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Autonomy, Education, Virtue

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AUTONOMY, EDUCATION, VIRTUE

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The ways in which educators have tried to implement autonomy support have typically been constrained by their pedagogical interests and demands from above for certain threshold levels of performance. In our current educational system, this treats autonomy as a means to the end of measurement-based outcomes. The research on autonomy such as self-determination theory (SDT) often acknowledges the significance as a matter of background, but the actual ways teachers bring it into class is typically much more superficial than what might be possible with authentic cognitive autonomy support. Further, the innate status of the three needs put forth by SDT might imply we ought to facilitate their flourishing for their own sake, rather than for the sake of some measurement-based outcome. Rather than view autonomy supportive pedagogy as an instrumental means to an end, educators may benefit from considering autonomy supportive pedagogy as a form of pedagogical virtue which can be cultivated through practice.

Chapter One: Introduction

Problem statement:

Educators often struggle to support student autonomy in the classroom in genuine, meaningful ways. One way to address this issue might be to change the way educators think of autonomy supportive pedagogy; rather than considering autonomy support as a means to the end of improving engagement and motivation, educators may want to consider autonomy supportive pedagogy as a professional virtue to be developed through practice and reflection.

Significance of the Problem:

Research shows autonomy supportive classrooms foster motivation and engagement, but in practice teachers often only allow for shallow exercises of student autonomy in terms of choices that are pedagogically trivial, and instructors' focus on autonomy support tends to focus primarily on its use as a strategy employed to realize some intended outcomes, rather than valuing it as an end in and of itself—thus undermining both genuine autonomy development (for the students) and genuine autonomy support (for the instructors themselves). One way to mitigate this difficulty is to change the way educators view autonomy supportive pedagogy—not as a strategic method, but as a sort of virtue to be cultivated through practice and reflection. Although the vast majority of research materials addressing the connection between autonomy and educational outcomes tend to emphasize the instrumental (outcome-oriented) aspects of autonomy support, the underlying thought behind the theoretical articulations of autonomy support refer to a deeper, more genuine way of thinking of autonomy that extends beyond means and ends, and connects with something broadly and essentially human.

Although autonomy support is considered important for motivation and engagement, supporting students' "cognitive autonomy" is relatively neglected. Cognitive autonomy refers to

the choice of one's own goals, values, beliefs, commitments, communications, and so on; it can be an ethical and/or epistemological concept. It tends to elude educational practice, especially in its most significant forms, such as the standards to aim for, if any, or the form and content of the curriculum itself. Choices matter insomuch as they have consequences, otherwise they are trivial. Choices that increase motivation and engagement are good for pedagogical practice, but deep cognitive autonomy support requires its exercise on a deep level, by making substantial choices with primary and secondary effects.

Classrooms can foster or inhibit students' developing sense of autonomy, but educators often struggle to find ways to foster authentic exercises of deep autonomy while meeting pedagogical targets; outcome-based pressures from above such as curriculum, standards, and assessments. Additionally, there is an intuitive sense in which autonomy seems to run counter to any method intended to "lead" students in a certain direction, even if it is for their own benefit. Too much autonomy seems to imply chaos; too little seems almost authoritarian. For educators, this can seem to render autonomy support a difficult thing to implement in practice. Hence, while the value of autonomy support in the classroom is undeniable from the existing research, the ability (and the perceived ability) of educators to do so seems to undermine autonomy support being brought into classroom practices.

Purpose:

In this paper, I will show how autonomy has been discussed, specifically in terms of one of the main frameworks incorporating it, self-determination theory (SDT). By reflecting on the relative advantages and shortcomings of the theoretical framework of SDT, I hope to make a case for a more humanistic and authentic version of autonomy-supportive education. To do so, I will discuss the basics of SDT, and its basis in theories of motivation and engagement. I will also

cover some ways in which researchers have extended the scope of SDT to include more practical pedagogical concerns; these represent the ways in which educational research has sought to bridge the gap between theory and practice. While covering the basics of SDT and explaining some of the practical applications suggested by researchers along the way, I will also draw attention to some of the issues that prevent the theory from becoming fully realized in pedagogical practice. Ultimately I will suggest that SDT was grounded in a perfectionist view of autonomy that renders it more akin to a form of epistemic virtue than anything like a neat pedagogical decision procedure. Autonomy, like autonomy support, are more akin to dispositions or character traits than "things one does" or "things one learns." They are cultivated through practice, not learned through instruction.

Rationale:

SDT has been an invaluable framework for psychological, sociological, and pedagogical research since its initial development in the 1980's. Unfortunately, since that time its implicitly philosophical foundations have been obscured. I believe this is partly because of the emphasis on data-driven research in pedagogical studies--a tendency which tends to choke off the living roots of certain sorts of theories, SDT being, perhaps, the prime exemplar. Among the unintended consequences of the data-driven mindset so prevalent in fields like education and psychology, perhaps the most difficult is the way theories, for whatever reasons, sometimes tend to obscure their origins. As a result, there is a certain foundational sense that is often lacking in how teachers try to "make sense" out of certain frameworks and theories. I hope that the sense of difficulty in applying SDT and autonomy-supportive pedagogy in general can be at least somewhat ameliorated by way of a proper grounding in the perspective from which it originated. Even some of its proponents have trouble articulating why it is so difficult to bring the insights

gained from SDT to bear in practical teaching contexts. Reviewing a summary version of the theoretical framework of SDT, and discussing particular aspects of its relevance to educators today, I will suggest educators hesitance to embrace some of its implications has more to do with what they don't understand about it than what they do. I do not presume to grasp all of the SDT research, and I do not mean to suggest that I consider it a theory to be dismissed or neglected. On the contrary, I think bringing attention to its roots will help encourage educators to explore its implications for their own practical purposes. A theory that cannot be applied in the real world is, after all, only a tool of thought, and not a tool for action. While theories such as SDT are instrumentally useful for scaffolding educator practices, they are ultimately mere approximations of the basic character dispositions necessary for supporting student autonomy, which is more akin to a virtue on the part of the educator than a formal theory. What is required, as Paulo Freire might suggest, is both action and reflection.

Summary Statement:

One of the hallmark issues in education is motivation. A student may be clever without putting that capacity to good use; the development of a student's sense of autonomy helps them own their learning choices. The same framework that emphasizes assessments and measurements of progress may have an inherent tendency to undermine the sorts of practices that most authentically foster genuine autonomy amongst students. Autonomy ("self-rule") is a generally humanist value referring to the capacity to act according to choice, yet students' exercise of autonomy in school is often constrained to trivial choices without lasting or secondary effects. The current forces in pedagogical practice tend to emphasize the utility of autonomy, but not its significance or essential functions. Self-determination theory is the influential theory underlying much research into autonomy today. Autonomy is described as an innate need rather than a latent

capacity which can be neglected or can flourish. is grounded on autonomy a framework used to discuss autonomy support with implicit roots in a conceptualization of autonomy as one of three innate needs which distinguishes human beings from other sorts of beings. Autonomy requires both conscious experience and a sense of self, as its exercise is a dynamic function rather than a property. Although the concept of autonomy has real-world relevance, in educational discussions it is too often embraced solely for its utility as a means to the ends of motivation and engagement (and therefore, improved assessment performance). A more authentic conceptualization of autonomy is needed in order for educators to do justice to their students as autonomous human beings.

Self determination theory is a leading research framework for studying autonomy in the context of teaching practice. Feeling as though a student has control over their choices and actions seems correlated to the student valuing those choices and actions more highly. Autonomy is something improved by its effective exercise, and its effective exercise requires suitable conditions for its practice. According to researchers, autonomy is a meaningful concept in educational concepts because it helps students transition from being taught to being active, self-motivated learners. Autonomy's value in educational research seems most often connected by utilitarian considerations to motivation and engagement, yet the significance of autonomy as something distinctly human and self-referential is left out of the picture. Yet even SDT is rooted in this philosophical perfectionist style view of autonomy as an innate capacity. The pressures of the education system tend to preclude the most ideal functioning of student autonomy, as a sort of free exercise of epistemic agency--to learn and apply oneself to whatever pursuits beckon.

The research on autonomy supportive practices and motivational styles cannot provide a "step by step" process for supporting autonomy, because autonomy support, like autonomy, is a

(philosophically) perfectible skill--it can be cultivated to flourishing. Yet student choice and the scope of action for student autonomy is prevented from making substantial, consequential commitments with real-world effects. Autonomy in SDT is considered universal and innate; something like that almost seems to merit the status of a basic human right. If there is something that defines some significant aspect of our experience, it seems far from trivial, and requires a sort of respect. Because of SDT's grounding in certain basic assumptions about human nature (the three innate needs), SDT will always exhibit a tendency toward a virtue-theoretical conception of human action, and as a result, will always frustrate attempts to interpret its implications in terms of rule-consequentialism or theories meant to provide ready-made decision procedures that apply in all contexts and for all people. Interpretations of SDT that overlook the virtue-theoretical tendencies inherent in perfectionist thinking will always exhibit a tendency to create a theory-practice gap, because they are misconstruing what the theory is actually saying about practice. The researchers do not miss this; they often return to the refrain that the ways autonomy supportive educators practice teach is a sort of overall disposition, a form of pedagogical character developed through habituation or intentional cultivation. Like autonomy's exercise, autonomy's facilitation is a sort of perfectible, virtue-like activity. What is missing isn't theory, but the commitment to deeper forms of practice. Autonomy support is not a teaching strategy, but an ethical duty for educators.

Definition of Terms:

Autonomy - self-rule; a capacity to reflect on and change one's actions in light of preferences

Banking Education - a view of education that sees all educational activity like an exchange of goods, with the teacher the empowered broker of the exchange and the students in their debt

Cognitive Autonomy Support - has to do with learning and learning about learning (metacognition)

Competence - the development of the basic level of skills and background knowledge that enable a student to participate in learning

Decision Procedure – a well-defined process by which choices can be made, according to a set of relatively fixed or stable rules; related to the concept of inferentialism

Epistemology - the study of knowledge; what it means to know. Epistemic subjects are described as "knowers and inquirers"

Extrinsic Motivations - motivations for the sake of external things such as rewards, punishments, or other ends

Helper Problem – the apparent conflict in helping others help themselves; in an educational context, the apparent conflict in teaching students to teach themselves; in the context of this paper, the apparent conflict in teaching students to be autonomous (dictating choice to encourage choice, or controlling action to encourage free action)

Hermeneutics – interpretation; hermeneutical resources are those means by which a culture's set of meanings are constructed or interpretations developed

Inferentialism - the view that the significance of a given meaning relies primarily on the rules by which meaning is determined, rather than a relationship of representation between signifier and signified

Internalization - the process by which over time external motivators are gradually seen as having their origins within the subject

Integrated Regulation - the process by which one's behaviors and actions are regulated by thoroughly internalized motivations; this is the most extreme form of internalization

Intrinsic Motivations - motivations that emanate from oneself

Locus of Causality - where the cause of a given effect originates or is perceived to originate

Organizational Autonomy Support - allows student choices in such matters as group members for cooperative activities, evaluation procedures, due dates, classroom rules, and seating arrangements.

(Philosophical) Perfectionism - the theory that certain innate traits of human beings are to be developed or perfected through practice and engagement, particularly those traits which are unique or somehow essential to the way human beings operate in the world.

Problem Posing Education - the view of education that focuses on the practice of teaching and learning as a holistic joint effort of teachers and students engaged in meaningful, student-guided enquiry; contrasts with banking education

Procedural Autonomy Support - having to do with the form of lessons and presentations--how instruction and evaluation is to be structured or presented.

Relatedness - a sense that one is more or less "at home" in one's social world; that one is secure in one's social relationships and can be oneself without fear or danger.

Self Determination Theory - the theory that engagement and motivation are a result of the fulfillment of three innate need (relatedness, competence, autonomy)

Virtue - a tendency which can and should be developed for the sake of having proper character to make right choices; virtue theory sidesteps the issues incumbent on systems requiring decision procedures; rather than provide a set of well-defined rules, virtue theory holds that, for the most part, the cultivation of the proper character will lead to proper action.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Self Determination Theory

The question of how to motivate students has probably been around as long as education itself--and perhaps longer. Actions have often been considered as falling into one of two general types according to the source of their impetus: actions may be either extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. This refers to the "locus of causality"--the origin of the impulse to act in a certain way. Extrinsic motivations refer to motives as means to other ends--for instance, motivation to earn a certain grade due to a promised reward, or in order to attain something else desirable that is not directly related to the task at hand. Extrinsic motivations may take the form of striving for reward, or alternatively an aversion to punishment. For instance, studying out of the desire to earn good grades and secure a good paying position later on in one's professional career is an extrinsic motivation. But so too are studying to avoid being grounded for earning poor grades, or studying to avoid being held back a year and embarrassed before one's peers. Because the motivation originates "outside" of the students themselves, they are extrinsic. Teachers who attempt to use extrinsic motivation may offer praise or reward for satisfactory performance, perhaps while even offering criticism or punishment for unsatisfactory performance.

Intrinsic motivations are those that are undertaken for their own sake, and do not refer to anything else beyond themselves. They may be valued as, and taken on, as ends unto themselves. Or, to put it in less lofty terms, they may simply be things students will feel the motivation to do because "they want to." They are actions taken not for their effects, but for their own sake-- perhaps the activity is something the student enjoys, or that the student wants to do for any reasons which does not "point elsewhere" as it were. If the motive comes from "inside" the person (if it is "internal"), it is an intrinsic motivation. Studying for the sake of satisfying one's

own desire to know, to want to learn for curiosity's sake, is studying for the sake of intrinsic motivations. The desire to know, or the desire to satisfy one's curiosity, are both "internal" to the person. They do not refer to an external cause, but instead only refer to what may be thought of as internal states of the person. The key point to remember about intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is that intrinsic motivations are internal, and extrinsic motivations are external.

However, in self-determination theory (SDT)**,** it is suggested that perhaps the intrinsic-extrinsic division is an oversimplification. People do, after all, develop new inclinations toward certain seemingly intrinsic motivations, presumably through the influence of other people and their social environment. This suggests that some intrinsic motivations are not always entirely innate, and some extrinsic motivations are not always perpetually referring to something "external" to the action itself and the person performing it.

SDT suggests that the intrinsic-extrinsic divide misses a crucial observation about motivations: that motivations are not innate and unchanging throughout one's life, but often seem to be adapted from one's experiences and circumstances in the social environment. People may sometimes seem to "internalize" ways of thinking and acting that they encounter "out there" in the world, and those ways of thinking and acting may regulate their future behaviors and preferences. In other words, people can pick up on motivations that are external and non-intrinsic, and they may gradually come to internalize the ways of thinking and acting that engender a quasi-internal sort of motivation derived from external sources. "Internalization" refers to the process whereby extrinsic motivations can be "taken in" and identified with as "one's own" so that a student can gradually come to have what seem to be very nearly intrinsic sorts of motivations for actions or behaviors that were initially purely extrinsic.

The sense of a motivation's "external" origin can be undermined by the continuous identification of the self with the motive, so that thinking in terms of doing what one has to do X may gradually be replaced by thinking of oneself as the sort of person who *just does* X, and thinking of X as the sort of action that the person that I am does. If motivations are what cause "selves" to choose some actions over others, then identifying "oneself" with "one's actions" may be inevitable. Associating new conceptions of oneself then may lead to new conceptions of what actions that self might take. Associating new conceptions of certain sorts of actions may lead to a shift in self-perception. In SDT, motivations that have become identified with oneself to some degree are considered "internalized." Even if their locus of causality is exterior to the self, there is an internal reference point which does give some sort of "internalized" motivation, though it may not be purely and absolutely "internal" in the same sense as a "strictly intrinsic" motivation.

Internalized motivations can vary in kind and degree. The "most" internalized motivations will be those that have become thoroughly mixed in with one's self-concept. People can begin undertaking certain actions because they "must" and only gradually begin to associate the action with "who they are." Over time, the constant correlation of "this self" and "that action" may influence how one conceives of both self and action. This change in how the relation between "self" and "action" is conceived can lead to changes in how one perceives both terms of the relation (self-action), and hence can change one's sense of the locus of causality for that motivation. Specifically, there may be a shift in one's sense of where the impetus for some action primarily resides. The origin of one's motive may be extrinsic, but it may eventually come to be so internalized and so thoroughly associated with one's sense of oneself that a person might simply come to see themselves as "a person who does X," or alternatively, to see X as "that which a person such as myself does." The most thoroughly internalized motivations will be those

which are perhaps so ingrained in one's self-concept that it becomes virtually inseparable from it. At this point, according to SDT, such internalized motivations can be described as "integrated regulation;" they are motivations which regulate one's actions, and they are so integrated into one's sense of self that they seem practically integral to it. This is how people can change according to the influence of their life experience and social environment. As they integrate new experiences and ways of thinking about themselves and their world, the way they "feel" motivation changes, as does the way they "see" who they are.

In fact, according to the founding researchers behind SDT, Deci and Ryan (2015) the psychological mechanisms by which they are internalized are held to be both innate and universal. SDT holds that in order for students to be intrinsically motivated learners, they need three basic psychological needs to be met by their environment. These three needs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (p.486). Although they are distinguished in SDT, they are all equally considered innate, and hence are the sorts of things we'd consider more like capacities capable of being maximally realized or neglected. First, students need a sense of competence. "Competence" refers to the development of the basic level of skills and background knowledge that enable a student to participate in learning. Loosely speaking, if a student does not even have a foothold in the material, it is going to be hard to engage in learning.

A baseline level of competence provides that foothold. We might say that competence refers to having sufficient epistemic resources at one's disposal to access the background knowledge needed to engage in learning. "Relatedness" refers to a sense that one is more or less "at home" in one's social world; that one is secure in one's social relationships and can be oneself without fear or danger. In that sense, "relatedness" seems to entail a sort of self-recognition as a social member of the community in which one finds oneself. Taken together,

competence and relatedness seem to refer to one feeling both capable of, and welcome to, participation in some sphere of the social world. We might pause to consider why relatedness and competence matter for "motivation." After all, might a person be motivated by the perception of one's own ignorance to try to learn? And might a person who feels "other" in their social world seek ways to engage with and enter into it? Of course, these are possibilities. But then one is not talking about motivation for participation, but preliminary motivation to feeling able to participate. These become waypoints on the road to a developed sense of self-determination, rather than the endpoint.

Finally, autonomy is the third need that students need met by a given learning environment in order to become intrinsically motivated through internalization of extrinsic stimulus. Autonomy is an important concept in education at multiple levels. For example, as pointed out by Wermke and Salokangas (2015), one can speak of autonomy in terms of school autonomy, teacher autonomy, or learner autonomy. The degree to which a school, teacher, or learner is self-governing or autonomous remains largely dependent on the context in which it is situated and, perhaps more importantly, the perceptions of that context (p.1). Autonomy seems to always be defined relative to its limits, even when those limits are self-imposed. But what is autonomy, and why does it matter for learning? The following passage explains autonomy, in slightly technical-sounding parlance, as follows:

> Autonomy is conceived as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth, and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values. By exercising such a capacity, persons define their nature, give meaning and coherence to their lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person they are. (Dworkin, 1988, p.20).

There is something important to the sorts of choices indicated above. A capacity that functions in ways that touch the core of the sense of self seems worthy of respect and its due scope of action, given suitable levels of development. After a period of basic educational training, students could be introduced to greater degrees of autonomous exercise in class, up to and including curriculum matters at the higher levels. We can see from the above why autonomy is connected to the idea of "self-determination," as it seems to imply that part of our nature is to engage in intentional activities leading to substantial (non-trivial) choices that lead to divergent branches of alternative options which were not available prior to the decisive action that precede them.

In the context of intrinsic motivation, what does autonomy mean? Although its origins lay in thinking about intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, SDT actually subtly shifts the distinction in a more psychological direction than simply saying a motivation comes from "inside" or "outside." Similar to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Ryan and Deci (2015) distinguish between autonomous and controlled motivation. This cleans up the messy questions that can arise when we consider issues such as how internal motivations that were internalized can really be free, for instance. After all, if one is led to internalize a motivation through the actions of an external source, then it doesn't seem as though that motivation started out as internal after all--and so consequently not much would count as truly intrinsically motivated. By instead using the terms autonomous versus controlled motivation, we can see how internalizing an external motivation can still count as autonomous without having to go to great lengths to qualify every instance of it happening. One can internalize motivations and become intrinsically (autonomously) motivated, even when those motivations were initially spurred externally through extrinsic factors (control from the outside, so to speak). But one

cannot be autonomously motivated in a "controlled manner" if that control is external--and most especially if the locus of that control is not only external to me, but resides with another person, who thereby has "control" over me in a significant sense. This sense of being controlled from the outside is absent in integrated regulation, because integrated regulation is by definition (learned) self-regulation (p.487-488). Control, on the other hand, is regulation of the self by another.

There is something fundamentally different about having one's actions and motivations controlled by another *person* versus being controlled by non-agential aspects of one's environment. Even unintentional forms of pressure or constraint that may be thought of as emergent from collective social activity in general do not evoke the sense of violation (and subsequent desire for resistance) brought about by forms of intentional agential "control." Perhaps if we cannot exclusively be the products of our own individual wills, we may be amenable to some measure of our freedoms being curtailed by circumstance and facticity. But generally, we will not so readily abide outright control of ourselves if it is actually thought to be in the hands of other people. We can exercise our internal sense of autonomous agency as it is always already situated within a broader social context imperfect external conditions. But conditions of external control that are traceable to other agents fundamentally call into question the legitimacy of either that control, or else they place in doubt our sense of our own autonomous agency. The essential point here is that the degree to which external agent-based control undermines individual autonomy will be coextensive with the degree to which the controlling agent's social power is enhanced. As Deci and Ryan (1985) point out, external agential control can fundamentally undermine autonomy, both in terms of eroding our awareness of it and in terms of reducing its efficacy. Integrated regulation, however, allows for the autonomy-preserving internalization of, and identification with, certain forms of self-regulation whose

extrinsic origin does not preclude our fostering an internal locus of causality corresponding to what had previously been understood as an extrinsic motivation without any inherent contradiction (p.149).

Although early motivational research conceived of motivations as fundamentally distinguished by their locus of causality, and hence into intrinsic or extrinsic motivations, researchers such as Deci and Ryan (1971) investigating this idea also found evidence that the provision of extrinsic rewards had a negative impact on intrinsically motivated activities, and later studies confirmed this finding (p.105-115). Deci and Ryan (2000) later found that "all expected tangible rewards made contingent on task performance...reliably undermine intrinsic motivation" (p.70). One wonders whether this has to do with the sense that one is being controlled rather than being enabled to act autonomously. Although extrinsic rewards were sometimes inhibitive of intrinsically motivated behavior, researchers also discovered that positive feedback had a positive impact on intrinsic motivation, as did such factors as the provision of a range of choices salient to the activity, supportive verbal expressions that validated participants' perspectives and outlooks, and so on. Therefore, not only does the perceived locus of control and of causality impact the effect of a given motivational situation, but so do the specific types of reinforcement brought to bear on a given motivation, the corresponding action with which it is associated, or the conceptualization of "self" that accompanies the manifold. Certain forms of positive reinforcement can be beneficial while others may be harmful. Though the potential for some forms of reward to undermine intrinsic motivation might seem surprising, the correlation between negative reinforcements (punishments, penalties, censure, criticism, etc) and decreased intrinsic motivation is what people would presumably have expected to see.

As Deci and Ryan (2015) point out, when extrinsic factors determine a behavior, people tend to feel less autonomous in their actions (p. 487). The sense of control is external to themselves, and this undermines the sense of autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 70). On the other hand, offering people the opportunity for choice and recognizing the legitimacy of their perspectives on the choices they make and the actions they take tends to reinforce autonomy, giving people a greater sense of ownership over their actions. More ownership over one's actions allows one to see more of "oneself" reflecting in one's intentional activity in the world, deepening the sense of autonomy and the sense of effective agency in general.

Yet people do not go through their entire lives with the same set of intrinsic motivations-- instead, behaviors that were extrinsically motivated can become intrinsically motivated through "internalization." When individuals sense the shared values of their communities prioritize certain behaviors over others, they tend to "internalize" those values to the same extent to which they relate to that community. There is a social dynamic to motivation--the need for relatedness allows autonomous individuals to take on new intrinsic motivations via external influence; this is the process of internalization. The optimal form of internalization is when this internalized motivation is fully integrated into one's sense of self. At that point, we can say that the motivation, though originally extrinsically motivated, was internalized and integrated to such an extent that it can now be considered an intrinsic motivation.

Since intrinsic motivations are autonomously taken up as ends worthy of pursuit for their own sake, such an an end-in-itself is something one chooses to do freely, without reference to anything outside of the self. Our motivations are partly grounded in the social world, and that context can be utilized to change behaviors, as well as how people feel about those behaviors. This is not an all-or-nothing process, however. When they are fully internalized, they are said to

be "integrated" into one's sense of self, although many behaviors remain straddling the gap between internal and external motivation. Often, those partially integrated motivations come with the same negative associations as other forms of external control such as threats of punishment, deadlines, and so on. (Deci and Ryan, 2015, p. 487-488). External motivations that are sufficiently internalized and integrated so that one considers them as emanating from one's own choices in light of the sense of self are referred to as "integrated regulation." This is when the individual's autonomous nature allows them to voluntarily associate their choice with the preferred behavior, even if it originated outside of themselves. This autonomous-controlling distinction is more informative in educational contexts, because it takes us beyond the simplistic view of motivations being "internal or external" and instead allows for some movement between realms.

Greater autonomous motivation tends to be associated with better performance, a greater sense of well-being, and a sense that one belongs within one's social world. When a person is in an environment that supports their development of competence, their sense of making their own choices, and their sense that they are a full member of their social world, that then people are generally more motivated, tend to flourish, and tend to reap the benefits of a general sense of real well-being. Intrinsic motivations may be innate, but the impact of aspects of one's environment can alter the degree to which those innate motivations are realized and built upon. Where intrinsically motivated behaviors are properly encouraged, individuals find a greater sense of belonging and purpose, which can in turn help them relate to others and internalize the values of their communities (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p.71-73).

The greater the sense of autonomy in a given context of behavior, the greater the degree that behavior is likely to be intrinsically motivated, or internalized. Deci and Ryan (2000) that,

by internalizing and integrating shared values, one becomes more fully a member of one's social world, and as such one becomes less alienated and more engaged with it. In light of these observations, it seems clear that by providing a learning environment supportive of the three basic needs set forth in SDT, educators can help give students the best chance to build on their intrinsic motivations. An environment in which these needs are met allows individuals to more fully integrate into their community, as well as integrating collective values into their sense of self (p.74). SDT is not only relevant to education, however. Many have suggested that the same framework informs research in psychology, organizational management, and even international development projects (Ellerman, 2004, pp. 3-5). And in each of these contexts, there remains a complication: what Ellerman (2004) described as "the helping conundrum," (pp. 5-9)

The Helper Problem

In international development assistance circles, the question of how to help developing nations "help themselves" has been a contentious issue. Ellerman describes the issue as one occurring between what he describes as "the helpers" and "the doers." When help comes in the form of giving answers rather than giving ownership over the process of discovering and formulating those answers, it amounts to "unhelpful help." Ellerman identifies two forms of unhelpful help that undermine autonomous learning in development projects: socially engineered help and benevolent help (Ellerman, 2004, pp 5-9)

Socially engineered help is outcome-driven; as a consequence of the emphasis on tangible results that can be quantified and assessed, this form of help tends to lead to helpers having ownership of the process. Since the idea of autonomy requires the "doers" to have a sense of ownership of the process by which decisions are made, the fact that helpers are continuously intervening to steer the process toward producing results tends to undermine autonomy. When

the facilitation of student autonomy is leveraged as a means to an end not of the student's choosing, no matter its efficacy it is a spoiled measurement of success for the human being manipulated in this way. Autonomy isn't a foothold for educators, but a basic feature of human beings that is inherently deserving of respect and dignity. If the doers lack ownership of the process in their education, they aren't really "doers" in the fullest sense after all. Nor are the helpers truly "helping" except in terms of producing the results they are expected to produce. This is a bit like teachers "teaching to the test." They aren't giving the students the skills and knowledge that the test is intended to measure, but instead simply giving them the skills and knowledge necessary to produce a satisfactory performance on an assessment. The instrument affects the measurement, if only by determining it.

Schools want children to be intrinsically motivated in school, but the justification is so often misplaced as though it were due to its efficacy that autonomy should be valued, rather than autonomy being an innate and distinct human capacity tied up with notions of freedom, dignity, value, and the like.. Wherever in pedagogical practice autonomy support ceases paying dividends, it seems it is simply dropped. This is not treatment suitable for such an innate and essential capacity that cuts close to the heart of what it is to be a human being, to have plans and a sense of dynamic intentionality to strive for various things in the course of one's life. In schools, students are plied with all sorts of extrinsic motivations running the gamut from grades to reprimands to accolades to trophies and so on. The teachers know they are also judged at least in part on the basis of the performances of their students, and so they are pressured to conform to a certain overall curriculum. The pressure from the top tends to preclude radical alternatives to the standard type of curriculum. Elevating the measurement-based outcome, even unintentionally, as the "end" by which we verify success for a grade level or instructional unit,

may significantly limit the opportunities for unanticipated exploration and discovery, even when it is student-generated, student-centered, and student-driven.

It seems to become an issue because in an environment grounded in global competition the educators (or helpers) are held responsible for the outcomes generated by the students (the doers):

> Organizational ownership undermines and crowds out client ownership...this Tendler effect [named for Judith Tendler, who originally wrote about it in 1975] shows how the organizational imperative to 'take responsibility' for the 'product' crowds out the ownership of the clients and leads to passivity and dependency. (Ellerman, 2004, p.7).

The passage from Judith Tendler (1975) to which he's referring of the issue runs as follows:

> The more that donor organizations are able to impose order on the outside decision-making that affects their product, the better they can perform their task. In so doing, however, they bring dependency to those whose decision-making has been so ordered. Seen in this light, dependency is the result not necessarily of design but of an organization's attempts to do well. (p. 109)

When teacher performance is grounded in the production of a certain artifact to be evaluated by a third party—the results of a standardized assessment, for instance—there is often an accompanying tendency for the process to focus on that production (rather than the product) as the ultimate aim. But as Ellerman suggests, while this proxy goal may be intended to measure the kind of authentic learning students ought to have achieved, the emphasis on performing at a certain level tends to encourage teachers (and their administrators) to focus on this proxy rather than the thing it stands in as a proxy for (Ellerman, 2004, p 6). This form of help undermines autonomy and amounts to a short term fix to produce results, without providing learners with the

means to replicate the process themselves--let alone apply it in new contexts. And if you only know something under very narrow conditions--after a semester of study, with copious review and test prep, with multiple choice answers or pre-determined essay topics--under such narrow conditions, does it qualify as real "knowing" at all? What is learning in this case, if not mere performance?

A second form of unhelpful help Ellerman identifies is "benevolent help," which he describes as "giving out the answers." In this form of unhelpful help, students are seen to be powerless and incapable of generating their own forms of "beneficial self-activity" and would have to be guided along by their benefactors This is a form of help in which the helpers see those in need as infantile, incapable, and in need of the aid of their social and intellectual superiors to achieve anything at all. In this view, they don't know "what's good for them" nor would they be able to figure out how to achieve it even if they did (Ellerman, 2004, p. 9). The two forms of unhelpful help have more to do with the helpers than those they intend to aid, and this is telling as to the source of the problem. For help to count as genuine, it needs to be a mutual effort sustained between both the helpers and doers--or rather, situation where "helper" and "doer" becomes a less and less defined distinction, owing to the cooperative nature of authentic help.

Helpers and Bankers

Taken together, both problematic forms of help described by Ellerman bear a notable similarity to essential aspects of "the banking concept" of traditional education, as it was described by Paulo Freire (1970, pp. 71-80). Paulo Freire's influential text, first published in Portuguese in 1970, suggests a shift in the way we consider the venture of education. Rather than viewing schooling as a top-down hierarchical enterprise (with teachers occupying a privileged position of expertise relative to their students, who occupy a subordinate position), we should

consider education in light of its aim. For Freire, the aim of education is the empowerment of the disempowered.

The "banking concept" embodies a "narrative" form of education, in which the teacher narrates to the students (Freire, 1970, p. 71-74). We should consider what this means. A narrative is a story; a speaker delivers an account that follows a certain path and leads to a seemingly inexorable conclusion. The listeners take it in; if they understand, they can explain what it means. But in the context of the banking concept of education, this meaning is limited to the intent of the speaker—if the student comes away with a divergent understanding, this is taken as a mistake. This is a very formalist view of storytelling, but this formalism is inherent in the view of teaching which is today as prevalent as it was in Freire's day (albeit more subtly now than it was then). In the sense of being a formalistically conceived narrative, the communication is reduced to a one-way communique (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

The difference between a narrative in which an active speaker delivers an account (replete with preordained significance imposed by the narrator) and a dialogue is simple: one must not speak back to the narrator. The narrator narrates; the listeners listen. The power appears to be granted entirely to the narrative side--any interruption is talking out of turn; any alternative interpretations are misunderstandings to be corrected by the narrator. In the end, the measure of a listener's understanding is the extent to which their idea of the narrative conforms to the understanding intended by the speaker. Not only does the speaker determine the understanding to be deemed adequate, but the speaker is also assumed to have preemptively "ruled out" alternatives (even though aside from assuming as much, no real work is typically required on this front). In narrative instruction, there is a right way and a wrong way--in fact a multitude of "wrong ways." Anything falling outside of the bounds of the preconceived "right way" becomes

de facto "wrong." This reduces the human activity of sharing stories to narrative instruction, and makes real communication as dialogue secondary to the primacy of lecture.

This is characteristic of an asymmetrical power relation in the process of inquiry--one party is in possession of true knowledge or understanding, and all fledgling newcomers are incapable of coming to knowledge or understanding in any other way than that which the narrator has foreseen and planned for. Other routes to knowing are barred; "the one true path lay before you, so come along." In this sense, the narrative characteristics of such forms of instruction reduce inquiry to a lower form of intellectual activity, from active engagement to attain understanding to a passive reception of an understanding that was built for efficiency in the epistemic economy. It is about a transaction or an exchange of information, but only in one direction. The teacher only requires the students to internalize the knowledge being handed over to them, and to reproduce it at a given time under the determinate conditions of an assessment or evaluation. How faithfully they adhere to the teacher's intended meaning is the only measure of learning entertained in this view. Freire (1972) has this to say about the banking concept of education:

> It turns [students] into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are....Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor...This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the

lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge…For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful, inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other...In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as a process of inquiry. (p. 72)

The asymmetrical nature of this relationship is clear at once: before, we conceived of the teacher as the narrator who tells the story while the students take it in. This shift from storytelling to banking emphasizes the fundamentally economic nature of the exchange--not in terms of an economy of capital, but in terms of an economy of information, of thought. And in this economy of thought, one side is given all of the currency, while the other sits patiently awaiting a little charity from above. This places students in a position where no knowledge or understanding is conceivable without the intervention and guidance of the instructor, and ensures a sort of dependence on being led by authority to truth. The correlation of authority to truth will come up again, so it's best to bear it in mind. For now, it may suffice to observe that the feature is clearly there, whatever its implications.

In Freire's (1970) view, this concept describes education as a process whereby educators actively transmit knowledge to passive students, who will eventually provide an inventory of goods in the form of an assessment performance (p. 76). This view conceives of students as the powerless recipients of knowledge which is transmitted to them by their instructors. The essential point about the banking concept of education is that it is geared toward attaining a

certain measurement under certain conditions, and not at producing genuine and effective autonomy. In the traditional banking concept of education, the emphasis is on the performance, not the performers; or rather the focus is on the object of the exchange, rather than the parties to it. Because of this, it depicts the teachers as benevolent depositors of knowledge and ability, which are to be gratefully taken in by the helpless recipients of charity. It is interesting to note that Freire's (1970) concerns arose in the context of teaching literacy to impoverished peasants in his native Brazil, which had experienced centuries of political turmoil due to rampant colonialism (pp.1-9). The fact that these same concerns are faced by educators and those involved in international development is only further affirmation that Freire was right in his criticisms of traditional educational thinking, and how it connects to oppression and dehumanization on a broad scale.

Deci and Ryan had suggested autonomy was an important aspect of a highly effective classroom environment because it helps students build on intrinsic motivations while internalizing and integrating the motivations shared by others in their immediate environment. Ellerman and Freire had suggested that autonomy is important beyond its practical effects, and instead is of fundamental importance to the value of (and perhaps even the coherence of) education itself. Depending on how one thinks of "autonomy," both perspectives seems right, and perhaps this is because the understanding of autonomy can be taken in a more or less expansive context. Ryan and Deci have a strategically narrow view of it, whereas Freire and Ellerman, thinking more globally, have a broader conceptualization of autonomy. Freire, a crucial figure in the development of critical pedagogy, and Ellerman, a proponent of international development, come from two camps whose agreement here should be as striking as it is rare. What unites them and distinguishes them from the educational theorists we have

focused on in discussing SDT and its corollaries, is their broader and more humanistic conceptualization of autonomy.

Autonomy Supportive Pedagogy

The question of how to support student autonomy in the classroom is one most ELA teachers will have to face at some point. Teachers can retain more or less control over the learning environment, including the tasks students are asked to take on. But what does autonomy-supportive teaching look like, and under what conditions is it most beneficial for students? First, we should note that, as some researchers have observed, "learning itself has an autonomous nature," (Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCinto, and Turner, 2004, p. 98.) The conditions that foster authentic learning and the conditions that foster authentic autonomy may therefore share some significant overlap. Indeed, we have seen as much so far in our discussion of forms of motivation and SDT. In fact, this overlap may have more to do with learning's inherently autonomous nature than with autonomy being one component amongst others in an effective learning environment. Although educators know autonomy is important in the ELA classroom, there is often difficulty figuring out how to incorporate it. Stefanou et al. have said as much, and present some suggestions for thinking about incorporating autonomy into classroom practice.

First, they distinguish between autonomy supportive environments and controlling environments. These would correspond with the "authoritarian" versus "democratic" modes of instruction. In the authoritarian mode, the teacher assumes the role of established leader, and all choices are deferred to the instructor. They set the agenda, dictate the rules, inform the students of what is to be learned and how, and execute that plan according to their understanding of what will get the class from where they are to where they need to be. In a democratic style of instruction, the teacher doesn't presume to know where the students are coming from, but instead

makes that a focus of inquiry. The teacher's instruction is informed by their ever-evolving understanding of their students, and the route taken throughout an instructional unit has more to do with the students than the instructors' predetermined understanding of the material and their assumptions about where the students "ought to" be. The authoritarian classroom is one led by the instructor where the students follow along. The democratic classroom is one co-led by students and instructor so that everyone has a stake in the outcome and the process by which that outcome is attained. It should be obvious from these remarks that authoritarian classrooms are stifling of autonomy. But teachers rarely fall entirely into one side or the other. Instead, those styles represent extremes along a continuum, with teachers generally occupying different points at different times.

The distinction is more helpful when considered as a matter of degree--how much control to retain or relinquish to students, and under what conditions? Although many teachers offer students opportunities to develop their sense of autonomy, too often those opportunities are limited to making superficial choices (Stefanou, et al., 2004, p. 100). The trouble is similar to that mentioned in the previous comments on the continuities between autonomy in education and international development projects:

> We offered students choices over only instructionally irrelevant aspects of the learning activity…[we did not want to run] the risk that students might make pedagogically poor choices if allowed to determine instructionally crucial aspects of the activity. (Cordova and Lepper, 1996, p. 716.)

The quote above perhaps perfectly captures the issue at the heart of incorporating autonomy into the classroom. This is especially true of forms of autonomy support that emphasize a more egalitarian (less teacher-centric) economy of curricular control. The most fully

autonomous learning is that which is student-centered and student-driven. While such egalitarian forms of autonomy supportive education are therefore self-directed and intrinsically motivated by definition, they face a corresponding issue in that they are also the least subject to instructional authority. Teachers have to strike a balance between students autonomy and instructor authority, to ensure that students don't get less of an education under their own autonomous control than they would had an instructor dictated it all for them. An authoritarian classroom tends to look like that characterized by Freire's banking concept, or like the kind of controlling environment invoked in making the conceptual distinction between autonomous versus controlled motivation discussions of SDT. Indeed, just as Stefanou et al noted from the outset that learning bears a resemblance to autonomy, we might say that teaching has a corresponding authoritarian nature. The compromise requires both sides to find an appropriate place to meet in a constantly shifting middle. How much choice is the right amount? How much is too little or too much? What are the relevant conditions under which such determinations can be made? Obviously, "choice" seems an insufficient characterization to tease out the distinctions. Surely "choice" means different things in different contexts. What contextual distinctions will help make sense of the appropriate degrees of choice to make available for students?

Stefanou (2004) describes three forms of autonomy support, which they developed from observations of instructional practices and through interviews with educators and students. The three general forms of autonomy support identified in their research were organizational, procedural, and cognitive choice. Organizational autonomy support allows student choices in such matters as group members for cooperative activities, evaluation procedures, due dates, classroom rules, and seating arrangements (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 101). A superficial version of organizational autonomy support might be having students sign a pledge to respect classroom

rules. A more authentic version of organizational autonomy support might have the students come together to form their own rules and reach a consensus on how their classroom is to be governed. Again, we can note the obvious tension that is bound to arise when student rule-making fails to meet the expectations of their instructor--how much authority can an instructor relinquish so that students have a sense of "ownership" over classroom rules?

Procedural autonomy support has more to do with the form of lessons and presentations--how instruction and evaluation is to be structured or presented. This has to do with choices regarding the materials used in projects, what kinds of demonstration of competence to allow for, how to meet the wants of students, and the handling of materials in class. An authentic version of procedural autonomy support might allow students to design their own final assessment, while a shallow version of procedural autonomy support might consist of asking for a volunteer to pass around handouts. The difference here is, again, fairly severe. Allowing students to take complete control of classroom procedures may prove impossible, but a teacher retaining full authority in these matters may risk alienating students from their own activities (Stefanou et al., 2004, pp. 98-101).

Finally, cognitive autonomy support has to do with learning and learning *about* learning (metacognition). This is the branch of autonomy support that enables the highest level of flourishing in terms of a well-adapted autonomous intentionality. This is the kind of support that grants students access to significant enough choices that most teachers shy from attempting to provide it. Yet cognitive autonomy support needn't be entirely unstructured to succeed in some measure--practice with some security measures before climbing without a net. In cognitive autonomy support, students have choices in terms of things like how to approach a topic, finding and sharing multiple solutions and strategies, justifying their claims to others, taking adequate

time to reach their own understanding, being given the proper balance of independence and scaffolding, reviewing their work for mistakes and rethinking their work after identifying errors, working with peer and instructor feedback, coming up with goals and activities salient to their own perspectives and interests, participating in debate, being free to speak and be heard, and being able to ask whatever questions strike them as worth asking. A shallow version of cognitive autonomy support might have something to do with picking one of a handful of pre-selected options: a student can learn about a topic by reading one of three articles, for instance, or by being allowed to ask questions but only if the instructor determines they are sufficiently "on-topic", or being given a set of goals to choose from rather than developing their own. A more authentic version of cognitive autonomy support would require collaboration between the teacher and students, and presumably also between the students themselves (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 101).

While each of these autonomy supportive approaches have their merits, the most crucial of the trio (according to the researchers) is cognitive autonomy support, because without it, the other two are bound to be more shallow than they would be in a more cognitive autonomy supportive classroom. According to Stefanou et al. (2004), in cognitive autonomy support, students "become initiators of their own academic pursuits" (p. 102). Cognitive autonomy enriches the depth and breadth of the other forms of autonomy support by enabling students to make personal connections to the material and to the learning that arises through their engaging with the material. It also embraces all the basic aspects of being in a learning community, which means that any other forms of autonomy support will be occurring in a more autonomous environment overall. The important distinction here is between autonomously chosen action and autonomously chosen goals; a forced choice between constrained options has less utility in

realizing autonomy than a free choice in selecting the ends one intends to pursue, whatever the means.

By having a stake in the ends, the means themselves gain significance. This enables students to identify their learning activities as fundamentally theirs in a critical respect that simply isn't possible when cognitive autonomy support is lacking. But it is not enough to simply sell students on the goals of their learning. The most cognitive autonomy supporting classroom will enable students to explore ideas and see for themselves how those ideas connect to their own goals. They have to become less like tourists and more like explorers in a cognitive autonomy supportive environment. Seeing the value of learning for its own sake and connecting that value with their own enrichment is how cognitive autonomy support enables students to flourish in their own ways. Cognitive autonomy support fosters "ownership and justification of ideas, the construction of meaning, and the intentional self-reliance used in critical thinking" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p.109). As Stefanou (2004) writes:

> [When students see] the meaningfulness of the topic under study in its own right...students can be said to be engaging in learning for learning's sake, wen their drive is simply to understand and not necessarily to need a personally relevant reason for understanding...the distinction being made here is that one might see this as the difference between intrinsic motivation and integrated regulation, the most self-determined form of extrinsic motivation. (p.102)

Johnmarshall Reeve (2006) suggested a correlation between the extent of autonomy support exhibited in teachers' motivational styles and the quality of the student teacher relationship. Specific "motivational styles" of teachers are better or worse for certain sorts of learning and in different contexts for difference students. But some generalizations are

warranted, such as the value of developing and acting in accordance with an autonomy supportive motivational style. The student-teacher relationship may be cooperative or conflicted depending on motivational style and interpersonal rapport. Relationships with students that are more in synch and supportive inspire self-confidence and the security to take more stake in one's learning behaviors and how one engages in class. An autonomy supportive motivational style improves engagement and motivation, while a controlling interpersonal style fundermines them both (pp. 226-228). According to SDT when students' needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are nourished, their engagement improves. Autonomy supportive environments, to be autonomy supportive, also have to be competence and relatedness supportive. In fact, all three innate needs are typically satisfied by the same sorts of basic conditions that characterize a sort of "democratic educational" style. Students need to know they are sufficiently able, welcome, and free to engage in the learning process in order to know they have a stake in it, and to claim it.

What goes on in the classroom can aid or impede the fulfillment of those three innate needs: an environment in which all three are fostered can foster growth and lead to student flourishing. To promote motivation and engagement, educators ought to provide motivation and supports that foster an environment in which students' senses of autonomy, relatedness, and competence can continue to develop. But autonomy has a particularly important role to play in the process, because the sense of one's own agency is significant in terms of enabling the cultivation of other two functions, relatedness and competence.

What Reeve (2006) points out as the dialectic nature of SDT has to do with the process by which students' participation in various learning activities help shape their sense of fulfillment of the three innate needs (pp. 226-227). And their sense of being fulfilled or thwarted today influences their engagement and motivation tomorrow (and tomorrow partially determines

the next day, and that day the next, and so on). The continuous process is like a dynamic feedback loop that can interfere with or reinforce itself, depending on how things come together. Students sensing their needs being met are increasingly engaged and motivated, while students sensing their needs being ignored may not experience growth in either. In the worst case scenario, neglect to the point of inhibition of those needs may lead students to display a diminished sense of engagement and motivation.

Aside from what students experience during learning activities, there is also another critical component of SDT that Reeve (2006) considers dialectic: the student-teacher relationship. Specifically, what he calls the "motivational style" of the teacher has a significant effect on the students' sense of how their needs are being met. He stresses the importance of an autonomy-supportive motivational style, so that the students' sense of how their needs are being met in the context of their relationship with their teacher is similarly conducive to their flourishing as their sense of these same needs being met by the activities they engage in and the context of that engagement. Just as the learner-to-learning-activity relationship has a dialectical effect on students' sense of their needs being met (or neglected), so too does the learner-to-teacher relationship have a similar dialectic effect. Interestingly, these two dialectical processes themselves also influence one another, so we have another more complex level of dialectical interaction (we might even call it "meta-dialectic") between the processes unfolding from both relationships, learner-to-activity and learner-to-instructor (pp.226-228). Among the myriad advantages of autonomy supportive learning environments (comprised of student activity and student relationships to educators), Reeve (2006) lists the following:

> …greater perceived competence, higher mastery motivation, enhanced creativity, a
> preference for optimal challenge over easy success, increased conceptual understanding,

active and deeper information processing, greater engagement, positive emotionality, higher intrinsic motivation, enhanced well-being, better academic performance, and academic persistence rather than dropping out of school. (p. 228)

It seems clear that autonomy supportive environments that also create a sense of relatedness and competence are worth establishing. Yet the question of how to implement this sort of program is still unclear. While specific strategies are lacking, Reeve (2006) provides some general headings under which autonomy-supportive teaching practices tend to fall, saying an autonomy supportive teacher might do things such as:

…nurture inner motivational resources, rely on informational, noncontrolling language, communicate value and provide rationales, acknowledge and accept students' expressions of negative affect, and engage in autonomy supportive behaviors. (p. 231)

Instead of grounding autonomy support entirely in instructional practices, Reeve (2006) goes on to describe some potential autonomy supportive behaviors to be undertaken on the part of the teacher. These include such suggestions as listening carefully, giving students opportunities to work as it suits them, providing opportunities for discussion, arranging seating so students can actively engage with information rather than passively listen, encourage tenacity, praise student progress, offer hints (but not answers) when students need them, be responsive to student input, and acknowledge student perspectives (p. 231). Reeve (2016) emphasizes that the responsiveness of the student-teacher relationship and that of the learning activity are mutually interacting factors that can synergize or throw one another off (p.134).

According to Reeve (2016), autonomy supportive teachers cultivate certain dispositions of their own (pp. 135-148). After all, the instructor is certainly a defining aspect of the classroom environment, and so an instructor can adjust their disposition to maximally encourage student

autonomy. Reeve (2006) identifies four essential characteristics for being a responsive, autonomy supportive educator. The first of these is what Reeves describes as "attunement." Attuned educators sense their students' reactions to material and activities and adjust their approach in the light of that sensitivity. Being "attuned" is being "tuned in" to the way the students are responding to the material. Attunement comes from a certain cultivated sensitivity to student perceptions and needs, and a responsiveness to that sensitivity. An instructor attuned to students will anticipate student engagement and incorporate that sensitivity into their instruction responsively. By paying attention to what the students are saying both with their speech and with their general demeanor, an attuned educator adjusts instruction to student needs. Relatedness is another important aspect of autonomy supportive instruction. Students need to feel that they are valued by the teacher, and is characterized by "warmth, affection, and approval" (pp. 232-234). This improves student engagement and reduces negative feelings about the classroom environment, according to researchers.

Supportiveness refers to an instructor's perceived endorsement of a student's free choice and self-selected goals. A supportive teacher respects student autonomy in the sense that autonomous individuals set their own agenda, and by affirming that agenda, the supportive instructor thereby affirms the legitimacy of student autonomy. Supportiveness has been shown by Reeve (1996) to correspond to an increased sense of competence, which allows for greater engagement and creativity.

The final component of autonomy supportive instruction Reeve (2006) identifies is "gentle discipline" (p.233). He describes this form of discipline as a "supportive socialization strategy that involves guiding and explaining why one way of thinking or behaving is right and another is wrong" and contrasts it with "power assertion...which is a controlling socialization

strategy that involves forceful commands and an insistence that students comply with the teacher's request or demands" (Reeve, 2006, p. 233). The distinction between forceful control and gentle guidance once again invokes the dichotomy between harsh classroom authoritarianism versus a more liberating autonomy-supportive instruction. Recalling our earlier concerns regarding how far to go in terms of permissiveness versus control in encouraging students' sense of autonomy, Reeve is careful to point out that an autonomy-supportive classroom is not without its structure: a class wholly without structure is not much better than an authoritarian structure when it comes to fostering autonomy. The important thing for Reeve is that the "structure" must be supportive of autonomy, rather than working against it. One way to structure the classroom environment is to recognize the instructor's role in the environment, which sets an example for the kind of respect that encourages growth. By cultivating these four traits of autonomy supportive instruction, educators can create a positive, affirming relationship with students, which helps foster engagement and motivation. These instructor dispositions are not only helpful in building a positive relationship with students, but themselves generally "cash out" as autonomy-supportive classroom practices (Reeve, 2006, p. 233).

Elsewhere, Reeve (2016) has suggested that different teaching styles (or more specifically, "motivational styles") are conducive to autonomy support to greater or lesser degrees. Beyond cultivating certain autonomy-supportive dispositions, instructors can adopt an autonomy supportive "motivating style" (pp.129-130).

An autonomy-supportive motivating style is characterized by such practices as:

1. Take the students perspective.

2. Vitalize inner motivational resources.

3. Provide explanatory rationales for requests.

4. Acknowledge and respect students' expressions of negative affect.

5. Rely on informational, non-pressuring language.

6. Display patience (Reeve, 2016, pp. 132-133, 135).

It is important to note that while Reeve previously emphasized dispositional traits of autonomy supportive instructors, here he is largely emphasizing how those dispositions "cash out" in typical classroom interactions. Attunement, relatedness, supportiveness, and gentle discipline are all implicit beneath these examples of an autonomy supportive pedagogical disposition in action. To capture the importance of communication style, Reeve uses this list to stress how the instructor's communication style toward students can enhance or undermine motivation and engagement. By communicating to students in an autonomy-supportive way, students can sense the instructor's support and respect, bringing autonomy support from the realm of the instructor's disposition into the realm of how the teacher communicates with students in their instructional practice. The four essential traits of autonomy supportive pedagogy, placed alongside the corresponding set of examples, suggests that how those four traits emerge in practice may be more of a challenge than getting educators to agree with them in principle. I will return to this point after the discussion section to follow.

Chapter Three: Application

Universality, Innateness, and Virtue

It seems clear from reviewing the literature that motivation and engagement depend on students having certain basic needs met. According to SDT, students must have a sense of (1) competence (2) relatedness and (3) autonomy. While competence is important for students to feel confident enough to grow beyond their comfort zone, relatedness is important in that it allows students to feel safe in doing so, and supported when they do. Further, relatedness helps students

integrate shared values and hence to foster newly internalized intrinsic motivations on the basis of their being members of a learning community. Autonomy is especially important, because it provides students with the sense of control they need to really "own" their learning and to engage with it in a significant way. Yet autonomy presents a conundrum, where there seems something contradictory in teaching people to be autonomous learners. On another deeper level, the very invocation of the concept of autonomy is so tied up in our values and our sense of what it is to be human, that it seems constraining it to superficial, insubstantial choices with no novel secondary effects is making a mockery of something with inherent value as an innate capacity of human beings for a sort of intentional striving.

Researchers have generally come to believe that autonomy is especially important for SDT in educational practice, and that it enables genuine flourishing in a way that would not be possible with either competence or relatedness alone. Although autonomy support does not require an entirely unstructured learning environment, there is some difficulty in implementing an autonomy-supportive classroom environment. One way to foster autonomy in the classroom is for the teacher to cultivate an autonomy-supportive disposition and to manifest that disposition through an autonomy-supportive style of communication (Reeve, 2006, pp.228-231). In general, then, autonomy is recognized as a valuable component of an authentic education, but it is not often brought to its highest functional exercises in the context of education, which seems a shame for both education and autonomy. The means for fostering autonomy, however, may be so contextually sensitive because they refer to various relations in play (the environment, the teacher, the learning activity). Educators exhibiting the four characteristics laid out by Reeve would not always need to plan for autonomy support of the shallow type, as those opportunities arise naturally in everyday interactions.

At the deeper levels, the extent to which instructors are able to foster autonomy may be dependent on their school, their administrators, and their students. Under some conditions, it will be harder to actualize autonomy support in practice than in others. For one example of how complexities proliferate in practice versus theory, consider that students come into the classroom with varying degrees of home and community resources, including things like "autonomy supportive home and social environments." Those with a greater store of therelevany resources and supports will come in at an advantage, and will be able to capitalize on that advantage in the context of potentially making more efficient use of classroom-based autonomy supports than students who lack those experiences and advantages outside of the classroom. Like so many other broad societal inequities that factor into educational outcomes, this too may lead to a perpetuation of existing disparities in access to quality education. Indeed, depending on whether or not one allows for such practices as "leveling down," it may even have the effect of amplifying those inequities. Once again, we face the same old problem of the have-nots getting a lesser share, and even then only getting what they do through the benevolence of the more fortunately situated instructors, who remain "above" them.

There are other issues of inequities to consider as well. Just as inequities in the distribution of skills and dispositions amongst student may preserve or magnify existent disparities, it is impossible to imagine teachers will not be similarly impacted by where along the spectrum they fall, from being naturally "autonomy supportive" to, perhaps unwittingly, more "controlling" and authoritarian. Reeve's list of four essential characteristics of autonomy supportive educators is intended to suggest that they can be cultivated through practice. While this is certainly true to at least some extent, the question of how, after being cultivated, they are executed in practice will always remain sufficiently context-sensitive to ensure that no stable

formulation or decision procedure can ever ensure right pedagogical action with certainty. One also imagines that the pedagogical capabilities needed to effectively implement organizational, procedural, and cognitive support strategies may not always be in perfect synch with the four characteristics of autonomy supportive educators. Mistakes are inevitable, and while that is a given, there is a sense in which these lists tend to obscure the inherent uncertainty in trying to "do right" by one's students. But that intent to "do right" is only fulfilled through right character, not deference to applying some set of rules or principles.

As I've noted, the characteristics on Reeve's (2006) list (attunement, relatedness, supportiveness, and gentle discipline) are presumably differentially distributed amongst educators (p.233). Hence, they require practice both for their initial development and for their effective utilization. There is a general tendency in educational practice to break everything up into easily quantified and measured components, and this was previously considered when discussing "the helper problem" as described by Ellerman. The pressure to provide some tangible concrete measure of success in terms of realizing some disposition or implementing some practice may risk undermining the essentially unitary nature of autonomy itself. After all, what is autonomy if not the relatively straightforward idea of "self-governance?" Might there be another more holistic way to think about fostering autonomy in the context of education? Such an approach might be preferable if it offers the opportunity to minimize theory and maximize the practice on which it is ultimately grounded?

One key issue that has cropped up throughout the literature review is the problematic nature of implementing appropriate autonomy supportive practices in the classroom. I will here argue that two different approaches can be taken up for two different aspects of autonomy support. First, I will consider Freire's suggestion of problem-posing education as a form of

cognitive autonomy support, specifically as it pertains to issues of curriculum design. We have previously discussed this in terms of Reeve's suggestions for organizational, procedural, and cognitive autonomy supports. Reeve's emphasis on the importance of cognitive autonomy support seems to mesh with Freire's notion that the teacher-student distinction must be in a sense transcended in a cooperative venture in which action and reflection become a mutual endeavor undertaken by both teachers and students. Second, I will consider an alternative conceptualization of the set of teacher habits and dispositions that govern an educator's communicative and motivational style, which Reeve also discussed as forms of autonomy supportive practices.

> The raison d'etre of libertarian education, on the other hand, lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students. (Freire, 1970, p. 72)

Perhaps the hesitation to offer a deeply autonomy-supportive environment (particularly cognitive autonomy) is a version of what we encountered in Ellerman's discussion of international development, the "Tendler problem"—that a organization's desire to do well can sometimes create conditions that are not optimal for autonomy supportive education. Educators expressed concern that giving power over any but the more superficial aspects of curriculum design might enable students to make "pedagogical mistakes" (Cordova and Lepper, 1996, p. 716).

While it is easy to imagine students will take a different route than the pre-planned one, isn't that the point? The best times to engage in cognitive autonomy supportive instruction is when the focus is on issues that have real meaning to students, so that they have something to

say. The banking concept is a system where the teacher makes deposits of knowledge, checking account balances at assessment time. The focus is on the object of exchange, the knowledge being transmitted. The student may have nothing to say about it, and it is all the same. On the other hand, critical pedagogies such as Freire's problem-posing pedagogy focus less on the object of exchange and more the parties to it, and the stands they take on the their relations to themselves, one another, and their shared world.

The three forms of autonomy support can be built into lesson plans or learning segments—or, in the case of deep cognitive autonomy support, one can plan to "make room" for it. A lesson plan or learning segment needn't be totally predetermined if it is intended only to serve as a guiding framework to be built upon. The opportunity to explore cognitive autonomous support in the classroom would be perfectly suited for activities meant to help students generate their own ideas to explore. The instructor may listen, as Freire often did, for issues and ideas worth potentially exploring further that crop up in the background. Freire (1970) called these sorts of ideas "generative ideas," and since they typically took the form of shared social experiences, they often had a social justice component to them (pp. 96-97). After coming across a generative idea, Freire would pose it back to them, in the form of a concrete example of the problem (hence problem-posing pedagogy). The student responses would now center on an effort to collectively articulate distinct forms of social experience that it would would be to their benefit to be able to understand and articulate. From there, the class could engage in action on an issue. How did Freire involve the students in directing their own efforts toward empowering themselves to act according to their own interests and preferences? By being receptive to these interests and preferences, and by fostering their sense of their own power, the fact that they

related to one another's shared experiences, and the fact that coming together around shared experiences is empowering and essentially human (Friere, 1970, pp.185-188).

While Freire's degree of involvement in social justice issues as well as the explicitly political nature of his thought might strike American teachers as somehow too political for the classroom, one needn't predetermine the content of the learning the segment in this way. However, it is notable that students are peers who share social experiences, so there is always a likelihood that their shared experiences will tend to coalesce in certain ways. It seems as plausible that they may gravitate toward issues of controversy as areas of agreement. Nonetheless, they are worth exploring, for tolerance is also a part of the proper pedagogical character.

Yet consider a learning segment less "critical" in Freire's style of the term, and more critical in the sense of critical thinking as "analysis." Even basic guiding idea like a current events focus would eventually land on potential political controversy. So while one needn't have a political agenda, it seems strange to demand things remain apolitical. Indeed, today, it seems impossible to find anything thoroughly apolitical. There is no way to really isolate today's students from political dialogue and debate. And even if it could be done, it would be to their disadvantage--students live in a world awash with information, and need to know how to handle it. Critical thinking is vital for today's students. It is hard to be motivated, engaged, and think critically about something that everyone agrees about. To demand students be taught critical thinking skills without being taught to apply them is absurd.

Whatever the focus comes out to be, the research shows that supporting students' cognitive autonomy can improve critical thinking, motivation and engagement, and students' perception of their own competence. And perhaps the way to best engage their cognitive

autonomy is to challenge them at a level just beyond their current ability--a sort of proximal zone of autonomy development. Freire's (1970) suggestion is that teachers and students transcend the asymmetrical power relations that have typically characterized the pedagogical relationship, and instead consider themselves parties to a joint venture of co-discovery (pp.106-107). This sounds very much like cognitive autonomy at the higher levels--for instance, curriculum design and course content.

While educators may hesitate to adapt an explicit political agenda such as generating critical consciousness, the application of critical thought to real world problems will tend to be conducive its development. Giving students access to cognitive autonomy supportive learning experiences will benefit their critical capacities, especially in terms of their application to real-world issues that have real-world effects. In a subject area so focused on expression and communication, it seems odd to quarantine students from what everybody is actually talking about in the world beyond academia.

I have emphasized that autonomy support is worth including in the curriculum. Since it is already arguable the least embraced form of autonomy support, as well as one of the most effective forms, I have taken the liberty of providing a somewhat extreme example of its implementation. Deep cognitive autonomy support can be fostered by providing opportunities for open-ended, co-designed learning segments. How open ended and how co-designed remains an issue that will presumably vary by context. The extent to which the teacher hands over the reigns to students, and the direction they take things, will largely determine whether such a lesson segment comes out looking something like Freire's critical pedagogy, or whether it ends up becoming a current events discussion panel.

Nonetheless, the fact that deep cognitive autonomy support is possible at all makes it seem worth exploring. Reflecting on Reeve's emphasis on the dialectical aspects of SDT, we may recall that there are at least two dialectical relationships at work: the students relationship to the actual learning material, and the students relationship to the teacher. The role of the student-teacher relationship in the dialectic side of SDT supports the value of the sorts of dispositions and practices such as those listed under Reeve's heading of autonomy supportive motivational styles. Teachers whose pedagogical style is autonomy supportive value student perspectives, display patience, recognize objections and expressions of negative affect, explain their rationales, provide positive feedback, build on student motivations, and use non-pressuring, informational language (Reeve, 2016, p.131). These practices seem to emphasize a more egalitarian or humanistic sensibility regarding the educational enterprise in general.

Aside from cultivating that sort of pedagogical character, educators can incorporate autonomy support into their instruction and even build it into the curriculum in various ways. Although the suggestion seems extreme, the idea of co-developing a learning segment built around common student interests, concerns, and experiences might not be as difficult as it seems. A significant part of the pressure educators face isn't struggling to make things work, but struggling to make things work out in certain ways within a fairly strict schedule. A minimal version of the problem-posing approach might see a teacher setting aside a block of instructional time each day for this purpose. A more indulgent version might allow for an entire lesson plan built around this sort of co-investigation of pertinent topics of interest to students. At the extreme, students and teachers co-design their shared educational path and treat it more like an exploration than tracing out lines on a curricular map.

Yet again, the form this approach ultimately takes might vary along a continuum from, at one extreme, something very much like Freire's problem-posing pedagogy, or at the other, something resembling a current events discussion or even a debate class. Anything that gives students a platform for expression, and something to express, can be a topic for education. Just as the question of how one cultivates the proper autonomy supportive pedagogical character necessarily refers back to what sort of character one already has, so too does the question of how to maximize various forms of autonomy support in classroom practices and curriculum design refer back to what sort of class and what sort of students one has—and what sorts of opportunities their world offers for getting a foothold on autonomy. Educators today are exploring the possibilities of autonomy support. It may benefit the educators of tomorrow to provide opportunities for students to capitalize on the autonomy thus supported by applying it in the context of epistemic activity.

Different forms of autonomy may be worth developing through a gradual process of increasing student involvement in different aspects of the course. I've focused mainly on cognitive autonomy support, because I believe it is important that educators emphasize it for today's students. Just as I am suggesting autonomy-support could be maximized for a learning segment, so could organizational and procedural autonomy, to whatever degree the teacher is comfortable with.It may also be objected dictating that the debate must center on social justice alone may seem to undermine the idea of really allowing the students to design the learning segment. What if they don't center on an issue of social justice? Students are peers; they share social experiences. When they talk about social experiences, they will come across issues of social justice in some form or other.

The first step in the problem posing pedagogy style of Paulo Freire isn't to tell the students what to do, but to listen to what the students naturally gravitate towards speaking about. What topics come up? How do the students feel about them? Talking about their day to day lives, concerns and interests, fears and hopes, may inevitably touch on some set of issues or experiences that have standing for them. Giving them a venue to express and explore their thoughts is a worthy use of class time, and a good example of strong pedagogical character that is perhaps implicit beneath the surface of Reeve's list, but which is not teased out in the literature.

Freire's habit was to spend time listening, and then when he found something that could bring the students to collective focus, he would find a way to reiterate the problem to them in a really concrete way to be sure everyone understood and was able to be involved in its critique (Freire, 1970, pp.114-118). Guiding casual discussions toward critical thinking is another habit worthy of practice for the autonomy supportive educator. Starting in small groups would presumably be favorable; shy students are more likely to speak in small peer groups than in front of the whole class and their teacher. A student who may hesitate to speak in front of the whole class may be more comfortable participating who within a more intimate small group setting.

Again, the idea of giving students more control over the actual content of what is taught tends to strike fear into the heart of some educators. Although effective cognitive autonomy support must be structured somehow or other, it needn't be "predetermined." Freire's (1970) method of "problem posing education" focused on de-emphasizing the static role of teacher as having power and superiority over the student. Instead, he emphasized the mutually interdependent nature of the relationship between the teacher-student, and the student-teacher (p.72). Being equals engaged in a task requiring mutual commitment to respectful engagement is

the starting point for his sort of autonomy, not the point at which class descends into chaos. The fear of losing control is not new for teachers. But the idea that teachers must always retain a stranglehold on curricular (cognitive) control seems to permanently bar students from some of the richest and most rewarding opportunities for autonomy support an education can offer: the chance to come together on mutual terms and enter into a joint venture of co-discovery through uninhibited dialogue.

Because of the natural give and take inherent in this teaching paradigm, Freire (1970) found it instructive to "co-investigate" questions of interest to his students (p. 106). This may be the extent of his wish to exert pedagogical authority. He helped structure the discussions, but only in the sense that this was necessary to facilitate the growth of his students. The curriculum as such was always a process, not a fully planned procedure. He was overseeing a dynamic process, not watching a meticulous plan unfold according to a preconceived series of steps.

Freire felt that problem-posing education gave the people a sort of political agency that they may have lacked access to before. He saw literacy and developing critical thought as basic sorts of human capabilities that could enable human liberation from oppressive forms of social organization and interaction. That which maximizes freedom is ideal, but practically speaking, liberation from forms of existent oppression is more tangible, and in addition it's morally compelling. Listening to students is the best way to learn what issues matter to them. This is why his approach is described as a dialogue approach whereas the traditional banking concept was described as narrative (Freire, 1970, pp. 79-80). By involving the students in the generation of topics, Freire and those who follow his example give students a stake in the process, as well as a stake in the outcome—because it matters to them. As he explains it in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed:*

Problem-posing education...breaks the vertical patterns characteristic of banking

education…[an] can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom only if it can overcome

the [teacher-student] contradiction. Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the

students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with

student-teachers...They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow...The

problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the

students. The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in

dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their

consideration, and reconsiders her earlier considerations as the students express their

own...Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-

posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. (Freire, 1970, p. 80)

Recalling our earlier discussion of the dialectic of SDT as it was characterized by Reeve,

it involved the relationship between students and their classwork, as well as the relationship

between students and their instructor. Both relationships are dynamic, in a constant flux, but can

either serve to inhibit or facilitate autonomy. On the one side, the relationship between students

and their work can be considered through the lens of various forms of autonomy support. One

the other, the relationship between students and their teachers can be considered through the lens

of what Reeve had called autonomy-supportive motivational styles, but which I will argue here

are really more akin to a form of pedagogical virtue.

Teacher dispositions (such as those suggested by Reeve) can be expressed as a list of

traits characterizing personal style, but these suggested traits seem more apt as characterizing a

certain form of interpersonal virtue. According to Deci (1995), autonomy support can be thought

of as "a personal orientation you take toward other people. This orientation flavors every aspect

of your interaction with them" (p.142) In other words, the three innate psychological needs tied

to motivation and engagement can be met at least in part by the cultivation of good pedagogical

character on the part of the instructor. Moreover, as I'll suggest shortly, this autonomy-

supportive or democratic pedagogical character is more akin to a sort of virtue underlying

Reeve's list rather than the items on the list themselves.

Reeve (2006) suggested some of the traits of autonomy supportive sorts of teacher dispositions

were as follows:

- attunement

- relatedness

- supportiveness

- gentle discipline (p.233)

Deci (1995) presented a list of six examples of practices of autonomy supportive educators:

- Take the students perspective

- Vitalize inner motivational resources

- Provide explanatory rationales for requests

- Acknowledge and respect students' expressions of negative affect

- Rely on informational, non-pressuring language

- Display patience (pp. 132-133; 135).

First, an observation. Reviewing this list reminds me of something I once heard (I do not

recall where): "Most people imagine themselves kind, funny, and smart. We can't all be right."

Granted, the four traits of autonomy supportive communication and six characteristics of

autonomy supportive motivational style are easy to agree with in principle. It seems

incomprehensible that any contemporary educator would scoff and dismiss these suggestions.

Most educators presumably consider themselves the kind of people who aspire to practice these same sorts of habits of character. Would anyone conceivably hold themselves to the opposite standards? It seems hard to imagine.

I mean to suggest here that perhaps this sort of list does more to affirm existent practices than to change them. Even educators who fail to implement these practices where it would count most would presumably recollect other instances where they fulfilled them in some other way. The problem I'm suggesting here is that if this list is easy to agree with, it must be that much harder to live by--or else why bother making it in the first place? I would imagine most teachers consider themselves the kinds of people who strive to live up to those sorts of behaviors. It would be hard to imagine an educator who held to their contradictions: ignore student input and affect, pressure them, don't explain anything, be impatient. This list, although illustrative, is largely devoid of new content. It tells us things we generally already know. There should be no surprise that a good teacher listens to their students, repeats instructions and explains rationales, and utilizes students' inner motivations to help facilitate learning. This list is an easy way for teachers to feel validated--but it contains very little in the way of challenge to do better, to be better. Perhaps the most common deviations from the list I imagine educators would admit to is being occasionally impatient, sometimes brushing past complaints about material or assignments, or sometimes using pressuring language. But overall, I suspect most educators will look at this list, and see only the best parts of their pedagogical selves. There are bound to be blind spots here.

Any orchestrated attempt to cultivate the kind of disposition that lends itself to these kinds of behaviors will presumably be implemented in certain rather obvious and easily incorporated ways, but it will still be a worthy effort in that it will have some impact. But

autonomy being developed to the level of flourishing is something that requires more commitment than any list or well-defined decision procedure could offer. This alternative take on the notion of autonomy-supportive pedagogy as a sort of virtue or perfectible capacity has its genesis in my reading of Freire and in thinking of his work and its ethical requirements, as well as its ethical implications. It does, after all, seem to demand a lot from both teachers and students--even that they cease being just one or the other.

In his last interview during the 1996 World Conference on Literacy, Freire made the following remarks:

> I am a curious being. But in a certain moment of the process of being curious, in order to understand others, I discovered that I have to create in myself a certain virtue...the virtue of tolerance. It is through the exercise of tolerance that I discover the rich possibility of doing things and learning different things with different people. Being tolerant is not a question of being naive. On the contrary, it is a duty to be tolerant. An ethical duty, an historical duty, a political duty, but it does not demand that I lose my personality."
> (Literacydotorg, 1996).

Although he doesn't provide a list like Reeve, it seems clear that there is a similar sort of kindness of pedagogical character on display in both problem-posing pedagogy and the sort of pedagogical character conducive to being more conservatively autonomy-supportive, in terms of shallow organizational or procedural autonomy. Reeve's list was simply an example of how pedagogical virtue might cash out in terms of autonomy support in mundane classroom interactions. Those behaviors seem implicitly grounded in a form of recognition of autonomy, but they do not rise to the level of eliciting its substantial exercise. After all, the list of positive attributes presented by Reeves is necessarily incomplete.

This is my purpose in introducing a virtue-theoretical conception of autonomy supportive pedagogy. Virtue theories have the unique quality of emphasizing the development of virtuous character over teaching virtuous practices. The assumption underlying this shift has a practical and a theoretical component: practically, there is no perfect decision procedure for right action. Different perspectives tell us different things. A virtue theory holds that a person properly adapted to justly functioning in certain sorts of situations may naturally learn to gravitate toward right action without relying on decision procedures. An inferentialist sort of moral theory might say that one chooses the right thing by referring to some framework of moral judgment, but a virtue-theory approach holds that right action may be more easily determined by having a virtuous sort of character than by referring to a system of rules and guidelines. (Fricker, 2007, pp. 61-64). A virtuous pedagogical character is one which does not need the guidance of lists such as Reeve's, but which is capable of generating such a list in a given suitably familiar context. It stands to reason that a person's character is more readily adaptable to new contexts than decision procedures grounded in a range of prior contexts, not all of which will share equal relevence to the situation at hand. (Fricker, 2007, pp. 72-74)

Education, as a fundamentally epistemic activity (having to do with knowledge and making sense of things) is also inherently social and hence requires a sort of sense of justice to obtain between participants in the endeavor. A basic component of this sense of justice is a mutual respect that is always more the responsibility of the educator than the student (and how could it be otherwise?). This is due to the presumption of a privileged epistemic position of the educator relative to the student. Aside from the asymmetry of the student-teacher power-relation conferred by the pedagogical authority of the teacher, there is also an imbalance in how well students and teachers are able to understand and be understood by one another—but the

imbalance cuts both ways. The students will almost always be at a disadvantage in both regards relative to the teacher, both in terms of the power represented by the teacher-student relationship in general (where the teacher is always considered the authority) as well as in terms of the power represented by the teacher as a person whose specialty is epistemic in nature. The students' relative disadvantage in expressing themselves to a teacher with a greater share of the common stock of cultural knowledge might also confer a distinct form of disadvantage to the teacher as well. In particular, if students and teachers lack a mutual understanding of some issue critical to either party, then both are at a loss—one cannot understand what the others cannot adequately express. Teachers ought to perpetually be asking "Am I being fair? Am I misunderstanding something?" These all suggest treating the student as an end in themselves rather than a means, and seem to imply a sort of basic respect for the dignity of the person. But they also emphasize a basic way in which "truth" and "justice" may be fundamentally related—at least in an ethical-epistemological context, they can be seen as different manifestations of the same virtue (Fricker, 2007, pp. 16-17, 122).

To connect our thinking with the three suggested forms of autonomy support, consider how each might function as a form of respect for students as epistemic subjects. Just as SDT is grounded in a recognition of certain presumed-to-be-innate and universal capacities of human beings, so is autonomy-supportive pedagogy as a sort of virtue grounded in mutual respect between epistemic subjects.

1. Procedural autonomy support respects students as epistemic subjects by involving them with the activities and materials that are involved in class. As such, it gives them a say in what kind of work takes place, and how it is carried out. It enables them to make basic decisions about, and contributions to, how class is materially executed in practice.

2. Organizational autonomy support enables students to make basic decisions that affect day-to-day classroom expectations and activities. As such, students are recognized as agents capable of formulating plans, connecting ends with means, engaging in dialogue about practical issues of day-to-day activities and planning.

3. Cognitive autonomy support respects students as epistemic subjects by fostering their sense of intellectual and causal agency, and by encouraging them to actively participate in deciding what to learn and how to learn it. It brings their activity to the level of metacognition, while at the same time empowering them in terms of knowing how to apply critical thought. As such, it gives them a say in what their education provides them, and the context in which it is provided. Students are taught to apply their cognitive powers in areas where those powers are naturally inclined to go.

The distinction between autonomy, relatedness, and competence has proven useful for educational researchers following Deci and Ryan's initial research on SDT. Though autonomy is a concept with implications beyond improving student motivation and performance, educational research has tended to stick with a narrower interpretation of autonomy for instrumental purposes. As the review of the literature on SDT has indicated, researchers have interpreted autonomy as one of three innate universal psychological needs students bring to the classroom. Although the concept is expansive, the methods suggested to support it are fairly conservative. The way autonomy support typically ends up being implemented in practice is too often of insufficient depth to have optimal effect.

Considering the issue closely, one might wonder whether the distinction of the three components of SDT are merely instrumental. After all, what is autonomy if not "self-

determination"? The trio of innate needs may be a useful conceptualization, but recall our earlier definition of autonomy from Dworkin (1988):

> Autonomy is conceived as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth, and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values. By exercising such a capacity, persons define their nature, give meaning and coherence to their lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person they are. (p.20)

I would suggest that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are not reducible to one another, but they are interdependent and capable of mutually reinforcing one another or inhibiting one another. Consider that, although autonomy as a sort of self-rule is not the same as competence, *effective* self-rule *must* require some degree of competence. And the more competent one is, the better one's ability to capitalize on autonomy, to select goals and plan ways to realize them. Similarly, relatedness is not, strictly speaking, necessary for autonomy. But autonomy in isolation comes to mean very little—the notion of autonomy must imply one lives in a world of competition and cooperation, a world of sometimes contrary interests (unless autonomy is to be reduced to a purely metaphysical concept, as a euphemism for "free will"). "Self-rule" only makes sense as a concept in contexts where other forms of rule are also potentially or actually in effect—"self-rule" makes sense only in a world of other selves. To have security in one's autonomous capacity, one would ideally live in a shared world of mutual respect, where autonomous selves are left to their own self-determination with minimal interference and opportunities for cooperation when interests align. Autonomy is more easily understood as the absence of various forms of constraint than as a purely positive value in complete isolation from its lack. Relatedness, too, makes little sense in a vacuum. And

competence is hard to come by without access to shared knowledge, lest we all be forced to reinvent the wheel at every juncture. To make use of one's basic human agency, one needs all three components--competence, relatedness, and autonomy, are all necessary to be truly "self-determining."

Thus, SDT's three basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy are not entirely distinct from one another in actual practice. Rather, they form something of a continuous whole within the sphere of human activity in general; specifically, I would argue that relatedness, competence, and autonomy are all aspects of human activity having to do with our being knowers and inquirers, or what Fricker (2007) called "epistemic subjects" (pp. 43-44). In pedagogical discussions, some aspects of Fricker's framework for thinking about issues of epistemic injustice may help make sense of how to construct a holistic view of SDT by considering students and teachers alike in a manner that captures a more holistic view of their mutual epistemic activity as fundamentally dialectic, rather than didactic.

The concept of the epistemic subject enable the teacher-student distinction to give way to the more cooperative picture of knowers and inquirers, which is similar to Freire's notion of co-investigators or co-discoverers. Where SDT portrays competence, relatedness, and autonomy as distinct psychological needs, a portrayal of human beings as epistemic subjects can potentially provide a perspective from which those psychological needs are transformed into something more akin to basic human rights than levers with which to steer studenrts toward higher grades. After all, if a sort of epistemic activity is distinctively human, and that activity is essential for living a fulfilling life in a shared social world, then the basic necessities that such activity requires as conditions for the possibility of its effective exercise could arguably be considered basic human rights. Our review of the literature has demonstrated that, since its inception, SDT

has always been grounded in the claim that the three psychological needs are both universal and innate. This bolsters the suggestion that the sphere of epistemic activity that requires their fulfillment is a similarly universal and innate capacity for human beings qua epistemic subjects.

The Capabilities Approach and Virtue

As international development theorist Martha Nussbaum has suggested, the notion of universal human rights rests on the assumption that some such universal and innate capabilities exist in all human beings. These basic capabilities are "innate faculties of the person that make later development and training possible." (Nussbuam, 2011, p 24). As such, they are essential for autonomous activity and self-determination in general. The capabilities of relating to others and feeling socially secure, of developing an awareness of one's own competence, and of sensing one's own power of autonomous choice are essential for self-determination. Moreover, as should be clear by now, they are each essential for one another's flourishing. Nussbaum expresses her approach as follows:

> The Capabilities Approach...holds that the key question to ask...is 'what is each person able to do and to be?' In other words, the approach takes each person as an end, asking not just about the total or average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person. It is focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs. It thus commits itself to respect for people's powers of self-definition. (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 18)

Committing to facilitating students' development of their basic capabilities is a key task for educators concerned with bringing a broader sense of autonomy and self-definition into the classroom. Those capabilities are best conceived of as "a set of (usually interrelated)

opportunities to choose and act" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20). Nussbaum (2011) points out that the mere existence of such basic capabilities does not automatically entail the opportunity for optimal capitalization on them (p. 20). Instead, the context in which a person finds him or her self will substantially determine the extent to which those capabilities are developed and built upon. Capabilities account for very little when they go unrealized. This is why Nussbaum (2011) distinguishes between "internal" capabilities, which are the innate capacities for certain kinds of activity or development), and "combined" capabilities (internal capabilities *plus* a context favorable to their realization) (p. 22).

Perhaps students do come into school with a set of internal capabilities much like those that SDT theory posits, and the teacher's role is to find ways to create contexts for those internal capabilities to become combined capabilities. By providing the proper conditions to facilitate their development, one enables students to potentially flourish as epistemic subjects. The cooperative nature of the student-teacher relationship in such a classroom would also arguably benefit the teacher as well. But moreover, they could benefit society at large:

> Capabilities have value in and of themselves, as spheres of freedom and choice. To promote capabilities is to promote areas of freedom, and this is not the same as making people function in a certain way. Thus the Capabilities Approach departs from a tradition in economics that measures the real value of a set of options by the best use that can be made of them. Options are freedoms, and freedoms have intrinsic value. (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 25)

Nonetheless, children are considered an exceptional case: certain forms of functional development of children's basic capabilities are justified insomuch as they are necessary for the cultivation of future adult capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 25-26). Nonetheless, I would suggest

that those which are most critical for children to develop will be those that are essential for leading a meaningful life. I would suggest here that the three innate needs suggested in SDT are just such a set a capabilities. The capacity to feel socially connected to others and to be able to relate to them in some set of basic ways is crucial for a meaningful life. Without relatedness, people are alienated, unmoored from their social world. The capacity to develop one's competence is similarly crucial for living a meaningful life. Sensing one's growth is one of the most rewarding aspects of any pursuit that allows for progress. Competence is a basic capability that ought to be combined with an appropriate context.

Autonomy is yet another suitable candidate for such a capability, and a particularly important one at that: the right to make my own choices is one of the things that makes my life truly *mine*. Capitalization on these universal and innate capacities is fundamental to the project of pursuing one's own conception of "the good" or even (more broadly) "the good life," however one wishes to define it. What is important to note here is that, for such capacities to be so essential to the good life, it is simply not enough that *they are* universal and innate in order to ensure that they are capitalized on as they ought to be. To develop these capacities to their potential is a universal human need, and hence arguably a universal human right.

> The Capabilities Approach....focuses on the protection of areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity. (Nussbaum, 2011, p 31)

Since the innate capacities are internal capabilities, the provision of suitable contexts in which to realize them are the component which it is incumbent upon educators to provide. Unfortunately, our literature review shows just how confusing the recommendations can be, and how difficult the choices teachers face in the attempt are likely to become. The capacity for intellectual and social development seem to fit the bill generally, but this formulation is

insufficiently precise and requires further refinement. To bring more clarity to the argument for some sort of human right corresponding to the three needs SDT holds to be universal and innate, we may want to focus in on some particular aspect of human social and intellectual activity that captures the three within a singular, unified concept. Building on concept of basic human capacities developed by Nussbaum, philosopher Miranda Fricker has suggested in her more recent work that a sort of capacity for "social epistemic contribution" may be just such a basic human capability, forming the preliminary basis for a philosophical argument that access to information and education is a universal human right. (Fricker, 2015, pp. 3-7)

Social epistemic contribution has to do with participating in collective epistemic activity. The idea that there is such a need for access to social epistemic resources implies a corresponding capacity to contribute to those resources. Since epistemic access is an implied human right by virtue of the universal and innate nature of the capacity for epistemic activity, so too is the corresponding capacity for epistemic contribution, as another mode of epistemic participation. As Fricker (2015) indicates, it isn't enough simply to be able to draw on resources; one must be able to contribute to the common share. To allow a person to take but not give back in epistemic contexts is to rob the person of their epistemic agency, which forms the very basis for the concept of universal human capabilities as indicators of these kinds of basic human rights. One has to have the right to draw on the pool of epistemic and interpretive resources in order to formulate one's conception of "the good," to make use of one's intellectual capacities to plan on how to attain this good, and to execute that plan by making use of those epistemic resources. One must also have the right to contribute to those resources, or else one becomes subject to epistemic marginalization—being left out of the activities of meaning and interpretation so essential to human beings conceived as epistemic subjects. (p. 4)

Revisiting the three psychological needs, one sees how social epistemic contribution fits the criteria for a suitable concept which reliably incorporates all three components of SDT (which is, after all, a theory of "self-determination"). Social epistemic contribution incorporates the need for competence, as access to epistemic activity and goods is essential for competence in any given domain. Indeed, without collective epistemic activity, it is hard to understand what a concept like "competence" could possibly come out to mean. One is only competent in regards to some shared measure or criterion, and such things very often simply do not exist without reference to the past or present activities and contributions of others. Social epistemic contribution embraces the basic psychological need for competence, but also places it on social, political, and broadly existential footing. As such, it seems to break out of the narrow constraints of SDT and apply more broadly.

Social epistemic contribution can also be seen to encompass the basic psychological need for relatedness, as epistemic activity is inherently social. At the most fundamental level, literacy is required to access information efficiently. And literacy, like so many others, is a component of human epistemic activity that does not exist in a vacuum. Recalling the characterization of humans as epistemic subjects and most significant human activity as essentially epistemic activity, we see how relatedness factors into social epistemic contribution. One must be able to make sense of the resources available, to draw on them and make sense of them, to apply them to one's own life. As such, there must be enough held "in common" with other epistemic subjects for those epistemic goods to "cash out" in a meaningful way. (Fricker, 2015, p. 9)

Finally, social epistemic contribution encompasses the universal need for autonomy. Moreover, it elevates the need for autonomy from a somewhat instrumental concept as it was portrayed in SDT, and shows its rightful place as a fundamental aspect of human existence.

Autonomy, as the capacity to reflect on preferences and choices and adjust or pursue them as one sees fit, is obviously epistemic, and like the other basic needs, requires access to information and education, as well as the necessary opportunity to contribute to the overall store of epistemic and interpretive resources. Just as the three basic psychological needs were held to be innate and universal, I tried to show how they might be further understood as interdependent and correlated. By grouping them all under the general conceptual heading of social epistemic contribution, we can see how they are part and parcel of a basic universal aspect of human existence—the need to make sense of one's self and one's world.

Our review of SDT literature indicated just how much time has been spent illustrating ways in which educators might try to create an autonomy-supportive educational context. None of these suggestions were intended to be hard and fast rules, however. Instead, they were always offered merely as general suggestions, mostly to illustrate the kinds of general dispositions and habits that an instructor might cultivate as well as the kinds of general features of instruction and curriculum design that might maximize the potential to create an autonomy-supportive environment. Leaving things so wide open to instructors' interpretations of student needs indicates the degree of variability in a given educational context. There is no strict decision procedure for what rules to employ and when. Instead, teachers must have a certain sensibility to what a particular context calls for. That kind of requirement seems to refer to a concept of virtue, and SDT was, conveniently enough, built on just such a concept.

The problem of seeking out strict decision procedures for matters as complex as how interpersonal relationships foster or inhibit autonomy might not simply be that we are missing the "magic bullet" solution. Perhaps there is no determinate and eternally valid way to foster autonomy. I want to suggest that the Reeve was right in emphasizing teacher disposition and

communication, but that boiling autonomy support down to a set of general principles is no more than a useful fiction. Instead, instructors need to think about autonomy support less as a strategy to enable motivation and hence improve engagement and performance, and more as a basic aspect of being a human being. The notion of autonomy originated in philosophical thought and political theory, and was only imported into pedagogical thought because respect for autonomy was so lacking in teaching practices. The justification for including an emphasis on autonomy in educational research has generally been grounded in its utility for improving performance and affect, but thinking about the broader concept of autonomy beyond the classroom one is struck by how shallow an understanding of autonomy this is.

Chapter Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

Autonomy is self-rule; it is more tied in to the notion of free will than to academic performance or satisfaction with school activities. It is a fundamental aspect of human beings' activity in a shared world. Again, to invoke the previous authors, I'd like to reiterate the point that learning and autonomy have a certain structural similarity. Freire and Ellerman seems to stress this point when critiquing the practices of international development and the banking concept of education, which focus on teaching as a transmission of information from the haves to the have nots rather than respecting the parties to the exchange. Talk of "autonomy in general" is likely to expand too far beyond the classroom context, while limiting autonomy to the classroom context alone tends to throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. Rather than compromise between two limited views, one which obscures the particular for the sake of the general and another which obscures the general for the sake of the particular, we might try an alternative approach to the topic.

An alternative way to think of autonomy in educational contexts is to consider what the aim of education in general is. No matter how we conceive of it, education has an irreducibly epistemic aspect. It has an obvious connection to our idea of knowledge, as it is the mechanism by which that knowledge continues to be shared and collectively held. Knowledge kept to oneself dies with the knower. Epistemic resources are held in common, although not held equally. Education it has something to do with "knowing," however we choose to define and qualify it. Education involves the the sharing of epistemic resources. But what needs are to be addressed in the distribution of epistemic resources? The tension between education's role in shaping people and shaping society seems to beg the question: to which do we grant priority, the needs of society, or the needs of social members? How are these defined, in any case? And who benefits? Is education a matter of the most efficient transmission of knowledge, or a matter of the greatest possible development of the people?

One way to clear things up is to erase the distinction between teacher and learner and consider just what education is. Traditional pedagogies tend to focus on knowledge and education as a way of providing society with the skilled workers and expertise it requires to function and compete internationally, while critical pedagogies tend to focus on providing people with the agency to make authentic choices and to develop themselves according to their own aims and interests. What we have then is a perceived conflict between the interests of society and the interests of the individuals of which it is composed. How to resolve that tension has long been a matter of debate. Education is often conceived in terms of its role as the institutional transmission of knowledge. The purpose of this transmission of knowledge is often cast in one of two ways: as a means for students to become autonomous, e.g. to realize their individual freedom; or else to function appropriately in society in general, e.g., to fit into the broader social,

economic, and political relations beyond the classroom. This tension, which might broadly be described as one obtaining between the individual and society, tends to underlie some of the issues in education today. How do we encourage students to become who they are, to develop their capacities and dispositions, while also ensuring that they have a place in the wider social, economic, and political world? This is often seen as a sort of balancing act, like that of mediating the relationship between liberty and equality. An alternative approach to balancing would be to investigate whether there is an alternative perspective that could help shed light on the issue from another direction.

There is a responsibility on the part of the teacher to develop a sort of epistemic virtue, as a manner of respecting students as epistemic subjects, which is an aspect of being a human being that we might consider innate and universal. The necessary conditions for the cultivation of this form of virtue—a virtue which unlocks other forms of virtuous activity and human flourishing—bears a great degree of similarity to Reeve's salient points about teacher dispositions and communication styles, while also not being reducible to a fixed set of practices or a well-defined decision procedure. The role of schools as institutions that transmit knowledge has both an irreducibly ethical aspect as well as an irreducibly epistemological aspect. But the school is not an "either or" proposition—here, the ethical and the epistemic are mutually interdependent. Autonomy implies one sets one's ends in the light of one's own values, that one reflects on and is capable of transforming those values, and strives to attain the ends to meet those values through deliberately selected means.

This ultimately refers us back to autonomy as the capacity for effective intentional activity. The concept of the epistemic subject actually goes further than embracing autonomy alone—the epistemic subject by nature requires all three components of SDT: competence

(knowledge and the capacity to put it to use in application), relatedness (being a member of an

epistemic community and participating in epistemic activity), and autonomy (using one's

capacity to know and participate in epistemic endeavors to realize one's own aims). Epistemic

subjectivity as a pro-autonomy virtue unifies SDT into a singular notion, that human beings are

always simultaneously functioning both knowers and inquirers.

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