study. While this is a possible result here as well, I am afraid that this thesis' focus on literature as a vantage point for ethical discussions can make this a demanding experience for reluctant readers.

Further research would in my view entail interviewing students and teachers about their experiences of working on literature and ethics.

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