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Human agency and the curriculum

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ABSTRACT

It is generally supposed that a curriculum should engage students with worthwhile knowledge, which requires an understanding of what it means for something to be worthwhile: a substantive conception of the good. Yet a number of influential curriculum theories deny or undermine one or another aspect of the key assumption upon which a meaningful account of the good depends – that people are the agents of their own beliefs, desires and actions. This renders a significant encounter between the curriculum and substantive ethics highly problematic. In this article I explore the meeting between curriculum and human agency in four seminal curriculum theories, and offer a framework to engage the curriculum with this key concept of substantive ethics.

KEYWORDS *curriculum, ethics, good life, human agency, worthwhile knowledge*

INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHERS SINCE PLATO have held that education in the fullest sense entails initiation into communities in pursuit of worthwhile knowledge (Plato, 1987). This means, as Richard Peters (1965) put it, that education involves two conditions, one concerning knowledge and the other desirability. Regardless of how one conceives the nature of knowledge however addressing the question of what is *worth* knowing requires a conception of what it means for something to be worthwhile (Spencer, 1945; Bode, 1927). Such a conception is found in the response to Socrates' question, 'How should one live?', which requires a stance concerning what it means to live a good life (Murdoch, 1970; Williams, 1985). Yet, recent curriculum thought has tended to deny or undermine one or another aspect of the key assumption upon which a meaningful account of desirability depends – that people are

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the agents of their own beliefs, desires and actions. This renders a significant encounter between the curriculum and substantive ethics highly problematic.[1]

In this article I examine how four seminal curriculum theories relate to human agency, those of Tyler, Schwab, Eisner and the critical pedagogues. Although they do not exhaust the rich variety of alternatives within the curriculum field, these theories provide a glimpse of how curriculum studies writ large has grappled with Socrates' question. They have exerted considerable influence on major traditions of curriculum thought, are illustrative of the prevailing assumptions among a number of leading orientations and address a breadth of behavioral, cognitive, emotional and political aspects of human experience with which the curriculum ought to be concerned.[2] Before turning to these curriculum orientations, however, I should say more about the connection between ethics, human agency and the curriculum.

ETHICS AND HUMAN AGENCY

Crucial to any ethical stance is the assumption that human beings possess agency. This means that they have the freedom within reasonable limits to choose their beliefs, desires and actions, the intelligence to distinguish between better and worse according to some conception of these notions, and the capacity to make mistakes in what they believe, feel and do.[3] Elsewhere I have called these the conditions of moral or ethical discourse: freedom, moral intelligence, and fallibility (Alexander 2001: 44–8).[4] It is pointless for people to consider what sort of life they should live if their beliefs and behaviors are determined by history or society or chemistry or the gods, if they cannot understand the difference between worthwhile or worthless according to some account of these terms, or if they are destined to be either good or bad by providence or their very nature. To deny agency is to rob life of meaning and purpose; it is to view human existence as amoral, governed by arbitrary and mechanical natural forces, by fates beyond human comprehension, or by nothing at all (Alexander, 2004b; Frankena, 1973: 72–6).

These conditions can be clarified by reference to three concepts that emerge in the thought of Charles Taylor (1964), self-determination, self-expression and strong evaluation. Free will is related to self-determination. Taylor followed Kant in believing that personal autonomy is a 'transcendental condition' of ethics, an assumption we must make for any conception of normative discourse to make sense. Ethics is concerned with persuading a person to discipline her will to act or arrange her life in a certain way. If it is not in fact within a person's sphere of influence to direct her will, because it is controlled by some other agent such as society or history or chemistry or the gods, if she is not in this sense autonomous, then it is futile to endeavor

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to persuade her to desire this rather than that or to behave in this way rather than that, since she is not the agent in charge of her desires or behavior

Moral intelligence is connected to what Taylor calls self-expression. He follows Hegel in recognizing that for a person to be able to exercise autonomy she must be able to ground her choices in some sort of reasoning or understanding; otherwise her choices would not actually be hers, but rather a product of caprice. This requires 'horizons of significance' or 'transcendental ideals' embedded in moral traditions sufficiently 'thick' to sustain meaningful moral choice, not mere reflections of arbitrary taste, personal whim or momentary feeling, to which competing conceptions of the good give expression, even if we cannot agree on their content (Taylor 1991; Walzer, 1994: xi; Alexander, 2001: 145–50; Smith, 2002: 65–66).[5]

For self-expression to be meaningful, moreover, we must suppose that people have the capacity to engage in a particular kind of self-evaluation. This is connected to what I have called fallibility, or the capacity to err. Unlike animals that possess only first order desires concerning such needs as food, procreation and survival, humans also possess second order desires – desires about desires – in which they evaluate their primary preferences (Frankfurt, 1971). It is useful to distinguish between two sorts of second order desires. I can choose, in the first instance, between two flavors of ice cream, say. Taylor calls this 'weak evaluation', because the decisive factor in choosing one flavor over another is how I feel at that moment. Today I feel like vanilla, but tomorrow, I might prefer chocolate. I can also choose, however, between risking my life to save a friend in battle or running away to save myself. The crucial factor in this instance is not how I feel at a given moment, but how I assess the worth of a particular feeling. I might consider the desire to save a friend courageous or generous, for example, and the motivation to run cowardly or selfish. Or, I might think it foolish to risk my life for another and eminently sensible to look out for myself first. It is this sort of assessment, which Taylor calls 'strong evaluation', that we must express in making autonomous ethical decisions if they are be meaningful in other than a weak sense. Humans require strong values upon which to base ethical judgments, but they do not always live up to those values. However, they are capable of recognizing when they do not through a process of self-examination that includes strong evaluation of their own desires and behaviors (Taylor, 1985: 15–44).

Whatever else it presupposes, then, to the extent that it is concerned with worthwhile knowledge curriculum thought must assume that teachers and students possess agency, that they are capable of self-determination, self-expression and strong evaluation. In what follows I argue that Tyler runs afoul of self-determination, Schwab of self-expression, Eisner of strong evaluation

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and critical pedagogy of all three.[6] This has led me to the conclusion that the role of ethics in curriculum discourse needs to be reconsidered. In the final section of this article I make some preliminary suggestions as to what this might entail.

THE TYLER RATIONALE

Ralph Tyler (1949) is often associated with the technological movement in curriculum thought. He responded to the so-called 'scientific curriculum making' of Franklin Bobbitt and W.W. Charter, according to which the curriculum should prepare students for adult life (Bobbitt, 1924). The tasks to be mastered to that end are to be determined by means of a statistical survey of daily adult behaviors (Charters, 1923). Unfortunately, this assumes that current adult behaviors are those that ought to be taught to children, which as Boyde Bode pointed out, is not always the case (Bode, 1927). Additionally, it assumes that we can conclude from the way things are how they ought to be, and as David Hume (1953) long ago pointed out, this is logically problematic. This problem is commonly associated with what G.E. Moore (1993) called the 'naturalistic fallacy', although Moore's formulation differed in significant ways from Hume's (Moore 1993).[7]

Tyler addressed this among other concerns by suggesting that three sources be consulted to determine curriculum objectives, the learners themselves, the social environment and the subject matter. By comparing an assessment of what students know in a given field to what the society and subject matter require them to learn, we can establish the proper objectives in each discipline. Since there are likely to be many more objectives than can be attained, the results of this process should be sifted through two screens, the philosophy of the school and the psychology of learning. The first establishes the normative priorities of the school and the latter the appropriate developmental stages at which each priority should be addressed.

To establish the objectives of a language or mathematics curriculum, for instance, we should first assess what the students already know and compare this to what the social environment and subject matter require. French or American schools will demand different levels of language proficiency at home than they do abroad, and a math program in a science magnet will have different expectations from that of an arts centered school. Whatever the environment, the subject matter will require much more than can be accomplished in any given academic year. So the school philosophy should be consulted to establish priorities and educational psychology to determine developmental appropriateness. The school philosophy can help to allocate resources such as instructional time, money for textbooks, language laboratories and other

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instructional aids. Educational psychology will assist in deciding what students of a given age can be expected to achieve.

Once the objectives have been determined, Tyler then asked the curriculum planner to consider the experiences that might ensure that they are achieved, the ways in which those experiences should be organized, and how they ought to be evaluated. Tyler was among the first curriculum theorists to conceive the curriculum process in terms of student learning and social conditions rather than subject matter alone. He held that objectives should be stated in terms of measurable student outcomes, that a variety of experiences in addition to frontal instruction can assist students in achieving those objectives, that student interest is an important guide in choosing among the available experiential alternatives, that experiences should be organized to emphasize conceptual connection among disciplines, and that the curriculum planning process is not complete until student achievement has been assessed. Despite these contributions, however, he did not succeed in overcoming the normative difficulties that plagued his predecessors.

In a well-known critique, curriculum historian Hebert Kliebard (1975) pointed out that to assess students' knowledge or the demands of any given subject matter we must first know what subjects are to be taught. However, this is the whole point of curriculum development, to determine what those subjects ought to be. In other words, according to Kliebard's critique, to determine what subjects should be taught we must already know what they are. The sources of objectives may help to refine the desired behaviors the curriculum should seek to attain, but at the end of the day the real work of curriculum development comes down to the normative philosophy of the school, which is predetermined by the adult society. Yet, Tyler offers no guidance as to how to evaluate competing claims among normative philosophies of education. Similar to his predecessors Bobbitt and Charters, he uncritically assumes that the way things are is the way they ought to be.

However, Tyler's difficulties with the normative side of the curriculum run deeper than this. Kliebard also questioned the morality of manipulating educational environments to achieve predetermined behavioral objectives.[8] Does not the very idea of stating curriculum aims in terms of predetermined measurable objectives presume that the outcomes of learning can be controlled by the educational experiences in which the learner is required to participate? Where is the will, or desire, or interest of students in this scheme? To be sure, Tyler calls upon the curriculum planner to measure the interests of students in assessing the needs of the learners, and even asks that student interest be taken into account when planners select educational experiences for learners. Yet in the final analysis, the interests of society – expressed in the philosophical screen and translated into experiences designed to ensure

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outcomes – will always trump student desires. It would appear that interest is to be consulted in Tyler's curriculum primarily for the purpose of packaging predetermined social objectives to make them appealing to students, rather than to actively engage their genuine aspirations and concerns.

Tyler might respond, of course, that aspirations are socially determined, and that one purpose of the curriculum is to shape student desires according to social needs, or at least to provide a basis upon which autonomous decisions might later be founded. Communities of all sorts – political, cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic – have legitimate interests in inculcating their particular concerns in their children (see Counts, 1978). But this response misses the key point: Kliebard questioned not only the adequacy of Tyler's approach to competing social needs and rival educational philosophies, but also the morality of his assumption that learning should be defined primarily in terms of experiences designed to produce predetermined outcomes. Tyler did not consider whether students might at any time embrace those outcomes, either when they are asked to achieve them, or later on when, according to some views, people are better prepared by virtue of accumulated learning or maturity to make such assessments. Nor did he suggest that the task of the curriculum is to form student desires by persuading them to appreciate or encouraging them to choose certain ends over others. Rather, the only way for students to embrace desired outcomes according to the Tyler rationale would be through experiences that are prearranged to produce those outcomes whether or not a student might at some point be so convinced or inclined. Yet, the very idea that social or any other sort of interests are *morally* legitimate only makes sense when we recognize that people, including students, are agents endowed with the capacity for self-determination. We flatten the ethical significance of social or other concerns, therefore, to the extent that we ignore, suppress or subvert this essential human capacity.

A second defense of Tyler's position might claim that this critique conflates two different sorts of actions or policies: (1) those that undermine the autonomous actions of particular people under certain circumstances, thus impeding their capacity for moral judgment; and (2) those that implicitly deny a presupposition of moral agency, such as autonomy, even though the people subject to those policies might nevertheless remain moral agents. Kliebard's critique pertains to the first sort of actions or policies, it might be argued, whereas the thesis of this article, that contemporary curriculum theory is conceptually ill-equipped to assess the worth of the learning that it prescribes, relates to the second. However, this distinction does not appear to withstand criticism. A curriculum theory prescribes policies concerning what to teach children in school and how to teach it to them. To say that an approach to curriculum implicitly denies this or that supposition of agency (or anything

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else for that matter), can mean nothing other than that it directs school personnel to relate to students in particular ways. To conceive of curriculum in ways that undermine the autonomy of this or that student, therefore, is just what it means to deny, implicitly or otherwise, that self-determination is a condition of moral agency necessary to make sense of judgments about the value of the learning a curriculum prescribes.

By attempting to sideline the will of students, Tyler undermines a key assumption of human agency necessary for normative discourse to have meaning. There is a deep tension within a curriculum that offers an account of what is most worth knowing, which is what the Tyler rationale proposed to do, but that flattens the self-determination of students; for the very idea of something being worthwhile requires the assumption that within reasonable limits students are agents of their own desires, beliefs and actions.

SCHWAB AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISCIPLINES

An especially influential approach to the academic curriculum during the past half century was launched in the 1960s as 'the structure of the disciplines' movement. Joseph Schwab (1982), Tyler's colleague at the University of Chicago, was a towering figure in this tradition.

Schwab and his structuralist colleagues responded to the rapid growth of knowledge by arguing that the curriculum could no longer provide students with a comprehensive knowledge of any given subject-matter, since scientific discovery is moving so rapidly that what is believed to be true today may turn out to be false tomorrow. Instead of focusing solely on the *substance* of a discipline, its basic concepts and findings, the curriculum should also teach the *syntax* of a discipline, its methods of discovery and justification. Such an inquiry based curriculum would teach students not only the matter of a discipline, as Richard Peters (1965) called it, but more importantly its epistemological form, the tools of investigation and critical assessment used by scholars to discover new knowledge (Schwab, 1982, also Hirst and Peters, 1970; Hirst, 1974). For this reason, the structuralist approach to curriculum has sometimes been associated with what came to be known as the 'discovery method' (Shulman and Keisler, 1968).

How are we to devise such a curriculum? Schwab had a unique and ingenious answer. Following Aristotle's distinction between theoretical knowledge (*Sophia*) and practical wisdom (*Phronesis*), he held that curriculum is a practical not a theoretical discipline (Aristotle, 2001). Its aim is not to discover laws of nature, society, behavior or education, but to translate those discoveries into practical strategies for teaching the structure of disciplines. The products of curriculum development are alternative lesson plans that anticipate instructional

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challenges in teaching a particular subject matter, not experiences designed to meet objectives measurable by the tools of social or behavioral science.

Arriving at such plans is a complex process because the disciplines to be taught, and the research that provides guidance for how to teach them, are not static doctrines to be memorized and applied, but dynamic disciplines rich with scholarly discussion and debate. The challenge is to create an ongoing conversation between those working to discover new disciplinary and pedagogic knowledge and those endeavoring to teach students in school. This process, which Schwab called 'curriculum deliberation', engages representatives of the essential ingredients of curriculum in dynamic discussions about how best to translate theory into practice. He called these ingredients 'commonplaces' – teaching, students, subject matter and milieu. Since there is no one right way to teach a discipline, the creation of practical pedagogic wisdom requires the 'arts of eclectic', an integrated application of the most compelling and relevant theories from both the subject matter itself as the study of how best to teach it (Schwab, 1982: 322–83). Lee Shulman (1986) was later to call this sort of practical wisdom 'pedagogic-content knowledge', the unique understanding that is accumulated in the teaching of an academic discipline.

Unlike Tyler and the curriculum technologists, Schwab and his structuralist colleagues were not ambivalent about normative discourse in curriculum thought; but they were ambiguous. A normative educational philosophy is implied in the communal requirements of what Schwab called milieu. However, Schwab is unclear about whether normative philosophy should provide the conceptual and ethical frame that guides curriculum deliberation. If so, how is it to be determined given Schwab's complex, plural and evolving conception of theory? If normative visions of education are to be considered as one of a number of types of theories to be taken into account during the process of deliberation, how can it be said that the curriculum subscribes to a normative vision?

This ambiguity is related to an epistemological problem with curriculum structuralism that raises questions about the second condition of human agency – moral intelligence and self-expression. Schwab was among the pioneers of what later became known as post-empiricist and post-positivist philosophy of knowledge that argued that scientific theories are more tentative and partial than was previously supposed (Bernstein, 1983; Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Since the findings of inquiry are underdetermined by data according to this view, theoretical expectations and conceptual frameworks play a significant role in the formulation of explanations. These frameworks are organized into disciplines or forms of knowledge each with its own assumptions, concepts and methods of inquiry. This leads to a strong form of

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cognitive relativism, which holds that truth is a function of conceptual framework.

Although it does not follow logically from his epistemological position, Schwab appears to treat moral traditions like structures of knowledge. Since all moral positions are underdetermined by reasoning, and no argument exists that can sustain the superiority of one over another, normative positions must be evaluated within the context of the conceptual frameworks within which they are formulated, and a variety of competing (even contradictory) positions should be considered in making curriculum decisions. Ironically, and I believe unintentionally, this sort of relativism, both cognitive and moral, undermines the very critical spirit that structuralists such as Schwab sought to promote, because it implies that it is senseless or unreasonable to criticize one framework on the basis of the assumptions of another. According to this view, the only sort of criticism permitted must come from within a conceptual scheme, and if a particular tradition or discipline cares little for logical consistency, even internal criticism may be ruled out (Alexander, 1989).

Schwab (1982: 228) admitted that 'the charge of relativism can be fairly laid against' his viewpoint. Yet he embraced this sort of relativism in response to the dogmatism of scientific positivism, which held that truth and goodness could be only defined in terms of a very narrow empiricism. His intention was to create an eclectic basis for educational practice in which a rich variety of normative as well as empirical traditions, from Plato and Aristotle to Freud and Skinner, could play equally challenging roles in making curriculum decisions. As he put the point, 'if scientific knowledge can be sought in many ways, it is not because science is a game, a systematic delusion, or the pursuit of metaphors of mnemonics. Rather . . . it is because nature is so rich in matters to be learned and scientists so apt in finding ways to learn them' (Schwab, 1982: 228).

In throwing out arbitrary and overly simplistic empirical standards, however, Schwab may have gone too far by blurring important epistemological distinctions between truth and falsehood. And in adopting a parallel stance toward moral traditions, Schwab may have embraced an overly eclectic attitude toward normative visions of education that weakens our capacity to identify value differences between better and worse. This threatens the possibility of moral intelligence and self-expression. If every moral tradition is as good as every other, it becomes impossible in principle to distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong according to any theory. Of course, one might respond *a la* MacIntyre (1981, 1988) that certain goods are internal to discipline based practices and that the comparative worth of various moral ideals and traditions can only be judged from the perspective of the various moral ideals and traditions available to us. However, MacIntyre assumes with

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Aristotle that rival moral traditions struggle to grasp a common *telos* or ultimate good unarticulated in Schwab's writings, even if they may never reach agreement as to its most adequate formulation. For self-expression to be morally meaningful, it must reflect more than mere personal or conceptual or collective preference. This is not to say that there is only one moral tradition that can provide a normative frame for curriculum deliberations, but rather that any putative conception of the good must appeal to horizons of significance that transcend the indeterminate circumstance in which we find ourselves, even if we may not be able to agree as to their nature or content.[9]

EISNER'S ESTHETIC HUMANISM

If Tyler's technological curriculum focuses on producing desired behaviors and Schwab's academic structuralism focuses on cognitive processes, the humanistic curriculum turns our attention to emotional dimensions of education. One important theorist in this tradition is Elliot Eisner, who is known for his systematic exploration of art as a root metaphor for the processes of teaching and educating (Eisner, 2001).

To conceive education as an art requires an esthetic theory. For this Eisner turned to Suzanne Langer's analysis of art as the symbolic expression of feeling. Langer (1957) grounded art in two important distinctions, between discursive and non-discursive expression, and between logical and dynamic form. Discursive expression is abstract, conceptual and theoretical. We use it to communicate about our world in daily and academic life, from shopping lists and travel directions to scholarly discoveries and scientific theories. Non-discursive expression, on the other hand, is concrete, particular and experiential. We use it to communicate about dimensions of experience where words and concepts fail us, for instance, in expressing intense emotions such as love or anger. This sort of expression often relies on religious rituals, artistic symbols or metaphoric language to create immediate, virtual or vicarious experience.

Logical form, according to Langer, is rigorous, structured, and fixed. It is concerned with the precise measurements and conceptual contours of reality. For instance, two lampshades that share precisely the same profile but for size can be said to have the same logical form. Dynamic form, on the other hand, speaks to the shape of experiences that are fleeting and in flux. A dry riverbed, for example, can be said to capture the dynamic form of flowing water at the moment the water ceased flowing. The description of an automobile accident by a police officer, to take another example, will strive to express the logical form of the events in discursive language: when the accident happened, the direction of each car before they collided, where they ended up immediately

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afterwards, and so on. But the stories told by the drivers to their families and friends will be filled with emotion. They will seek to capture the emotional shape of the accident through expressive language that involves the listener in a vicarious experience of it.

The academic curriculum prefers discursive expression of logical form. It aims to convey concepts, methods of inquiry and truths in the precise theoretical language associated with scholarship. The fine arts, on the other hand, aim to capture the dynamic form of human feeling in non-discursive expression such as symbols and metaphors (Goodman, 1978). To take seriously the image of teaching and education as fine arts, then, we must understand how they use non-discursive expression to capture and communicate the shape of human feeling. Eisner offers such an understanding by rethinking curriculum content and evaluation, rather than in a new approach to its design and construction.

Eisner conceives curriculum subject matter in terms of what he calls 'forms of representation'. In contrast to the structure of a discipline that emphasizes its mode of inquiry, the notion of a form of representation stresses a mode of expression. 'People don't paint what they see', Eisner is fond of musing; 'they see what they can paint'. The shape of consciousness is determined by the ways we represent experience, not by how we study it. Art and science are both forms in which we represent what we experience. Excluding forms of representation such as the fine arts from the curriculum, as so often occurs in state schools, denies students the opportunity to appreciate the sort of experience that they capture, indeed to enjoy those experiences altogether. In terms of the Hegelian formulation borrowed from Charles Taylor above, limiting the forms of representation in the curriculum restricts the capacity of students to acquire new and unimagined traditions and media within which to exercise self-expression. The optimum curriculum will expose students to as many forms of representation as time and other resources permit (Eisner, 1996; Heubner, 1999: 23–5).

If the curriculum initiates students into a collection of artistic forms, the evaluation of curriculum entails appreciating and critiquing the ways in which those forms have been represented. To view teaching and education as fine arts requires that assessment be conceived as artistic connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurship refers to the refined taste for a particular art form that is acquired through extensive personal experience as either a creator or student of that art. It involves the capacity for judging quality, for assessing the artistic merit of a particular work of art. Educational connoisseurship, then, is a form of understanding what goes on in classrooms based on personal experience. Educational criticism, on the other hand, is a form of representing that knowledge. It involves commenting on pedagogic activities in rich, metaphoric

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terms in order to transform how we perceive and do our educational work (Eisner, 1997).

This conception of curriculum and evaluation expands our thinking about the tasks of education by placing the affective domain and subjective experience at its core. It recognizes that the curriculum needs to influence feeling and creative self-expression as well as thinking, to foster love of learning, mold commitment and dedication, and shape the student's deepest appreciation of what it means to be devoted to people and ideals. Following Plato, Schwab called this the education of 'eros' (Schwab, 1982: 105–32; Garrison, 1997). It is not enough to teach about friendship and fellowship, we must engage students with comrades; it is not enough to discuss love of community, or tradition, or beauty, or God, we must involve students in symbolic activities that facilitates these sorts of emotions; and it is not enough to deliberate about those who are different, we must engage students actively and creatively with the Other.

Nevertheless, although Eisner is acutely sensitive to the impact of what we choose not to teach (see Eisner 2001: 97–107). He offers little guidance concerning how to make those choices. If every form of representation is as suitable for inclusion in the curriculum as any other, how are we to distinguish between those that are more or less worthwhile? Under these circumstances, it is difficult to assess whether or to what degree particular curriculum alternatives are more or less desirable. This undermines the third assumption of moral agency mentioned above, fallibility or the possibility of being wrong (Alexander, 1989). The very self-expression Eisner seeks to promote would appear to require what Taylor calls strong values that enable the assessment of the quality of an experience (Taylor, 1991). Yet, Eisner shies away from such strong evaluation when he fails to offer an account of how to distinguish the relative worth of forms of representation that compete for time and resources in the curriculum. In short, Eisner's esthetic approach to self-expression appears to rely on too 'weak' or 'thin' or 'merely' personal an account of the values needed to make curriculum decisions and assess classroom experience (Walzer, 1994).

This point is driven home it seems to me by Eisner's tendency to posit a personal conception of connoisseurship as the primary source for assessing the merit of education experiences. This weakens the meaning of the term merit. It is not enough for educational criticism to re-educate our perception of educational events according to the connoisseurship of an experienced educator alone. For this sort of personal assessment to be meaningful, it must carry weight because the connoisseur has acquired an appreciation for a standard of excellence; and for such standards to have meaning they must appeal to strong values that transcend self and society (Phenix, 1971;

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Alexander, 1986). Yet it is the very possibility of this kind of strong evaluation that Eisner appears to avoid in stressing the role of personal understanding in the assessment of school programs.

One might respond, of course, that standards of merit are implicit within the forms of representation themselves. If the connoisseur is to base her assessment of an educational program on a merely personal interpretation of these contextualized standards, however, the attendant conception of merit remains weak since assessment will be grounded primarily on individual taste. We might suppose, on the other hand, that standards of excellence are agreed upon by recognized practitioners of various activities or discourses. Unfortunately, this could too easily lead to a self-refuting form of relativism, which assumes, for example, that programs can only be assessed according to standards internal to a particular viewpoint or tradition. But this would imply that one would have to accept the presuppositions of a particular form of representation in order to criticize it. Moreover, if a tradition rejects the very idea of a standard of merit, it would be difficult to sort out what educational criticism or assessment in this context could possibly mean. To engage in what Taylor calls strong evaluation requires that connoisseurs assess the quality of, not merely express, their own personal or collective preferences, and for this to be possible the standards of merit that they employ need to emanate from beyond the narrow confines of self or community or form of expression. However, Eisner's tendency to situate the source of aesthetic authority within either individual connoisseurs or communities of practitioners appears to preclude such a transcendent point of view.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE RADICAL CURRICULUM

Eisner wrote of the three curricula that all schools teach: the explicit curriculum that is announced in brochures, course syllabi and textbooks; the implicit curriculum, which is embedded in classroom norms and student–teacher relations; and the null curriculum, which refers to what we do not teach (Eisner, 2001). Practitioners and policy-makers often ignore the latter two curricula. For radical curriculum theorists such as Michael Apple (1979), however, the implicit and null curricula are not merely ignored; they are hidden by those in power. Grounded in neo-Marxist critical theory, this approach to curriculum seeks to expose unspoken assumptions of schooling in order to reveal how education is used by dominant classes and cultures to reproduce the power relations embedded in the status quo (Apple, 1979, 1995).

Neo-Marxist critical theorists hold that beneath the surface of social life lies conflict between the powerful and the powerless (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972). Those who have power based on wealth, lineage or majority-rule use

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culture to impose an ideology on others that sustains their power. This ideology – expressed in language, media, religion, knowledge, morality and education – obscures the fact of oppression from those who are enslaved to the degree that some even prefer subjugation to liberation. Marx called this 'false consciousness' (Marx and Engels, 1947). Epistemological ideas such as truth and knowledge and moral ideas such as right and wrong have no 'objective' basis outside of the power interests they serve. At the end of the day, all beliefs and behaviors are ideological save those dedicated to liberating the oppressed (Watt, 1994: 1–26). The task of critical pedagogy, an educational orientation influenced by critical theory, is to expose the hidden tools of oppression utilized by those in power so that students can embrace more authentic ideologies that reflect their own cultural, social, and political interests (McLaren, 1989; Gur-Zeev, 2003).

Neo-Marxist analysis assumes that all education is ideological. The question is not whether but which ideology to inculcate (Counts, 1978)? It might appear that this is entirely consistent with my call for a return to substantive ethics in curriculum thought,[10] but this is not so, because radical curriculum theory uses the term 'ideology' in what I have called an amoral (or non-ethical) rather than a moral (or ethical) sense. Moral ideologies embrace the conditions of human agency. They are not moral in the sense that they embrace a particular substantive ethic, although the conditions of moral agency are by no means value free, but in that they accept the transcendental conditions that make it possible to have meaningful ethical discourse. Amoral ideologies on the other hand, deny these conditions. They assume that beliefs and behaviors are not chosen but determined by family, or socio-economic class or culture (Alexander, 2005).[11]

By advocating that children ought to be liberated from hegemonic culture to serve ideological interests they may not necessarily embrace, radical curriculum theory employs the term 'ideology' in an amoral sense; and since all truths and values that do not reflect the necessity of liberating the oppressed are relative to class, or culture or gender, there is no way to assess whether the interests of a particular child, however they might be interpreted, are in fact being served by this new ideology of liberation (Watt, 1994: 1–26). This undermines all three assumptions of human agency. The child does not make choices that give expression to her own strong values, either now or upon reaching maturity. Values are not chosen at all, but determined by ideology, culture and class. It is assumed, therefore, that the child will express the values of her culture or social class and embrace liberation as defined by others, whether or not she would choose such a form of liberty for herself. Positions of this kind do not engage substantive ethics; they render such an engagement deeply problematic (Alexander, 2001: 94–107).

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Consider one representative illustration. At the end of *Education and Power*, Michael Apple (1995) writes with critical appreciation of political economists and cultural reproduction theorists in education:

> Thus, a particular kind of discipline has been required here, one that is critical of overly reductionist and economist categories that have proven in the long run to be damaging to the Marxist tradition, and one which – at the same time – interrogates the school with an interest in uncovering the roots of domination and exploitation that undoubtedly exist. This . . . involves criticizing a tradition and using it at the same time . . . While it is important to realize that schools do reproduce gender relations and the social relations of reproduction, 'behind their backs,' they also reproduce historically specific forms of resistance . . . (Finn, Grant and Johnson, 1978: 34)
>
> Based on this, I have suggested strategies and action on a variety of fronts: within schools and universities involving curriculum, democratizing technical knowledge, using and politicizing the lived culture of students and teachers, etc.; and outside the school involving both educational practices in progressive labor unions, political and feminist groups, and so on, and in political action to build a mass socialist and democratic movement in the United States. (Apple, 1995: 150–1)

The ideological agenda of this perspective is clear; and my point is not that this agenda makes no contribution to curriculum thought and practice. Rather it over reaches because of an ambivalence concerning free choice. Apple suggests strategies to uncover the roots of 'exploitation' and 'domination' as critical pedagogy sees it, presumably to liberate students so that they can make choices based on the radical insights they have gained. But what of a young woman who finds fulfillment in a particular religious orientation that Apple might consider oppressive of women, or a young man who would prefer to remain loyal to his family or community, even though this may require submitting to the authority of parents or tradition? Surely these young people should be offered opportunities to move on if they so choose. By exposing hidden structures and forces that would deny or subvert such opportunities, critical thought in education makes a significant contribution. But with equal surety, these youngsters should be allowed to decline opportunities to look elsewhere without disrespect if this is their preference, and here it seems to me is where the trouble begins (see Ellsworth, 1989).

Radical curriculum theory too often appears to embrace what Isaiah Berlin (1998: 194) called liberty in the 'positive sense', which addresses the question 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?' Berlin argues that what gives plausibility to this sort of reasoning is that:

> (W)e recognize that it is possible, and at times justifiable, to coerce men in the name of some goal (let us say justice or public health) which they would, if they were sufficiently enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not, because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt. This renders it easy for me to conceive of myself as coercing others for their sake, in

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> their, not my, interest. I am then claiming that I know what they truly need better than they know themselves . . . . Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and on behalf, of their 'real' selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal of man (happiness, performance of duty, wisdom, a just society, self fulfillment) must be identical with his freedom – the free choice of his 'true,' albeit often submerged and inarticulate self. (Berlin, 1998: 204–5)

The tendency to decide what is best for someone whether or not he or she would agree is often more subtle in the views expressed by Apple and his colleagues than in the left and right leaning orthodoxies to which Berlin was referring when he wrote these words; indeed Apple himself as cited above criticizes some of these very orthodoxies. Nevertheless, these tendencies can be found for example in the ways radicals sometimes use the term 'progressive' to suggest that those who do not embrace their views are 'backward' or 'regressive'; or the designation 'democratic' to hint that those who do not endorse Apple's mass socialist movement are less or un- democratic; or the expression 'resistance' to intimate that those in favor of reproducing some of the social relations opposed by radicals are sympathetic to oppression.[12] The problem, of course, is not in the use of these terms per se – other movements have described themselves as 'progressive,' or 'democratic' or dedicated to 'resistance' – but rather in the exclusiveness (almost intolerance) with which these terms are too often appropriated, in ways that cast aspersions on the views or actions of those who might use them differently, or who are not comfortable with a neo-Marxist style of argumentation, or who believe that their interests lie elsewhere, implying that those uses or discomforts or interests are morally suspect or expressions of a false or inauthentic self because they do not sense the need to 'resist' 'domination' or 'exploitation' as conceived in critical, or post-structural, or post-colonial, or some other radical theory.[13]

My point is not that radical curriculum theory is illiberal because it fails to embrace autonomy, but rather that in diminishing the significance of human agency, it tends to undermine the *moral* bite of the claim that one group or another has suffered oppression, because it undercuts the conditions necessary for ethical concepts to be meaningful altogether. Instead, its antidote – 'liberation' or 'positive liberty' – runs the risk of replacing one form of subjugation with another. In an amoral universe, power not ethics is the primary court of appeals; and force of one kind or another too often appears to be the only recourse to resolve differences or redress perceived injustice (Alexander, 2003).[14]

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HUMAN AGENCY IN THE CURRICULUM

To speak of ethics in the curriculum does not require an alternative account of instructional content, design or evaluation, which might well be derived from an eclectic application of these and other curriculum orientations, taking into account some of the difficulties I have mentioned. Rather, to engage ethics in the curriculum requires a conception of what it means for an educational program to be better or worse, and this can be articulated only within the context of a conception of the good. Although there is no single ethical vision that all curricula are bound to promote, they must embrace the formal criteria without which the very idea of an ethical stance is meaningless in other than a weak sense, that people have the capacity for agency. However, this capacity is not an innate ability that will develop on its own. Indeed, the awareness and facility for agency can be just as easily ignored or suppressed as fostered, so it is a fundamental task of every curriculum to promote an awareness of the capacity for agency among those it proposes to influence. Let us conclude then by considering how each of the conditions of agency, (1) free will or self-determination, (2) moral intelligence or self-expression, and (3) fallibility or self-evaluation, might be incorporated into the curriculum.

Free will

To foster free will and self-determination, the primary concern of any curriculum must be the ultimate independence of children, their ability upon reaching maturity to understand within reasonable limits the options they face and the consequences of choosing one direction over another, and their ability to make intelligent choices based on this understanding. Whatever value educators may attribute to this or that subject matter or pedagogy, cultivating the moral potential of the child as a human agent is always of greater importance, since without an awareness of our capacity for agency the very idea of something being important makes no sense (cf. Dewey 1909). We teach subject matter not to liberate students from forms of oppression that they may or may not agree to perceive as such, but to give them greater cognitive and affective control over their own lives (Dewey, 1938; Scheffler, 1973; Peters, 1966).

To live meaningfully in and contribute productively to a liberal democracy requires the ability to assess not only the strength of an argument, but also the quality (according to some conception) of a piece of art or literature, the significance of an historical or a sociological development, or the contribution of a scientific or technological innovation as well as the capacity to understand or reproduce them (McPeck, 1990). Education for self-determination implies fostering a critical stance toward subject matter, not only in the sense

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of the ability to employ and assess reasons (Siegel, 1988; Paul, 1994; Norris, 1992; Ennis, 1996), but also – and perhaps more importantly – in terms of the capacity to appraise quality or significance, to evaluate not only the amount of happiness one may achieve by making one choice rather than another, or the strength of the reasoning that favors that choice, but also the relative worth of the satisfaction that may be realized from making it.

Moral intelligence

However, qualitative judgments of this kind only make sense within the context of ethical orientations that enable one to say that this is more important than that. And to make such judgments possible, a tradition must meet at least two conditions: (1) to serve as a basis for a person's self-determined choices – what Taylor (1989) calls a 'source of the self' – a moral tradition must be an expression of ones' identity, integral to how one conceives who one aspires to be needs. And (2) to achieve this level of ownership and investment, a tradition needs to be sufficiently robust and emotionally compelling to inspire affiliation and identification.

(1) Martin Buber's distinction between objective and subjective learning can help to clarify what it means for a tradition to become part of one's identity. Buber, it should be recalled, distinguished between two moments in relationships. One can relate to another as a subject to an object – what Buber called I–It relations – in which the subject uses the object to achieve some instrumental end; or one can also relate to another as a subject to another subject – what he called I–Thou relations – in which at least for a few precious moments, to use Buber's beautiful language, 'the other fills the firmament'. There is a receiving of the other into oneself, a mystical union of sorts in which it becomes difficult to distinguish between one's own feelings and those of the other. The other, in this sense, becomes part of me, and I become part of the other (Buber, 1970).

Buber applied this analysis to relations between students and subject matter. One can relate to learning as a subject to an object, in which case the knowledge acquired is employed to achieve some instrumental end, such as professional development, technological innovation or even the advancement of knowledge. This attitude clearly plays an important role in the curriculum, and is indicative of much if not most of the learning that takes place in schools. However, one can also relate to subject matter as one subject to another, in which case the knowledge acquired becomes part of my very being, integrated into my conception of who I choose to become (Rosenzweig, 1955). For an ethical orientation to be a sufficiently

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integral expression of one's self to serve as a source for self-determined choice, it must be transformed from this sort of objective into subjective learning (cf. Dewey, 1938). From this it does not follow that ethical sources are merely 'subjective' in the weak sense that they only reflect one's personal taste or feelings at a particular moment. They are subjective rather in a strong sense, in that they connect one's inner life with horizons of significance that transcend the self, so that the demands of community or tradition or nature or God become part and parcel of who one chooses to be.

(2) Michael Walzer's (1994) distinction between 'thick' and 'thin' morality can be useful in clarifying the sort of traditions that are the most likely candidates for promoting this sort of self-expression. We can distinguish, Walzer (1994: xi) argues, between two different interrelated kinds of moral argument, 'a way of talking among ourselves, here at home, about the thickness of our own history and culture . . . and a way of talking to people abroad, across different cultures, about a thinner life we have in common . . . . (T)here are the makings of a thin and universalistic morality inside every thick and particular morality.' The conditions of human agency adumbrated here are clearly part of that thin universalistic ethic that many cultures and moral traditions share in common. And a curriculum concerned with engaging worthwhile knowledge will of necessity initiate students into some notion of common humanity or civil society since, as I have been arguing, competing conceptions of the good must embrace and promote at least the assumptions of human freedom, intelligence and fallibility in order to count as ethical orientations (Alexander, 2001: 92–3).

However, for this thin universalistic ethic to be sufficiently meaningful to serve as a source for self-determined choices, it must be embodied in the practices of a local community that displays the features of what Walzer (1994: 21) calls moral maximalism: 'It will be idiomatic in its language, particularist in its cultural references, and circumstantial in two senses of that word: historically dependent and factually detailed. Its principles and procedures will have been worked out over a long period of time through complex social interactions.' This is so for at least two reasons. First, this is how social and other goods present themselves in our lives. The process as a whole', Walzer continues, 'is surely misrepresented when it is described . . . as if it had been guided by a single, comprehensive, and universal principle. All such principles are abstractions and simplifications that, when analyzed, reveal their idiomatic, particularist, and circumstantial character' (cf. Oakeshott, 1962). Second, in order to undergo the transformation from

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objective to subjective learning, an ethic needs to be sufficiently emotionally compelling to engage a student's moral imagination. One is moved to live in this way for love of country, or culture, or family, or tradition, or reason, or God or something else that has the capacity to ignite a commitment sufficiently passionate to serve as the guidepost of one's life. Robust and detailed cultural narratives, symbols and artifacts that reflect the complexities and perplexities of real life are better able to inspire this level of commitment than high-level abstractions.[15]

Fallibility

Finally, to assume that students are fallible and to promote strong evaluation means among other things that the moral understanding necessary to acquire or construct worthwhile knowledge is not innate but learned, that it is not in a person's very nature to grasp the wisdom of an ethical tradition, or to behave well or poorly. Students might just as readily misunderstand as understand that tradition, or choose poorly as wisely. Whether or not they do so is a contingent matter, which implies that if they in fact comprehend the tradition's conception of what counts as worthwhile, or learn to desire or appreciate something of particular value, or choose to follow a virtuous course of action, they are to be credited with a meritorious intellectual, emotional or practical accomplishment. And if they fail to achieve this understanding or appreciation, or to exercise this choice, they are in some measure responsible for the failure.

This is not to say that there are no factors beyond the student's control. All students are disadvantaged in some way or another, and some are obviously more advantaged than others, economically, intellectually, emotionally, artistically and physically. Surely curriculum theory and educational policy should consider whether, when and how to address these imbalances.[16] However, in so far as we are unwilling to hold students accountable for any portion of their learning, or to see them as responsible in some way when they miss the mark, they will face grave difficulty in acquiring or constructing or doing whatever a tradition deems appropriate with the knowledge that it considers to be worthwhile. An equally, if not more, important curricular and educational task, therefore, is to cultivate within students this sense of responsibility and accountability. This requires that students be encouraged to experience the exhilaration of genuine accomplishment when they succeed and to examine their own beliefs, desires and actions when they have not achieved all that they had hoped. What might I have done differently? Where have I missed the mark? The strong evaluation required of future life choices begins with an assessment of the quality of personal investment a student has made in the learning process.[17]

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Although this may sometimes mean that students will need to face uncomfortable aspects of their own personalities, and this can result in fear or stress, the upside is that they will come to recognize that they have the capacity to change course, to make a difference. What they do, feel, and think does in fact matter; and their inherent worth is to be discovered not in the feeling that they will get it right no matter what, but rather in the realization that they matter even when they get it wrong, indeed because they have the capacity to get it wrong, since were this not the case, it would literally make no sense to speak of anything mattering at all. Students can thus learn to accept themselves as imperfect but nonetheless worthwhile beings, even as they strive to improve where they can. The recognition that I am inherently worthwhile even though I make mistakes, coupled with the awareness that I have the capacity to contribute to a better tomorrow for myself and others is a source of profound joy.[18]

A meaningful account of curriculum must begin with what can count as desirable, with what it means for knowledge on any account to be considered worthwhile, with the conditions of human agency: attempts to conceive the curriculum in terms of establishing, realizing and evaluating behavioral objectives, or the structure of disciplines or knowledge or rationality, or forms of esthetic representation and evaluation, or the liberation of the oppressed have tended to undermine one or more of these conditions. To engage worthwhile knowledge requires that the curriculum not only presuppose these conditions as human capabilities, but also that it actively promote them. This requires that students learn to make independent choices grounded in assessments not only of the reasoning entailed but also the relative worth of various human activities, that these choices express their personal identification with thick ethical traditions within which strong evaluation makes sense. It also requires students to recognize that in the context of those traditions they have the capacity to err in what they think, feel and do, but that they can also change course and make a difference. This is a source of fear and trepidation, but also of great joy. Cultivating this sort of existential joy is, to my mind, the highest aspiration of any curriculum.

NOTES

1. This may be one reason why every few years someone declares the curriculum field moribund or in crisis (Schwab, 1982: 287–321; Heubner, 1999).

2. There is of course no one right way to conceptualize the curriculum field. John McNeil (McNeil, 1984: 1–81) has divided the field into four traditions that more or less correspond to the examples I have chosen to examine here. He calls them the technological curriculum, academic rationalism, the humanistic curriculum, and social reconstructionism. Elliot Eisner has divided

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conceptions of curriculum into similar categories in conflicting *Conceptions of Curriculum* (Eisner and Vallance, 1974) and in the first edition of *The Educational Imagination* (1979). In the third edition of *The Educational Imagination*, Eisner adopted the term 'curriculum ideologies' in place of 'conceptions of curriculum' (Eisner, 2001). I will discuss the role of ideology in curriculum thought in the section dealing with critical pedagogy below.

3. The point here is not, of course, that all beliefs, desires or actions of human agents are entirely volitional. Clearly we embrace many beliefs, experience numerous desires and engage in behavior without due consideration or exercise of will. Nor, as Frankfort (1971: 6) points out, are human beings 'alone in having desires and motives, or in making choices'. The point rather is that human agents have the capacity to subject their beliefs, desires and actions to particular sorts of evaluative judgment, and to choose whether or not to believe, desire, or enact them based on those judgments.

4. I use the term fallible in a broader sense than that commonly associated with the work of Karl Popper (1995). It includes the possibility of moral as well as cognitive mistakes.

5. Hegel (1953) referred to this kind of transcendental ideal as absolute. Kant (1997) called them regulative principles. They articulate the ends toward which pure and practical reason strive. This guarantees the possibility of truth, since advocates of different intellectual or moral traditions may disagree, but are assumed nonetheless to aspire to common ends. Regulative principles also motivate inquiry, since without the possibility of achieving a desirable end, there would be no reason to inquire altogether. Both Hegel and Kant have been criticized for understanding these ideals as dogmatic and unchanging, whereas a more compelling reading would see them as dynamic concepts, suggesting infinite growth, evolution, or fermentation (Phenix 1971; Alexander, 2001: 112).

6. Some portions of these sections are based on Alexander (2004a). That article was written for a specialized audience, however, and did not contain the philosophical framework drawn from Taylor, Buber and Walzer around which this article is organized.

7. Not all ethical theorists, of course, would accept Hume's logical critique or Moore's argument that goodness is not identical with any natural quality (Prior, 1949). Pragmatic, critical and post-modern theorists would all argue that facts and values are both socially determined, and so intimately intertwined with one another. Yet, despite these important admonitions to conceive the relations between Is and Ought as less dichotomous than Hume or Moore may have allowed,' many critics of this distinction nevertheless admit that a moral or political *telos* or, end-in-view, or horizon of significance can be distinguished from our efforts to describe the world in which we live or about which we theorize; see Bernstein (1983).

8. It could be argued that this assumes with the behaviorists that notions such as freedom and dignity are unscientific, ineffective and meaningless. According to behaviorism, human behavior is to be engineered, not educated, through a

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process that sidesteps the will altogether by determining outcomes in advance and controlling the environment in order to achieve them, whether or not students would choose these outcomes given the opportunity (see Skinner, 1971).

9. See my discussion of the difference between moral and amoral ideologies in the curriculum in connection with critical pedagogy below.

10. This appears to be the view taken by O'Neil (1981) in his *Educational Ideologies*, by Goodlad (1979) in his discussion of ideology in *Curriculum Inquiry* and by Eisner (2001: 47–86) in the third edition of *The Educational Imagination*.

11. Some philosophers have found it useful to make a rather rigid distinction between the terms 'morals' and 'ethics', reserving the former for the concern in modern philosophy since Kant with deontological or duty-related questions and the latter for the pre-modern and post-MacIntyre (1981) interest in virtues and values. While I agree with this point in principle, in everyday speech, especially among educators, the terms ethics and morality are used more or less interchangeably, and attempts to insist upon more restrictive uses of the terms lead more often to confusion than to increased clarity.

12. Some authors go so far as to refer to all 'normalizing' education as a form of violence, blurring substantial and important distinctions between the bullying tactics used by repressive rulers and what parents or teachers in particular traditions might do to encourage our traditionally oriented students to remain within the fold (Gur-Zeev, 2003: 1–24).

13. One might respond of course that intolerance of this kind is found among all ideological positions, certainly within many of the religious traditions our young traditionalists might choose to embrace. But the whole point here is that we can distinguish between ideological traditions, religious and otherwise, that embrace agency and those that undermine it. Radical curriculum theorists tend to undermine it. For a classic view of political education rooted in rational moral traditions rather than narrow political ideologies, see Oakeshott (1962).

14. To be sure, I do embrace a substantive ethical position, which I call liberal communitarianism (see Alexander, 2004b). This view undoubtedly influences my criticism not only of the radical curriculum, but also of the traditions represented by Tyler, Schwab and Eisner upon which I have commented above. However, Apple and other critical pedagogues can not fault me for this, since they hold that all views, mine as well as theirs, are influenced if not determined by ideological, cultural or class interests, and if my comments are but a mere reflection of my own arbitrary ideological orientation, their positions too must be counted as arbitrary and indefensible on other than narrow ideological grounds. My point, in all events, is not that the radical curriculum does not embrace my own brand of liberalism, but rather that without a conception of agency its critique of oppression falters as a *moral* critique and the liberation it promises turns out to be a gateway to new forms of subjugation. For a very balanced presentation of additional related issues see Burbules and Berk (1999).

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15. Elsewhere I have described two aspects of this expressive dimension of the curriculum. Miriam Ben Peretz and I have called one of these 'pedagogy of the sacred.' This refers to one of the ways in which we initiate students into the values and virtues we cherish most. Often our most fundamental desires are so embedded in our emotional and cultural beings, that it is difficult to be articulate about what makes them important to us. So we turn to non-discursive forms to express our feelings such as rituals, metaphors, stories, and symbols. Songs such as national anthems or public ceremonies such as sports rallies can sometimes serve these functions (Alexander and Ben Peretz, 2001). I have called a second aspect of this expression dimension 'pedagogy of difference', which suggests that we teach students to celebrate the ways in which they are different while respecting the differences of others (Alexander, 2005).

16. Although justice dictates making every effort to equalize inequalities that are consequences of social conditions such as vast inequity in the distribution of wealth, some inequalities cannot be balanced, such as native intelligences, proclivities, or talents of one kind or another. No matter what we do, not every student will be a great scientist, athlete or musician.

17. This conception of strong evaluation in the curriculum bears some resemblance to what Richard Paul has called critical thinking in the strong sense, see Paul (1990) and Paul and Elder (2000).

18. The joy that emerges from the admission of one's fallibility suggests that, with Aristotle, this is a eudaimonian not a perfectionist or utilitarian ethic; it recognizes the fragility of the human condition on the one hand and the satisfaction of learning from our mistakes on the other (Steutel and Carr, 1999: 12–16). To recognize and learn from error we must accept and grow from criticism, which is impossible in a perfect world or utopian society and which does not require calculating degrees of happiness, either on the part of the individual or as a social aggregate.

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