EDUCATION AND SELF-CULTIVATION: FOUNDATIONAL CHANGES FOR EXISTENTIAL FLOURISHING

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy
In conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(September, 2016)

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Abstract

The strained relationship between pedagogy and self-cultivation is often overlooked in favour of more pressing and profitable concerns within educational institutions. However, the end of education is not a well-paying job. It is often thought that education will produce a certain type of learned individual. Students are entered into educational institutions from a very young age and spend most of their youth within them, subsequently forming a part of themselves, their self-identify and agency, through these institutions. A significant amount of trust is placed in the hands of educators not only to impart information about various subject matters but to teach students how to think. This, however, is a difficult task which cannot be completely accomplished; thinking is a skill which an educator can promote but only the individual can cultivate. If self-cultivation is not the end of pedagogical practice and education, there is something deeply contradictory between the theoretical and practical values and aims of educational institutions.

This thesis will address the problems caused by the neglect of self-cultivation within the pedagogical practices of contemporary educational institutions. I argue that self-cultivation, existential learning and flourishing should be the focus of these institutions. Educational institutions can make alternative efforts not only to improve the learning environment for these students but to prepare them to cope with existential questions. By acknowledging and focusing on the significance of self-cultivation, educational institutions can and should make efforts not only to teach useful, marketable skills and information but to also nurture the agency and mental well-being of the student him- or herself. My hope is that this thesis will be the first step towards answering a larger concern: How can educational institutions alleviate the struggles of students, particularly the seemingly growing number who are suffering from depression, by appealing to notions of self-cultivation?
Acknowledgements

I am thankful for the helpful comments, advice, and guidance offered by Professor Paul Fairfield, as well as the encouragement of Professor David Bakhurst, and the faculty and staff in the Department of Philosophy at Queen’s University. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my loving friends and family who have provided me with a steady supply of coffee and have always been a voice of reassurance and support.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves.”¹

There is a tension in the relation between the student and the educational institution. While the former seeks to learn, not only about the world but about oneself, the latter strives to teach but not to educate. But what does it mean to make the claim that educational institutions do not educate? Furthermore, where does the inconsistency lie between what the student wishes to learn and what institutions are able to teach? Or rather, is the problem a matter of what institutions ought to teach versus what they want to teach? These are the concerns that must be addressed for the ‘conversation of mankind’, as Oakeshott puts it, to be perpetuated through schools. I will be arguing that, under the right circumstances provided by the educational institution and the educator, the conversation of mankind, as exercised through the conversational classroom, will encourage the highly motivated student to flourish and, consequently, cultivate the critical thinking and self-growth skills of an existentially aware individual.

The highly motivated student is one who strives to learn in such an intimate fashion that it cultivates her to be ‘at home in the world’. This, however, is not to discriminate one type of student from another. Rather, the highly motivated student is a standard, a hypothetical individual who exhibits the critical thinking and self-growth skills which are required to fulfill epistemic and personal goals. This sort of individual is existentially aware; her professional and personal goals are not motivated by the institution’s idea of success. Rather, she flourishes through her intellectual virtues. Every student is already in the process of becoming the highly motivated student and, as a result, some prove to be more cultivated than others. What can hinder the highly motivated student, however, is unwillingness on the part of the institution to provide for her the appropriate environment for her flourishing. This is certainly hypocritical coming from an institution which ought to be a place of growth, conversation, and ideas. To do this, I will address the three constitutive areas of educational institutions and how change needs to be implemented at every level for persistent, long-term benefits for the student. The inconsistencies between the values and practices of current educational institutions can begin to be remedied by shifting the focus of education to be both a means to securing the skills required for the current job market, and honing the critical-thinking, self-reflective, and evaluative abilities to prepare one for life. This change can be achieved by efforts on the part of the institution, educator, and student.

There is a pressing need for change in every foundational aspect of educational institutions. It would be narrow-minded to suspect that only the educators are guilty of failing to educate, or that inconsistencies in institutional values cause unsuccessful students. Rather, the perspective which I wish to encourage is that institutions, educators, and students alike all contribute to the hindrance of the existentially aware, self-critical,

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and self-cultivated student. This is not only a theoretical observation, but a practical one. It has become evident knowledge in present academic communities that “students’ ability to do analysis and synthesis seems to have been replaced by rote memorization and regurgitation in both the sciences and the humanities.” Students do not flock to libraries to ‘talk it out’ the night before an exam, but rather have ‘cram sessions’ which entail rapidly storing facts in one’s mind until it can be, just as quickly, regurgitated.

But how does this act of ‘studying’ translate into the understanding and internalization of information? To know any subject well requires a slow process in which educators teach students how to think about a given topic. The students will then digest this idea and, through contemplation and conversation, formulate a personal understanding and opinion of it. The ‘memorization and fill-in-the-blanks approach’ which Bernie Hodgson, a Philosophy Professor at Trent University, observes from his students only mirrors science and mathematics and fails to communicate the essence of the subject matter. Alvin Slavin, Professor of Physics and Astronomy, also from Trent University, writes that while every subject requires some degree of memorization, this is not an approach which fully works within analytical disciplines such as physics, philosophy, English, mathematics or the visual arts, where ‘the main emphasis is on constructing one’s own knowledge and approaches’. “…Knowledge of facts makes up only a small component of one’s learning,” he writes; “more important is the ability to relate these facts in new ways, to see them in a new light, and to bring quite disparate ideas together to solve new problems or create new forms of art.”

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
However, to view subject matter in a creative and artistic light requires change on the part of the curriculum itself. Institutions are constantly working to improve curriculum by integrating new school values and shifting the structure of academic institutions. In 1997, the Ontario government introduced a new content-heavy curriculum in mathematics and language for grades K to 8 students, which was quickly followed by a similar shift in the science and technology curriculum in 1998. Curriculum quickly shifted to a hierarchy determined by external, likely economically motivated, factors, unlike earlier curricula that had been designed by local teachers and their school boards under general guidelines from the Ministry of Education. Further, in 1997, the Ontario government introduced standardized province-wide testing in math and reading/writing in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10 arranged by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). This independent agency “creates and administers large-scale assessments to measure Ontario students’ achievement,” and, additionally, provides schools and school boards with detailed reports on students’ “contextual, attitudinal, and behavioural information from questionnaires, in an interactive online reporting tool.”

Given that standardized tests, like the EQAO or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), determine the path of curriculum, teaching at the elementary and secondary level is now directed at successfully passing these tests. Academic education as a means to passing these tests means intensive curricula which are considered by many experienced teachers to be “beyond the mental development of students at that level.” Margaret McNay, at Western’s Faculty of Education, wrote an article on the new

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7 Slavin, Alvin. “Has Ontario Taught its High-School Students not to Think?”
8 Ibid.
10 Slavin, Alvin. “Has Ontario Taught its High-School Students not to Think?”; The OSSLT became a requirement for secondary school graduation (thereby earning the Ontario Secondary School Diploma) during the 2000-2001 academic year.
11 Ibid.
curriculum in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* in which she said, “Grade 1 students can learn to parrot ‘right’ answers, and grade 7 students to memorize incomprehensible definitions, but no educational advantage is gained when the conceptual demands of what is taught are beyond the comprehension of the students.”¹² Thus, due to the high priority and trust placed on standardized testing and rigid curriculum, teachers must ensure that their teaching is efficient. Courses and information are compressed for efficiency; learning has to be speedy, and degrees earned easily. The compression of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) is a prime example. Introduced in 1984, the Ontario Academic Credit (OAC), implemented a fifth year of secondary school to better prepare students for post-secondary education. 2003, however, “saw the graduation of the ‘double cohort’ of the 4U students and last of the OAC five-year students.”¹³ The increasingly dense curriculum implemented by these institutions and exercised by their educators, are structured to mass-produce educated students. Sir Kenneth Robinson, who led the British government’s 1998 advisory committee on creative and cultural education, stated in a 2006 Ted Talk that “in the next 30 years, according to UNESCO, more people worldwide will be graduating through [educational institutions] since the beginning of history.”¹⁴ Which is proof that the hierarchy of these institutions are rooted on two ideas: first, “that the most useful subjects for work are at the top,” and, second is “academic ability, which has really come to dominate our view of intelligence, because the universities designed the system in their image.”¹⁵

Though this curriculum has its institutional benefits, its most corrosive repercussion is the loss of the humanities which is apparent by the blandness of a society

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¹² Slavin, Alvin. “Has Ontario Taught its High-School Students not to Think?”
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
and culture of creatively snubbed individuals. This sort of educational culture ‘stigmatizes mistakes,’ “…and we now are running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is, that we are educating people out of their creative capacities.”\textsuperscript{16} Teaching and learning quickly become tools for “maximizing labour efficiency in the neoliberal (corporate) university,” states Jessica Riddell of Bishop’s University.\textsuperscript{17} Professors now constitute a labour cost, and “the challenge becomes how to get the maximum number of students through the system to increase revenue for the university with the fewest number of professors.”\textsuperscript{18}

Thomas Henry Huxley, coining the term “agnostic” in 1869, states, “in matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable,” meaning that we must question whether we can fully measure the process of understanding and internalizing knowledge.\textsuperscript{19} This skill and ability to analyze and synthesize concepts and ideas is what constitutes good scientists, writers, philosophers and artists; it is the skill required to perpetuate a knowledge-based society.\textsuperscript{20} A balance must be struck for Canada and other countries with similarly structured institutions to succeed in the future; students must be equipped with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed for success in a ‘knowledge-driven economy.’\textsuperscript{21}

There must be a fear that a student is only quiet because she fears the consequences of pursuing her personal interests and fulfilling her own epistemic goals; that she fails to be cultivated as an existentially aware individual because she has not

\textsuperscript{16} Robinson, Ken. “Do Schools Kill Creativity?”
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Slavin, Alvin. “Has Ontario Taught its High-School Students not to Think?”
developed the ability to cope with greater challenges.\textsuperscript{22} To teach a student how to identify and create her own values and worldview demands personal commitment on the part of the students; it is not the type of skill which is simply transferred from teacher to student through a semester of classes. Even STEM courses require the student to digest and mull over concepts to fully grasp them. Slavin shares a Grade One teacher’s experience with developing the idea of ‘fiveness’ in her students. The exercise is simple: how many different ways can one make up five, using different objects as well as cuisinaire rods. She claims that when the students completed the activity, they “understood the number five at a broad conceptual level, and they carried this understanding to other numbers. [However], there is now little time for such activities if a student is to be ready to pass the standard tests which are tied to the new curriculum; all a student has to do is memorize that $2+2+1=5$.\textsuperscript{23} It becomes challenging for the educator to think of ways in which critical thinking and self-reflective skills are integrated. Not to mention that the extent to which individuals can hone these skills is capped; the student does not get touched by chemistry or maths in the same way as history. There is an element of self-reflection in the humanities which colours the bleak silhouette of the institutionalized student.

The approach which I assume reflects Martha Nussbaum’s critical perspective towards educational institutions and curriculum in \textit{Not for Profit}. Though only slightly leaning on her idea of the democratic need for the humanities through the citizen of the world, the highly motivated student which is encouraged is one which flourishes in reformed institutions. These institutions are actively engaged with “rigorous critical thought” which is heightened though the reflective nature of the humanities.\textsuperscript{24} By indulging in a curriculum which is shaped to produce students who have the ability to

\textsuperscript{23} Slavin, Alvin. “Has Ontario Taught its High-School Students not to Think?”
think well, have concern for the lives of others, imagine well, and judge political leaders critically, to name a few qualities of the student who is also the citizen of the world, educational ends will take a turn to benefit the growth of the student versus the growth of capitalism. Nussbaum may attract skeptics and defenders of current institutional values and pedagogical practices, however, I maintain that her perspective and attitude are necessary to shed light upon the significance of the growth or, more specifically, the existential flourishing, of the student.

Briefly, Chapter One addresses the inconsistencies within educational institutions which fail to uphold the standards and values which they claim to be grounded upon. More specifically, the shift from education for the sake of education itself to education as a means to securing a career will be demonstrated by observing the direct relationship between the prioritization of economically profitable subjects and the academic injury caused by a decline in enrolment in the humanities. I will claim that there are two general aims of education. First, at a surface level, is the necessity to prepare the student to be a contributing member of society. This preparation requires an appropriation of the significant cultural and societal values which cohere diverse groups of people into a functional and prosperous society. In addition, the student needs to be moulded into the ideal worker who possesses a particular set of skills to be proficient in her area of expertise. However, this area of expertise is often an economically profitable trade; the expectation is not that individuals are trained to be proficient in thinking or living well. On this note, the second, and more neglected, aim of education is to cultivate students to fulfill personal epistemic and existential goals. This will be the motivation of this essay.

Chapter Two pertains to the identification and role of the educator. While educational institutions employ teachers to impart information, the educator strives to

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25 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 25-6.
teach the student how to think. Friedrich Nietzsche’s conception of the educator as presented through “Schopenhauer as Educator” artfully captures the struggle of a student who seeks an educator who is both an exemplar and a mentor. The view is that “education is an art in which an inventive mind mediates between some body of knowledge and the student’s consciousness.”

26 This inventive, mediating mind is that of the educator. Though the educator need not be found within the educational institution, for the purposes of this inquiry I will argue that the Nietzschean educator can be found within the classroom. In other words, the educator is he who can both impart information from a set curriculum and identify the highly motivated students who make efforts towards existential growth.

Chapter Three introduces the highly motivated student and delineates the qualities which benefit her as an existentially aware individual. Borrowing from Hans-Georg Gadamer, I will discuss the idea of Bildung as an inevitable process of becoming. The highly motivated student cultivates critical thinking and self-growth skills which aid her ability to fulfill her epistemic and personal goals; she is wholeheartedly invested and flourishes within the classroom and participates in the ‘conversation of mankind’. Following this, Chapter Four elaborates upon Michael Oakeshott’s idea of conversation. Borrowing from this view, I propose the idea of the conversational classroom which shifts the generic, hierarchal structure of the classroom towards a more Socratic dialogue. It is within the conversational classroom that highly motivated students are provided with an environment for flourishing; they are encouraged to, actively or passively, participate in a conversation which respects and considers every voice and perspective.

Why ought we to consider the school as the place for this type of education? If education is multifaceted then there is no necessity for the institution to take on the obligation of cultivating self-critical and existentially aware individuals. If there are alternatives targeting the same skills, and these alternatives happen to be ones which can be more subjective and private, then one would be inclined to agree that the more personal and personally moulded a curriculum is the easier it is for the student to gain expertise in that area. This being said, other places of learning such as the home, community centres, religious or spiritual institutions, or social gatherings may provide the student with experience, understanding, and the ability to cultivate the same skills. Further, it is not out of the ordinary to believe that these alternative places of learning can be more educational and rewarding for the student. However, I maintain that existential learning should take place within the school because it will provide all students with equal access and exposure to the kinds of skills that ought to be cultivated for critical thinking and self-growth. Going to school, in other words, has a place in the flow of life. There is a unifying factor behind schools; it is a widely accepted and encouraged part of life. In other words, it is safe to assume that most children in developed countries between the ages of five and eighteen have attended an academic institution and have been trained to acquire a set of information within a classroom. These individuals emerge from the institution as certain kinds of people with similar skills and worldview. Given these conditions, a promising place to encourage a widespread appropriation of critical thinking and self-growth skills is within the classroom through existential learning. Here, all students have the opportunity to flourish as both professionals and existential individuals.
Chapter 2

The Institution

This chapter touches on three themes: (1) the issues and inconsistencies which, I maintain, plague current educational institutions can begin to be alleviated; (2) by shifting the focus to the self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous student; (3) who is the outcome of Bildung.

Let us begin with an inquiry into the current state of educational institutions. There are four main issues which, I will argue, complicate the school or university’s potential for pedagogical success. First, it seems to be the case that there has been a significant shift in the values and goals of these institutions which, as mentioned, once were for the sole purpose of gaining, imparting, and sharing knowledge. Education ought to be a conversation, a discourse between teachers and students alike for the sake of learning about ideas. This takes place within schools and universities which students attend with the intention of gaining knowledge from experienced and well-informed teachers who genuinely wish to impart their knowledge. However, there is an evident inconsistency between what these institutions are claiming to be and what they are in actuality; their values and goals, as I will soon discuss in further detail, are not primarily for the sake of knowledge itself.

In “Education and Conversation”, Bakhurst explains that “the image of ‘conversation’ evokes a worthwhile and pleasurable activity, freely entered into for its own sake, by interlocutors seeking a fruitful exchange of ideas in the course of a common intellectual adventure, listening attentively and speaking intelligibly to one another as
equal partners in the discourse”

The purpose of conversation, thus explained, is valuable in the pursuit of knowledge through education. The discourse which the scholar, teacher, and undergraduate—though all with different levels of expertise—participate in does not have ulterior motives outside of education and conversation; their purpose is solely for the sake of learning through dialogue. Institutions must not forget that conversation is a natural outcome of education, that it is not possible for the scholar, teacher, and especially the undergraduate to flourish without engaging in conversation about ideas. “The idea of ‘making conversation’ evokes a mutual exchange of views, where there is reciprocal recognition among the participants...an activity properly entered into for its own sake rather than for its results.”

The institution’s shift in values largely reflects an appeal to economic gain. I would like to take a brief moment to distinguish the humanities from what I will call ‘profitable knowledge’. This is the type of knowledge which Nussbaum and Oakeshott fear will consume educational institutions, and is the type of knowledge which prevails in the sciences, engineering, and commerce. The sense in which I am using ‘profitable’ is solely economic. There is a tendency for students to pursue subjects which are associated with high-paying jobs, thus creating a demand for the university to increase their enrolment in the sciences or commerce despite their minimal ability to contribute to the student’s self-knowledge. This is certainly not meant to denounce the significance of the sciences and other economically profitable subjects in academia. It would be unreasonable to deny that these subjects, while reaping economic benefits for the school or university, also contribute notably to functional aspects of society. Nonetheless, what

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these economically profitable subjects often fail to provide is the cultivation of the self. Given the circumstances which I have just mentioned, Nussbaum’s and Oakeshott’s worry is legitimate.

The demand for ‘economically profitable knowledge’ consequently transforms the educational institution into a place of transactions; students pay tuition which will in turn earn them a degree and ultimately pay them back through their jobs. To understand this issue, I would like to touch on both the theoretical and practical problems associated with educational institutions. What cannot be dismissed is the reflection of current educational values and goals in everyday pedagogical practice. In both Western and Eastern institutions, particularly in universities, the shift away from learning for the sake of learning has long been made. A case that Nussbaum offers in Not for Profit is that of Visva-Bharati, an interdisciplinary liberal arts university established by the respectable and historically influential Rabindranath Tagore, which has been turned into a single-subject-model university by the Indian government. The significance of this shift is due to the pivotal role Tagore played within Indian history as a visionary, spiritual poet, and educator for Indians during British colonization. This school which was once revered for Tagore’s perspective on life suddenly lost its value due to a hike in financial reliance and capitalistic greed. While it is possible to identify the benefits of economically-driven disciplines and use these reasons to motivate one’s pursuits, it should not be the case that it overwhelms those subjects which are rich in a type of thinking which cannot be taught. What is lost here is not only the Socratic method of inquiry and learning but also the emphasis on certain self-cultivating skills, such as critical thinking and ‘empathetic imagination’.

Though Nussbaum claims that dramatic shifts such as that of Visva-Bharati have not occurred in the United States, it does not diminish the severe impact of

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30 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 19.
31 Ibid.
the steep incline in STEM courses and capitalistic interests which educational institutions are adopting.

Though this idea is undeveloped and in danger of being tangential, I would like to offer the view that there is something inherently wrong with knowledge as a commodity in a business transaction. It is no secret that the high demand for very specialized professions has people forking over large sums for their degrees. However, knowledge as a commodity seems to produce individuals who are trained to fit into a niche in society. In other words, there are no personal, epistemic goals; the aims of the students reflect the aims of the institution, while the latter are determined by the kind of knowledge which would train students for its application in the job market. Perhaps, if those individuals who excelled in certain fields were given the opportunity to pursue whatever specialization they wish despite, first, their ability to afford the education and, second, the market value of their chosen field, then universities would produce, simply put, people doing a good job at what they love. This is a familiar thought, but one nonetheless important in regard to the humanities and the cultivation of highly motivated students.

If we can accept the idea of care and love as genuine motivating factors for action, and further claim that acting out of love instills a stronger volitional necessity that other motivational forces cannot trump, then we can claim that students (1) typically pursue their academic area of expertise for reasons other than love, and (2) feel more fulfilled by pursuing their area of interest—which ought to be a sufficient motivation for the curriculum. The problem is not the financial implications of disciplines but the high value applied to some subjects over others.
This is not to say that the appeal to economic gain diminishes the ability for schools and institutions to provide meaningful education for students. But rather, we must be wary of the direction in which they are heading. The claims to quality education which every university boasts should be taken lightly, for ‘quality’ no longer means that it is the best place to engage in the tradition of learning, rather, that it is the place where a diploma, certificate, or degree is worth the most. Certainly, as Oakeshott says, the university is very good at going about the “business of being a university.” It certainly is possible for these institutions to be simultaneously money-making and encourage good pedagogical practices. I do not believe the issue to be that institutions profit (financially) from certain disciplines; it is simply that the profitable quality of certain disciplines should not be a reason to neglect others.

Third, what is tragic about this shift in the values and goals of educational institutions is the associated loss of the humanities. Certainly, it is unfortunate that education is degenerating for the sake of economic benefit; the motives for both the student and the university are no longer for the sake of learning. There is a direct correlation between the institutional focus on economic gain and the diminishing priority on the humanities. “Educators for economic growth,” writes Nussbaum, “will do more than ignore the arts. They will fear them.” By this, advocates of current educational institutions are simultaneously aware of the pedagogical value of the humanities and their inability to profit the institution. Thus, it would be best to avoid the danger of students ‘falling for’ the humanities by diminishing their presence in institutions. Why pursue a subject which will not increase the likelihood of securing a well-paying job, after all? The prioritization of securing a well-paying job is likely higher now than it ever has been. Educational institutions traditionally produce students with various interests. Once

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33 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 23.
schools took a turn towards STEM, fulfillment through play and passions were
diminished and replaced by static, structured curriculum. This is a view that has been
circulating in the Eastern world for many years now and has slowly crept into Western
perspectives on education. The shift in the values of education and priority towards
economic gain has placed subjects which benefit the self rather than the wallet at the
bottom of the hierarchy. It is as though the ways in which education and knowledge affect
the student as an individual in the world has no significance in society; rather, what is
accepted as beneficial to society is assumed to be significant to the self. Nonetheless, in
“One of a Kind”, Bakhurst stresses that the enjoyment which results from the humanities
should not shadow their true value; the humanities ought to be studied “for their own
sake”.

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In other words, what Bakhurst and Nussbaum are arguing against is the
withdrawal of the humanities from the curriculum on the basis that they do not reap
economic benefits. Nussbaum argues that the value of the humanities cannot be measured
by enrolment rates, job placements, or financial factors. There is something non-
negotiable about the humanities; they provide students with an opportunity to learn how
to think. “I shall argue”, states Nussbaum, “that cultivated capacities for critical thinking
and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies alive and wide awake.”

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Suppose, following the current downward trajectory, that the humanities lost all relevance in
academia, that educational institutions simply could not financially justify providing
courses in philosophy or history. I am not alone in expressing discomfort with the fact
that such valuable knowledge has a diminishing place in the classroom. Moreover, as
Nussbaum said, this would not sustain our culture or country’s democratic values.

34 David Bakhurst, “One of a Kind: Self-Knowledge, Language and Literature” (unpublished
paper, presented to the London English Group, King’s College London, 2009), 3.
35 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 10.
Students would graduate with superficial knowledge in the liberal arts and would not be able to address pressing questions about morality, purpose, or meaning. This paints a very bleak image of the world as one that lacks the fundamental ability to think critically, sympathize with others, and cultivate ‘citizens of the world’. Furthermore, there exist inseparable ties between the humanities and other subjects; bioethics and business ethics, for example, necessitate philosophical research, knowledge, and conversation to determine how businesses and medical practitioners ought to treat humans. The highly motivated student or the ‘citizen of the world’, as Nussbaum puts it, would not flourish in the absence of the humanities.

Finally, the most corrosive aspect of current educational institutions are the students whom they produce. Today it seems to be the aim of the institution to produce students who are the product of institutionalization, the perfect robotic offspring of capitalization and science. This is likely not something that schools, especially at the elementary level, would be inclined to agree with, although it is at this level that young children are most likely to be moulded under the pressure of the institution. The undergraduate, as Oakeshott points out, is in a “strange middle moment of life when he knows only enough of himself and of the world which passes before him to wish to know more.”

Thus, the undergraduate is vulnerable and ready to be moulded by the university; his hopes are to discover ‘intellectual fortune’ and develop a love and ambition to pursue it. However, when universities do not provide the student with an environment for intellectual and individual flourishing, the outcome after three, four, or

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37 Ibid.
five years of post-secondary education is nothing but an individual who is trained to fill some niche in society.\footnote{Oakeshott, “Voice of Poetry,” 116.}

I must stress that I am not faulting the institution for being concerned with its own financial success, however, when this becomes the sole aim of education the institution fails to be well-rounded. Moreover, the teacher wishes to cultivate the student into a certain type of individual; the goal is not—or, at least, \textit{was} not—merely to fill students’ heads with facts about the world which they can one day regurgitate word for word. Rather, the role of the teacher or educator was to help transform the student into a cultured individual, someone who is not only knowledgeable about the world but is also a part of the world. The highly motivated student is ‘on a mission’ of becoming; he asks questions and actively engages with ideas in hopes of participating in the world. Moreover, he is self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous. However, before jumping into an analysis of the highly motivated student, I would like to turn my focus back to the teacher and institution which fail to genuinely cultivate these students.

I wish to quickly explain my choice of calling this student the highly motivated and cultured student. It is, first, a means of identifying the extent of one’s self-cultivation on a scale which is determined by an ideal conception of the student. There certainly is a different air about the highly motivated student; he, as I have mentioned, is the student who cares, not just about his education but about who he is and his place in the world. Expanding on this, in Chapter Three, the cultured student is the ideal embodiment of a student who takes interest and strives towards fulfilling personal and epistemic goals through education. Though every individual engages in \textit{Bildung}, the process can go strongly or poorly, thus, the highly motivated student, as I will explain greater in Chapter Three, is the student who engages in \textit{Bildung}. This leads to a second reason for the use of
‘cultured’: Bildung is a process of self-cultivation which involves “rising up to humanity through culture,” as Johann Gottfried Herder describes it.\textsuperscript{39} Gadamer in Truth and Method also points out the significance of culture, through which the individual emerges and engages in Bildung.\textsuperscript{40} Let us not forget that the investment and dedication on the student’s part is pivotal for the overall change in institutional values and curriculum.

This being said, the claims I am making against current educational institutions are that they have: first, shifted their values and goals to prioritize no longer the pursuit of knowledge; second, used economic gain to determined curriculum; third, diminished the value of the humanities; and, finally, failed to focus on the cultivation of the student.

\textsuperscript{39} Fairfield, Teachability, 19.
Chapter 3

The Educator

The difficulty for the educator is that she is both to encourage self-growth, which involves gentle nudges in the right direction, while maintaining a hands-off approach. The brunt of the work is laid upon the educator as they are the intermediary between the institutional objectives and the student as a successful graduate. However, despite Nietzsche’s bold definition of the ideal educator, what must be acknowledged is that the autonomy of the teacher is compromised under the institution; they are predominantly executors of the institution. Perhaps it would be beneficial to define and distinguish between the two roles of the educator—these being (1) the instructor or exemplar and (2) the guide. While one displays the qualities/virtues which are worth cultivating, the other aids in the learning process. A good teacher will strive to impart the curriculum to his students while identifying and guiding those individuals who display an additional interest in their self-cultivation. The latter requires a commitment on the educator’s part to recognize the potential of one’s growth.

“To educate educators! But the first ones must educate themselves! And for these I write.” For Nietzsche, the task of finding an educator proved to be exceedingly challenging. What he is seeking is an independent thinker, someone who can guide him to self-knowledge rather than impose a way of thinking upon him. The problem with our “educators” is that they do not know the significance and influence of their task; they misinterpret the act of schooling a student as equivalent to preparing them for life. Whether educators realize it or not, their influence over students is highly significant to the student’s development. They serve as both teacher, imparter of knowledge, and a

model of the skills in practice. The student inadvertently accepts the teacher as an exemplar of the skills, characteristics, and qualities which the teacher is imparting. Would it not be hypocritical for the teacher to lack expertise and proficiency in the skills which they are advocating?

Some may question the significance of the role of the parental figure. Is it not the role of the parent to be an example of virtues to the child? It certainly is. However, there is no governmental control over the quality of one’s parenting and, further, the relationship between child and parents is private. In other words, there is no guarantee that the child will be raised by an individual who seeks to cultivate the student in her own way. Let me clarify that I cannot over-stress how pivotal parent-teacher unity is for the cultivation of the student.

As Ivan Illich states, most learning is not the outcome of instruction. People learn as a result of being “with it”, being with and being educated by life itself. Thus, the role of an educator is not to be a mere conveyer of information or the preserver of beliefs and traditions. If this is the case, they do not educate any more than they sustain previously established conceptions of truth which, in Nietzsche’s eyes, is a grave mistake. He claims that a true educator must recognize and nourish the real strengths of his pupil in order to guide them to self-knowledge. By doing this, the student is able to thrive in his independence rather than being moulded by the beliefs and morality of others. A student’s beliefs and morality should be further encouraged by the example set by the educator. This is due to the fact that it would simply be absurd for an educator to guide his students towards self-knowledge when he himself does not portray the qualities of one who possesses a high amount of self-knowledge. Thus, in “Schopenhauer as Educator”

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(1874) Nietzsche dissects the characteristics of a superficial educator and explains the temptations of base morality which the educator falls prey to.

What is it to be ‘with it’? Further, what does being ‘with it’ look like? Students will not be able to grasp or embody such an ambiguous and abstract concept, nor would an educator be able to convey its meaning through demonstration. Being ‘with it’, however, is a significant step in the student’s process of self-actualization, and growth involves being wholly invested in one’s epistemic and existential goals.

Despite Nietzsche’s initial skepticism towards educators, he fell hard and fast for Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*. Thus began Nietzsche’s investigation into “Schopenhauer as Educator”. Schopenhauer’s atheism, relentlessness, and independent attitude were attractive to Nietzsche and provided him with an exemplar for his own intellectual growth. This chapter will examine Nietzsche’s thoughts on the ideal educator and why he believed that Schopenhauer fit his framework despite their conflicting philosophical interests. Despite the eventual failed relationship and their dissimilar and even conflicting academic interests, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer embody the struggles of a student and an educator. I will proceed by offering an account of Nietzsche’s perspective for the role of the student and subsequently the role of an educator.

First, Nietzsche argues that it is relevant but not necessary that the educator and student share academic interests. Rather, the similarity and mutual recognition rest in the attitudes and worldview which the educator possesses and the student wishes to emulate. While the former focused more on the use of the will to create meaning for one’s life, Schopenhauer focused more on the metaphysical nature of the will. Furthermore, the

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43 Illich, *Deschooling*, 39.
The greatest inconsistency which led to Nietzsche’s break from Schopenhauer is the attitude which colours each philosopher’s perspective. While Schopenhauer argued for life-negation which would alleviate the suffering of humanity, Nietzsche embraced suffering by arguing for life-affirmation. By saying ‘yes’ to life, Nietzsche is supporting the superior, Ubermensch individual who embodies master morality which conflicts with Schopenhauer who believes that a renunciation of life will lead to existential affirmation. Moreover, as a result of Schopenhauer’s attitude to life, he argued that compassion was the ultimate virtue which should guide one’s actions. This will prove to be deeply unsettling for Nietzsche who regarded pity as the main characterization of decadence. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s choice of Schopenhauer as his educator, despite their eventual fall-out, is due to Schopenhauer’s ability to live and write courageously, independently, and for no one else but himself. Despite their philosophical differences, to which Nietzsche seems to turn a blind eye, his attraction to Schopenhauer was embedded in the pessimistic philosopher’s acceptance of the reality of the world.

However, before delving into the relationship between these two philosophers, it is worth inquiring into what Nietzsche was looking for in an educator and why. The educator, for Nietzsche, plays an important role in the cultivation of an individual’s potential to live existentially, that is, to live with the weight of responsibility for the quality of one’s life. In other words, it is significant for an individual to accept that who one is is determined by who one chooses to be, the values they appropriate and the characteristics they embody. You are, in other words, who you choose to be. This is the sense in which I will be speaking of the existential life. Being born into a society, culture, or religion which imposes particular values upon the individual, the potential to act genuinely and take responsibility for life is hindered. Rather, the individual falls prey to

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these institutionalized values and becomes their product. One becomes a representative of
the Christian ideal or German culture rather than embracing one’s own values and beliefs.
This individual, who has the potential to live boldly by creating oneself and one’s values,
has become a degenerate in Nietzsche’s eyes. However, the individual would not be
hindered to this extent if educators did not indoctrinate him with conventional values.
Further, in the Nietzschean sense, living existentially does not require subscribing to a
document. In fact, the reliance upon group and institutionalized values hinders the
individual from thinking and determining a personal morality, one that is authentically
one’s own and that has been contemplated over and put into action. Thus, the educator is
corrupted because he does not come to know and create himself genuinely and, thus,
cannot educate a student to do so either. Thus, when Nietzsche makes the claim that
there are no educators, this is not in the superficial sense of the cookie-cutter teacher of
math or science. He is bringing about the necessity to reevaluate the source of our
knowledge and find a genuine educator who can help us achieve this. There is a common
belief that training in Teacher’s College suffices to prepare the educator to uphold the
responsibility of being the guiding figure for the cultivation of the student. The
significance of this role is severely undervalued.

Briefly, I will address the reason an educator is so essential to the existential
growth of the individual. One would question whether it is possible for an individual to
separate himself from the herd with no other guidance but his own instinct for self-
creation. Surely, self-creation does not require the assistance of anyone else considering
its subjective nature. However, even Nietzsche’s Zarathustra suffered greatly without the
assistance of an educator. Though he was on a journey of self-creation, he ultimately was
left in agonizing uncertainty as to whether his truth was his own. In other words, even the

45 Friedrich Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator”, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 129.
strongest of wills need the support and guidance of an educator to reassure them of their growth. If Nietzsche wishes for the individual to step away from the decadence of society, culture, and religion, then he needs to find someone who can shed some light in the right direction, a role model for those individuals who wish to look into the abyss. It would come as no surprise to suppose that Nietzsche intended Zarathustra to assume the role of educator for his readers. The task that Zarathustra assumes is not one that even Nietzsche himself could admit to be committed to. Thus, the invention of this fictional figure allows Nietzsche’s readers and all those who take on existential responsibility to have an exemplar for action. Moreover, Zarathustra has experienced the suffering and turmoil of the harshest existential realities, which provides individuals with an example of what an ascetic life entails. Bearing in mind that Thus Spoke Zarathustra was written in 1883, ten years after “Schopenhauer as Educator”, Nietzsche would have come to the conclusion that he would have to provide his own educator for his own philosophy even if it is a fictional one. He understood that students require an educator because they require a role model to guide them through their existential reality. Though self-knowledge and -creation is the goal, there is a necessity that a superior figure of guidance is present to rightfully guide the individual towards an existentially aware life. As mentioned earlier, the educator need not be a school teacher. However, I am arguing that school teachers ought to guide students in this regard as well.

There is a very specific breed of educator for whom Nietzsche is searching. He is looking for someone who relates to him at a fundamental level, someone who shares his perspective on human life, the will, and suffering. However, it is not the case that all educators must have these views, rather, an educator must be particular in his own interests and only attract those students who are particular in their own interests. Therefore, it is important that educators are not generic. In fact, Nietzsche would argue
that an educator who writes with the intention of attracting students is a phony. As he writes, “Schopenhauer never wants to cut a figure: for he writes for himself and wants no one to be deceived, least of all a philosopher who has made it a rule for himself: deceive no one, not even yourself!”\textsuperscript{46} To deceive oneself is to deceive the person one desires to be. In other words, it is to be hypocritical with one’s morality, to persuade oneself that she is such-and-such a way when she cannot justify her values and ideals in the face of mass morality. If one does this, she will come to love her passions; she will be steadfast in her beliefs and actions and pursue whatever it is that motivates her ability to feel fulfilled. How many people are encountered who express their passion and desire to be a writer, actor, musician, or artist, yet never fulfill their desire due to a seemingly unquestionable and predetermined path towards capitalistic success. A life lived in light of one’s passions is one of creative living, one that avoids self-deception by acknowledging the significance of a self-determined morality. This, to Nietzsche, is a reflection of Dionysian culture. Directly opposing the logical structure of the Apollonians, the Dionysian emphasized the arts, passions, and the sentiments. Flooded with deep-seated vitality and drive, Dionysian culture symbolizes a life that draws inspiration and ambition from life itself. This exercise of the passions proves one’s authenticity and commitment to creative living. It is the Dionysian voice that breathed life into Nietzsche's characters.

However, one must be wary of those who fake their authenticity. He writes in \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, “These wisest men of all ages—they should first be scrutinized closely.”\textsuperscript{47} Trust no one with the responsibility of educating you, Nietzsche warns. The individuals to whom we bequeath the title of ‘educator’ should not be taken as generic.

\textsuperscript{46} Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 134.
What they know, believe, and propagate are their particulars and should not be taken as a truth for us. In other words, educators ought to be doubted. It is dishonest to assume that their values and beliefs are true on the basis of their authority. The genuine educator lives while embracing existential anguish. He is constantly in a “secret guilt” that he could always be living to a higher potential. (“Schopenhauer” 138) Over theories and doctrines, what truly reflects on the greatness and authenticity of an individual are his actions. What Nietzsche is looking for is someone who lives. He wants to be the pupil of an educator who will cultivate his skills and show him how to live. This too appeals to educators who educate educators.

The student is not to become a replica of the educator or another outlet for the procreation of his thoughts. Rather, the student blossoms into his own person, and develops and reflects critically on himself and the state of the world. He is to use the success of a fellow skeptic as an exemplar for himself. The educator encourages the skills and abilities of his pupil so that he can prosper in his own regard. Furthermore, he can create himself without the fear of acting in vain, without doubting his reason to proceed. Every other student is only accepting the indoctrination by those who merely teach but do not educate. There is something that constrains the individual to “fear his neighbor” which, consequently, leads him to think and act with a herd mentality. To think like the herd, as Nietzsche claims, is to associate oneself with those individuals who reject an authentic mode of living, those who allow others to determine their beliefs, values, and motivations for action. This quality, Nietzsche writes, is nothing other than laziness. Every individual is aware, at some level of his consciousness, that he has the potential to affirm his life and create his own morality, yet he is fearful of stepping away from the crowd. He fears for his comfortable and stable life within the herd and, moreover, he does not want to make the effort of taking responsibility for his existence. If this is the attitude
that the student assumes then even a genuine educator cannot guide him towards self-
knowledge. This sort of student is schooled to accept services in place of values, and
thus, he believes that a diploma entails competence in life. This is what happens to the
student who wants to learn what to believe in without learning how to believe and,
moreover, how to live. No credit is given to a student of this nature; the student of the
herd is not himself, he is no more than a product of indoctrination. The student who
realizes that true learning, thinking, and growing require more than the proficient
memorization and regurgitation of information is initiated into a second nature and a
different worldview that involves critical self-reflection and engagement with others,
becoming, as Nussbaum suggests, a global citizen of sorts. This being said, it is crucial
that the student requires an educator who can support the growth of the student. As will
be further expanded on in the following chapter, I am not distinguishing between two
types of students, one group which is more promising or elite than the other. What I am
hoping to shed light upon are the characteristics and qualities of the student who desires
to strive beyond who they are generically shaped to be through educational institutions.
The ability to cultivate one’s own interests and participate in the conversational
classroom is a quality which is universally attainable.

Nietzsche goes on to explain the four forces that cause educators of
“misemployed and appropriated culture” – this hinders the growth of the individual and
causes the superficiality of the educator. First is the “greed of the money-makers.”
This is the commodification of invaluable qualities; education, culture, and religion are
things that cannot be bought yet stand in direct relation to a money value. In other words,
greed portrays a possibility that, given enough money, one can acquire culture, become

\[49\] Ibid. 164.
\[50\] Ibid.
educated, or pay their sins away. What a student learns is no longer relevant due to the fact that the priority is what an individual earns.\textsuperscript{51} Consequently, the educator’s role is no longer to educate, rather they teach what they are paid to teach. Thus, education has become a seductive commodity for the apparent recognition and happiness which it entails. By acquiring as much of it as possible the student is setting himself up for profit and success. Nietzsche points out that there exists a “natural and necessary connection between ‘intelligence and property’, between ‘wealth and culture’, more, that this connection is a \textit{moral} necessity.”\textsuperscript{52} By reducing education to a mere commodity the impact it has on the potential of existential growth is diminished, and the greed of “money-makers” devalues the purpose of education in an individual’s life.

The next temptation is the “greed of the state” which, like the greed of the money-makers, seeks to universalize the value of culture for its own political and monetary benefit.\textsuperscript{53} In other words, by creating a culture that lures in the individual with the promise of being among the powerful, the state has a more advantageous position in competition with other states. Thus, the aim of the state is to attract as many nationalists for its benefit rather than generating a culture of authentic creativity. Due to this characteristic, Nietzsche is incredibly hostile towards European culture, especially that of the German. As mentioned earlier, he uses the Dionysian culture as an example of a society that does not use culture to its advantage but produces life-affirming and existentially aware individuals. Furthermore, the Dionysian educator would perpetuate the type of master morality which reflects the culture of his state and, thus, the educator of a state of superficial values and beliefs will only perpetuate a base morality. This can be exemplified by Christianity which is “the purest revelation of the impulse to culture …

\textsuperscript{51} Illich, \textit{Deschooling}, 29.
\textsuperscript{52} Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 165.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
but since it has been employed in a hundred ways to propel the mills of state power, it has gradually become sick to the very marrow.”

Thus, an educator who emerges from Christianity will only perpetuate the values and beliefs of the Christian rather than guiding his student towards self-knowl
dge. The issue here is not Christianity but those who fail to know Christianity genuinely, those who simply associate themselves with its beliefs for convenience’s sake, to avoid thinking for oneself. Without digressing too drastically, it is worth pointing out that religious morality and ideals are more challenging to withdraw from, on grounds that they are alleged to derive from a higher source. Nonetheless, the significance of Nietzsche’s skepticism holds and serves as a more persuasive reason for the student’s skepticism of institutional values and imparted information. What is required is an awareness of the person one is shaped to be. Rising out of state greed is the third temptation, the “ugly or boring content” which, as previously explained, is exhibited by the educators of today and consumed by the superficial student.

Though by no means limiting the number of other temptations which could diminish the authenticity of the educator, Nietzsche’s fourth point is the “greed of the sciences.” Briefly, this is the desire to objectify and classify all facts while discounting the importance of true culture and other unquantifiable aspects of life. The natural sciences know very little of self-knowledge, suffering, and longing, and the “men of learning” they create live lives that are equally lacking. These men of learning are the servants of truth; they lack the essence of the ideal educator and are corrosive to the self-knowledge of their students. They educate in the name of scientific truth and do not know how to live another way. Suffering and existential anguish are incomprehensible from

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54 Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 166.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid. 169.
57 Ibid.
this perspective and are consequently suppressed by the morality of the herd. Furthermore, Nietzsche lists thirteen qualities that the base educator exhibits in his loyalty to morality. They are: probity and a sense of simplicity; sharp-sightedness for things; sobriety and conventionality of his nature in his likes and dislikes; poverty of feeling and aridity; low self-esteem, amounting to modesty; loyalty towards their teachers and leaders; routine continuation; flight from boredom; the motivation of breadwinning; recognition of fellow scholars; the scholar from vanity; the scholar for fun; and, impulse for justice. Nietzsche is unforgiving in his depiction of the superficial educator, for worse than living a base life is guiding others into doing the same. Hence, Nietzsche’s contempt for Christianity is further perpetuated by their luring in of disciples. The desire to maintain their authoritative role as educator and provider of meaning to life is decadent. The stripping of the individual’s right and responsibility for self-knowledge and -creation is the consequence of an educator who falls prey to the greed of money-makers, the greed of the state, boring content, and the greed of science.

Thus, when Nietzsche first encounters Schopenhauer he is engrossed with his ability to write and live independently and for no one else but himself. His atheism was what first attracted Nietzsche whose views against religion and Christianity are well known. Furthermore, it is the attitude in which Schopenhauer lived which caused Nietzsche to give him the title of his educator. He lived genuinely, creating himself in virtue of discovering his own truth without compromising for the satisfaction of the herd. Regardless of the fateful relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is that students ought to share a similar enthusiasm and expressive vitality for their educator’s mentorship. Nietzsche was ecstatic of his discovery of Schopenhauer. Nietzsche identifies three qualities which constitute the ideal educator in Schopenhauer: honesty, joy, and

steadfastness. A great thinker ought to engage in spirited, “bear-like” honesty to push us towards reality, Nietzsche writes. Schopenhauer embraces the harshness of being honest and coming to terms with existential suffering as a necessary and unavoidable part of life. Furthermore, his honesty does not issue from any societal, cultural, or religious ideal. It does not fall in line with the German model of idealized “pseudo-Frenchness.” Though Nietzsche greatly admired the French for their style and creativity, what he did not appreciate was the way German culture placed French culture on a pedestal; this lack of originality characterizes German decadence and largely explains Nietzsche’s contempt of German culture. Thus, Schopenhauer’s honesty revealed his shared perspective and calling-out of German culture. Thus, knowing Nietzsche, the first glance of another philosopher who writes with unapologetic passion for the truth had him deeply infatuated. Schopenhauer’s harsh honesty captured Nietzsche interest for a philosophical companion.

The second quality of Schopenhauer as an educator is his cheerfulness despite his honesty. Without doubt, the awareness of one’s existential situatedness is a cause for anguish. The ability to find joy within this circumstance is a characteristic which, to Nietzsche, depicted the ‘yes-sayer’ and life-affirmer. Though Schopenhauer’s conflicting views become more lucid after some number of years, the cheerfulness which Nietzsche saw in him depicted the good-naturedness of an educator. “Aliis laetus, sibi sapiens”, “cheerful for others, wise for himself”, Nietzsche writes about Schopenhauer. He is cheerful because he is wise. However, Nietzsche distinguishes between two types of cheerfulness. The first is a false, happenstance kind of cheerfulness, a superficial joy without rhyme or reason but only for the sake of imitating the ignorant joy of the herd. On the other hand, the more significant type of happiness is the cheerfulness of the true

60 Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 132.
61 Ibid. 135.
thinker. The individual who is refreshingly cheerful “whether he is being serious or humourous, expressing his human insight or his divine forbearance; without peevish gesturing, trembling hands, tearfilled eyes, but with certainty and simplicity, courage and strength, perhaps a little harshly and valiantly but in any case as a victor.” This kind of thinker knows that cheerfulness is a necessity, that one must live through existential anguish and the sufferings of life with a happy disposition. Schopenhauer has lived through the suffering of life and can now be a role model for his pupil. Not only his works but his life itself are proof of his ability to overcome all-too-human morality. Thus, Schopenhauer’s cheerfulness and honesty are extremely attractive to the life-affirming Nietzsche. However, whether or not Schopenhauer’s cheerfulness is legitimate considering his morality of life-negation can be easily overlooked due to the fact that Nietzsche did not want Schopenhauer himself as his educator but rather enjoyed the idea of him as his educator. Nietzsche created Schopenhauer as his own ideal to be the type of role model who could foster the growth of other life-affirming existential individuals, the kind of existential individuals Nietzsche would one day hope to educate. The ideal educator, then, is more a collection of characteristics of an ideal figure than the ones of Schopenhauer himself.

The third and last quality which Nietzsche identifies in Schopenhauer is his steadfastness. This is the determination which one has to uphold their beliefs and values in the face of the most challenging circumstances. The stability and certainty of the herd will always appeal to the weak-willed. It is when it is most tempting to abandon one’s values that one ought to be persistent. Schopenhauer’s steadfastness, therefore, was not a matter of choice but a necessity to maintain his integrity as a thinker and as an

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individual.\textsuperscript{63} Steadfastness plays a leading role in Nietzsche’s conception of the ideal educator; it ties together honesty and cheerfulness to create an individual who embodies master morality. Only in this case can an educator fulfill his role to his student by serving as an exemplar. As mentioned earlier, an educator is necessary to reassure the student that his stepping away from society, culture, religion, and base morality as a whole, is a step towards self-knowledge. Finally, Nietzsche accepts that in this age of public opinion, private opinions have become condemned and illegitimate, however, he insists that his characterization of Schopenhauer’s honesty, cheerfulness, and steadfastness are facts, not personal views.\textsuperscript{64} Schopenhauer’s intentions cannot be doubted, Nietzsche would argue, for he does not write for anyone else but himself.

However, considering these qualities which Nietzsche admired in or, rather, imposed on Schopenhauer, it is curious that he decided to choose Schopenhauer as his educator despite his admiration of several other individuals who also exhibit honesty, cheerfulness, and steadfastness. He was highly influenced by Wagner and wrote a great deal praising his music and genuine character, especially in “Richard Wagner in Bayreuth”. The honesty of Wagner’s music is what bonded the two men; Nietzsche often wrote that his philosophy was reflected in Wagner’s music and that both captured the creativity of the Dionysian. However, despite their eventual break, Nietzsche could not have chosen Wagner as his educator due to the fact he did not possess the air of an educator. He was a Dionysian, who honestly depicted the sufferings of life through his music, however, he lacked Schopenhauer’s independence. Another individual whom Nietzsche held in high esteem is Jesus, though, given his animosity towards Christianity, it comes as no surprise that Jesus could not play this role in Nietzsche’s life. Nevertheless, Jesus was the ideal embodiment of a life-affirming creator of master

\textsuperscript{63} Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 136.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. 135.
morality; his comprehension of existential reality and responsibility caused him to revolutionize society, culture, and religion with his revaluation of values. Furthermore, Nietzsche acknowledged that Jesus was honest, cheerful, and steadfast in *Twilight of the Idols*; only his disciples failed to be guided by the great educator. Additionally, Nietzsche speaks briefly about Michel de Montaigne, comparing his writing to Schopenhauer’s. His honesty and cheerfulness conveyed a disregard for public opinion, instead seeking to embrace the realities of life through his essays. Yet this admiration for Montaigne’s literary style only reflected in Nietzsche’s works rather than his person. Furthermore, there is doubt that Montaigne had enough to contribute to Nietzsche’s philosophical inquiry, though it is possible to think that he did exhibit the qualities of an educator given his characteristics. Thus, these individuals share the same qualities which Nietzsche admired in Schopenhauer; they were critical of society, culture, and religion and sought to create their own values and beliefs. Like Schopenhauer, they were exemplars of their philosophy and had students and disciples of their own. Furthermore, just as Nietzsche’s appreciation for them was diminished by identifying their flaws, Schopenhauer was no exception.

Upon further inquiry it is well known that Nietzsche himself so desperately wanted Schopenhauer to fit his framework for an educator that he later admitted that he imposed his own views upon him.\(^5\) Nietzsche did not find the search for an educator easy, though he felt he needed one. Eventually “fate would take me from the terrible effort and duty of educating myself.”\(^6\) He goes on to say, “I would discover a philosopher to educate me, a true philosopher whom one could follow without any misgiving because one would have more faith in him than one had in oneself.”\(^7\) Thus,

\(^5\) Copleston, *Nietzsche*, 156.
\(^6\) Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer,” 130.
\(^7\) Ibid.
Nietzsche’s admiration of Schopenhauer eventually fails to be genuine. He certainly exhibited the qualities of a great educator, but not one whom Nietzsche could find as a reflection of himself. At first, admitting that it was as though Schopenhauer was writing specifically for him, Nietzsche was too quick to assume that the atheism, honesty, and independence of Schopenhauer could make him an educator who would cultivate Nietzsche’s self-knowledge. Rather, the educator whom Nietzsche saw in Schopenhauer, I would argue, is himself.

To clarify, it is not the role of, nor do I think it possible for, the educator to evoke a sense of existential lucidity within the student. Nor am I suggesting that a shift in curriculum to cater to self-growth and critical thinking will evoke these sentiments. The aim rather is to prepare students for existential crises, for lack of a better term, and guide them towards the passions and potential which otherwise may not be cultivated.

Before moving on, it is worth examining the extent of the conflict between compassion and pity which caused Nietzsche to abandon the closest individual he could find to be his educator. What Nietzsche could not forgive in Schopenhauer was the life-negating role of compassion in his philosophy. Though Nietzsche often overlooked Schopenhauer’s focus on metaphysics and his depiction of the will as an aspect of the phenomenal, it was not due to conflicting views but rather a mere difference in interest.\textsuperscript{68} However, the conflict between Nietzsche’s view on pity and Schopenhauer’s compassion could only be resolved by surrendering one’s own views. However, raised in true Schopenhauerian fashion of writing for oneself, Nietzsche would be a hypocrite to give up his animosity toward pity. Though Schopenhauer valued sympathizing with the suffering and encouraging it as the chief virtue of the individual, Nietzsche viewed it as

the degradation of the self. The individual would have to sacrifice his existential efforts to
stoop down to the masses for the sake of compassion; this devalues both oneself and the
pitied individual. However, Schopenhauer argues that existential suffering is combatted
by compassion. Suffering defines life as we all merely live through a series of unfortunate
events. The task of the individual, Schopenhauer states, is to say no to life, in order to live
well. However, Nietzsche was not hesitant to place compassion of this sort among the
vices. Nevertheless, what Nietzsche is opposed to is Schopenhauer’s encouragement of
weakness and submissiveness. The individual is looking down to the herd, and instead of
overcoming their humanity he finds himself reflected in them. What the individual ought
to do, Nietzsche argues, is separate himself from the herd and strive to create his own
morality, like Zarathustra. Nevertheless, due to the crucial difference in their conceptions
of morality and their attitudes towards life-affirmation, Nietzsche could no long find
himself reflected in Schopenhauer. He could not be educated by someone whose
particular interests were not consistent with his own, for he too had to work towards self-
knowledge.

It is important to avoid discounting Nietzsche’s seriousness because of his
apparent inconsistency regarding influences throughout his philosophy. He does not
remain loyal to any one thinker and does not fear disposing of his relationship when it no
longer contributes to his existential self-knowledge and -creation. What Nietzsche was
seeking was a great thinker who could serve as an educator, an exemplar of someone who
is life-affirming and existentially aware. Perhaps this is Nietzsche’s cry for help. The task
that he undertakes has not been done before. He is courageous in his endeavor, but he
knows he will not find any existential certainty in his attempt to step away from base
morality and create his own values. He seeks an educator for guidance; by holding a great

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thinker as an exemplar, he would know that someone had been down this road before. The role of the educator is to identify the strengths of a student and cultivate them in order to help him grow. However, we cannot help but realize that in the end Nietzsche does not acquire this guidance; he is left alone. He dismissed Schopenhauer, the only individual he was willing to call his educator due to the painful realization that he could not be educated by someone who did not share his interests to be able to guide him towards his self-creation and self-knowledge. Despite Schopenhauer’s honesty, cheerfulness, and steadfastness, Nietzsche admits to his false interpretation and is left, once again, at a loss for an educator. The individual who writes and lives for no one but himself may not exist, for Nietzsche, for his existential endeavor involves looking into the abyss. He is alone in his philosophical journey of self-creation and self-knowledge, and though Schopenhauer played an influential role he could not satisfy the role of the educator which Nietzsche was looking for. Nietzsche must realize that he must be his own educator if, after all, he is “the first real philosopher.”\textsuperscript{70} To be truly educated one requires both the guidance of an educator and the ability to be one’s own educator.

Nietzsche conveys an important quality about the student. Regardless of her reverence for education, self-growth and critical thinking are ultimately cultivated by the student herself. Nietzsche ultimately could no longer look upon Schopenhauer as his educator, and perhaps this is a consequence of his blind optimism that such an educator (someone who writes ‘for him’) existed. A student will fail to find the ideal educator just as the educator will fail to find the ideal student. Nonetheless, what needs to be consistent between the educator and student is the perspective and attitude which is assumed.

Chapter 4

*Bildung* and Self-Cultivation

Having discussed what I regard as the major issues associated with current educational institutions and highlighted the significant role of the educator and the struggle to find a genuine educator, I will now argue that these issues can begin to be alleviated by shifting the focus onto what I shall call the highly motivated student. I must stress that this shift in focus on the part of educational institutions will only begin to remedy its problems and will not solve them altogether. What I am proposing is that by bringing to light the significance of the highly motivated student, of the self-cultivating, self-critical, and autonomous student, institutions may realize the necessity and benefits of producing such students. This requires foresight on the part of the institution. What must be recognized are the effects of their values, goals, and decisions on the student and whether this is the desired outcome they wish to produce. I will not be proposing strategies about the best possible plan of action to enforce these changes but wish to shed light upon my account of the highly motivated student and his role within the institution.

There are two main benefits of focusing on the highly motivated student: first, he will benefit himself by becoming a self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous individual; second, stemming from the first, he will benefit the community by becoming an exemplar of the ‘citizen of the world’. ⁷¹ Starting with the latter, in *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum appeals to the citizen of the world as the type of individual who is imbued with the ‘spirit of the humanities’, with the ability to think critically and adopt a sympathetic view towards the circumstances of others. ⁷² This individual is the highly motivated student; through an active and extensive engagement with the humanities, the

⁷² Ibid.
citizen of the world comes to care about the welfare of others and not just himself. His role, then, is to serve his nation or the world in some democratic way to promote “‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’”. 73 What Nussbaum is proposing is a political movement. The importance of preserving the humanities in education is to promote the cultivation of the citizen of the world whose purpose is to uphold and promote democratic values. As she states, “The world’s schools, colleges, and universities therefore have an important and urgent task: to cultivate in students the ability to see themselves as members of a heterogeneous nation, and a still more heterogeneous world.…” 74 Though I will not be touching upon the political purpose of the citizen of the world—if it is possible to isolate the individual from his purpose—it is worth considering the appeal of producing individuals with higher purposes than merely fitting into a niche in society. 75 From the perspective of current educational institutions, it would be favourable for them to have a reputation of cultivating true learners who benefit society. Instead, institutions are too often led astray by the prospect of a high student enrolment rate and quick money through the sciences which the humanities cannot provide.

Nonetheless, returning to Nussbaum’s citizen of the world, my only concern with her argument is with the curriculum she proposes (though she does not provide an extremely detailed one). There should be, she points out, some knowledge of world history, national history, economics, world religions, and foreign languages, to name a few. Simultaneously, the student must also learn how to specialize in unfamiliar areas through research activities. Though she does not provide further information about how this curriculum ought to be enforced within the university, Nussbaum is very specific about the qualities which the citizen of the world ought to possess; she lists “capacity for

73 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 25.
74 Ibid. 80.
genuine concern for others”, “undermined tendency to shrink from minorities”, and “promote accountability” among others.\textsuperscript{76} It becomes difficult, however, to get a grasp on how exactly this will be achieved. This is all in hopes of engaging the student with a particular way of knowing about the self and the world.

However, I worry about the efficiency of whatever curriculum may be established within institutions to ensure that the citizen of the world is produced. In other words, given that the fundamental process of Bildung, of becoming the highly motivated student or citizen of the world, is a personal task, there is no way for institutions to ensure that the student will be such-and-such a way after some number of years in school or university. I worry, then, that curriculum may be imposed upon the student only to be poorly interpreted and fail to encourage self-knowledge and self-cultivation. This concern is not specifically directed towards Nussbaum, but towards any proposed curriculum. Keeping her suggestions in mind, how is the student who dedicates himself to learning about history, economics, religions, languages, and so forth to know who he is and his place in the world? Though he is exposed to the humanities which encourage critical thinking and sympathetic perspectives, there must be some internal process which the student engages with to transform into the highly motivated student or the citizen of the world; curriculum simply is not enough.

What I am delineating are the two main motivations for the cultivation of the highly motivated student within educational institutions. Nussbaum’s notion of the citizen of the world is the external benefit of this cultivation; the student grows into a citizen who rises up and finds self-knowledge through humanity. I will now turn to the first motivation, namely, the internal benefit of the highly motivated student’s cultivation through education. This is the prerequisite for Nussbaum’s citizen of the world; the only

\textsuperscript{76} Nussbaum, \textit{Not for Profit}, 45.
way in which the individual can apply himself in the world in this sense is first to gain a sense of self-knowledge, self-criticism, and autonomy.

To understand the idea of self-knowledge better, let us take a look at Bakhurst’s “One of a Kind” in which he outlines two conceptions of self-knowledge: existential and metaphysical. The latter is self-knowledge in the sense of consciousness and awareness; it is the ability for an individual to know what he is thinking, experiencing, and sensing.77 Under most circumstances this is easy to grasp by assuming the first-person perspective through self-consciousness. The type of self-knowledge that is relevant to the cultivation of the self, on the other hand, is in the existential sense. By encouraging the highly motivated student, he would gain existential self-knowledge in the sense that he is open to cultivation.78 Furthermore, in the process of cultivating himself through education, the highly motivated student has the opportunity to assume a critical perspective towards his own character, states of mind, and manner. This allows him to identify his hypocrisies, deficiencies, and capabilities and cultivate them in such a way that they reflect the kind of person he wishes to become. Bakhurst claims that, “...lack of knowledge of one’s own character can represent a serious deficiency, and conversely the right amount of self-knowledge is constitutive of doing well.”79

Thus, the highly motivated student ought to be encouraged through education due to the fact that he is provided with the ideal opportunity to gain self-knowledge and cultivate himself. By supporting this, educational institutions can realize their potential of producing individuals who are well-rounded, self-knowledgeable, and self-cultivated. In other words, education can aid an individual in the process of Bildung. In fact, it is through education that Bildung reaches its highest potential; through education the

77 Bakhurst, “One of a Kind”, 5.
78 Ibid. 10.
79 Ibid. 7.
individual becomes self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous. What is unique about
the ideal academic setting is that it allows the student to engage freely in a conversation
to reveal not only information about the world and how to interpret it but also knowledge
about one’s character and states of mind. This opportunity is especially constructive for
Bildung because there is no other experience which has the dynamic of a genuine Socratic
place of learning. Bildung and the highly motivated student, I will now argue, are
inextricably tied. Bildung is, after all, “…as Herder expressed it, ‘rising up to humanity
through culture.’”

To quickly recap, I have thus far addressed a few issues underlying current
educational institutions and pointed out that by turning the focus towards the cultivation
of the highly motivated student, these issues can be alleviated to some degree. I provide
two main reasons for the shift of focus to be on the highly motivated student: first, that he
benefits himself by gaining a sense of self-knowledge and, second, that he becomes,
following Nussbaum’s argument, a citizen of the world. This is someone who, through
the humanities, is able to uphold democratic values by developing the skill of critical
thinking and having sympathetic perspectives towards the world. I then turn to focus on
the internalized benefits of encouraging the highly motivated student through education. I
claim that existential self-knowledge cultivates the highly motivated student to be self-
critical and self-aware of his tendencies and characteristics. In other words, the process of
self-cultivation which the highly motivated student is going through is Bildung, which I
will now address. By redirecting the focus of educational institutions on the student, not
only will the institution encourage self-cultivation, self-knowledge, and autonomy, but
the highly motivated student himself will be encouraged to flourish in the world.

81 Oakeshott, Voice of Liberal Learning, xxxv
82 Fairfield, Teachability, 19.
Having identified some reasons why the cultivation of the highly motivated student and attainment of self-knowledge are significant within educational institutions, I would like to focus on the dynamics of Bildung itself. Ultimately, my aim is to show that the cultivation of the highly motivated student through Bildung is crucial for both the pursuit of knowledge and the development of the self. Even if these institutions do not appropriately find value in the self-knowledge of the highly motivated student, Bildung cannot be substituted or curtailed; it is the inevitable process of formative self-development.83

My reason for introducing Bildung now rather than at an earlier point is to highlight the mutual interest of educational institutions and Bildung, namely, the student. The student, the highly motivated student specifically, must be cultivated in such a way that both the educational institution and Bildung contribute to his lived experience. What I mean by this is that education forms the soul; the self necessarily relies on education to engage in Bildung and similarly Bildung is what necessitates education. “In Humboldt’s words, ‘when in our language we say Bildung, we mean something both higher and more inward, namely the disposition of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavour, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character.’”84

I will briefly discuss the notions of Bildung as described by Gadamer and Bakhurst. My intention for this essay is not to grasp the nature of Bildung but rather to understand the self’s engagement with Bildung. Gadamer describes it as “The concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation.”85 It is not merely the idea of ‘becoming’ through culture but rather becoming in such a way that the individual is responsible for

84 Gadamer, Truth and Method, 10.
85 Ibid. 9.
his cultivation. It is a continuous process with no goal outside of itself, and is the state of grasping the world in which one lives and finding what is true for oneself within it. Thus, it is the task of the student to indulge in his education to fully engage in Bildung. In other words, education opens the self to various ways of knowing and, consequently, various ways of becoming. Gadamer states that “…following Hegel, we emphasized as the general characteristic of Bildung: keeping oneself open to what is other—other, more universal points of view.”\textsuperscript{86} With this said, education is the gateway to formative self-development.\textsuperscript{87}

It seems that the highly motivated student is the mutual interest of both education and Bildung. Though the individual can become self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous without being engaged with education, the process of self-growth is heightened within the educational institution. This being said, the significance of educational institutions refocusing their values and goals on the student is incredibly important for self-cultivation. Education can allow Bildung to flourish but must first accept Bildung as something worth cultivating. Furthermore, the humanities are required, as Nussbaum argues, to spark self-reflection within culture and tradition. Rather than merely accepting the world for what it is, the highly motivated student actively appropriates and transforms the world to become part of his inner life.\textsuperscript{88} Nonetheless, even within current educational institutions which do not focus on the development of the student, individuals are still engaged in Bildung. He is one who is willing to take the knowledge he is presented with and construct within it an understanding of the world and his role in it. “The student’s task, as Gadamer expressed it, is to ‘find his free space’ in

\textsuperscript{86} Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, 16.
\textsuperscript{87} Bakhurst, \textit{Formation}, 8.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. 8.
the sense of discovering an environment in which one may think for oneself and pursue questions that vitally concern one in association with one’s peers.”\(^{89}\)

Next, it is worth mentioning that “…\textit{Bildung} makes the child not just something \textit{in} the world, interacting with her immediate local environment, but a subject with a view \textit{on} the world that can think and act in light of that conception.”\(^{90}\) We may substitute ‘child’ for the ‘student’ for the sake of our inquiry. Here, we can come to understand the relation between \textit{Bildung} and the self, with or without education: it is the formation of the self to fit within a conception of the world which is true for the self. “To be initiated into this world,” Bakhurst writes, “is learning to become human; and to move within it freely is being human.”\(^{91}\)

\textit{Bildung} does not have a fixed end or goal. There will not be a point in one’s life in which he can stop cultivating and critically perceiving himself because he has achieved \textit{Bildung}. Rather, “…the result of Bildung is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction, but grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore constantly remains in a state of continual Bildung.”\(^{92}\) In other words, \textit{Bildung} cannot be deconstructed in such a way that an external perspective can come to understand how one has cultivated himself to be such a way. The process of \textit{Bildung} is so unique and transformative that who one is is a result of how one has developed his natural talents and capacities within culture. Here, I think the formative role of education becomes more lucid: the extent of an individual’s self-knowledge, self-cultivation, and autonomy is determined by how he has worked within the framework of his life. Education, then, is an initiation into a mode of thinking and being in the world. It

\(^{89}\) Fairfield, \textit{Teachability}, 23.  
\(^{90}\) Bakhurst, \textit{Formation}, 9.  
provides the individual with an opportunity to cultivate and form the self. “Thus, whether we identify education with Bildung or think of education as merely part of what Bildung entails, such a view invites us to think of education as a matter of cultivating in children the ability to determine what to think and do.”

93 Bakhurst, Formation, 124.
Chapter 5

The Conversational Classroom

The relationship between intellectual virtues and conversation within the classroom is essential to the cultivation of the ‘good thinker’, meaning the student who seeks out personal and epistemic growth. Agreeing with Michael Oakeshott’s claim that students should be initiated into the conversation of mankind, it is worth exploring the dynamics of what I will call the conversational classroom. The question I would like to address in this essay is: what pragmatic steps are required to (1) shift the structure of the standard classroom to the conversational classroom, and (2) establish intellectual virtues that aid in personal and epistemic growth? What I wish to argue is that by encouraging structural changes to promote conversation within the classroom, students will be initiated into the practice of ‘good thinking’. Good thinking allows students to engage with other voices and thus gives rise to intellectual virtues such as curiosity, open-mindedness, attentiveness, intellectual carefulness, and intellectual courage which ultimately aid in the process of self-cultivation.

I will then present three methods of developing and maintaining intellectual virtues which I adopt from Jason Baehr. Finally, the cultivation of intellectual virtues is a sign of a student’s engagement with Bildung and second nature which initiates her into the conversation of mankind. I am hoping that the type of student who emerges from the conversational classroom is motivated to engage in self-cultivation in a way which is both personally and epistemically constructive.

What I find particularly troublesome is that often inadequate emphasis is given to the voice of students. The common structure of the classroom is such that the institution’s

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mind serves as a goal towards which education ought to move. While researching statistics which would indicate the level of participation within the classroom, I was disappointed to see results focused primarily on secondary and post-secondary classrooms, while education in elementary to secondary school is primarily structured as teachers instilling information upon the student which abides by a pre-established standardized curriculum. One fundamental hindrance is rooted in the students being unprepared to learn. In other words, students are expected to attend school with a pre-established willingness to learn. This willingness, however, is an intellectual virtue which may not be a disposition within every student.

However, by structuring the classroom and the curriculum as the birthplace for intellectual virtues rather than the place for attaining information, the school becomes a place of genuine learning. In the introduction, I mentioned that a structural shift is required to establish conversation within the classroom. I acknowledge that there are certain learning environments which are structured differently, such as graduate seminars or online discussion forums which rely heavily on student participation. It is as though after twelve or so years of being a vessel for holding information, students reach a level at which they suddenly know how to exercise their intellectual virtues and are capable of having a voice to contribute to the conversation of mankind. This is clearly not always true. Often, students graduate from high school or university only as a product of the institution, to assume unquestioningly their role in society. However, I would like to focus my attention on average to larger classes from elementary to post-secondary institutions where, practically speaking, the foundations of the ‘good thinker’ should be established. It is especially within these ‘average’ classrooms that education turns into a

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97 Nussbaum says something to this effect in Not for Profit.
one-way street of teacher imparting knowledge upon the student. This method is insufficient for encouraging a hunger for knowledge and self-cultivation within the young student. John Dewey continually emphasizes the significance of acknowledging the child’s preferences, tendencies, and interests in shaping the environment and attitude of the classroom. This is not to assume that possessing intellectual virtues always results in a desire for knowledge and self-cultivation, however I agree with Jason Baehr that in addition to self-cultivation and pursuing personal goals, “intellectual virtues aim at deep explanatory understanding of epistemically significant subject matters.”

In “The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind”, Oakeshott writes: “Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation.” Conversation, then, ought to play a pivotal role within the classroom. It determines not only the dynamics of the classroom and the relationships between peers and teachers, but also the attitude and perspective which is assumed by the student towards his or her epistemic goals. In other words, students are more likely to genuinely pursue their epistemic interests when these ideas are equally represented and valued in conversation. The conversation of mankind is a meeting-place in which voices from different disciplines can contribute and be heard: “…each voice contributes something distinctive, and an educated person is able to understand and appreciate the history and character of each voice, evaluate what it is saying, and contribute in some way to conversation, if only as an informed listener.” It is a safe-zone of sorts, one in

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which, as Oakeshott puts it, “thoughts of different species take wing and play around one another.”

One distinction that needs to be made is my suggested use of ‘conversation’. One could interpret it as active participation within the classroom, the kind that requires students to contribute their opinion and in this sense be engaged in the conversation. On the other hand, the view that I would endorse is that of Oakeshottian conversation, that is, the conversation of mankind. While I can acknowledge the relevance of active participation to the pursuit of an academically inclusive classroom, I am hesitant to claim that it is a necessary feature. Further, I am inclined to argue that participation within the conversational classroom can be either active or passive; a student or teacher can be either vocally engaged or speculatively committed. Thus, I wish to turn my notion of the conversational classroom towards the aim of encouraging the presence of various academic perspectives, or voices as Oakeshott says, which in turn will help to cultivate intellectual virtues.

Another reason to support a shift towards the conversational classroom is that, as Bakhurst claims, “it is in the nature of knowledge to be sharable…. [K]nowledge is public in at least this sense: when a person’s judgement amounts to knowledge, she apprehends a truth that is in principle available to others.” Genuinely sharing knowledge, however, requires a certain environment and attitude for it to flourish. The problem is that schools are failing to introduce the idea of the classroom as a space for conversation early on in a student’s education. Consequently, when university seminars are held, the student has already been marinated in silence for some twelve years. Or at least, students have failed to have sufficient experience in conversation. Not only are the

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voices of students in elementary to secondary school misrepresented due to the focus on institutional preferences and curricula, but voices are also suppressed due to other circumstances such as demographic or socio-economic class. This is problematic because the intellectual virtues which could be cultivated are subordinate to the intellectual virtues that institutions determine as more valuable. Dewey in *The Child and the Curriculum* questions how the pursuit of knowledge can be genuine when the curriculum is not developed to cater to students’ interests, inclinations, and abilities. Rather, teachers must strike a balance of education being both rigorous and personal. To do this, an academic community should be one in which teachers and students are equally interested in being learners. “The idea of ‘making conversation’ evokes a mutual exchange of views, where there is reciprocal recognition among the participants, who give and take ... in the common activity of conversing.”

The purpose of conversation is to evoke a mutual exchange of views for its own sake. What makes conversation favourable for the classroom is that it is free of hierarchy and diminishes the hierarchy between teachers and students. No one discipline is more valuable than another in the conversation of mankind and, similarly, no one student’s voice is more valuable than another’s. Given that the conversational classroom does have some value in paying respect to different voices and bringing to light different epistemic perspectives, one can conclude that it does foster ‘good thinking’. However, intellectual virtues are not synonymous with good thinking. I am claiming that intellectual virtues are determined by the consistency in which they are exercised. I agree with the Aristotelian notion that the business of virtue is “to have them at the right time,

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104 Ibid.
105 Bakhurst 2015, 8.
106 Ibid.
about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end.”107 Making the shift to the conversational classroom does not guarantee that virtues are cultivated, only that the right conditions are provided for their cultivation. By encouraging a structural shift within the classroom towards conversation, students will gain some “discipline of mind, a grasp of consequences, and a greater command over [her] own powers.”108 This is because conversation is an initiation of sorts, into a realm of thinking, a worldview, or second nature. It is also worth noting that good thinking can be cultivated outside the classroom and certainly outside the conversational classroom. My concern is that if the highest aim of education is to cultivate autonomy or self-cultivation, it has to be in a way that intellectual virtues are developed so that personal growth is possible. Good thinking ensures that the student cultivates some thoughts rather than merely assuming a point of view.109

Baehr proposes seven practical approaches which can be implemented within the classroom. I will briefly discuss three of these suggested methods. First, intellectual virtues can be fostered through a supportive institutional culture.110 By encouraging a learning environment in which students are well acquainted with and motivated by the culture of conversation, the school can become a place where one can be initiated into the conversation of mankind. “In a sense”, says Dewey, “the child’s mind develops into one that is similar to the teacher’s as it is manifested in the environment that was created by the teacher and reconstructed by [for] the student.”111 To provide a supportive institutional culture, schools do not have to be explicit in their commitment, however there are certain attitudes such as those offered by Dewey which can ensure a positive

108 Oakeshott, Liberal Learning, 115.
109 Ibid.
change in institutional culture. This can be established, claims Baehr, by choice of faculty, administration, curricula, public relations, and so forth.112

Second, self-reflection and self-assessment are steps which can be taken on the part of the student to develop and advance their current intellectual virtues. Whether virtues are active or passive – whether the student has come with a disposition to be open-minded, for example, or has learned to cultivate open-mindedness over the years of schooling – the ability to reflect upon one’s own capabilities, to identify that one possesses open-mindedness, is a skill in itself. To have the reflective ability to identify which virtues one possesses and how they contribute to the conversation of the classroom “challenge[s] students to apply their knowledge of intellectual virtues to how they understand their own intellectual character.”113

The third and final practical approach is the modelling of intellectual virtues. This I hold to be the primary responsibility of the teacher. Not only does this minimize the teacher-student dichotomy, it also provides students with an opportunity to study the virtues as manifested within the individual. By doing this, the teacher becomes a trustworthy source; as Anscombe says, “in teaching (philosophy) ‘we do not hope that our pupils believe us, but rather, that they will come to see that what we say is true—if it is.’”114 It seems plausible that students ‘come to see’ what is true if it is presented to them through the virtues that they are trying to cultivate. In other words, if a teacher is trying to establish within her students a sense of intellectual honesty, then not only would they grasp the concept quicker if she demonstrated the virtue, but they would also have reason to trust that the virtue is worth cultivating. Individuals flourish when in the presence of others who possess the traits which they wish to cultivate. To be the student of a teacher

113 Ibid. 117.
114 Ibid. 48.
who models open-mindedness, attentiveness, intellectual rigour, and the like is an invitation to the ‘life of the mind’, as Baehr puts it.\textsuperscript{115}

A concern which intellectual virtues may raise is whether a student must possess them all to be considered an intellectually virtuous individual. The answer to this is ‘no’. A common trend in the institutional evaluation of a student’s skills are standardized tests which cannot genuinely or effectively measure intellectual virtues. However, as I have claimed earlier, virtues are difficult to cultivate and the only real evaluation is through self-reflection. Just as there is no end to conversation, there is no end to intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues are tailored to the specific student and are cultivated to help one achieve one’s epistemic aims.\textsuperscript{116} Intellectual virtues can be thought of as ‘personal qualities or characteristics of a lifelong learner’.\textsuperscript{117} As intellectual virtues are a result of conversation and the account of conversation that I am entertaining is regarded as an initiation into culture and second nature, then the cultivation of intellectual virtues contributes to one’s overall self-cultivation as a certain type of person.

The reason I have not addressed moral virtues thus far is not because I do not believe they can be cultivated within the conversational classroom. Rather, I adopt Baehr’s perspective that intellectual virtues are somewhere between a subset of moral virtues and independent of moral virtues. I accept that some intellectual virtues have an others-regarding feature which entails that moral virtues are generally present within the conversational classroom. Moral virtues concern the well-being of others, while intellectual virtues promote knowledge.\textsuperscript{118} However, it is not moral virtue’s concern for others which makes it a difficult pursuit for the classroom; intellectual virtues are not

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. 119.
\textsuperscript{116} Baehr, “Educating for Intellectual Virtues,” 106.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. 107.
\textsuperscript{118} Kotzee, ‘Inculcating Moral and Epistemic Virtue’ 2016.
strictly egoistic or self-oriented either.\textsuperscript{119} Take, for example, when a teacher makes an effort to model intellectual virtues. Though he displays the virtue of intellectual honesty, his fundamental aim is for the development of his student’s mind and cultivation of their own virtues. Moral virtues require a different type of cultivation, one that pays heed to other-regarding goals, not epistemic ones, and accordingly its primary place is through experience in the world. Intellectual virtues have an other-regarding dimension, but they are not themselves moral virtues, nor can moral virtues be explicitly cultivated within the classroom. Baehr writes, “…if a teacher is educating for intellectual virtues, his aim will be to mould and shape his students as \textit{persons}.”\textsuperscript{120} The additional aim of the teacher is to cultivate a reason to care.\textsuperscript{121}

Finally, I will move on to address the kind of student who arises from the conversational classroom. Baehr claims that the student who possesses intellectual virtues has the traits of a lifelong learner. The student toils and grapples with other voices within the classroom and is actively engaged with \textit{Bildung} as she is being transformed into an informed knower. With the cultivation of these intellectual virtues what the student is doing is developing and transforming her worldview. She is engaged in a transformative process, one which entertains her desire to engage with these virtues in order to achieve some personal epistemic goal or change her worldview. The possession of intellectual virtues determines what kind of person someone is. If Amrita regularly demonstrates her intellectual honesty and courage then she is the kind of person who would exercise honesty and courage both in and outside the classroom. Amrita’s honesty and courage are

\textsuperscript{120} Baehr, “Educating for Intellectual Virtues,” 112.
concrete and action-guiding. She simply is self-cultivated in such a way that she is defined by her consistent acting upon her virtues.

To close, in this essay I have identified some issues in the present structure of the classroom and have proposed a shift to the conversational classroom. I have addressed three practical steps put forth by Baehr which can be implemented to encourage the development of intellectual virtues within students. The first is a supportive institutional culture which focuses on the school as a whole. The second change is self-reflection and self-assessment which promote student responsibility, as no amount of encouragement on the part of the institution or the teacher will guarantee that the student will genuinely grasp the virtues or implement them in the pursuit of his epistemic goals. Finally, I suggest that the modelling of intellectual virtues by teachers will provide students with an exemplar of what kind of person and what kind of ‘good thinking’ result from possessing the relevant intellectual virtues. I recognize that, pragmatically speaking, there are specific concerns which require attention to enable conversation within the classroom, including age, demographic, academic course, etc. However, my fundamental concern is with the recognition of the general significance of self-cultivation of students, that the aims of education are ultimately for autonomy and growth of personal goals.

Ultimately, the conversation of mankind is a meeting-place in which different voices stand in equal value and relation to one another and willingly engage in a conversation for the sake of conversation. This approach provides students with an opportunity to identify intellectual virtues both within themselves and in others. This will help them become intellectually virtuous and self-cultivated individuals.

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Conclusion

I have endeavoured to clarify the concept of Bildung and its relevance to the self and education. Bildung is something that a rational being can actively choose to undertake and which institutions can also hold out as a goal. Perhaps, as Nussbaum suggests, Bildung (though she does not use this term) is best encouraged and cultivated through the humanities. This too suggests that Bildung can be engaged with by pursuing certain disciplines over others. There is a special relationship between the humanities and the type of worldview that a student associates with. This is not to discount the flourishing of Bildung for those who choose not to entertain the humanities. However, what I am advocating is an education that thoroughly integrates the humanities and strives to encourage self-critical and self-growth qualities and skills in students. It would be wise to prepare the student simultaneously for both the capitalistic market and existential turmoil. It is the latter consideration that remedies several of the institutional problems and inconsistencies which were addressed at the start of my inquiry.

Further, quoting Fairfield, “For Gadamer, a mark of educational success is that one approaches a text with the anticipation that what it has to say is true. How often students or the rest of us actually do this may be questioned, but his point is that where this anticipation is absent, so is Bildung.”123 Does this not also suggest that Bildung is something one can choose to be involved with? My worry is that all of this suggests that Bildung is negotiable, something with which we are not inevitably engaged. The issue with this is that there is no imperative for the individual to cultivate the self through Bildung. On the other hand, however, my general understanding of McDowell suggests Bildung to be a constant development in life rather than something that can or cannot be

123 Fairfield, Teachability, 25.
engaged with: “Bildung … is an element in the normal coming to maturity of the kind of animals we are.”124 This is all, however, something that requires more research than what I have provided in this essay. My goal has been to identify the significance of the highly motivated student within institutions as opposed to delineating the nature of Bildung.

What I have come to conclude is that (1) the issues and inconsistencies which plague current educational institutions can begin to be alleviated by (2) shifting the focus to the self-cultivated, self-critical, and autonomous student who (3) is the outcome of Bildung. What required attention first were the four major faults of the institution, namely, the shift in values and goals, the appeal to economic gain, the loss of the humanities, and the failure to cultivate the highly motivated student. In this section, I focused on the concept of education as conversation. This was significant because it highlighted an important activity which takes place not only within the institution but also as a result of education in general. Conversation, in this sense, adopts the Socratic method in which scholars, teachers, and students engage in genuine discourse about ideas; it is learning for the sake of learning. The type of student who is able to participate in this conversation is what I call the highly motivated student.

I go on to identify two aspects of the highly motivated student which both serve as a motivation for educational institutions to care about their cultivation. I address the outward aspect first: the citizen of the world. Here, the highly motivated student is the citizen of the world; he has gained the necessary critical thinking and sympathetic skills of a democratic individual and can thus uphold democratic values.125 Unlike the typical individual who is produced by the university, ready to fulfill his role in society’s niche, it is important for Nussbaum that this individual is the outcome of education so that he can

125 Nussbaum, Not for Profit, 7.
extend himself to and participate in the world. The other aspect of the highly motivated student is introspection. I hope to have made it clear that the self-cultivation and self-knowledge of the individual is a prerequisite to any outward application. To further grasp the concept of self-knowledge and self-cultivation I introduce the concept of Bildung and strive to delineate its relevance to the student. “The word refers to a life task that belongs to every human being, and while it occurs both within and without educational institutions it has special importance for what happens within them.” In other words, who I am is who I have been educated to be; my self-cultivation, self-criticism, and autonomy are features of Bildung which are expressed through education. Nonetheless, if educational institutions fail to acknowledge the importance of the highly motivated student and, consequently, the importance of Bildung, then I lose the opportunity and potential to acquire self-knowledge and rise up to humanity. I claim, finally, that education and Bildung are necessary for one another. The result is the “emergence of an autonomous, critical rational agent ‘at home in the world’.”

**Further Inquiry**

My motivation for further inquiry on this topic is expressed on the concluding page of Bakhurst’s *The Formation of Reason* in which he urges “the socio-historical approach’s commitment to autonomy as the end of Bildung by developing the idea of ‘being at home in the world’ so that, suitably understood, it should serve as an ideal that might regulate the education process.” What I wish to inquire into is the method that ought to be adopted for the flourishing of the student within educational institutions. However, my

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129 Ibid. 161.
doubt is that it may not be possible to identify a potential curriculum structure in which Bildung can be promoted. The role of Bildung, as we have seen, is highly subjective and is determined by the very individual who engages in it. Thus, there is no guarantee that universalizing a curriculum will reap similar results in students: “there are, after all, infinitely many ways of constructing the teacher’s instruction that can be made out to fit the rule. What the pupil needs to grasp, we might conclude, is the correct interpretation.”\textsuperscript{130} Even in the case that a curriculum is structured in such a way that the humanities are available and encouraged, inviting the student to engage in Bildung and cultivate oneself, there is no guarantee that it will be universally interpreted in such a way. I suppose, my doubt is a pragmatic one: how is it possible for Bildung to be integrated into the curriculum? Thus far, I am only convinced that Bildung, the cultivation of a cultured, self-critical, and autonomous individual, is more apparent through the humanities. How to ensure that this individual will emerge and flourish through education is not at all certain.

\textsuperscript{130} Bakhurst, “Education and Conversation,” 30.
Bibliography


