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JUDGMENT AND THE AIMS OF EDUCATION*

By Randall Curren

I. Introduction

Wisdom, or "judgment," was the undisputed highest aim of education in the world of Greek antiquity, when the self-described philosophers we know as sophists, orators, and philosophers invented philosophy of education with a view to explaining the educational value of the teaching in which they engaged. Their students were young men of means with the leisure to prepare themselves for political leadership, and their understanding of wisdom was anchored by the ideal of a leader with the understanding, discernment, and judgment to successfully navigate an independent city-state through difficulties. *Phronêsis* or practical wisdom — good *practical* judgment — was thus a dominant aspect of the educational ideal, and political leadership was its most important sphere of activity. Good judgment in any sphere was understood to be much more than the calculative rationality it requires; and of all personal attributes, it was regarded as the most important to success in living well and achieving important ends. This is expressed in characteristic fashion by Socrates in the *Apology*, when he counsels that, "[w]ealth does not bring about excellence (*arête*), but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men."[1] In the context of this and related passages, "excellence" (or goodness, virtue) is more or less synonymous with practical wisdom or excellence of practical judgment.

This view of the highest aim of education survived in the Greek schools of the Hellenistic world and higher learning of the Roman Empire, and variations of it persisted well into the modern era, making it the dominant educational ideal of the West for two millennia.[2] Today, by contrast, the cultivation of good judgment is rarely identified as an important aim of education, and the aims with most currency in education policy and popular discourse are not direct formative benefits of education at all, but

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[1] Plato, *Apology* 30b, in G. M. A. Grube, ed. [trans.], *Plato: The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1975), 33.

[2] See, Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956); Randall Curren, "Education, History of Philosophy of," in E. J. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 1998), 222–31.

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future economic and civic benefits. Ideas of promoting rationality or critical thinking are undoubtedly widely shared by contemporary educators and many educational philosophers, but these ideas do not come close to dominating recent theorizing about curriculum and pedagogy, let alone educational theory and policy generally.[3]

The thesis of this essay is that the cultivation of judgment informed by a general education should be regarded as a broadly important, culminating aim of education. It follows from two premises: the proposition that it is in the nature of education to guide students in acquiring understanding, capabilities, and virtues foundational to living well, and the proposition that good judgment is an intellectual virtue that is educable and foundational to living well.[4] Beyond defending this thesis, the paper aims to explore its meaning and implications. What can be saved of the classical view in present circumstances? How is the promotion of good judgment related to other educational aims, such as the fulfillment of potential, facilitation of autonomy, and acquisition of knowledge? In what ways could contemporary schools be reoriented to prioritize the development of good judgment? What could one realistically expect this to accomplish?

Section II outlines the classical view more fully, beginning with Aristotle's version of it and ending with John Locke's. Both versions have been immensely influential, and together they yield some useful lessons for how the educational promotion of good judgment might proceed.[5] I note some important limitations of Locke's view and corresponding respects in which Aristotle's view of the educational task is more adequate. Section III defends good judgment as an important and culminating aim of education, discussing its relationships to living well and self-determination. Section IV addresses curricular and pedagogical aspects of the promotion of good judgment, drawing on the more promising aspects of the Aristotelian and Lockean views. I finish in Section V with some observations about the potential benefits and limitations of reorienting schools to make the cultivation of good judgment a higher priority. Some benefits of abandoning the current dominating and largely ineffectual focus on distant, instrumental benefits of schooling in favor of direct formative benefits are

[3] For leading accounts of rationality or critical thinking as a fundamental aim of education, see Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[4] I have defended the first of these premises most recently in Randall Curren, "A Neo-Aristotelian Account of Education, Justice, and the Human Good," *Theory and Research in Education* 11, no. 3 (2013). I touch on the latter premise in the context of identifying "effective agency" as an educational aim, in Randall Curren, "Developmental Liberalism," *Educational Theory* 56, no. 4 (2006): 451–68, at 466.

[5] On the place of Locke's educational philosophy in eighteenth-century thought, see John Yolton, "Locke: Education for Virtue," in Amelie Rorty, ed., *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1998), 173–89; Nathan Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Lorraine and Thomas Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

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that it would offer a more promising basis for sustaining student engagement and would have important lifelong benefits irrespective of subsequent occupational status. I note, on the other hand, that the world for which students must be prepared is characterized by demanding contexts of judgment in which the coordination of proliferating forms of expertise is ever more difficult. Education is not a panacea with regard to either equality of opportunity or adequacy of practical judgment. Wider educational access erodes the market value of the credentials that are more widely obtained. Advances in the cultivation of ever more exotic forms of expertise may similarly erode the adequacy of individual judgment by stimulating the growth of complexity beyond comprehension. In both spheres, there is a sense in which *more* education does not offer a solution.

II. Exemplars of the Classical View

Aristotle's references to education are brief except in Book VIII of the *Politics*, but his scattered remarks and some independent testimony about the practices of his school provide some insight into his educational views.[6] Referring to common schools in *Politics* VIII, he writes that the primary concern of education is to cultivate a capacity to form good or correct judgments and a disposition to enjoy what is humanly admirable. His work *On the Parts of Animals* opens similarly with the claim that to be educated is to be able to form a sound judgment of an investigation or exposition, and a person of "universal" education is one who is able to do this in all or nearly all domains of knowledge. Together, these passages suggest that Aristotle regarded the ability to make sound judgments for oneself as a defining aim that unifies education at all levels. *Politics* VIII is concerned with a stage of education in which the development of good judgment is strongly linked to the formation of moral dispositions, whereas *Parts of Animals* I is concerned with the principles by which the soundness of inquiries and expositions in a domain of higher learning (zoology) might be judged — principles Aristotle had devised and was about to impart. What is known of the practices of Aristotle's Peripatetic school suggests that students did not simply receive direct instruction in those principles but mastered them through collaborative participation in research projects. The *Peripatos* was an informal community of "friends" (*philoi*) who engaged, in varying proportions, in research, instruction, and learning.

The students who heard the lectures comprising Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* were told at the outset that their upbringing and familiarity with

[6] For a detailed account of Aristotle's views on education, see Randall Curren, *Aristotle on the Necessity of Public Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). On what is known of Aristotle's school, see John Lynch, *Aristotle's School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

ethical facts would provide the starting-points for a process of inquiry culminating in a systematic body of ethical knowledge (*epistêmê*) — the ethical *knowledge* required for *phronêsis* or excellence in practical judgment.[7] Aristotle thereby announces his practical philosophy as a science and field of higher learning, and here, as in other educational domains, the overarching aim is the development of a form of good judgment. We learn later in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that practical wisdom requires both virtues of character and a grasp of universal ethical truths. According to the *unity of virtue* doctrine elaborated in Book VI, sound judgment both presupposes and completes the moral virtues; no one can develop sound judgment without first possessing natural or habituated forms of all the moral virtues, and no moral virtue becomes a *true* virtue unless habituation through guided practice is combined with teaching that leads to sound judgment. Sound judgment is only possible if one *perceives* the world accurately in its various ethical aspects, and it is what we do and practice that shapes the cluster of dispositions constituting a habituated moral virtue — what we desire, take pleasure in, and *perceive* as good. Good practical judgment requires accurate perceptions, in short, and the ability accurately to perceive the ethical aspects of situations, persons, and events is understood to be inseparable from good character. The development of good character is in turn depicted in *Politics* VII as building on a foundation of bodily health.

Aristotle's understanding of the basis for sound judgment in a domain of knowledge is closely related to his conception of a science (*epistêmê*) as consisting of a structure of "first principles" and theorems derived from those principles, the first principles being necessary and defining truths of the natures of things in the domain. Grasping a science's first principles and what follows from them would enable one to understand the causes of things in the domain, he believed. Judgment of diverse practical affairs — medical, musical, navigational, and the like — would similarly require the mastery of the sciences on which Aristotle took the relevant arts to be properly based. Practical wisdom in civic affairs would apparently require an understanding of *all* such affairs and how they contribute to a society's well-being; and practical wisdom in managing the affairs of a household or one's personal affairs would similarly require a person to bring together as needed the perspectives of all the arts and sciences relevant

[7] Aristotle identifies the topic of his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* as political science (*hê politikê epistêmê*), concerned with knowing and achieving the good for human beings, at *NE* I.2, I.4, X.9, etc. Political science is thus explicitly both a systematic body of knowledge (*epistêmê*) and an art (*technê*), and the same is true of its component parts, ethics and legislation. The methodology of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is explained in I.4, and the role of universals (moral knowledge) in good judgment is noted in VI.8. For a leading translation, see Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1984), 1729–1867. For further references and elaboration, see Randall Curren, "Aristotle's Educational Politics and the Aristotelian Renaissance in Philosophy of Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 5 (2010): 543–59.

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to understanding those affairs and making sound decisions.[8] Aristotle offers few details concerning the nature and origins of excellence in making judgments of these kinds. What is clear is that judgment would require:

(1) an *upbringing* that equips a person with morally sound perceptions, emotions, goals, and behavioral dispositions;
(2) being *taught* the principles of the various sciences and learning to perceive various features and aspects of the world with the understanding these sciences make possible;
(3) *practice* in achieving a well-rounded, comprehensive understanding of the complex matters one must judge well, consulting others familiar with aspects of those matters;
(4) *imagination* in conceiving possible courses of action; and
(5) *practice* in making decisions informed by all of these.[9]

Aristotle thus understood good judgment to require and build on a range of intellectual, moral, and bodily virtues acquired in the course of a sound upbringing and education: Without an array of intellectual virtues such as well-rounded discernment, understanding, and the imagination needed to generate promising plans of action, excellence of judgment would be impossible. Without a comprehensive array of moral virtues, the discernment, understanding, and imagination essential to good judgment would be impaired, corrupt, or misdirected. And without a sound body, the activity through which intellectual and moral virtues are developed and expressed might be impaired or impossible, and some internal prerequisites for those virtues might be lacking. In this understanding of education, good judgment was not simply its most important aim. It was the highest aim to which everything else was subsidiary and the culminating capstone that informed and completed everything else. A capstone completes and protects a structure, enabling it to have and retain a desired form. In Aristotelian thought, good judgment similarly completes an education, completes the moral virtues so that they have the form and function of true virtues, and informs choice and action over the course of a life, providing the most important internal basis for living well and preserving the bodily, moral, and intellectual virtues on which living well depends. These virtues might fall away or decay in a person who must face life's challenges without the understanding and good judgment an education should provide. So understood, an education is a process of formation that relies on the reason or judgment of others but aims to enable learners to guide themselves by their own reason or judgment in living well.

[8] This is implied by Aristotle's discussion of politics as the master art in *Nicomachean Ethics,* bk. I. 1–2 and his arguments for the relevance of legislative science to household management in X.9.

[9] See, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* bk. VI; Curren, *Aristotle on the Necessity of Public Education,* 201ff; Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 13ff; Curren, "Aristotle's Educational Politics and the Aristotelian Renaissance in Philosophy of Education."

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Aristotle's school and ideal of a "universal" education in good judgment competed directly with Isocrates' school of rhetoric, and it lost such sponsorship as it had with the death of Alexander. School curricula became predominantly literary during the Hellenistic period that followed, and oratorical models of higher learning derived from the pedagogy of Isocrates were adopted by the Romans and advanced by Augustine.[10] These developments, in what came to be known as education in the seven liberal arts, elevated judgment in interpreting *texts*, and may have done so at the expense of good judgment in other spheres, but judgment remained the theoretical "crowning-point" of such learning.[11]

Writing in the seventeenth century, Descartes identified universal wisdom as the greatest good and proper aim of education. His educational views are to that extent continuous with the classical view, if also novel in the context of his time. His view that *natural reason* is the common possession of human beings, male and female alike, is arguably the foundation of the revolutionary tendencies in Enlightenment liberalism generally and Locke's philosophy in particular.[12] Descartes championed the unrestrained use of natural reason by individuals as a human birthright, guide for the conduct of life, and key to human progress in science and public affairs. He held that knowledge rests in an intuitive grasp of the natures of things and relationships between ideas, and that this is only possible when the natures and ideas are clearly and distinctly perceived through the knower's own efforts of analysis. His views thus entailed a fundamental egalitarianism with respect to human epistemic powers and a kind of epistemic individualism. A central feature of Descartes's conception of the reasoning in which the faculty of "natural reason" engages is that it is the very form of reasoning required by science. This assertion of the continuity of natural and scientific reasoning has probably had more influence

[10] See Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* esp. 160 ff. The focus of Isocratic pedagogy is speaking well, but Isocrates insists that it is by learning to speak well that students learn to deliberate and advise well, and become prudent, intelligent, and wise; "the wise (*sophoi*) [being] those who have the ability to reach the best opinions (*doxai*) most of the time" (Isocrates, *Antidosis,* in David Mirhady and Yun Lee Too, eds. [trans.], *Isocrates I* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000], 254, and 251 ff. generally). The relevant sections of *Antidosis* are reprinted as "An Educated Person Can Speak Well and Persuade," in Randall Curren, ed., *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 28–34. On Roman oratorical education, see Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, vols. I–IV, H. E. Butler, ed. [trans.] (London: Heinemann, 1920–22). For Augustine's conceptualization of the liberal arts as grounding biblical interpretation, see *Christian Instruction* (*De doctrina christiana*), trans. J. J. Gavigan, in *Fathers of the Church: The Writings of Saint Augustine*, Vol. 4, ed. R. Deferrari, et al., (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1947/66), 19–235.

[11] Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* 169.

[12] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. I and II, J. Cottingham, et al., eds. [trans.] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984/5), esp. *Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Discourse on Method,* parts I and II, *The Search for Truth by Means of Natural Light,* and the Dedicatory Letter to the *Principles of Philosophy.* See also, Peter Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), and Amy Schmitter, Nathan Tarcov, and Wendy Donner, "Enlightenment Liberalism," in Randall Curren, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 73–93.

on modern educational thought than any other distinctively modern idea, having been enshrined and pedagogically elaborated (if also altered) in Rousseau's *Emile*, and from there taken up by generations of progressive educators. It denies the artificiality of science and distinctive qualities of scientific thinking in different domains, exaggerates the scope for learning by discovery, and underestimates the need for direct instruction and guided practice in learning.[13] Taken literally, it overturns Aristotle's idea that a universal education in good judgment requires mastery of diverse, domain-specific principles of inquiry and practice.

Locke's adoption of Descartes's conception of knowledge plays a central role in his educational philosophy. His program of adult self-education in liberty, in the *Conduct of the Understanding,* is premised on a right and "fundamental duty which every man owes to himself," to examine the basis of his beliefs and actions for himself, and a related conception of free agency that identifies understanding or ideas as the origins of action.[14] Locke writes that voluntary actions arise from "dictates of the understanding," or in contemporary terms, people's reasons, judgments, and choices.[15] He endorses Descartes's "natural" standard of epistemic diligence in taking responsibility for the beliefs one holds and acts on; namely, he thinks that one should follow chains of reasoning to where they "bottom out" in relationships between ideas that are clearly and distinctly perceived.[16] These resting points for chains of reasoning would clearly include self-evident *moral* truths.[17] His ideal of taking responsibility for one's beliefs is evidently that one should believe no more or less than the evidence warrants, and his position in the *Conduct* seems to be that achieving this ideal would enable a person to avoid error, even though the evidence available for the guidance of life is often probabilistic.[18]

[13] On the continuing pedagogical impact of the idea that scientific thinking is natural, see Michael R. Matthews, *Science Teaching* (London: Routledge, 1994), 137ff.

[14] John Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 41, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, Ruth Grant and Nathan Tarcov, eds. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), 218.

[15] Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 1, p. 167.

[16] Ibid., secs., 3, 5, 6, 7, and 29, pp. 169, 171, 173, 175, 177–78, 180–81, 205.

[17] On moral knowledge, see *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 43, p. 223; *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* bk. 4, chap. 3, sec. 18 and chap. 4, sec. 7, in the unabridged edition of Alexander Campbell Fraser, ed. (New York: Dover, 1959), vol. 2, 207–9 and 232.

[18] Locke refers to "the overbalance of probability" in connection with basing one's assent on the evidence, in *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 42, p. 220. It is only in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* however, that he describes judgment as different from knowledge in being probabilistic, and asserts that "in the greatest part of our concernments, [God] has afforded us [not knowledge but] only . . . probability," as well as a human "liableness to error." See *Essay* bk. 4, chap. 14, vol. 2, pp. 360–61. Locke wrote the *Conduct* as an addendum to the *Essay,* but the former seems decidedly more optimistic than Book IV of the *Essay* about the prospects for avoiding error in the conduct of our lives. The introduction to the *Essay* itself appears no less optimistic than the *Conduct*: "'Tis of great use to the sailor to know the length of his line, though he cannot with it fathom all the depths of the ocean. 'Tis well he knows, that it is long enough to reach the bottom, at such places, as are necessary to direct his voyage . . . Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct" (Locke, *Essay,* Intro. sec. 6, pp. 30–31).

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Locke associates the right and duty to take responsibility for the ideas from which one acts with the idea of personhood, and he sometimes refers to this responsibility in terms of ownership. "Person" is a "Forensick term appropriating Actions and their Merits," Locke writes; the "personality" of an agent "owns and imputes to it *self*" actions.[19] Persons "own" their actions, claiming and accepting responsibility for them both prospectively and retrospectively. Owning or accepting responsibility for one's actions prospectively involves owning or taking responsibility for the springs of action that operate through one, taking responsibility to ensure the ideas from which one acts are true before accepting them as one's own. The thinking by which persons exercise "freedom of the understanding," take responsibility for the ideas from which they act, make ideas they encounter their own, and turn such ideas into knowledge, is one and the same — the thinking through which one examines the basis of ideas, following the chains of reasoning to where they do or do not "bottom out" in self-evident truths.[20]

Hence, "[r]eading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge," writes Locke, "it is thinking that makes what we read *ours*."[21] By "thinking," Locke means the reader must "see and follow the train of [the author's] reasonings, observe the strength and clearness of their connection, and examine upon what they bottom . . . All that he relies on without this . . . he takes upon trust upon the author's credit, without any knowledge of it at all."[22] Such thinking is arduous, Locke concedes, but "nobody is under an obligation to know everything," and it is "no unreasonable proposal, nor impossible," that "those who have particular callings . . . should think and reason right about what is their daily employment."[23] Locke seems to assert, much as Descartes does, that with practice people can avoid falling into error in the things they must judge in living their lives, and can avoid error in other matters by simply withholding judgment.[24]

The fundamental aim of the education that Locke goes on to detail in the *Conduct* is to equip a person to fulfill this right and duty to take responsibility for his ideas or understanding, in order to judge matters correctly and act well. "We are born to be, if we please, rational creatures, but it is use and exercise only that makes us so," Locke insists.[25] He emphasizes the vital necessity of cultivating the power of one's mind, examining one's own beliefs, thinking things through for oneself, and withholding judgment in matters one has not fully examined. Mathematics is prescribed as the most beneficial form of exercise. In all matters, "every single argument

[19] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* bk. 2, chap. 27, sec. 26, p. 467.
[20] On freedom of the understanding, see Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 12, p. 186.
[21] Ibid., secs. 20, 193; italics added.
[22] Ibid., sec. 24 , pp. 199–200.
[23] Ibid., secs. 20 and 7, pp. 193, 182.
[24] Descartes, *Principles,* pt. 1, secs. 33–35. Cf., Locke's *Essay,* Intro. sec. 6, pp. 30–31.
[25] *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 6, p. 178.

should be managed as a mathematical demonstration," through "close reasoning in a continued connection of a long train of consequences from sure foundations."[26] It is through such exercise that the freedom, ability, and activity of the understanding are primarily improved. Apart from this attention to fully reasoning matters through to their foundations, the *Conduct* is largely occupied with the "many natural defects in the understanding capable of amendment," by which Locke means tendencies to avoid thinking or to fall short of a well-rounded understanding — a "*large, sound, round-about sense*" — of matters.[27] As Nathan Tarcov notes, much of Locke's focus is on "diagnosing intellectual pathologies and prescribing a diverse set of remedies for them."[28] And so, Locke writes, it is hard to dislodge ideas that have been constantly associated in a person's mind, and it is "the great art and business of the teachers and guides in most sects, to suppress" freedom of thought by conjuring and repeating such associations.[29] People accept on trust the ideas of the leaders of their party and authors they find congenial, limiting the kinds of people and books they take seriously, rooting out prejudices and narrowness in others but not in themselves.[30] Locke's general advice is to work at overcoming the tendencies toward narrowness associated with one's place in the world, in order to achieve a well-rounded understanding of matters.

Locke's conception of education for good judgment has some attractive features, its defects and limitations notwithstanding. The underlying conception of self-determination and responsibility with respect to belief and action is important and suggestive, despite its association in Locke's thought with an implausible and singularly demanding test of knowledge. It might be salvaged through the idea that taking responsibility for one's beliefs involves a self-conscious adoption of epistemic strategies and standards grounded in a sound understanding of the merits of diverse, relevant strategies and standards.[31] It might also be generalized to address self-determination, responsibility, and education more broadly, by distinguishing more clearly than Locke does the basic aspects of agency for which persons can take responsibility. This said, it is striking that Locke's theory of knowledge and epistemic responsibility weds them to a single, "natural" standard of diligence, good for all topics, times, and places, at the expense of knowledge on the basis of testimony and without regard to any body of established methods of inquiry or public knowledge that may exist. His attention to the social context and preparation to resist predictable forms of social inducement to bad judgment is an important

[26] Ibid., secs. 7 and 6, pp. 180, 178. Cf. sec. 4, pp. 173–75.
[27] Ibid., sec. 2, p. 169.
[28] Schmitter, Tarcov, and Donner, "Enlightenment Liberalism," 84.
[29] Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 41, p. 218.
[30] See esp., ibid., secs. 3 and 10, pp. 170, 184.
[31] For an account along these lines, see Mark Heller, "Hobartian Voluntarism: Grounding a Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 81 (2000): 130–41.

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supplement to education in patterns of sound reasoning. The ideas about overcoming narrowness in the interest of well-rounded perception are salutary, and resemble such ideas in Aristotle and Dewey. Yet, these ideas could be more helpfully developed by acknowledging the realities of epistemic interdependence, the inevitable reliance of individuals on experts in specialized domains of inquiry and practice, and the difficulty of judging who is an expert and a reliable source.

Locke's conception of knowledge and his commitment to epistemic self-sufficiency face staggering problems. Even if a person limited the examination of her ideas to those at stake in her daily life, there would be too many to examine fully, and no basis in Locke's account for regarding any as secure without a full examination. His accounts of natural reason and the nature of a full examination are also far too optimistic about a person's ability meaningfully to examine and competently to judge all the beliefs relied on in daily life. The ramifications of everyday judgments and choices are not neatly confined to circumscribed matters that can be easily examined completely. They reach every corner of the globe in ways that are endlessly complex and spill across a growing range of increasingly specialized forms of expertise. Understanding the significance of one's choices would seem to require either a command of and ability to connect all of these forms of expertise, or informed reliance on the judgments of diverse experts and a remarkable ability to bring those judgments to bear on one's own ideas and choices. The former is impossible, and the latter far from easy.

There are more forms of expertise to call upon than ever before, and the forms of analysis and related vocabularies on which they rely are becoming ever more disjoint and esoteric. Even in relatively circumscribed matters for which diverse experts are jointly responsible, the experts themselves are not always able to reliably bridge their distinct understandings of complex systems and reach sound coordinated judgments.[32] In these circumstances, the deficiencies of Locke's theory of ideas and his epistemic standard of clarity and distinctness are even more glaring than they might otherwise be. His theory of ideas implies that the concepts one would need in order to fully understand the matters one deals with on a daily basis should be readily obtainable through one's experience of those matters, but often they are not. The cultivation of good judgment would surely involve introducing students to a variety of invented vocabularies that can only be understood through related bodies of theory and methods of inquiry and analysis. These considerations commend a curriculum of judgment closer to Aristotle's, but any such curriculum will have its limits, and the adequacy of judgment for the purposes of life will ultimately depend on aspects of the contexts in which such judgment occurs.

[32] For a detailed analysis of a catastrophic system failure in which diverse experts within the same industry were unable to understand each other, grasp what was happening, and accurately assess risk, see Joseph Tainter and Tadeusz Patzek, *Drilling Down: The Gulf Oil Debacle and Our Energy Dilemma* (New York: Springer, 2012).

To the extent that distinct forms of understanding and analysis can be brought to bear on matters of significance for the conduct of life, good judgment in those matters would require that those various forms of understanding and analysis be brought together coherently. A question of no small importance is the extent to which individuals can be educated to do this for themselves, and the extent to which institutions with the right characteristics can enable individuals to be more effectively self-determining by relieving them of some of the burden of doing it themselves.

III. Judgment as the Highest Aim of Education

What might be saved of the idea of good judgment as the highest aim of education, the "capstone" of a general education that completes it and enables the student to be self-determining in preserving the formative benefits of the educational efforts that precede it? Why should the cultivation of judgment informed by a general education be regarded as a broadly important, culminating aim of education? I suggested in the introduction that the importance of good judgment as an aim of education follows from two premises: the proposition that it is in the nature of education to guide students in acquiring understanding, capabilities, and virtues foundational to living well, and the proposition that good judgment is an intellectual virtue that is educable and foundational to living well. Spelling out this argument and the ways in which good judgment comes into play in living well will clarify its relationships to self-determination, autonomy, fulfillment of potential, and the completeness of an education.

A defensible view of the nature of education is that it promotes the acquisition of understanding, capabilities, and virtues foundational to living well, and that it does so largely by initiating learners into a variety of practices.[33] The initiation through which such attributes develop occurs primarily in structured activities in which learners are coached, and it is this consideration that suggests that initiation into practices is essential to education. It is through the activities shaped by practices that perception, understanding, capabilities, desire, and attachment to goods develop, all in connection with acquiring vocabularies of the good, forming identities, and finding meaning and direction in life.[34] The goods to which attachment becomes possible include the power of an idea, artistry in diverse domains of performance, qualities of craftsmanship, ingenuity of design, and the like. An introduction to these goods expands a student's understanding of value and opportunities

[33] I have offered defenses of this view, one grounded in a history of analysis of the idea of education and another grounded in what people could reasonably expect of educational institutions, in "A Neo-Aristotelian Account of Education, Justice, and the Human Good."

[34] On the idea of learning as initiation pertaining to forms of goodness and not just skills or knowledge, see R. S. Peters, "Education as Initiation," in Randall Curren, ed., *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*, 55–67; Kenneth Strike, "The Ethics of Teaching," in Randall Curren, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, 509–24.

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for self-directed activity, while offering resources and standards for critical thinking and judgment. Finding the activities of one's life meaningful is an essential aspect of living well; and such learning offers opportunities to live well, in part, by expanding the range of goods that might lend meaning to a life and doing so in conjunction with nurturing capabilities through which learners can relate to those goods in significant and productive ways.[35]

The idea that education promotes forms of development conducive to living well might be thought to face a dilemma: one must define living well either objectively or subjectively — as living admirably or living happily — choosing to educate children either for others or for themselves, not both. Yet, no matter how one conceptualizes the terms of a viable social ethic, grasping one horn or the other of this dilemma will not be permissible. What will be required is a reconciliation or harmonization of objective and subjective aspects of living well, of the admirable and the fulfilling, in education that is both for students themselves and for the society to which they belong. Whether one conceives of justice in terms of reciprocity, mutual advantage, fairness, or the universal protection of basic interests or rights, it will require that insofar as education touches on basic interests, dispositions to cooperate, capacities to contribute usefully to society, and the like, it will seek a harmonization of each student's good with the good of others. To suppose that no such harmonization is possible is to suppose that just societies are impossible, and that even in the circumstances of reasonably just societies there is no demonstrable convergence between living admirably and living happily. There is, however, strong empirical evidence of a link between these two sides of living well, evidence that happiness is psychologically associated with fulfilling basic human potentialities in admirable ways.[36] This lends support to the common understanding of living well or *eudaimonia* enshrined in the classical tradition, but sidestepped in the recent philosophical opposition between subjective and objective theories of well-being.[37]

[35] The philosophical literature on meaning in life identifies the experience of relating to objective goods in positive ways as central to lives being both objectively meaningful and being experienced as meaningful. It is uncontroversial that such relating is exemplified in activities of creation, enhancement, preservation, renewal, communication, and the like. See Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[36] See Richard M. Ryan, Randall Curren, and Edward L. Deci, "What Humans Need: Flourishing in Aristotelian Philosophy and Self–determination Theory," in Alan S. Waterman, ed., *The Best Within Us: Positive Psychology Perspectives on Eudaimonia* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2013), 57–75; Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan, "Motivation, Personality, and Development Within Embedded Social Contexts: An Overview of Self-Determination Theory," in Richard Ryan, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85–107.

[37] It would take us too far afield to explore the split between subjective and objective accounts of well-being or living well in the massive philosophical literature that has developed in recent years. My own diagnosis of the either-or structure of this literature is that it is an artifact of relying solely on philosophical methods of investigation. The classical conception of flourishing or living well rests on the hypothesis that the objective and subjective aspects of living well are interdependent, and it is a hypothesis that is substantially empirical and only tractable through mixed research methods.

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Supposing, then, that the fundamental aim of educational institutions is to nurture forms of personal development conducive to living well, why should we accept the proposition that good judgment is an educable virtue conducive to living well? I will argue that it is both instrumentally and constitutively essential to living well, and will then address the grounds for believing that it is educable in the section that follows.

To have good judgment in a form of endeavor is to be attuned to the diverse features of instances of that endeavor that make a difference to success and to know how to proceed in light of relevant forms of knowledge and standards and measures of success. Having good judgment improves one's odds of success. To attribute good judgment without qualification is to identify a person as displaying such judgment in living her life, and so to a notable degree in the variety of activities she undertakes. The broad, instrumental reason for regarding good judgment as essential to living well is that it is an aspect of competence in everything a person does. This is true even in matters that are normally routine, since the nuances of the matter at hand and changing circumstances may require judgment as to whether deviation from, or revision of, routines is prudent. We act in contexts embedded within other contexts — social, institutional, built, and natural — all dynamic, interacting, and changing; monitoring and assessing these contexts is basic to understanding the ramifications of choices and deciding what to do.

Monitoring and assessing *ourselves* is equally important to success in living well, and it is in this arena that we can make sense of the classical idea that good judgment completes an education. An education provided by others can take a person only so far, and certainly very far short of knowing everything, being able to do everything, or being excellent in all respects. Recognizing this, it is tempting to conclude that there is no useful sense in which an education could be complete. Conceding this is awkward, however, because it would seem to leave us without a coherent basis for determining when a person is at liberty to refuse further education. Locke's position on this is instructive, for he holds that educational authority ends, just as parental custodial authority ends, when a youth's "understanding [is] fit to take the government of his will," the salient consideration being competence to be self-governing in conformity with the requirements of law.[38] Following the classical tradition broadly, we could regard such competence in self-governance as entailing not just an

[38] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chap. VI, sec. 59, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 33. Locke's position on this is essentially that of the common law tradition in regarding competent judgment as a condition for being answerable to law rather than a custodial authority, though he does not refer to the common law or the principles under which custodianship is jointly exercised by the state and guardians identified by the state. For a discussion of related matters of educational authority, see Randall Curren and J. C. Blokhuis, "The *Prima Facie* Case Against Homeschooling," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2011): 1–19.

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understanding of the law and ability to live in conformity with its requirements, but a reasonably informed ability to take responsibility for the personal attributes that shape one's actions — one's understanding, as Locke says, but also one's virtues and capabilities. Good judgment in self-assessment could on these grounds be seen as completing an education in a personally and socially important sense. With judgment sufficient for the purposes of life, a person might find her own way, determining how best to selectively build on her strengths and overcome her limitations. Without judgment, there are countless ways in which a person could go wrong more or less at any time, not least through failures to examine and overcome her own limitations — failures even to prevent the needless decline of her own capabilities and other prerequisites for living well.

One of Locke's central ideas is that the freedom and activity of the mind are enhanced by accepting responsibility to become a rational being and examine ideas before accepting them as one's own. He refers thereby to the development of mental powers or *capabilities* through self-directed exercise, a distinct matter from taking responsibility for the truth of one's beliefs or adequacy of one's *understanding.* He also speaks of freedom as educable or increasing with the extent of a person's capabilities. The capabilities and understanding one employs in acting could be understood as two basic aspects of action, and to these could be added *virtues* of character and intellect. Agency can be seen as involving the interplay of *epistemic, evaluative,* and *capability* components. Since we are limited and imperfect in each of these components or dimensions of agency, it is more or less essential to living well that we are educated in ways that develop all three *and* cultivate capacities of self-assessment through which we can critically examine and take responsibility for the improvement of all three.

Beyond the instrumental benefits of good judgment in living well, the *exercise* of good judgment may itself be an essential constitutive element of any life well lived. Beginning from the widespread perception that being self-determining is essential to living well — that people are typically pained by being restrained and find inherent pleasure in directing their activities themselves — it is reasonable to speculate that it is more pleasant and satisfying to be self-determining when one's decisions are good. Having good practical judgment improves the chances that one's decisions will be good and yield outcomes that are gratifying and enable one to feel in control of one's fate.

Research in psychology provides some confirmation of this view of the intrinsic importance of self-determination. An influential body of theory and supporting research in motivation studies posits three innate, *universal psychological needs* associated with the satisfaction of human potentials: the need for *competence* or efficacy, the need for *self-determination* rooted in values with which the agent wholeheartedly identifies, and the need for *relatedness* or the experience of mutually affirming relationships. The evidence of hundreds of studies spanning diverse cultures and life stages

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suggests that the satisfaction of *all three* of these basic psychological needs is essential to, and a predictor of, the experience of well-being or happiness and related measures of psychological well-being such as *meaning* or a sense of purpose.[39] What cross-cultural studies suggest is that the need to be self-determining in one's activities is no less acutely experienced in cultures that regard autonomy as an alien value, but that such cultures provide *spheres* of meaningful self-determination that meet this need more adequately than often supposed.[40] The need for competence must be satisfied in order for self-determination and relational needs to be satisfied, because there is no satisfaction in attempts at self-determination and relating to others that fail. Good judgment is fundamental to competence and good *practical* judgment is hard to distinguish from competence in self-determination or the activity of directing one's activities in accordance with one's own judgment. It would seem to follow that it is not merely intuitively obvious, but also empirically established, that being self-determining in accordance with good judgment is not just instrumentally valuable but inherently satisfying and an essential constitutive feature of living well.

It is worth noting some differences between this defense of good judgment in self-determination as an educational aim and recent philosophical defenses of autonomy as an educational aim, where autonomy is defined as a person's capacity to examine and revise her ethical commitments. What is typically asserted is that people have an instrumental interest in being autonomous, or able to reflectively endorse ways of life they are born into when those are beneficial, to withhold such endorsement and "exit" those lives for ones they perceive as a better fit, or to make lives for themselves incorporating elements of more than one established way of life. Because the rationale for autonomy-enabling education is its instrumental value for selecting an ethical basis for living well, such views are more or less explicit in identifying the facilitation of flourishing, or living well, as a more basic educational aim. A well-known version of this instrumental argument is Harry Brighouse's defense of schooling that is "autonomy-facilitating," rather than "autonomy-promoting," in order to create opportunities to live well without violating a norm of neutrality with respect to diverse reasonable conceptions of a good life and foreclosing students' opportunities to happily conform to the norms of cultural communities that do not embrace ideals of personal autonomy.[41] His argument, in brief, is that children should have the opportunity to learn the skills of critical thinking associated with autonomy, because such skills

[39] For a systematic overview of the theory and four decades of supporting research, see Deci and Ryan, "Motivation, Personality, and Development Within Embedded Social Contexts."

[40] See Valery I. Chirkov, Richard M. Ryan, and Kennon M. Sheldon, eds., *Human Autonomy in Cross-Cultural Context: Perspectives on the Psychology of Agency, Freedom, and Well-Being* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

[41] Brighouse, *School Choice and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chaps. 4 and 5.

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(informed by knowledge of diverse systems of value and analysis) will enable them to evaluate their own values, if they feel a need to, and will thereby improve their chances of living well.[42] Rob Reich has similarly defended a limited form of autonomy as a goal of education, arguing that a multicultural education that presents alternative cultural values in a sympathetic light expands a person's "interior standards," enabling her to "reflect independently and critically upon basic commitments, values, and desires . . . and to enjoy a range of meaningful life options."[43]

It is characteristic of these views that they limit their attention to the student's self-assessments of her conception of a good life. This focus on a person's capacity to evaluate her values has been part of the liberal response to communitarian assertions of cultural group and parental rights of exemption from uniform public educational standards — exemptions designed to limit children's exposure to diverse values, people, and technologies, and thereby make it more likely that they will remain within their community of origin. Apart from that debate, there is no reason to limit the educational promotion of self-evaluative critical thinking and self-determination in this way, since clearly there are more mundane ways in which an education in critical thinking facilitates living well than by enabling a once or twice in a lifetime assessment of the values in which one has been raised. The classical view commends a more complete education in good judgment, self-examination, and self-determination, and the cross-cultural research on self-determination suggests that education that *promotes* competent self-determination can be justified by its direct personal benefits without undermining the pursuit of diverse reasonable conceptions of a good life. There are sufficient grounds for asserting that ongoing self-determination is an inherent aspect of any good life, but this is not the mortal threat to diverse cultures it is sometimes perceived to be. To say this is not to undermine in any way the instrumental case for the kind of education in moral autonomy that Brighouse and others have made. It is rather to supplement it with a case, both instrumental and noninstrumental, for a wider education in good judgment, self-determination, and responsibility.

It is also worth noting that the idea of enabling students to fulfill their potential is an exception to the contemporary dominance of instrumental conceptions of the value of education, and one that is in harmony with the classical tradition.[44] The admirable and rewarding fulfillment of human

[42] Brighouse, *School Choice and Social Justice*, 68 ff.

[43] Rob Reich, *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in American Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 92, 185–87.

[44] This is enshrined in such documents as the National Education Association's 1975 Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, and the New York State Code of Ethics for Educators. The first principle of the NEA Code is that "The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society." The first principle of the NY State Code is similarly that, "Educators nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of each student. See http://www.nea.org/home/30442.htm; http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/pdf/codeofethics.pdf.

potential is central to Aristotle's *eudaimonism.* Although he places the fulfillment of rational potential at the heart of an implausibly restrictive account of what can qualify as a truly flourishing life, there are resources for constructing a more serviceable account of the fulfillment of potential sufficient for living well. What I have proposed elsewhere as both grounded in Aristotle's ethics and a missing link between philosophical and psychological work on well-being, is that basic human potentials fall into three categories — social, intellectual, and productive — all of which must be fulfilled reasonably well for a life to be recognized and experienced as well lived.[45] Goodness in the fulfillment of these potentials is evident in the achievement of mutually affirming relationships and associated satisfaction of relational needs, the quality of practical judgment and success in satisfying the need for self-determination, and competence in one's endeavors and satisfaction of the associated need for competence. Education that aims to enable people to live well should treat all three of these basic categories of potential as important, and help students become good at a variety of things, including relating to others in mutually affirming ways and thinking through what is important to them and how to manage their lives prudently. Focusing on the fulfillment of potentials that would enable students to satisfy their basic psychological needs in this way would supply the most essential internal foundation for living well, including a potent motivational basis for a lifelong commitment to self-improvement.[46]

IV. Good Judgment Across and Beyond the Curriculum

In what ways could contemporary schools be reoriented to prioritize the development of good judgment? What reasons do we have for thinking they could succeed in cultivating good judgment? What would it mean to shape teaching and the curriculum around the idea that good judgment is grounded in a general education that provides an understanding of the various contexts of life, an appreciation of the value of things, and practice in thinking things through? A variety of considerations and bodies of research suggest that the following structural and curricular changes could be effective. The cultivation of good judgment — and of self-governance in accordance with good judgment — would begin in forms of character education that orient children to thinking things through before acting. It would involve instruction in critical thinking and guided practice in analyzing historical and fictional case studies in judgment and choice. It would use integrated curricula and

[45] Of the works cited previously, see esp. Curren, "Aristotelian Necessities"; Ryan, Curren, and Deci, "What Humans Need: Flourishing in Aristotelian Philosophy and Self-determination Theory." These categories are intended to be exhaustive with respect to forms of human activity, but not non-overlapping. The category of productive potential is meant to range over all forms of activity directed to ends, notably those for which techniques have been established.

[46] On the relationship between motivation and psychological need fulfillment, see Deci and Ryan, "Motivation, Personality, and Development Within Embedded Social Contexts."

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cross-curricular inquiry-based learning that provide experience in bringing the resources of diverse disciplinary and analytical frameworks to bear on matters of importance to students' present and future lives. The approach to science education would be less pre-professional than it has often been, and more along the lines of a Science, Technology, and Society (STS) approach that aims to equip all students with a basis of scientific understanding for making individual and collective decisions.[47] It would ground all of this in school cultures favorable to such learning — school cultures that make learning meaningful for more students by "addressing their needs . . . establishing caring relationships with adults, maintaining positive and high expectations, and providing students with opportunities to participate and contribute."[48] The creation of such school cultures has been referred to as a "well-being approach" to school reform.[49] It is an approach facilitated by smaller schools and frustrated by regimes of high-stakes testing.

With regard to school culture, we now know quite a bit about the role of basic psychological needs satisfaction in sustaining student effort, and the role of socially nurturing, autonomy supportive, and optimally challenging school environments in meeting those needs.[50] Small schools can more easily function as cooperative learning communities that meet children's relational needs, and the strengthening of teacher-student relationships lends itself to educationally productive forms of character education and classroom management.[51] By "educationally productive" forms of character education and classroom management, I mean ones that cultivate virtues of self-governance by engaging students in forms of self-reflection and self-management rather than relying on regimes of control that revolve around extrinsic rewards and punishments.[52] Sigal

[47] See Michael Matthews, *Science Teaching: The Role of History and Philosophy of Science* (New York: Routledge, 1994) and *Time for Science Education* (New York: Kluwer, 2000) for the rationales and histories of different approaches to science education, and the grounds for infusing a Science, Technology, and Society approach with case studies in the history and philosophy of science.

[48] National Research Council Institute of Medicine, *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2004), 17–18.

[49] See Sarah L. Lightfoot, *The Good High School* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); K. S. Louis and M. B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990); F. Newmann and Associates, *Authentic Achievement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

[50] The July 2009 issue of *Theory and Research in Education* (vol. 7, no. 2) provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant research.

[51] See Kenneth Strike, *Small Schools & Strong Communities: A Third Way of School Reform* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).

[52] The PATHS curriculum (http://www.pathstraining.com/main/curriculum/) is an example of an approach to moral education (officially, a system of "social and emotional" learning) that is also a developmentally constructive approach to classroom management and alternative to the systems of punishment that have become increasingly draconian in recent years without any demonstrable effect on student compliance. For a detailed ethical, motivational, and practical critique of conventional, punitive approaches to addressing student infractions, see Matthew Williams, *A Normative Ethical Analysis of School Discipline Policies* (University of Rochester: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 2013), https://urresearch.rochester.edu/viewContributorPage.action?personNameId=4321.

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Ben-Porath has recently argued that the development of civic virtues is impeded by the "totalizing" forms of such regimes of control in KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) charter schools and those of other Charter Management Organizations that serve poor and minority students, and her argument would apply with equal force to any virtues of self-governance in accordance with students' own judgment.[53] Students cannot develop practical judgment without opportunities to exercise judgment and talk through the considerations relevant to their decisions. Controlling school regimes that are focused solely on behavior and testable knowledge and skills severely reduce those opportunities. In the form of high-stakes testing and accountability systems, such regimes also directly undermine the quality of teaching and student motivation by inducing teachers to be more controlling and narrowly focused on test results.[54] Finally, teachers and schools cannot get very far in nurturing self-governance in accordance with good judgment without establishing their own moral authority with students and credibly modeling qualities of good judgment; school management systems that leave no room for teacher judgment get in the way.[55]

A great deal of character education is implicit in how a school is managed, but there are also validated approaches to teaching children to understand and be mindful of the emotional dynamics of situations that might ensnare them and others and yield conflict — lessons in so-called "emotional intelligence." Closer to Aristotelian ideas about the role of conversation in good judgment, is the variant of Philosophy for Children that engages students in discussions of the ethical content of stories, to cultivate a more informed and nuanced grasp of virtues, principles, and the varieties of lives well lived.[56] If the goal is to nurture virtues of ethical reflection, imagination, and judgment, conversation is essential and success most likely if students are invited to engage in ethical inquiry and learn something of the resources and standards of such inquiry. Gareth Matthews, a proponent of this approach who was almost single handedly responsible for the introduction of philosophy as an alternative to required religious instruction in German schools, wrote that:

[53] Sigal Ben-Porath, "Deferring Virtue: The New Management of Students and the Civic Role of Schools," *Theory and Research in Education* 11, no. 2 (2013): 111–28.

[54] See Luc Pelletier and E. Sharp, "Administrative Pressures and Teachers' Interpersonal Behaviour," *Theory and Research in Education* 7, no. 2 (2009): 174–83; Richard Ryan and N. Weinstein, "Undermining Quality Teaching and Learning: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective on High-Stakes Testing," *Theory and Research in Education* 7, no. 2 (2009): 224–33; M. Vansteenkiste, B. Soenens, J. Verstuyf, and W. Lens, "'What is the Usefulness of Your Schoolwork?' The Differential Effects of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Goal Framing on Optimal Learning," *Theory and Research in Education* 7, no. 2 (2009): 155–63.

[55] Joan Goodman provides a persuasive account of authority relations and student engagement in, "Student Authority: Antidote to Alienation," *Theory and Research in Education* 8, no. 3 (2010): 227–47.

[56] For an account of moral education along these lines, see Robert Fullinwider, "Moral Conventions and Moral Lessons," in Randall Curren, ed., *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*, 498–506.

> Education is about, among other things, helping young people to become competent, informed, thoughtful, and responsible human beings. To achieve that goal it is necessary to reflect on what it would be for one to be a flourishing human being. . . . To live a happy life we need to think about what it would actually be like to live such a life.[57]

Matthews and others have argued persuasively that children are capable of philosophical thinking, that engaging children in philosophical thinking is highly motivating and educationally transformative, and that philosophical inquiry into ethical matters is a legitimate and valuable approach to ethics instruction through the pre-collegiate years. If the goal is to cultivate judgment, it is best to invite students into the enterprise of ethical inquiry and deliberation, in a way that tells them it matters what they think, and to give them the space and tools to think through the shape of that good for themselves.

A school designed to cultivate good judgment would both enable students to make the perspectives of individual disciplines their own, and foster skill in cross-curricular integration of those distinct perspectives.[58] Locke allowed that breadth of experience, reading, and human contact are essentially *resources* for critical thinking; it is not hard to imagine promoting such breadth through forms of experiential and project-based team learning that foster cross-curricular integration and connect the classroom to the community and world. Locke held, on the other hand, that there is exactly one, natural *standard* for critical thinking, and it is much more plausible to think that robust critical thinking deploys a variety of *analytical tools* and is guided by a variety of *standards of judgment*; some such tools and standards are general (those of general purpose logic, argument analysis, and the like), and some are specific to the forms of evidence and reasoning that have been developed in diverse domains of inquiry and practice.[59] These must be learned, usually with the help of teachers, and the art of bringing diverse analytical tools and standards together in understanding and judging complex matters must be practiced. The most robust lessons in critical thinking and judgment might allow students, working in teams, to bring the intellectual resources of diverse fields of study to bear on real-world problems, research those problems, and develop proposals.

[57] Gareth Matthews, "Philosophy and Developmental Psychology: Outgrowing the Deficit Conception of Childhood," in Harvey Siegel, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 175.

[58] A model for how to do this is provided by Gerald Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), a textbook designed to enable students to identify the basic structure of any field they might study, and bring the resources of those fields together in practical reasoning and judgment.

[59] See Siegel, *Educating Reason*.

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A common view of cognitive development is that it occurs primarily through guided participation in the activities of a community.[60] Philosophers have argued in this vein that the cultivation of good judgment and other intellectual virtues is best accomplished in schools through participation in classroom communities of inquiry that are modeled on ideal scientific or philosophical communities engaged in fundamental research.[61] I accept the general developmental thesis and the value of participatory learning in such communities of inquiry, whereby students acquire skills and virtues of disciplinary and ethical inquiry. However, if Locke's prescriptions for the pathologies of judgment are on the right track, then such communities of inquiry are not the only kind of social setting in, and for which, students should be prepared. They should also be prepared to fend for themselves in everyday settings in which the norms of such inquiry are violated or otherwise inoperable, and the patterns of such preparation would not be those of communities engaged in fundamental research. Instruction in recognizing and guarding against contemporary manifestations of Locke's pathologies of judgment would undoubtedly benefit from instruction in the patterns of serious inquiry, but would include lessons and practice in recognizing patterns of epistemic seduction and judging who is and is not a trustworthy expert on a subject one cannot judge for oneself. Locke would surely have commended the educational significance of the growing body of research on epistemic failures owing to *cognitive limitations* (such as distraction by competing concerns, irrational discounting of evidence, and optimism bias), *ideologies* (a conflicting worldview, faith, or status quo bias), *influence of social norms* (through cues or epistemic emulation of those whose acceptance one seeks), *sunk costs* (in the form of financial investments, established habits, or vested interests), *discredence* (mistrust, denial, or oppositional reaction to unwelcome messages), and *perceived risk* (irrational risk aversion in contemplating novelty).[62] I expect he would also approve the educational use of illustrative case studies of such epistemic failures and exercises in critical thinking that encourage students to probe the sources and foundations of their own ideas.[63]

[60] For an influential overview of the seminal theories and research, see Barbara Rogoff, *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[61] See, e.g., Richard Grandy, "Constructivisms and Objectivity," and Matthew Lipman, "Education for Critical Thinking," in Curren, *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology,* 410–16 and 427–34.

[62] See, e.g., T. Gilovic, D. Griffin and D. Kahneman, *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); D. Kahneman and A. Teversky, *Choices, Values and Frames* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

[63] For an engaging volume of case studies, see Margaret Heffernan, *Willful Blindness* (New York: Walker and Co., 2011). Argument-focused approaches to teaching critical thinking typically do not include exercises that invite students to examine their own ideas. For an approach to critical thinking instruction that does, see Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through.*

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V. Judgment and the Context of Educational Reform

What might we expect to accomplish by reorienting schools in the ways suggested in the previous sections? I have already argued that there are direct, developmental benefits for students in the form of personal efficacy, responsibility, and motivation for sustained engagement in learning, and it is not unreasonable to predict benefits for personal satisfaction, family life, and citizenship, irrespective of subsequent occupational status. It is conceivable that this reorientation might improve the occupational opportunities of the least advantaged, though perhaps not as much as some competing models of reform would. The prospects for progress in equalizing opportunity through school-based reforms would seem to be in any case modest, given the immense impact of disparities of wealth and income on children's life prospects and the capacity of advantaged families to remain a step or two ahead in the spiraling pursuit of marketable credentials.[64] There is no educational substitute for having more good opportunities to go around, so it is best to consider school reform within a wider understanding of the requirements of justice.

The disconcerting upshot of Aristotle being more nearly right than Locke about the ease of judging adequately everything pertaining to our daily affairs is that we face a parallel problem with respect to the adequacy of judgment. The progress of learning has placed the attainment of a "complete" Aristotelian education in judgment ever farther out of reach. The very sciences by which the world is better known have also facilitated the development of a technological and economic world order in which human beings interact with each other and the world in remarkably complex and far reaching ways. There is essentially nothing anyone can do now that does not have effects on the other side of the world that a person of Lockean responsibility would be compelled to investigate and have trouble assessing. One notable aspect of this is that having domesticated much of the planet, human beings now face the daunting task of piecing together a science of sustainability adequate to understanding the complex interactions of systems that are themselves enormously complex.[65] Humanity may be collectively up to the task, but individuals faced with the normal demands of daily life are far from able to judge the import of their actions.

Faced with a choice of meat or vegetarian entrees on a transatlantic flight, it would be relevant that livestock reportedly account for about 18 percent of anthropogenic (human-caused) greenhouse gas emissions,

[64] See Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, eds., *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

[65] See Bert J. M. de Vries, *Sustainability Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Hiroshi Komiyama and Kazuhiko Takeuchi, "Sustainability Science: Building a New Discipline," *Sustainability Science* 1, no. 1 (2006): 1–6, http://www.springerlink.com/content/214j253h82xh7342/fulltext.html.

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including close to 40 percent of all methane and 65 percent of nitrous oxide.[66] It would also be relevant that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued comprehensive assessments and projections of the impact of such emissions that have been formally endorsed by sponsoring governments, including those of the United States and Great Britain.[67] Would any plausible alternative to Locke's stringent standard of epistemic responsibility permit this to be dismissed without a serious investigation? It seems unlikely that any would, but how much epistemic diligence would suffice? A person with an education of the kind I have described would grasp that she is not equipped to judge the science for herself, but she might be able to spot some weak arguments and evidence of who is and is not a credible expert. Knowing a bit of geological history, she would not agree that, "Nature is, as any reasonable person might suppose, dominated by stabilizing negative feedbacks rather than destabilizing positive feedbacks."[68] She would know how wrong Locke was to think that any such thing could be evident to "natural reason." This is only the beginning, however, and not an altogether encouraging picture of how we might address collective interests of this apparent magnitude. The costs of individuals judging all they would have to judge for themselves are daunting.

Is there any prospect of governmental or nongovernmental organizations bringing the relevant kinds of *bona fide* experts together, to understand what needs to be understood and communicate that in a way we could all responsibly rely on? Do we know how to design organizations that reliably produce good judgments even in much less complicated matters than climate and sustainability?

These questions matter not only to the adequacy of judgments individuals make in the context of daily life, but because many of the consequential judgments and decisions people make are in the context of their

[66] Worldwatch Institute, *Vital Signs 2012* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2012), 76–77. The emissions associated with in–flight service are only a small part of those arising from airline travel, of course, so further choices arise concerning mode and quantity of travel, whether to purchase carbon offsets, and so on.

[67] IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) "Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report" (Geneva, 2007), http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-syr.htm.

[68] James Lawrence Powell, *The Inquisition of Climate Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 11, quoting the keynote address, "Climate Alarm," by Richard Lindzen, an MIT professor of meteorology, speaking at a March 2009 Heartland Institute conference. The consensus seems to be that neither Lindzen's research nor anyone else's has identified any significant negative feedback mechanisms that would slow climate change, while several positive feedbacks are outpacing IPCC projections: the retreat of sea ice (causing a decline of surface reflectivity), accelerating decay of organic matter in soil (releasing green-house gases), decline of forests killed by drought and pests, and release of methane from warming sea beds and melting permafrost. Droughts in the Amazon in 2005 and 2010 caused releases of carbon measured in gigatons (GtC, or billions of tons of carbon), estimated at 1.2 to 3.4 GtC in 2010. See World Wildlife Fund, *Living Planet Report 2012* (Gland: WWF International, 2012), 95, http://worldwildlife.org/publications/living-planet-report-2012-biodiversity-biocapacity-and-better-choices.

positions within organizations. The institutional cultures and structures of these organizations shape and limit the basis for judgments made within them, for better or worse. Organizations vary in the extent to which they coherently aggregate the understanding and expertise of people playing disparate roles within them, and the causes of such variance seem to be much broader than the challenges arising from the fundamental difficulties in bridging esoteric forms of expertise referred to in Section II. How spatially and culturally distant are the various operations and actors within an organization? How effectively is the work of functionally distinct units coordinated? How do the differences of training and orientation of different actors within the organization, and the cues and incentives to which they respond, shape the degree to which the organizations coherently aggregate partial understandings of things that matter to it? The significance of such factors for the quality of institutionally embedded judgments and incidence of system failures and catastrophic loss is borne out by case studies of "blindness" to what should have been evident.[69]

A consequence of all this is that a person educated in the way I have described may have difficulty reconciling his sense of personal responsibility with the conditions of judgment and decision-making he faces within an organization. What can be hoped is that people educated in this way might influence institutional cultures over time, and that knowledge of Lockean pathologies and the decisional consequences of various institutional factors may provide a basis for organizational reforms. We know enough to entertain the idea of an epistemically well-ordered society, concerned not only with the educational cultivation of good judgment but also with relieving individuals of some of the burden of understanding and bringing together the epistemic resources essential to good judgment.

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[69] See Heffernan, *Willful Blindness*.

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