TOWARDS A MORE PERSPICUOUS UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

In
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Educational Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 2003

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Date July 9, 03

DE-6 (2/88)
Abstract

This thesis is about the concept of social responsibility in moral education. I deal primarily with presenting a conceptualization of social responsibility as a moral tradition but I neither claim to decisively resolve the tensions surrounding the conceptual status of social responsibility nor articulate the precise definition of a moral tradition. Instead, I will present one way of conceptualizing social responsibility and moral traditions in moral education that works for some very good reasons.

This conceptual examination is both topical and important in British Columbia as The Ministry of Education has implemented an assessment program based upon developing social responsibility in its students. I begin examining the Ministry document, The British Columbia Performance Standards for Social Responsibility, (2000) in light of its ability to provide a basic theoretical framework for moral education toward social responsibility.

My purpose in relation to understanding social responsibility is to emphasise the importance of three dimensions of social responsibility in moral education. They are:

- Understanding the essential role of reasoning about moral concerns and participating in moral dialogue in learning to be socially responsible.
- Coming to realize that social responsibility is itself a moral tradition into which students ought to be initiated.
- Realizing the importance of students developing critical appreciation of themselves as moral agents and the virtues related to it.

We stand to benefit from a comprehensive definition of social responsibility which recognizes students' potential as moral agents in these three areas. Again, this is not to claim that I have resolved the intellectual tensions related to the conceptual status of social responsibility. However, my intent is to open up the discussion in such a way that encourages future researchers and policy makers to take seriously the importance of adequately defining social responsibility. Furthermore, to connect the practice of teaching students social responsibility with the conceptual task of describing it, I also include an example of my ideas about social responsibility as they look in practice.
## Table of Contents

*Abstract*  

*Table of Contents*

*Acknowledgements*

### CHAPTER ONE: Introducing Social Responsibility as a Concept for Moral Education

- Preface 1
- Introduction: Tracing the History of Social Responsibility 2
- Challenges to the Performance Standards for Social Responsibility 5
- Burnyeat’s Challenge 7
- A Clear Direction 10
- Chapter Overviews 11

### CHAPTER TWO: The Importance of Reasons and Values

- Introduction: Reasoning about Social Responsibility 16
- Accommodating Reason in the Performance Standards 17
- Students Assessing Reasons 19
- Scanlon’s Contribution to Reasons and Values 20
- Reasons, Values, and the Social Responsibility Curriculum 23
- Searching for Equilibrium 28
- Example Using the Value of Democracy 30
- Conclusion: Developing Reasoning as a Principle of Social Responsibility 32

### CHAPTER THREE: The Importance of a Moral Tradition

- Summarising the Conception Thus Far 36
- Exploring Moral Traditions 38
- Clarifying the Moral Tradition as Social Responsibility 40
- The Moral Tradition as Narrative 42
- Walzer on the Moral Tradition 43
- MacIntyre on the Moral Tradition 45
- Skills, Virtues, and Social Responsibility: Aspects of the Tradition 48
- Hare on Strong Knowledge 48
- Respecting Pluralism in the Moral Tradition 50
- Moral Traditions and Human Development 51
- Educating the Virtues and Respecting Pluralism 53
- Virtues 57
- The Place of Virtues in Moral Education 58
- Conclusion: Social Responsibility as a Moral Tradition 61
CHAPTER FOUR: **Unity of Self and Action**

64

The Unity of Self and Action 64
The Complexity of Moral Judgment 65
Virtues Securing Social Responsibility 70
Reasonableness 71
Empathy 72
Integrity 73
Response to Relativism 75

CHAPTER FIVE: **Young Students and the Power of Literature in Developing Social Responsibility**

77

Introduction: Concerns for Practice 77
The Power of Good Literature 77
The Informal Study 78
The Giver 80
Absent Concepts 83
Love 85
Students' Responses to The Giver 87
Reconciling Three Concepts in the Study 94
Limitations of the Study 98
Concluding Remarks 99

* Bibliography 105
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge those people who supported me throughout the writing process, many editorial revisions, and conceptual struggles: Pamela Courtenay-Hall, my co-supervisor, Murray Ross, Jon Eben Field, and Michael Zlotnik. I would like to thank Leroi Daniels for sitting as an external examier on my oral defense.

Throughout the writing process my family and close friends provided creative support. I would like to thank my Dad for contributing an inquisitive attitude to conceptual discussions, and my Mom for checking that my thesis was getting the attention it deserved from those in the institution. Greg and Tara offered their place and space at Boise State University while I was retreating and “regrouping” from the thesis I burned. Jeff was always supportive by joining in extra “recreational time” when the work load was too heavy. My thanks also go to Carlye who has remained concerned and supportive through the editing process.

Finally, without the caring respect, intuitive support and intelligence, and sustained friendship of my co-supervisor Linda Darling, I would have walked away from this six credit thesis on more than one occasion. She possessed throughout the project the adept skill of balancing her expectations of excellence with genuine counselled support.
CHAPTER ONE
Introducing Social Responsibility as a Concept for Moral Education

Preface

It is my assertion in this thesis, that by constructing a more perspicuous account of social responsibility we can at once strengthen and thicken our understanding of the concept for the purpose of developing social responsibility in our students. It is my goal to show that social responsibility is a moral concept that moral education cannot ignore. Moral education ought to include teaching children that political, moral, and social disagreements can be resolved by finding solutions that are justified in terms of our prior moral commitments. Our educational efforts should focus on the ways that many different people can live good lives within pluralistic societies. Incorporating aspects of a tradition of social responsibility into the folds of many different cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions, through education, enhances our abilities to live with each other. Additionally, any useful conception of social responsibility will embrace diversity. The moral educator working from this conception is concerned with helping students think about their roles as autonomous agents and helping them think morally from many different perspectives. By focusing on social responsibility as a central concept in moral education we can both instill strong senses of moral identity in students as well as respect the diversity reflected among our students in British Columbia.

I begin this project with a commentary on one aspect of the theoretical landscape of moral education in British Columbia. Specifically British Columbia has brought in the notion of educating students to be socially responsible. As such there is a palpable need for a clear definition of the concept. However, this thesis is not a purely analytical
critique of a document or method. I have not dissected and analyzed each part of this document in detail. Instead, the document has provided a point of theoretical reference that indicates the current conceptual climate of moral education in British Columbia. What I offer with this project is a greater sense of where we can go with such a conception for students given that we have a certain amount of work already done in this area. By gaining a fuller and more perspicuous understanding of social responsibility, we can begin to see the possibilities for moral education in British Columbia. It would seem incomplete to initiate a conversation about social responsibility in B.C. schools and not engage a program already in existence.

**Introduction: Tracing the History of Social Responsibility**

Many educators, administrators and school trustees have shied away from explicitly teaching the strong value systems that once provided the roots for character education in British Columbia. Not long ago the question of establishing a separate curriculum for educating character skills would have been a meaningless question. Character was developed as part of all curriculum areas: as a part of school. Students would recite in concert the “Lord’s Prayer” or sing of their loyalty to Queen and country in “God Save the Queen”. Dress codes and certain behaviours were encouraged as ways of showing respect for the institution and its personnel. Matters of moral value were pervasive in all the subjects of the curriculum. And while none of this character instruction admitted attachment to one particular religious tradition, no one seemed to be very confused about stating the source or the ethical mandate for the value positions held.
As nostalgic as I may sound, I am not suggesting that in light of our current situations in education, we return to past methods. We have progressed by way of respectful and sound pedagogies in many aspects of educational theory and practice. What we have lost however, is a clear sense of the foundation on which our character education might be based upon. We have, and rightly so, welcomed the reality of multiculturalism, the importance of diversity, and models of pluralism in society and education. As such our moral lives have become as diverse as the many different peoples that populate our educational institutions and partnerships. Additionally, the generative and reflective place for asserting and expressing values and morals has become the private sphere. I do not mean to invoke the traditional dichotomy between the public and private spheres as I realize this is messy business, however values that do not hold for all, or originate from a dominating or privileged position, or apply to all, seem indefensible within the public domain. Public institutions’ fitness and role in educating for strong values cannot help but become problematic as their mandate for educating strong values no longer extends deeply into the public domain. For how could we maintain equality and fairness – central to liberal assurances of pluralism, respect, and toleration - in light of all of our differences and at the same time claim that certain values ought to be educated over others?

Even though explicit moral instruction has become marginalized in public life and has suffered in education, the need for moral education is still great. However, moral education programs have become skills-based rather than focused on the reasoned development of moral character. In British Columbia, 2000, the Ministry of Education released its own version of this type of skills based program. Its goal is stated as
“providing a broad framework to assist in monitoring and evaluating a variety of school and classroom programs that aim to enhance how students get along and develop responsible behaviour” (p. 9). It is entitled The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility. Essentially, it is an assessment tool to determine how well students are progressing along the road to becoming socially responsible. The document is very specific about the behavioural criteria displayed by a socially responsible person. Yet, it is not prescriptive about how to develop these skills in students. It is concerned almost exclusively – and quite extensively so – with how to evaluate students’ behaviours.

In this document, a rich conception of character education has been replaced by a mandate for teaching the skills required to solve interpersonal problems, meet social and political obligations, become ‘community – minded’, and other such ideas. The niche occupied by this program seems to be one where students demonstrate the ability to solve problems and get on well with others without learning any foundational ethics or reflecting on aspects of their characters. The document, with its emphasis on skills, has eclipsed the moral dimension of education for social responsibility. Crucial moral concepts have faded to the background. The document makes the assumption that there are value neutral skills that are easily taught from a value neutral perspective. This means that schools do not have to wade into any sticky justifications of which or whose values they are educating. These are seen to be the skills that everyone needs to get on with others, and The Performance Standards can measure their development.

However, performance standards like any standards are normative; they must rest on a foundation of values. In other words, we have a standard toward which we are aiming. However, the values underlying The BC Performance Standards are far from
explicitly stated or even easily found in the document that directly addresses them. Yet, these are the values and moral connections that give real meaning to the actions emphasized in the Ministry document. In this sense, the type of program that the Ministry was trying to invent could not really succeed in its current form: as completely free from value partiality.

Challenges to the Performance Standards for Social Responsibility

My initial assertions at this point are really two-fold. It seems that what has really occurred in British Columbia has been an attempt to deliver a moral education program on social responsibility under the very guise of it not being one. The foundations upon which the program is built are moral in nature while the outcomes are described much more as skills rather than moral sensibilities. So my first problem with the document is that it is weakly connected to the moral sources upon which its outcomes rely. It attempts to secure the desired behavioural outcomes without emphasizing their essential moral foundations.

While the Ministry document is well intentioned, the shortcomings, in terms of its relation to a perspicuous view of moral education, are important to investigate. I intend to show that it is unlikely teachers can work successfully with this document unless it is seen as an effort toward educating students to be moral agents. A greater connection with the moral sources of the principles in the Ministry document is required to meet this challenge.
The real problem with the document, as I have noted, is its own apparent denial of the very moral sources within which its standards are couched. Concepts of democracy, community, and family are moral concepts and have to be tied to a moral tradition as well as to behaviour. As such understanding of these concepts is limited if the teacher is required to teach them from a morally neutral perspective. How is it that we can talk about understanding something like democratic values and liberal rights unless we invoke those values as ideals that we hold? They are included in the document because, morally speaking, they are important to us. It is not possible for the teacher to remain neutral to the foundational values that are present in the document but not made explicit. With a greater emphasis on both moral identity and behaviour we have a better chance to develop moral agents. Therefore, the idea of a socially responsible person is really in some sense the idea of a morally responsible person: a person who understands values, rights, and obligations in relation to some good and in relation to preventing the proliferation of social evils.

Another facet of moral education necessary to any program, and only assumed by The Performance Standards, is the need to address competing values in one’s life. The Performance Standards tend to assume, by treating principles separately, that none will come into conflict over values with any others. For example, personal values often come into conflict with family values, or community values with democratic values. Reconciling important values in our lives that sometimes come into conflict with each other is a significant aspect of the moral life. Therefore, a significant portion of moral education – around social responsibility, if my thesis is accepted – ought to be concerned with how we make sense of competing values in our lives. It is ultimately the moral
dilemmas where equally justified values and reasons present themselves to the agent - in favour and opposed to a certain mode of action – that are the hardest to adjudicate. How do we account for the choices that we are faced with that play on more than one set of values that may not always be in harmony?

**Burnyeat’s Challenge**

M.F. Burnyeat helps with this critique when he talks about the morally developed person being able to deal in values differing in kind. In elaborating on Aristotle’s ideas in *Learning to be Good* (2000), Burnyeat comments that it is impossible to understand moral development in light of simply one type of value, for instance pleasure. In terms of pleasure chosen as the moral principle for the argument, Burnyeat states:

> If, ultimately, only one factor counts – call it F – and we have measured two actions X and Y in terms of F, and X comes out more F than Y does, there is nothing left to give value to Y to outweigh or compensate for its lesser quantity of F. (Burnyeat, p. 87)

As it turns out, this type of idea is very important in the complex practice of understanding and educating children’s moral sensibilities. This example lights on two important implications. First, on this type of model where the ends are narrowly defined with respect to single principles, there can be no reason for doing Y if X meets more of the criteria for being good. Yet it is possible that in certain circumstances it may be more honourable to choose Y over X. If we do not allow in our moral education curriculum for the fact that values can differ in kind, it is impossible to make sense of how one’s choices
could remain important or autonomous. The moral monist may offer an entry-level critique of this position based upon epistemic and human perceptual deficiency. Simply, our limited ability to know and perceive the inherent difference between X and Y on some other level than a narrow definition provides, renders it difficult to make this type of moral distinction. However, even given that this may be so – and I would argue is an imminent possibility within the current structure of moral education – our role as educators is to broaden the moral perception of students: to try to include multiple values and competing moral views in an attempt to replicate the way these views are presented to us in reality. To accede to the monist’s view would be to reflect a concession to the effect that students’ moral capacities cannot accommodate this type of advanced moral reasoning, which, I hope, is false. Therefore, students must have not only the ability to behave according to prescribed rules, but also the capacity to decide for themselves what is of moral importance and how values relate. Responsibility would have very little meaning if it did not involve some aspect of reasonable choice so that a case can be made for doing either X or Y in different situations where ends may be different.

Consider the example of democratic values. The criteria in the document centering on ‘valuing democracy’ seek to evaluate students’ behaviour with respect to one value only. The emphasis is placed upon the student understanding and affirming the role democracy plays in our political and communal lives. It is quite possible that in certain circumstances, under certain value structures, it may be nobler to question the value of democracy or its applications. Such an attitude, because of its social criticism and intent to seek the good, is still characteristic of a socially responsible agent. Yet, according to the strict explanation of what ‘valuing democracy’ means, the student has
not met any of the expectations. The Ministry document does not make room for evaluation based upon understanding competing values.

This is explained in more detail in the second chapter, but a short preface to that discussion will help to clarify my point here. Within The Performance Standards there is a heavy emphasis on becoming ‘community minded’. A necessary value is assumed here: that securing this goal is the value of democratic organization. Students’ behaviours are judged according to criteria assessing their behaviour in light of democratic values. However, as this is a single narrowly defined principle there is no justifiable way for a student to remain socially responsible without demonstrating this value. As will be shown later there are many reasons – based on justifiable values – to suggest that this is a narrow view of social responsibility limiting students’ allegiance to competing value and therefore effectually constraining moral agency.

The criteria for adjudicating behaviour in the document can only account for differences in degree of demonstrating certain values – which it doesn’t even explicitly state – and not differences in kinds of values. We leave out the fact that the goods for all people’s lives may be different in kind and as such merit different behaviours, all of which are socially responsible. The role of moral education in part is to make sense of these differences in values and to be able to articulate manifestations of this conflict. However, to see moral evaluation as simply a difference of degrees of behaviour – whether and how one demonstrates such-and-so – is far too simple a view.
A Clear Direction

This is really the departure point for my thesis. From this dissatisfaction with the theoretical foundations of the document I seek to develop a more perspicuous articulation of the more important aspects of a moral education program centered on the importance of social responsibility. Specifically, there are three of these aspects and each will be addressed in its own chapter:

- Reason must be given a central role in its use for understanding other's moral actions and attitudes as well as justifying our own. Additionally, it must have a role in affirming those criteria that the group decides will regulate its behaviour.

- Social Responsibility is most clearly understood when we see that it develops as a concept out of a tradition of ideas and values about our behaviours towards others. I have called this type of a tradition a moral tradition and its use in describing social responsibility will be supported in argumentation.

- Socially responsible action is understood most clearly as an expression of the constitution of the moral self. That is, those virtues that make up our character should be displayed in the moral concepts we support in our behaviours.  

In the following paragraphs I will outline how these three ideas will be investigated.

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1 It has come to my attention that I have very clearly ignored the role of the social context in determining a socially responsible act. This is a well articulated critique of my position. However, The whole project should be viewed as an attempt to describe moral behaviour within the social context conceding already that the social context has perhaps the greatest influencing role on the way we relate to others. One thing that can be said for my project is that often what is required is a stronger personal orientation to the “good” in order to combat that which, in schools, is often harmful pressure inherent to social contexts. I am thinking of contextual aspects such as peer pressure, unstable home environment, class and group distinction among students, etc. It must be difficult to say the least to grow up a morally responsible person in light of some of the stronger social pressures one experiences at school.
1. Scanlon and The Importance of Reasons and Values: Overview of Chapter Two

In Chapter Two I investigate the importance of the role of reason and reasoning well, in moral education dedicated to developing social responsibility. I will address major themes in this chapter central to the notion of reason being essentially important for understanding obligations of a moral nature. I will argue that the student has a central role in participating in moral dialogue and argumentation in order to justify certain acts and beliefs that affect others. Additionally, through the aid of reason, students, as members of a knowledge community, will be more able to affirm and adopt guiding moral principles as their own. An end in view for such a community is to clearly understand, communicate, and make decisions about morally significant actions and beliefs.

T.M. Scanlon lays bare a very comprehensive investigation of the importance of reasons, values, and value conflict in his book What We Owe to Each Other (1998). The importance of morality and social responsibility comes to rest on one’s ability to assess, analyze, and evaluate the force of reasons in light of potential actions or in light of values that compete with each other. With his careful and sensitive focus on the role of reason in moral life, Scanlon will provide a significant foundation for my suggestions about how we ought to conceive of moral education with respect to reasons and values. Yet, I do not believe that this is the whole story for morality or moral education. It is too thin, too hypothetical, too calculative. Morality and moral education also requires a human
dimension found more readily in the ideas of authors I will describe in following chapters, such as Jeffery Stout, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Michael Walzer.

2. The Importance of Moral Traditions: Overview of Chapter Three

Social responsibility is most clearly understood and practiced when we perceive of it as part of a moral tradition or as a moral tradition for moral education. My aim throughout chapter two will be to persuade one that social responsibility is a moral tradition. This is not to suggest that social responsibility is not important to other moral traditions, but rather to claim that social responsibility can stand on its own or as part of other traditions. I will use the descriptions of moral narratives and traditions by such authors as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer to show that just like understanding other traditions or narratives, clearly understanding social responsibility requires many of the components that understanding other moral traditions does. Specifically, all moral traditions require the demonstration of certain virtues. I suggest that social responsibility also requires an understanding of certain moral virtues and goods internal to the practice of becoming socially responsible.

A further look into the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Walzer will help to support my claims in this chapter. MacIntyre has much to contribute about how we can decide whether or not social responsibility is a moral tradition or not. I will take a closer look at his ideas of goods internal to practice and his definition of a virtue to assess whether they are also required by a fully developed conception of social responsibility. Walzer on the other hand, contributes a very lively, creative, and genuine description of the type of "living" that we do within our moral environments. Specifically, his
description of what it means to interpret the moral world around us is particularly important. It is analogous to much of what we aim to do with students in having them interpret and describe the nature of moral situations in school.

Finally, in this chapter I will argue that an aim of moral education for social responsibility ought to be to further an immersion into a moral tradition with foundations in social responsibility. If we are to understand social responsibility as a moral tradition into which we immerse students, then we cannot also claim that it belongs only in the classroom or that it is only the province of certain lessons. It is a way of living a moral life. It is a way of interpreting the world around us. Its place is in every sphere of public and private life, and all nebulous areas in between. However, to better understand this last claim we must also understand the personal role the learner has to fulfill in becoming socially responsible.

3. The Unity of Self and Action: Overview of Chapter Four

All educators are aware that one of the principles of successful learning is the participation of the learner. The learner has to have a positive disposition toward being taught: in some sense a disposition toward becoming a different person – a person who knows. The same goes for one’s becoming morally educated. When they come to possess an understanding of how they ought to act they also possess knowledge of right and wrong in relation to that action. One is now a person who knows about right and wrong in relation to some act. I want to suggest that this knowledge of the rightness of certain actions becomes an integral part of who we are. We seek to encourage, express, and live out right action. In fact, it is important for the preservation of our identity to act
authentically with respect to the way we feel about something. In this way our sense of identity is tied to actions that can be observed in us by others as well as monitored by ourselves.

In order for students to truly become socially responsible, their commitment to what they have learned has to extend beyond the bounds of the classroom or school. It must permeate all aspects of their lives. As such, in Chapter Four, I claim that there has to exist some unity between how the student identifies themselves and how this is consistently evident in their actions. In some sense this is the student’s investment in becoming a socially responsible person. If educators did not look for this type of consistency between students’ beliefs and their behaviour, it would be similar to believing to be successful in teaching math if the student could perform 2+2 but not believe the answer was four. Chapter Four includes some detailed examples of how one must internalize strong knowledge about moral action and I rely heavily on the work of John Dewey to show how this unity is required to live a morally responsible life.

Classroom Narrative: Overview of Chapter Five

After developing, in the preceding chapters, the three important aspects of a more perspicuous account of social responsibility, I will offer some informal observations that I recorded over the course of two years in my classroom. The focus of my observations was on what aspects of my model of social responsibility could be developed through engaging with literature of a morally significant type. Specifically, students focus on the characters, events, and social conditions confronted in The Giver (1993), by Lois Lowry.
It will become evident in this fourth section that students’ approaches to thinking about morality were becoming a practice that they were investing personally in. Likewise, evidence from student responses suggests that their thinking corroborates the importance of the three ideas that I investigated in the preceding chapters. Students were becoming builders of their own senses of morality within a tradition that values certain moral virtues. We were beginning from a point of struggle with their experiences around the most primary moral notions. Students developed their beliefs and expressed moral opinions of how things ought to be based upon them. In most cases how they wanted the moral universe to appear was in line with principles set out in The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility but the students understood them as much more than lessons in school.
CHAPTER TWO
The Importance of Reasons and Values

Introduction: Reasoning about Social Responsibility

T.M. Scanlon, in his book What We Owe to Each Other, describes a type of morality based upon obligations central to living together. This has direct significance for moral education in schools as we are concerned with how well students get on together in social groupings. Included in Scanlon’s discussion of what is needed to interact in a morally defensible way are the abilities to recognize duty, responsibility, and moral criticism. This type of position is often called the contractualist position as it describes the type of social conditions necessary for people to live peacefully and prosperously together. Most importantly for Scanlon, is the role played by reason in securing agreement around moral principles concerning how we ought to live together. Reasons advanced in favour or in opposition to moral principles, and the fact that others must recognize these reasons, determine the nature of social morality, or the duties owed to one another. Scanlon provides a concise description of how reason, the rightness or wrongness of an act or principle, and morality relate to each other.

The view I will defend takes judgments of right and wrong to be claims about reasons – more specifically about the adequacy of reasons for accepting or rejecting principles under certain conditions. (Scanlon, p. 3)

From this initial description Scanlon goes on to give a more perspicious account of how the importance of reasons could enter into a social theory of responsibility.
An act is wrong if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behaviour that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced general agreement. (Scanlon, p. 153)

Reasons are important because they go beyond the act to characterize the moral nature of the act: what it is that makes the act right or wrong. Something is a reason if it provides good grounds for performing, or deters one from performing, a certain act. It follows then that statements about morality, or of how one ought to act, are supported by reasons. We could also conclude that for one to perform such an act it would have to be supported by some set of credible relevant reasons. This incorporates the idea that reasons can exist and can be acknowledged by persons, and also that reasons can be a source of motivation.

**Accommodating Reason in the Performance Standards**

The above analysis is an important one to keep in mind throughout the discussions in the second chapter. I will be making the case that reason does not enjoy a sufficient place in the B.C. document for social responsibility. I will be making this case on two grounds using Scanlon’s support.

1. If reason is important as a justifying principle about the rightness or wrongness of our actions, as Scanlon suggests, then it is a quality of good moral development.
2. Moral education is concerned with the comprehensive moral development of its students.
3. Therefore, moral education is concerned with the ability to manipulate, express, and defend reasons for our actions of right and wrong.
We have already encountered an aspect of this earlier on in the thesis. My main contention here is that an emphasis on reasoning is undervalued in the Performance Standards for Social Responsibility.

The second argument I will defend is less easily delineated than the first. The first suggests a positive development in moral education: the need to emphasize reason, and reasoning, is important. The second argument has to do with the performance standards themselves as they are found in the document and the ontological status they seem to enjoy.

1. If the performance standards are moral principles, as I have considered them, then they have reasons that must support them, even if they are not made clear.

2. The reasons and values upon which these performance standards are based are absent from the document.

3. Since the underlying reasons and values upon which the document is based are not made clear, they must not be considered by the Ministry to be an important aspect of moral education in B.C.

4. This also entails that investigating, arguing, and justifying these underlying reasons is not assumed by the Ministry to be an importance aspect of moral education either.

There is a problem here. The reasons underlying the performance standards are important to the standards, as I have noted. Yet, they do not seem to be emphasized in the document in terms of their relation to moral education. The implication is paradoxical. It amounts to saying that the reasons supporting the performance standards are important but not important for moral education. They cannot be both important
underlying elements of the document and unimportant aspects of a moral education according to it.

The problem exists when we try to reconcile the conclusion of the first argument with that of the second. As I will show later the second argument reveals a crucial flaw in the social responsibility document. For if we take Scanlon to mean that the reasons are important to argumentation then the reasons and values that support moral principles we ask students to accept should be open to scrutiny. It is important to consider that at some point justification stops. Some moral beliefs simply rely on such ingrained aspects of cultural or habitual life they form the foundations of our most cherished beliefs. We could not possibly justify all beliefs in the way Scanlon describes. Scanlon points out those certain personal moral domains that require moral assessment and defense of a different nature. Therefore, I must point out that we are talking about certain moral beliefs in this project that come to rest on the social aspect of morality: how we get along with others. At least where our behaviour concerning others is concerned, we should be able to justify any action of ours that has implications for the well-being of others.

**Students Assessing Reasons**

Reasoning and participation in reason-based dialogue are fundamental aspects of any moral education program. If we agree that one of the aims of moral education is to move the agent toward independent moral thinking, then some emphasis on self-governance according to reasons is required. In fact, looking at Scanlon’s ideas we can see the importance of reasoning for moral appraisal.
A person governs herself in the sense required if she is sensitive to the force of reasons and to the distinctions and relations between them and if her response to these reasons generally determines her subsequent attitudes and actions. (Scanlon, p. 281)

My arguments in this chapter will rest on the premise that coming to endorse reasons for one’s own moral appraisals from a personal standpoint is an important aspect of moral development for students. Effective self-governance is based upon not only an acknowledgment of reasons that fit a situation, but also upon the motivation to act in ways suggested by reason. Socially responsible action is dependent on the agent understanding and articulating defensible reasons, not just complying with rules. However, reasoning has a very small role to play in the B.C. Ministry’s Performance Standards. I advance an enhanced place for reason in moral education towards social responsibility compared with the performance standards. As is, emphasis on the role of reasons and argumentation is underrepresented in the document.

Three aspects of social responsibility require fleshing out through the rest of this chapter. First, I would like to deal more closely with the ideas of Scanlon that seem important to my critique of The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility. Secondly, I would like to further comment upon the arguments I outlined above. Finally, a synthesis and conclusion are required to show how important Scanlon’s ideas are for a moral education program based on learning to reason and learning to examine values.

Scanlon’s Contribution to Reasons and Values

My aim in this section is to show the ways in which Scanlon’s ideas about reasons and the examination of values bear on defensible moral education. My main
contention is that given the role that reasons and values play throughout his descriptions of moral cases, it is clear that agents have, or ought to have, a good grasp on reasons and principles of argumentation. If a unifying theory for social morality is based upon principles that no reasonable person could reject, then the development of a reasonable person is important. Later I will return, in more detail, to characteristics of reasonable students. A sound moral education develops abilities in reasoning and argumentation and Scanlon’s argument supports this assertion.

On the face of it Scanlon’s governing principle for morality shares some striking similarities with the categorical imperative of Kant, a similarity he notes (p.5). Kant’s formulation briefly paraphrased states that we should be able to will the maxims of our actions to be universal law. Kant arrives at this maxim through reason. Similarly, Scanlon is claiming that if we, as reasonable people, cannot reasonably reject a certain moral principle then such a principle would not be prohibited in action. Kant’s universal maxim implies much the same thing. If one can will that his or her maxims could become universally accepted then the agreement of all reasonable people is indicated.

There are two significant tangible differences between the views offered by Kant and Scanlon, the illumination of which shows clearly why I chose Scanlon to illustrate my arguments for moral education. The first difference is one that I call ‘significant others’ and it has to do with the scope of agreement that is required to justify a principle. The second difference springs from the first but has to do with the capacities required of the agent who agrees to live by these principles. Scanlon’s principle emphasizes the social dimensions of accepting and justifying moral principles. This emphasis is especially important for moral education.
Presumably if one were to live according to Kant’s categorical imperative one could do so in private. That is I can decide if I could will such actions as I am contemplating to become universal directives for actions of a similar nature. The role of strictly rational thought is central to the view offered by Kant. I do not require consent from others who may be significantly affected by my actions. In a sense I can assume that my actions are justified because I could will them to be universal law. For Scanlon however, the role of reasonable interlocutors is essential. Whatever principle is being considered must be seen to be reasonable and acceptable to significant others who may be affected by its consequences. This idea that reasonable persons should participate in the process of examining principles is important to my critique of the document on social responsibility. My critique, then, owes much of its force to Scanlon’s views on moral principles.

The second difference has to do with the capacities required by an agent to live by either one of the principles offered by Kant or Scanlon. Basically, Scanlon’s principle requires more in the way of moral development than does Kant’s. In speaking about rational development here I am speaking narrowly about the ability to recognize, dissect, and provide reasons for moral principles that would result in other reasonable people accepting or rejecting them. Kant’s position requires little in the way of collective justification and so it may not require that one is versed in skills of rhetoric, argumentation, or reason. I could very well will my actions to become universal laws based on other motivating factors since I do not have to provide reasons for such actions as long as I could will them to be of a certain type. Scanlon’s moral principle requires that one be versed in the practice of reasoning and argumentation. There is a clear
difference between the requirements of Kant’s formulations and Scanlon’s principle of morally justifiable action, as the latter requires moral dialogue between persons. Students must also become versed in such dialogical argumentation as they develop as moral agents. The end envisioned for such development is that students should come to understand one and other’s moral views and their force.

Three features of Scanlon’s discussion will be particularly important to my arguments in this thesis. The first is that reasons and the values underlying them are important to socially responsible action. Second, it is important for moral education that students be taught to participate in reasoning and argumentation, to become active participants in moral dialogue. And lastly, the capacity to reason and reflect on values is required for independent moral thought and self – governance. As will become evident in the next section, these qualities are missing from The Performance Standards on Social Responsibility.

Reasons, Values, and the Social Responsibility Curriculum

In the introduction I claimed that the BC document on social responsibility is flawed. Specifically, I made the charge that the role of one’s own reasons in socially responsible action, as well as one’s ability to identify and justify others’ reasons, was under-emphasized. I also claimed that the reasons that might support The Performance Standards are unexamined. It is also the case that students are not brought into the process of examining reasons or determining the adequacy of the standards themselves. These are two claims that require more attention. As we have seen from Scanlon’s
perspective the examination of reasons and values, as well as the capacity to reason and recognize reasons are important to moral development.

The scale of The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility exists as an evaluative tool for teachers to assess students' behaviours in four general areas. They are

1. contributing to the class and school community
2. solving problems in peaceful ways
3. valuing diversity and defending human rights
4. exercising democratic right and responsibilities

Within these four areas criteria for judging students' behaviours, are laid out. Students' performance is measured against a four tiered rating scale beginning with "Not yet meeting expectations" to "Minimally meeting expectations" and Meeting expectations" to "Exceeding expectations".

The problem exists at the stage where we seek to evaluate these principles. Although moral concepts exist as criteria upon which to judge students' behaviour, these are insufficiently acknowledged. Neither is there recognition of the need for students to come to see the force of the principles they are being asked to endorse. Otherwise the student may only hold instrumental reasons for acting according to the criteria. One such reason for showing respect to others could be that the student recognizes the teacher wants such behaviour. When the teacher does not demand it, the student does not exhibit or express it. Again though, in spheres where compliance is not required by rules or an authoritative figure, there does not appear to be a reason for acting morally. Reasons for acting morally must be reasons that are with me at all times, intrinsic motivations for my being good. As such they must be part of me, owned by me, and most importantly
justified by me. What I am claiming about reasons and values is that The Performance Standards should measure behaviour according to the students' abilities to recognize and accept reasons for acting in morally defensible ways. An example from the document helps to illustrate this point.

In the section called *Valuing Diversity and Defending Human Rights*, for Grade 4 and 5, there is a list of criteria that the students will meet as they progress toward being socially responsible people. According to the criteria in this section, one is exceeding expectations if one demonstrates behaviour that is "fair and respectful and shows growing commitment to fair and just treatment for everyone". For the child who shows that he or she is underdeveloped in this sense he or she will display behaviour that is "sometimes disrespectful and appears unaware of others' rights" (p. 61)

The problem is that the difference between the two outcomes in the example mentioned above is not a difference about the reasons each student would have to act responsibly. They are criteria that focus strictly on students' behaviour. Essentially we, as evaluators, are blind to any reasons upon which students' actions are predicated when we evaluate and focus on only behaviour. However, whether or not a student excels according to this particular criterion *certainly* depends upon the reasons and values underlying the student's behaviour. It is not as if we should suggest that the child who falls into "not within expectations" is acting without reason. The child may have justifiable reasons for acting in ways contrary to the narrowly described expectations of The Performance Standards. We would have a hard time justifying that such a student could be censured because the reason for his actions have been eclipsed by an exclusive focus on his behaviour. What we ought to be interested in are the reasons and values that
lead students to certain actions, and encourage an inward turn of reflection upon those reasons so that a child becomes involved in justifying his or her actions to others and to himself. According to Scanlon, this would be the process of offering reasons that no rational person could reject.

When the student who is disrespectful acts in such ways, we are not aiding the student by simply describing their actions as unacceptable. She or he needs to be taught not only to behave respectfully but also to see the reasons for believing that respect for others is important. These reasons must be explained in a way that can be grasped by the student. Her or his commitment to acting respectfully grows out of understanding the importance of respect, and being able to articulate the reasons why we value respect.

My evaluation of a student’s behaviour without examination of her reasons is incomplete. Such an assessment contains only a description of the student’s actual behaviour. It does not contain the normative distinction that sets this behaviour apart from behaviours that are encouraged. Simply put, we have not explained what it is about this expression of character that requires remediation. I would suggest that a more complete evaluation of the student includes assessing whether the student can offer good reasons for acting in such a way. We need to inquire and investigate with students about the deeper, perhaps underlying, reasons and values that led to certain behaviours. But, therein lies part of the task of moral education: to move the student by way of reason to be responsible for his or her actions. I am suggesting that a greater emphasis be placed upon the students’ abilities to justify their behaviours and opinions to others. When we turn our evaluative eye away from the “what” of the behaviour and to the “why” of the behaviour we stand to gain further insight into the moral development of students. For
we cannot lay moral blame or assess accountability without sufficient understanding of the reasons for such actions. Furthermore, when there is reliance upon the participation of the student in some co-deliberative project about understanding behaviour involving others, the relationship moves away from a perception of compliance on behalf of the student and toward a personal understanding of one’s involvement in the moral world. For Scanlon this deliberative process is of essential importance if we are to try to develop principles that govern the ways we act with regards to one and other. Scanlon writes:

The part of morality with which I am mainly concerned is sometimes seen as a system of restraints which we accept in order to gain protection against the harmful conduct of others. Moral criticism is then seen as a sanction that is supposed to move people to comply with these restraints. On my view, by contrast, this part of morality is not, fundamentally, a mechanism of control and protection but, rather, what I call a system of co-deliberation, and moral reasoning is an attempt to work out principles that each of us could be asked to employ as a basis for deliberation and accept as a basis of criticism. Seeking such principles is part of what is involved in recognizing each other’s value as rational creatures. (Scanlon, p.268)

I suspect that at least sometimes students perceive documents such as The B.C. Performance Standards for Social Responsibility as a set of rules, or on Scanlon’s view, as a set of restraints. As such the reasons for their behaviour go unexamined. As rational moral creatures we ought to be involved in working out principles that get at the real reasons – the relevant motivating reasons – for wanting our actions to secure certain outcomes. This also applies to students who are becoming moral agents. We want the outcome of their behaviour to reflect relevant reasons and values. Making the choice to
behave in certain ways then becomes conscious and understood. The difference is between acquiescence to a system of restraints vs. assent to a process of rational deliberation: the first is not sufficient for becoming socially responsible.

**Searching for Equilibrium**

As moral educators, we should be looking at a workable balance between students' rational understandings of their moral obligations and their behaviour. This will become important in following chapters. As it stands the emphasis in the document is on behaviour. However, most of us want assurances that our students are behaving morally for the right reasons.

Even when reasons are mentioned in the document, students have little or no opportunity to deliberate about their adequacy or relevance. As such, the reasons for advocating certain principles are to be accepted before they have been subject to any critical examination by the students. The truth or worthiness of principles is not subject to the deliberation that ought to occur through moral education. I will stick to the example of democratic values that I have already employed earlier in the thesis.

When we speak of democracy and democratic governments we are speaking of concepts and social practices that have been violently contested over time. In fact, democracy is healthy in Canada because we have good reason to support it. However, we cannot assume that students have the same reasons as adults for believing the values and practices of democracy are important. As educators, we also cannot expect students to exhibit behaviours that demonstrate their endorsement of these values and their
agreement with the reasons without a process of deliberation. Historically, the western world has struggled to assert and affirm the reasons and values of democracy. We ought to realize that the practice of moral education should include an emphasis upon instilling these values through examining their importance for students.

I suggest that these moral principles, like the value of democracy, are exactly what moral education ought to arrive at through sensitive examination, not assert from the beginning. Moral concepts such as the value of democracy are ends that we arrive at through extended dialogue and deliberation. The document assumes that certain moral positions and concepts are beyond question, and then holds them up as standards by which all students ought to refine their behaviour. But moral principles come to have their force through the process of rational examination by rational individuals, at least some of whom will be affected by them. Without this co-deliberation we cannot reasonably be asked to abide by principles. Without rational assent, social responsibility becomes blind obedience to the rule of the day.

If the reasons and values that support the larger moral principles in the document are not held up for examination by students themselves, an opportunity for moral development is overlooked. It is also possible that when students give us their own reasons for behaving in ways that seem contrary to expectations, we will miss the opportunity to engage with their views. That is, if The Performance Standards do not take into account other possible good reasons for acting contrary to such standards, then our view of what is morally acceptable is significantly narrowed. Burnyeat helped to point this out earlier. This may cause educators to evaluate a student as low on The Performance Standards because she acts in certain ways. The real problem is that under
The Performance Standards our evaluative vision is too narrow to allow us to see good reasons for acting otherwise. Examining, the underlying values of The Performance Standards results in a better understanding of the many reasons one could have for acting in certain ways in relation to The Performance Standards. Further examples will clarify these assertions.

Example Using the Value of Democracy

The document suggests that values of democracy and democratic governments should be clearly displayed or exemplified in students’ behaviours. Students who exceed expectations demonstrate “optimism about the ways that citizens interact with and influence democratic governments”, or “demonstrates understandings of global citizenship” (p. 105). While conversely, a student who “shows a sense of confusion or powerlessness about democratic governments” fails to meet the expectations we would have of a socially responsible person. What seems to be the requirement here is some endorsement of the value of democracy in a universal sense. As I suggested, no reasons are provided as to why one should endorse such values, simply the requirement to behave as if one does. Furthermore, the complicated reasons why one may choose to withhold or question their value for democracy, or at least lose confidence in democratic governments, are left absent.

It is of interest to note the possible – at least perceived – collusion here between the value of democracy and its association with modes of government. While it has no place in my study, this logical error did not go unnoticed. The government of the day really has very little to do with how we demonstrate our ‘values of democracy’. It is quite believable to suggest that it may be my strong value of democracy that causes me to stand in opposition to the government of the day. The value of democracy itself stands outside of the possibility for political corruption while the government of the day does not.
On the first account of my argument, valuing democracy may be an end or aim of moral education. Not just behaving as if one understands that one lives according to pseudo-democratic rule, but actually coming to reproduce relevant justification that valuing democracy is worthwhile. A socially responsible person would be able to justify the existence of important concepts in a morally defensible way. My view is that students are more likely to value living by democratic rules if they have participated in the deliberation, argumentation, and justification of central democratic principles. Students would then be motivated to act on the basis of their actual endorsement of the value of democracy. Their behaviours could then be internalized according to the moral concepts they have affirmed.

It is possible to look at this example in a different way. If we view valuing democracy as an educational end, we should help students practice democracy in the deliberations of which they are part. However, we cannot simply require that students accept the value of democracy as worthwhile. There is a developmental process through which students increasingly demonstrate their understanding of these concepts. Through practicing democracy, democratic values are identified and internalized over time. In practice this would reveal itself in a type of moral education program that could be flexible enough to allow for the students' conceptual struggles related to understanding and accepting certain moral concepts related to social responsibility.

Conversely, we shouldn't want to assert that the worth of a value such a democracy cannot be contested. It would be a self-defeating practice to suggest such an idea. The value of democracy implies that the reasons for adhering to its practices are recognized and affirmed. In fact, I believe that in some sense we are expected as citizens
to support the value of democracy. If this holds true the conceptual struggles with such a social value must have taken place at some point. That is there exists a need for the continual re-justification of the value of democracy. Classroom education is a good arena for this type of rational engagement with important social values that are not simply the byproducts or securities provided by such systems. Consequently, if this were not the case, the situation would amount to a dogmatic assertion that the value of democracy is unwavering and established for all people.

Conclusion: Developing Reasoning as a Principle of Social Responsibility

The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility can be critiqued on several grounds. First I suggested that the role of reason was understated in the document. When we educate to morality the role of reason is very important in evaluating and directing moral criticism. We understand the moral impact of a situation by understanding the reasons that govern one's behaviour. When we offer reasons and participate in reasoning we attempt to understand the motivations of others. However, the role of reason in developing a sense of social responsibility is insufficiently addressed in the document. Reasons for the action are important to the evaluation of any behavior. Hence an important focus of moral education ought to be the ability to express as well as understand reasons.

My conclusions then are simple. First, instead of focusing exclusively on the evaluative schemes in the document, emphasis should be placed upon opportunities for inter-subjective reasoning between teachers and students. Secondly, moral education
focused on the development of social responsibility ought to broaden its scope to allow the possibility of diverse perspectives on even the most foundational of principles. Education for social responsibility needs to include the reasonable conceptual struggles that must take place before students come to endorse certain values as morally important. This will include a difference of opinion on certain concepts due to variables such as cultural tradition, religion, or sexuality. Allowing for this struggle does not render an education toward social responsibility weak. In fact, by having students participate in pulling out the values and reasons inherent to the principles in the document, we allow better opportunities for them to engage with beliefs that will shape their lives. Difference of opinion is allowed as long as respectful behaviour continues to be practiced as part of becoming socially responsible. I am not advocating a departure from the main tenants of the document itself but instead suggesting that certain aspects could benefit from a re-visitation.

Becoming socially responsible requires the ability to offer reasons and in turn understand reasons offered by others for the ways we act and think. As such, we allow for difference of opinion and a respect for diversity. This demonstrates respect for ourselves and for others as rational creatures capable of questioning and defending moral positions.

Students should be engaged in meaningful ways with concepts that are at the very heart of social responsibility. At present, the document including its emphasis on performance rather than understanding fails students in important ways. Do we as educators presume that students are not yet equipped to address important moral concepts? Sometimes a student’s sense of right and wrong will not agree with common opinion. The possibility exists that the value of democracy for example, may not be a
shared value across the board. But differences in moral beliefs can be the start of fruitful
deliberation, deliberation that can enrich everyone’s understandings. The alternative is to
hide important values from potential examination that might enlighten or convince
students on the basis of reasons. Documents that merely assert the value of democracy,
without inviting students to come to their own understandings may have little success in
promoting values, the values they espouse.

In this chapter I have criticized The British Columbia Performance Standards for
giving reason a diminished role in the development of an authentic sense of social
responsibility. I suggested that a better understanding of the concept of social
responsibility in moral education is required I argued that understanding a person’s
reasons for their behaviors is crucial for helping them develop as moral agents who can
take responsibility for their actions. We cannot lay blame according to general standards
or principles without first discovering the reasons for a given action. Of course the
reasons offered can often change the moral import or evaluation of a given situation. But
without being able to offer reasons supporting moral positions and actions, the student is
at a loss to defend their position and the educator is at a loss to understand the authentic
moral content of an action.

In this chapter I argued that moral development is dependent on learning how to
deliberate on the basis of good reasons and in the company of others. It is only when
students can offer reasons to support foundational moral beliefs, that students
demonstrate their moral agency. The only genuine reason for behaving in a socially
responsible way is to be convinced of the value of social responsibility. Compliance
without understanding and affirmation is likely to be limited, inconsistent and vulnerable to whim.

To this point I have explained the importance of reason to social responsibility and related the importance of social responsibility to moral education in general. But more needs to be said about why we should accept that educating to social responsibility is more worthwhile than educating to some other equally important moral concept. Educating for social responsibility may meet overarching ends for the moral development of students, but it is also of importance to collective moral life. I will argue in chapter three that social responsibility is more than just an important concept for moral education. Social responsibility is itself a moral tradition within which we have lived in the western world for many years. It frames our understanding of the ways that we behave towards others and of the behaviours we expect from them. In the following chapters I will develop the criteria necessary to prove that social responsibility shares a tight correlation with other moral traditions and narratives.
CHAPTER 3
The Importance of a Moral Tradition

Introduction: Summarising the Conception Thus Far

In the previous chapter I argued that reasoning about, and providing good reasons for, the existence of moral principles is an important facet of education. I argued that, in terms of social responsibility, reason was an important vehicle for students to respond to actions of a moral nature as well as to give and understand reasons for theirs and others’ moral actions. With the help of T.M. Scanlon, I claimed the only moral blame that can be attributed to an individual is that blame which follows an account of the situation according to one’s reason for acting. Furthermore, I asserted that the development of dispositions of argumentation leads to a better understanding of the values that are made explicit once participation in reasoning takes place. These are the very values upon which the principles of social responsibility are premised. More needs to be developed around this idea.

I do not wish to be misunderstood as adopting an extreme position with regard to rationalism with this account of reason. I am not convinced nor do I advocate that any sort of pure reason can provide students with the type of moral understanding that would unambiguously guide behaviour. There are many other aspects of students’ behaviour that are important to consider such as social context, emotional state, or even mental condition. Instead, I used the idea of reason in the sense that reasons mean good grounds for being motivated to perform or refrain from performing a certain act. Simon Blackburn makes this differentiation in his work Being Good (2001), where he calls reasons in the rationalistic, or in the Cartesian sense, “capital R reasons”. These are the
types of reasons that if they existed could provide uncontestable grounds to perform certain actions and to act contrary to them would be illogical. Small ‘r’, reasons in the sense that I have been invoking them, are the other types of reasons he discusses. These reasons take into account the subjective realms of opinion, instinct, and general feeling about acts that cannot be uncontestably established by reasons alone. It is possible that we could ignore certain reasons and still not be irrational in our actions. Or, that should there be capital ‘R’ Reasons, they are of different type than those that relate to opinion and moral motivation.³ This is a useful distinction for moral education as it takes into account that students have reasons to offer that relate to their opinions and intuitions and that these reasons should be given due weight.

Nevertheless, no matter which type of reason we wish to employ, we cannot ignore that reasons have weight because of the values that they appeal to. As Stout (1989) mentions, in order for us to have a disagreement or a discussion about morality, we must agree on both our purpose for engaging in the disagreement in the first place and the meaning of the languages that we employ. It is the context within which reasons are given that gives meaning and weight to the reason. The statement that ‘I was too late for the polls’ explains why I did not vote. It is only a reason that mitigates guilt for not voting if there exists a context within which it is commonly understood that voting is an important part of citizenship, and that not voting is something one should feel guilty about. In the case of Western democracies our tradition of social responsibility includes the attitude that voting is an important part of one’s civic duties. This context of meaning

³ This holds true more steadfastly in the realm of moral philosophy as I think we could probably arrive at examples in say the medical field to defeat this premise. Scanlon uses the example of the smoker who understands the grave health risks involved in smoking, yet continues to smoke in spite of the personal
provides the grounds upon which actions can be interpreted according to reason. In the field of moral education one interprets actions according to their ethical merit. These types of judgements are only made possible if answers to the question, "What is important in relation to certain actions?" is explored. My inaction – not voting in an election – would carry little weight within a tradition that does not place value upon citizenship participation or democratic practices.

The purposes for examining social responsibility in terms of a moral tradition stem from this short introduction. First, there are other motivating factors of behaviour that must be considered in moral education. Specifically, it is important to examine the context or tradition within which our behaviour is couched and hence given further meaning. Second, that in the example of the citizen being late for the polls, it is evident that the first section on the importance of reason is only relevant in relation to a bigger picture of concepts, practices, and virtues. These will be examined in light of a tradition of social responsibility.

Exploring Moral Traditions

In terms of morality, and in relation to the discussion of how we ought to teach morality, I want to introduce the term 'moral tradition'. While this idea will be explored through the work of scholars in the field throughout the chapter, an introduction to the term is required. The moral tradition is used to encapsulate the idea there is a landscape of values, dispositions, concepts, attitudes, and virtues that when taken together form a

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interests he may have in life itself. It seems here that the man would have capital 'R' Reasons to stop smoking and in this sense could be termed irrational and hence the existence of at least some Reasons.
meaningful context, or bigger picture, within which we can better understand morality. For instance, to stick to the same example I used earlier, my action of voting in Canada is given its moral dimensions by the fact that there exists a democratic tradition among this country's peoples that places value upon voting.

Since moral education is concerned with the development of social responsibility, the very notion of responsibility must be defined in relation to some established moral tradition. A perspicuous definition of social responsibility must account for the importance of such a term in the historical accounts of a people. Furthermore, if we attempt to persuade students to act according to socially responsible precepts, then moral education could benefit from emphasizing for students the degree to which students are connected to or immersed in a moral tradition.

Again, in determining the conceptual status of such a tradition, one is faced with a difficult task of defining not only what constitutes this tradition but more importantly one is faced with the challenge of answering how any conception of a moral tradition allows for inter-dynamic relations between hegemonic cultures and minority traditions. It is not possible in this space to give due amount of space to these challenges. However, some important questions get at piecing together the puzzle of the conceptual status of social responsibility. Is social responsibility an emerging moral tradition of western multicultural democracies formed out of an overlapping consensus of constituent cultures? Or, does it consist of a common core at the heart of each of the constituent culture? Or, is it a dominant moral tradition that is immerging out of the ever-intensifying dynamics of globalization, a moral tradition that is not always on every point congruent with minority and marginalized cultures?
My feeling is that it is most closely associated with notions present in the third question. However, my view does not necessarily perceive any dominating elements of a tradition of social responsibility as evil. And furthermore, that the goal of any moral tradition involving more than one homogeneous culture is to develop the type of common core values suggested by question two. Any moral tradition of social responsibility is an evolving emerging tradition that, since it has to do with all cultures respectfully living together, welcomes most contributions from groups that may have even felt pushed to the perimeter of civic life in the past. I suspect that in an environment characterized by an increasingly pluralistic fabric, we require some civic moral tradition to emerge that determines our practices in the epistemic spaces between cultures and to do with cultures in relation to each other. The important practices of cultures within this environment and living within this moral tradition would be to seek consensus and common understandings of core values that must emerge as the tradition moves forward. Relating back to the thesis on moral education, here enters the importance of dialogue between moral agents, reasoning ability, and a clear recognition that whatever the conceptual status of social responsibility is, students are actors striving to interpret this moral world with some degree of consistency.

Clarifying the Moral Tradition as Social Responsibility

This chapter will proceed with a more detailed exploration of the idea of a moral tradition as a term within its own right. A clear description and characterization of the term "moral tradition" can help us decide whether it can include in its scope social
responsibility. I will argue that social responsibility is best understood when we accept it as a moral tradition in its own right. I have alluded in earlier chapters to the conceptual puzzle confronting any attempt to define social responsibility in this way. Firstly, it is difficult to move our understanding of moral traditions, such as Ancient Greece or traditional Chinese culture, away from particular groups because we have always associated the moral with religious or cultural lives and never with civic life. I concede that it is puzzling to think of social responsibility on structural par with historically expansive cultural moral traditions that all include notions of what it means to that particular culture to be social responsible. But as public spaces in western democracies become increasingly secular places some moral tradition must emerge from the space that previously was occupied by particular religious or cultural traditions. We cannot ignore that we must give some priority to defining what it could mean to be socially responsible outside of those particular cultural moral traditions because this is the social and educational reality that we are faced with in western democracies. Secondly, good arguments could be made to suggest that social responsibility is not a moral tradition in its own right but that it may be an integral part of all moral traditions spelled out in their own ways, or that it may be more useful to conceive of it as a moral tradition within moral education. Both these options are feasible. It may be useful to present social responsibility in various ways in relation to these other options. However, in the interest of simplicity here I will refer to the moral tradition of social responsibility on its own for.

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4 I realize civic republicans would object to this statement as there is much literature to suggest that civic republicanism is a moral tradition that has been well argued.

5 I do not mean to imply here that one does not come into civic activities ignoring their particular cultural or religious affiliations. I am saying that these affiliations, in reality, often have little to do in contemporary debates in schools about placing moral blame.
I hope, what turn out to be good reasons. As before, The Performance Standards document initiates this discussion well but does not develop it.

The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility mandates principles of morality. Without an understanding of the traditions that lend force to the principles within the document, the principles themselves cannot be fully understood or appreciated. Understanding how social responsibility includes certain virtues, practices, concepts, and dispositions is important for knowing what being responsible looks like. Additionally, the importance of reasoning, as mentioned in chapter one, is complemented by a student’s sense that there is something meaningful to defend or reason about. Students should begin to defend not only their actions discreetly, but defend their actions from a particular place or point of view within the tradition. Through an awareness of one’s being within a moral tradition one can at least perceive how certain reasons carry the weight they do.

The Moral Tradition as Narrative

Margaret Atwood writes in the Blind Assassin (2000),

“Happiness is a garden walled with glass: there is no way in or out. In paradise there are no stories, because there are no journeys. It’s loss and regret and misery and yearning that drive the story forward, along its twisted road.” (Atwood, p. 650)

Common to much literature, and well described in Atwood’s verse, is the ongoing human attempt to give meaning to our lives through story or narrative. As is clear in the Atwood sample, these stories are essential not only for the telling of the narrative but also for the important role of inward reflection aimed at making sense of “misery”, “regret”,

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or other important markers along the way. Our moral tradition is a story that can be told in much the same way. It serves a clear purpose, or points to a telos. The moral tradition is also an account and footprint of the moral interpretations of a people.

**Walzer on the Moral Tradition**

Our moral tradition can be characterized in a similar way. We are not inhabitants of a perfected moral landscape idealized by moral imperatives and obligations derived from some entity, such as a God, or by pure reason alone. Neither description possesses the scope to include the diverse features of our “moral horizons” (Taylor, 1989). We are people with histories, values, and practices that illuminate the significance of our lives. Our morality is received as a product of many complicated factors that, when totaled, constitute a tradition. These factors whether they are concepts, values, or attitudes may even compete to the extent that, when taken to the extreme, holding both would be irrational. However, when we make moral assessments or arguments about the rightness or goodness of things, we are making references to a tradition of morality that exists among a people. Jeffery Stout explains that “moral statements properly analysed, contain a reference to a system of rules adequate with respect to a particular group’s idea of morality.” (Stout, p. 91) One interpretation that I take from Stout’s comment here is the idea that a moral tradition belongs to a people. This seems important given that future moral events, assessments, and theory should be consistent with the over-all moral tradition.
Michael Walzer makes this point more clearly in his short piece Interpretation and Social Criticism. (1987) Walzer claims that when we engage in social or moral criticism we are not discovering, or inventing some code of rules related to how we ought to act. Rather, he claims that any advances in understanding the nature of our moral lives results from ongoing interpretation of the moral tradition within which we live. This interpretive effort is an attempt to better articulate and clarify the complexities of our moral culture.

Morality, unlike politics, does not require executive authority or systematic legislation. We do not have to discover the moral world because we have always lived there. We do not have to invent it because it has already been invented...The moral world have a lived-in quality, like a home occupied by a single family over many generations, with unexplained additions here and there, and all of the space filled with memory-laden objects and artifacts. (Walzer, 20)

Notions of morality are clarified in terms of an accurate description of the moral world within which we already live. If this is so, then the importance of our interpretation of the moral world, within which we live, becomes indispensable in describing our moral tradition. In terms of our interest in the notion of social responsibility as a moral tradition, the previous claim becomes particularly salient. We can trace our moral tradition of social responsibility (although that is not my task) through historical struggles, political developments, political organization, and, most importantly, moral education. Furthermore, the practice of interpreting the moral world and tradition of social responsibility becomes an indispensable project for moral education as well.
Thus far, according to Walzer and Stout, our moral experiences, social practices, and cultural artifacts constitute the elements of our moral world.

The shared understandings of a people are frequently expressed in general concepts – in its historical ideals, its public rhetoric, its foundational texts, its ceremonies and rituals. It is not only what people do but how they explain and justify what they do, the stories they tell, the principles they invoke, that constitute a moral culture. (Walzer, 29)

MacIntyre On the Moral Tradition

Yet another thinker who has also offered contributions to this thesis is Alasdair MacIntyre. In After Virtue (1981), MacIntyre details the many ways our morality and the virtues are wound up in the historical narratives we all carry with us. MacIntyre’s critique is that, as moderns, we have lost the moral languages required to participate in collective interpretation of the stories we have in common. This is more than a failure to understand existing stories. It is additionally an expression of our inability to create new stories about the significance of our moral world and the role our cultures and social practices play in them. As an “advanced” race we have come to think in an increasingly atomistic way about our relationships with people and objects within the world. MacIntyre claims that many of our narratives about virtues have been replaced with narratives about skills: the ability to accomplish a task within a discreet sphere of life and in a particular moment in time. Thus, our connection with moral ideas is lost in the increasingly mechanistic way we live out our lives.

The idea of a moral tradition lends itself to thick description for someone like MacIntyre or to “abstract interpretation” for someone like Walzer. There is much effort
devoted to describing our moral context. MacIntyre’s perspective is an interesting one in the sense that he is offering us a thick description of a moral tradition. The definition he offers for the moral tradition includes the idea that any moral tradition must have a purpose, or telos. It is very clear for him that the moral tradition can be once described as something with an end for those who live in it. Yet, in addition he offers the unique perspective suggesting that the moral tradition facilitates cultural, moral, and social activity. These are the ends of the tradition: the facilitation of the regeneration of the tradition itself. MacIntyre comments that our identities, histories, and practices are transmitted through the moral tradition personifying the live affirming nature of it. Since morality is concerned with ideas of right and wrong, or good and evil, the moral tradition also transmits these ideas along with our conceptions of practices, attitudes, and virtues.

This is a subtle, yet important, contribution of MacIntyre to the point of this thesis. What I take MacIntyre to be suggesting is two fold. First, instead of simply describing the moral tradition and placing it within a social context, Macintyre seems to be suggesting that there is a real importance in the health and the transmission of “goods” through the moral tradition. The extent to which we are aware that our moral identities and social/cultural practices are influenced by the moral tradition becomes of vital importance to the sustenance of such practices. The more one is aware of the sources of tradition the more one feels continuity with current practice. Moral development then, would in some sense be concerned with our awareness of the moral tradition as such an entity that can transmit and pass on culture and identity. Along within the importance of transmitting practices and goods MacIntyre’s unique perspective allows for a stronger more vital role for the moral tradition in applied theory. If we take MacIntyre’s thesis
according to my interpretation, the moral tradition becomes something more than just a descriptive term of the practices of a group. Shared understandings of the layers of tradition in our social practices become important for all areas that have ethical dimensions. Clear understandings of the moral tradition allow for a better understanding of the current moral climate.

Both of these points are essential to my argument about educating for social responsibility. What both of these points suggest is that knowledge or awareness of a moral tradition within which we live will allow us to learn why certain values and reasons are important. In the first chapter I argued moral education should place a greater emphasis on reasoning especially when it comes to reasoning about values. Students also need to understand and appreciate the force of the moral tradition within which the values we hold are couched. Awareness and articulation of some of concepts integral to the tradition make specific moral assessments intelligible. For MacIntyre, awareness and acceptance of a moral tradition is itself a kind of virtue. Up to now we have left the argument about virtues, behaviours, and skills to the side. The argument will need to be made that initiation into the moral tradition is important for moral education, and that moral education is concerned primarily with developing conceptions of the good rather than with exhibiting specific “good” behaviours. In the next section I will devote more attention to the idea that there is, within The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility, a rift or divide between skills and virtues. Ultimately, educating to social responsibility must include more than just teaching skills. It must include teaching the moral concepts and practices central to the moral tradition of a people.
Skills, Virtues, and Social Responsibility: Aspects of the Tradition

No student comes to a classroom without being part of a moral tradition already. They are born into a tradition where many of their attributes, attitudes and relations are decided for them. Furthermore, at school they are also developing an identity that will take on characteristics of the tradition within which they are educated. Most importantly for moral education, these ties to the past, to traditions, to practices are those ties that shape the individual identity. However, as Maclntyre clearly asserts, this identity is by no means shaped in an atomistic sense. There is at the heart of the idea an awareness of the immersed quality of ones life in others’ lives. Through moral education, we hope students learn to describe their actions and shape their identities in light of their own moral agency within a moral tradition. In this way moral education is not only concerned with informing students of right action and assessing their behaviour according to a behavioural rubric. It is concerned with students aligning themselves with a moral tradition where shared understandings and value contexts are established.

Hare on Strong Knowledge

R. M. Hare shares this thought in his Language of Morals. (1952) “It is not a question of informing those whom we are teaching, but of their coming to accept a certain opinion for their own.” (Hare, p. 52). We should not stop at trying to modify only students’ behaviours since we can never be sure of the means that brought about the intended results, or if the results would be repeated in our absence. Again, if the
motivation for the student behaving in socially responsible ways is not that they are a socially responsible person, then we cannot be sure that the reason is not just instrumental. We want to help students understand and appreciate the moral traditions in which they are immersed. Knowing one’s moral traditions helps one make sense of the past and helps one define possibilities for the future based on values we may come to believe are essential to living a good life. To this end moral education is responsible for passing on, or to use MacIntyre’s words, transmitting the values and stories that explain our experiences. R.M. Hare develops this idea further:

It (morality) will grow in most cases, but only because the seed is there in our own way of thinking, from which it is well – nigh impossible to isolate a child. It is not however, something innate; it is a question of tradition; morality is something that has to be handed down; if it were not – if the process were interrupted – our children really would grow up as barbarians.” (Hare, p.61)

Hare’s commentary while perhaps to grand a claim regarding its implications for humanity, nonetheless carries with it an important notion. Consider all that would be lost if this process of passing on virtues, ideas of right and wrong, and culture were interrupted. Consider the plight of the characters in Russell Hoban’s (1982) book Ridley Walker who, in a post nuclear age, cannot find the languages to express indignations at injustices or shock at the actions of people who were once regarded as civil human beings. The normative languages, including moral language, are only beginning to reemerge. The stories are starting anew. Hare makes very clear the importance of ideas of the good being transmitted through our adult ways of thinking in ways that demonstrate continuity with values of the past. Unlike the characters in the novel, we
have the benefit of remaining immersed in our moral traditions and any interruptions in transmission are partial. We are still in a position to rescue the moral languages that have come down to us.

**Respecting Pluralism in the Moral Tradition**

If we look at the idea of a moral tradition too narrowly, we could run the risk of appearing Western-centric or too tightly tied to modernist ideals. Some critics might worry that diverse ethical perspectives could be eclipsed. For who would want to endorse a public education system for all when the system chose to educate to a very narrow sense of the good? A very Western notion may fail from the start to show respect or recognition for others’ ways of thinking and doing. If anything *The Performance Standards* are strong in this suit as it avoids endorsing any one type tradition over another. But, social responsibility conceived of as a moral tradition allows for diversity and inclusion in a way that is defensible. Many of the practices and concepts pertain to how we respect and recognize others who are different.

It is a fairly simple critique and the argument seems sound. If we choose someone’s morals to educate to, then we exclude others traditions that do not show good fit with the chosen model. I think the educational systems response to the argument I outlined above has been two-fold. While the empirical data for this assertion lies outside of the scope of this study, I have made these observations from my experience in the system. Firstly, I believe that independent documents such as *The Performance Standards on Social Responsibility* set what is actually moral education, apart from the
other curricular subjects. On the one hand we have morals, virtues, and values while on the other we have knowledge about math or say the pure sciences. In a sense this view attempts to protect “pure” or “privileged” knowledge from pollution by any one’s ideas of the good.

The document makes very clear that it assesses only behaviours. In this way it is hard to understand how the document could exhibit preferences about the individual moral orientation of particular students. In fact, as I made clear in Chapter One, it is not even possible to determine the reasons for students meeting or not meeting the standards. How do we know why, if we are only concerned with behaviour, the child either obeyed or breeched the standards of responsibility? The document is concerned with the ability to show a particular skill in dealing in social situations. Each skill’s connection to a sense of the good or larger purpose or set of values remains unexamined and therefore irrelevant.

Moral Traditions and Human Development

In the preamble to the document there is much reference to a moral tradition being important to “human and social development” and that students are to develop a sense of social responsibility within a larger context (p.9). It then goes on to state that “[t]eachers, families, and students themselves want to know what skills and attitudes have developed and how effectively they apply these in everyday situations” (p. 9). From here on, the heavy emphasis falls on behaviour. On the face of it, it would appear that if one were displaying socially responsible behaviours then one would have a good sense of
one's disposition towards elements of the tradition such as tolerance or democracy. In reality we cannot be sure of what the student has grasped. All we can be sure of is that the student knows how to display behaviours that appear to reflect a sense of social responsibility. In a sense we are teaching them 'lessons about morals' and how to act, but whether they actually believe the content of these lessons is not of concern. For a healthy program of moral education this is a problem.

Moral education is practically hopeless when we set up the development of character as a supreme end, and at the same time treat the acquiring of knowledge and the development of understanding, as having nothing to do with character. On such a basis, moral education is inevitably reduced to some kind of catechetical instruction, or lessons about morals. Lessons "about morals" signify as matter of course lessons in what other people think about virtues and duties. (Dewey, 1916 p. 354)

Dewey implies that whatever moral education is, or whatever values it is concerned with, educators must understand students' ways of thinking. It is not effective for a teacher to think about moral education as discreet sections of his or her curriculum. Instead moral education benefits when it is related to connecting students' ways of thinking with their position within the moral tradition. It is certainly not adequate to have performance standards that set behaviours so far apart from what the student actually believes about their behaviour.

This focus on skills and application is useful and it certainly avoids having to filter out values and morals that may be culturally exclusive. For the teacher it would also appear beneficial because many believe that one can take a morally neutral stance toward a skill but not toward virtues. The problem is not with the ways students behave...
or apply these skills, but instead with how they think! The very concepts that are part of
our moral tradition remain healthy concepts only insofar as they are commonly
understood and consistently justified. The importance of reasons and reasoning can be
applied here. As a student I can show compliance with such notions as free choice,
democratic organization, or even tolerance and respect for others’ opinions if I have the
skills and motivation in certain circumstances to act in certain ways, it does not entail that
I believe these concepts are morally justified elements of my tradition. Social skills are a
vital part of moral education but cannot replace an understanding of what morality is or
how it connects to the practice of acquiring virtues. I have talked about the need to pass
on a moral tradition in moral education and to make reasoning about such a tradition, an
important part of moral education. Yet if passing on skills is not enough to sustain a
moral tradition, more needs to be said about what exactly we are passing on and why
transmitting virtues would be any better than passing on skills.

Educating the Virtues and Respecting Pluralism

I have two remaining challenges to address in this chapter. One is the need to
show that immersing students into a moral tradition (already reflected in the document)
can allow for other values that seem to be outside it: namely multiculturalism and
recognition of diverse value systems. The second challenge remains to show that
educating to the virtues is necessarily a better project for moral education than a ‘skills’
based model. I will deal with the latter first.
We can reach a much clearer understanding of social responsibility and the role of virtues and values once we realize that the notion of social responsibility bares all of the characteristics of a moral tradition itself. As a moral notion it is characterized by values that are norms within the larger notion: values of tolerance, respect, democratic organization, agency, and most importantly the choice to adhere and apply these values in real circumstances. What The Performance Standards provide educators with is a guide to assessing the level to which one displays these values in their behaviours. However, if we think for just a moment on an example, it is clear that these types of behavioural outcomes, while desired, are only part of a perspicuous understanding of the ends of social responsibility as a tradition.

It is possible to think about his notion from the perspective of two rather extreme but useful examples. First, imagine a child who for some reason could, during all of his or her lessons, get the message of the moral imperative. She knew the proper applications for all of her studies in social interaction: conflict resolution, school behaviour, respect for others, and tolerance of diversity. The teacher would be quite pleased, as would the student. In theory, this imaginary student would have scored quite highly in accordance with The Performance Standards. However, outside of the structure of the lesson - in the real unstructured world of the child - she has a problem of never behaving in the “right” way. Teachers are puzzled. The student is puzzled too since in the face of her contradictory behaviours, she is at a loss for a cogent explanation. It is quite possible that in the case of this student she is able to understand and apply the skills of her lessons, but is unable to feel or be motivated by them as reasons to act in certain ways. Within the structure of the lesson the student understands the application. Without
the structure of the school the student does not show consistency among her moral
behaviours. I would argue that it is not the case that her skills need brushing up. Rather,
I assert that she is not motivated by her morals as much as she is by the fleeting demands
of particular circumstances. She understands compliance within a school program, yet
remove the confines of such a program and the motivation to act morally is lost. She
does not feel compelled to act morally in certain situations. There is a problem of
consistency here, which in a moment I will show directly relates to the difference
between skills and virtues.

On the second example, imagine a society of robots. They could even be
genetic replicas of human beings or some form of artificial intelligence. Far from being
human, while these forms of artificial intelligence can think for themselves, these robots
cannot feel: they can never have intentions. That is they are not compelled to act on the
basis of principles that have come to matter to them, however adept they may be at
calculating the outcomes of instrumental reason. They have no understanding of what
may be “good” outside of what they can narrowly reason is in their programmed
interests. Yet in their programs are the criteria for behaving among other robots in a
socially responsible manner. They are polite, they respect the ‘lives’ of other robots, and
they organize themselves in a democratic fashion. According to the ‘lives’ of these
robots there would be little need for a moral education program around social
responsibility. They all would, by virtue of their programming, score off the scale on
such assessment. It may even be said that they live within a moral tradition given that
their behaviours suggest some orientation towards that which is “good” even though they
cannot understand it as such. Now say some circumstance was to arise whereby the robot
society was endangered. Their ways of existing are in jeopardy. However, they are permitted to appeal to a benevolent reasonable mediator about what aspects of their tradition they would like to preserve. By what means could they argue for the security of their ‘tradition’ without the means to think morally about such a tradition. In fact, they could not even feel the desire to come to the table for such a discussion. To them, nothing of significance is lost by such changes in society. Certainly, their ways of behaving have served them well, but there is no individual or collective attachment to such ways. I am not claiming that humans are in anyway similar to robots. However, I am pointing out how robots would differ from humans in their inability to possess moral agency. The fact is that when the telos or purpose of the moral tradition becomes lost, it is not something that is easily retrieved. My point does illustrate how important a connection to the moral tradition is by presenting the deficiencies of a society that could not possibly have one. The fact is that when the telos or purpose of the moral tradition becomes lost, it is not something that is easily retrieved. One must be able to defend on thick grounds the tradition itself or run the risk of losing the tradition that secures the rights and social conveniences they enjoy.\(^6\) Again, as in the last example, the ability to have more than just the skills to act in certain ways is justifiably important.

What is missing in both examples, and in the way the performance standards conceive of moral education, is the ability to think morally about social responsibility. This, in effect, is what we ought to be concerned with passing on. Currently the

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\(^6\) A similar example is offered in Hilary Putnam’s book *The Many Faces of Realism*. He is describing the ability of the “Fordian” characters in Huxley’s *Brave New World* to define their moral image of the world. What is evident as Putnam points out is that the characters are so impoverished morally in terms of their agency and languages that they can not justifiably defend or articulately advocate for a change in their moral situations. Their apparent discontent and inability to articulate just what was so important about their moral worlds opened the door to people such as Mustafa Mond to control the most integral elements of humanity.
document implies that because students behave in certain ways, they understand and are considered to be socially responsible. Hare says it well, "What has to be passed on is not any specific moral principles, but an understanding of what morality is and a readiness to think in a moral way and act accordingly." (Hare, P.61)

Virtues

There is a relationship between thinking morally and the possession of virtues. Alasdair Macintyre defines a virtue for us.

A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods. (MacIntyre, p. 191)

It is not of great importance to my argument to describe in detail MacIntyre's differentiation of external and internal goods. However, I will mention a few ways in which they do complement the argument I have been making thus far. Very briefly, internal goods are those goods that when secured within a practice (MacIntyre uses examples of chess, cricket, or art) advance the excellence inherent to such a practice. For the individual feelings of achievement, pride, or mastery are all goods that would be considered internal to a practice. On the other hand, external goods are those goods, which when achieved, always become the possession of one person or another, such as prizes, awards, or remuneration. Furthermore, upon securing this type of good, there is less of this type of good available for others within the practice to obtain for themselves. In MacIntyre's chess example, victory can only be the sole possession of one of the
players involved in the practice. Therefore, it is an external good in relation to the practice of chess. "External goods are therefore characteristically objects of competition in which there must be losers as well as winners." (MacIntyre, 1987 p.190)

Securing and achieving external goods does not require that one be a necessarily virtuous person. For instance, I can well imagine the example of MacIntyre’s child who cheats at chess to achieve victory. The healthy practice of chess itself is jeopardized by the means of reaching such ends as ‘victory at all costs’. What is required within a practice, by those who practice it, is possession of those virtues that respect the healthy practice of chess, for instance. Courage, humility, honesty are all among a group of virtues required in such a practice.

The Place of Virtues in Moral Education

This is interesting in light of the arguments I have been advancing in moral education. Specifically, within the practice itself, moral education also secures internal and external goods for students and teachers. The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility may seem to reflect a thin conception of moral education, implicitly referring to moral concepts that it does not highlight or explain. An alternate path toward teaching moral concepts explicitly would be to place these concepts within the larger framework of social responsibility. Helping students to understand themselves as moral agents would help initiate them into a tradition in which virtues matter. They matter, in part because they help secure the goods that are internal to any practice, including the practice of thinking and behaving as socially responsible persons. Furthermore, in thinking of virtues in this way they are more consistent over time and experience. It can
be expected for instance that if I possess the virtue of honesty, that I will not limit its application to particular instances as I may a skill. Instead, honesty serves me in many different situations; it becomes part of my character unlike a skill. MacIntyre sharpens this distinction. "Someone who genuinely possesses a virtue can be expected to manifest it in very different types of situation, many of them situations where the practice of a virtue cannot be expected to be effective in the way that we expect a professional skill to be." (MacIntyre, 1987 p.205)

Where each example above breaks down is in reaching for the substances of such practices and finding that, in those examples, internal goods are absent just as any virtues are absent. The robots cannot value the courage to stand up for their way of life because their ability to think of goods internal to living out their lives is limited. What good could standing up for their routines of living secure for them? The robots cannot think of goods internal to a practice. However, imagine how endangered humans would be if they were not able to connect with any internal goods to a practice? I imagine that if the characters in Brave New World were able to articulate the nature of their moral tradition, and the goods secured by it, they would have been able to rescue it from Mustafa Mond. Likewise, perhaps the young girl's behaviour could change if it were within her identity to recognize some goods internal to 'doing the right thing'. Instead, the only thing motivating her is the external goods of pleasing the teacher and earning good grades upon being assessed for social responsibility.

In focussing our collective educational observation on skills and outcomes in moral education, we are limiting our ability to promote and understand the more substantive part of a child's identity: how they actually think about right and wrong. If
our moral tradition of social responsibility is characterized by values, and if values are a form of internal goods, then virtues must be present to make such a concept not only healthy, but understandable as a moral tradition at all. Virtues that are connected to social responsibility need to be imbedded in any attempt to educate for social responsibility. For students direct thinking and acting activities with these virtues in mind could comprise a curriculum in moral education.

I have not expressed the view that the content of The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility is without merit. I support attitudes and behaviours it champions. But I have argued, in part, that the means for reaching the document’s goals are not likely to be effective because they are not tied to the development of virtues within a moral tradition that is both understood and endorsed. Social responsibility is not effectively taught through skills education, or by rewarding behaviours with marks, or by teaching discreet ‘lessons on morals’.

In this chapter, I am suggesting different ways of understanding a moral tradition. One of the aspects of immersing students into a moral tradition is cultivating in them the ability to think and consider issues of morality for themselves: and to understand the role that virtues play in such a tradition. The role of the teacher then becomes teaching one to think morally rather than educating to a particular set of moral rules. Once we are less concerned with external performance, we can turn our attention to the goods internal to the practice of learning to be socially responsible. This change in perspective allows room for all sorts of deliberations to become justified parts of a moral education curriculum. Certainly all types of personal issues will come to the fore when students think about their own identity in relation to a moral tradition. The ways in
which this might take place in the schools are discussed in the next chapter. First, however, I propose another way to view social responsibility that may prove useful in deciding exactly what and how to teach students.

Conclusion: Social Responsibility as a Moral Tradition

In this chapter I have suggested that our actions and our reasons for our actions are given greater meaning by allowing the concept social responsibility to be understood as a moral tradition in its own right. Because it relies on values and virtues, and because it gives reasons for acting, context and meaning, it may be considered such a tradition. Additionally, I am further convinced of this when we look at the smaller moral concepts that have to do with social responsibility or when I see that the dispositions and attitudes that we have always expected from students have to do with a tradition of meeting social obligations. Take the often over-used concept of ‘respect’. It makes up a lot of what education aims toward in certain lessons. As a concept it includes certain attitudes, practices, languages, and dispositions that allow us to talk about it. However, where does it find its place in our moral tradition? I would argue that under a definition of social responsibility the concept of respect, writ large, finds a place on our moral landscape. It has everything to do with how we relate to others and how we perceive of others in social relationships. It even provides an umbrella over other moral traditions. We expect certain degrees of respect – measured in virtues, conceptions, languages, and practices – to comprise all relations in society regardless of other moral affiliations. Moral indignation on the part of all people would result in the absence of respect.
Since viewing social responsibility as a moral tradition allows us to put certain other moral concepts “in the bigger picture”, this implies that for education we ought to aim at immersing students in a moral tradition in an attempt to develop moral agency. It is similar to learning a language. Once immersed within all aspects, and crucial elements of a language, one learns better and faster how to command the conventions and structures of that language. So too with the moral tradition of social responsibility; where one is immersed in the practices and languages of the moral tradition, one may be able to better understand the nature of social responsibility.

I am suggesting that A) education about social responsibility is part of moral education, B) that social responsibility itself can be considered a moral tradition, and C) as such, it is constituted by virtues, values, concepts, practices, attitudes, dispositions, and languages – not just skills – the awareness of which maintain the health and longevity of the tradition.

The virtues and values characteristic of a tradition such as social responsibility are those virtues and values that are part of individual moral identities. We ought to carry these through time, space, and social environments in a consistent fashion. For instance, if the moral tradition of social responsibility is characterized by the virtue courage, then a socially responsible person should display courage throughout all aspects of her or his life not just within a prescribed framework for behaviour in certain circumstances.\(^7\) I develop the idea further in the fourth chapter which explores the relationship between one’s identity and one’s moral actions. What I will argue is that some sort of confluence

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\(^7\) This is not to claim that the tradition of social responsibility can exclusively appropriate these virtues. These virtues can exist cross-culture. However it is the ends that define whether the virtue is displayed in a noble sense. Even though the Japanese Warrior Tradition sees the actions of a Kamikaze pilot as noble and
between senses of the self and moral action, and the virtues characteristic of social responsibility is necessary.

courageous, the end result in loss of lives would need to be justifiably defended before I could agree with the display of courage in that sense as being socially responsible.
CHAPTER FOUR
Unity of Self and Action

The Unity of Self and action

I am nearing the close of explicating an account of social responsibility as a moral tradition. At first, I demonstrated that, for various reasons, The Performance Standards on Social Responsibility do not emphasize enough the importance of argumentation and reason in the practice of moral education. I responded by offering the idea that reasons (small 'r') are really about understanding our motivation to act in certain ways and about expressing clearly the aspects of our moral identities. Therefore, children's abilities in reasoning and argumentation not only determine the knowledge base they are working from, but enlighten us also as to why a child may have performed a certain act. While these types of reasons do not provide moral certainty about any object or event they do make us socially responsible in the sense that we are charged with justifying, to others who are reasonable, our intentions in performing an act. Following my argument about the role of reasons in understanding social responsibility, I was faced with the question the first argument begs. That is, if reasons are not about objects in themselves - for instance whether X is objectively good or bad, and the motivational force such a claim would carry - then just what do 'reasonable others' take these reasons to refer to? Just what is it that gives such reasons motivational force, or meaning, if they do not relate to any object?
A possible solution from my perspective was to allow that these reasons appeal to some sense of shared value or moral tradition. Relevant to this tradition, reasons are given motivational force because of their place within a context where moral norms and shared meanings are established. But just what does such a tradition look like and from what is it constituted? I argued that because the conception of social responsibility that is endorsed in B.C. schools encapsulates many moral concepts, practices, values, virtues, attitudes, and languages, it ought to be considered a moral tradition in its own right. Furthermore, a clear understanding of social responsibility will take into account that immersion into such a tradition - that is coming to live with, and recognize, all of those aspects which account for a healthy tradition - is an important part of moral education. And lastly, since it appears in The Performance Standards that we make reference to the skills required to develop goods desired within a tradition, I took issue with the teaching skills rather than cultivating virtues. The final aspect in developing the idea of social responsibility as a moral tradition is to understand the unity of the self and action and how this helps us better understand virtues within moral life.

The Complexity of Moral Judgment

One of the more subtle problems of The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility is its failure to capture the infinite richness and diversity of students’ moral experiences and the moral content they contain. I have already touched on this in the second chapter but it becomes increasingly important here. Morally problematic situations are different from each other to the extent that any attempt to wrap them up in
neat tidy moral principles or narrow maxims fails to capture their complexity (Pardales, 2002). If one were to attempt to lay out criteria for assessing moral behaviour, as the document attempts to do, one could never account for the interplay of even the short list of complexities inherent to moral life.

What does this complexity mean for our understanding of social responsibility? It is possible to acknowledge the role of reason in being socially responsible. It is also possible to grant that moral education ought to initiate students into relevant moral traditions, in this case the tradition of social responsibility. Confronted with the challenge, on the student’s level, of interpreting moral knowledge in particular situations, more needs to be said. The question of how students’ moral interpretations and perceptions colour the nature of moral judgment requires exploration. Simply put, behaviours that reflect compliance to rules fail to match or account for all the nuances, and moral content, of a situation. We have to allow room for students’ diverse moral identities and competences to be reflected in socially responsible action.

If an appeal to external sources, such as a moral rule book, for moral direction were to be successful it would have to account for the diversity of moral experience and for diverse interpretations of moral concepts. But it cannot. We are left with the need to cultivate a sense of moral autonomy whereby one can interpret, assess, and direct one’s actions for oneself in the most reasonable way. For example, if I am temperate in character then I will consistently display in my actions an ability to moderate my behavior and regulate my passions. Through my actions, my identity is revealed.

Degrees of social responsibility can be partially determined by assessing the content of one’s actions, as shown by The Performance Standards for Social
Responsibility. For a more complete view though, one's behaviours ought to be united with some autonomous moral disposition to behave in certain ways. Social responsibility is concerned with the moral constitution of the self as it relates to moral situations. The upshot of this is that there is more to moral education than can be accounted for by 'skills' education or 'lessons' in morals. The argument has further implications. I have suggested that the concept of social responsibility can be considered a moral tradition. It has been argued by MacIntyre that moral traditions are concerned with certain virtues and practices. On this account, it would follow that social responsibility is concerned with the embodiment of virtues relevant to its flourishing as a moral tradition. Social responsibility is concerned with virtues and the expression of such in socially responsible action. These actions are also expressions of self, as Dewey writes, "The unity of self and action underlies all judgment that is distinctively moral in character." (Dewey 1908, p.151) Dewey uses the example that we would not evaluate happenings such as rains or floods with a moral lens asking whether or not the rain was morally responsible for the flood. In fact, it would be just absurd to do such a thing. Moral judgments require an agent who is capable of making moral judgments. Agency is not an all or nothing state: people become full moral agents over time. In line with the Aristotelian tradition, the individual is perceived as becoming moral as his recognition of the concept grows. The self is involved in becoming socially responsible.

We say that a man is moved by kindness, or mercy, or cruelty, or malice. These things are not independent powers which stir to action. They are designations of the kind of active union or integration which exists between the self and a class of objects. It is the man himself in his very self who is malicious or kindly and these adjectives signify
that the self is so constituted as to act in certain ways towards certain objects. (Dewey 1908, p. 154)

As an example, we can look at a student’s perceptions of school rules. It is not the case that these rules carry any motivational force on their own. They may act as reminders. But the real reason we want students to obey rules is that they believe them to be important and worth attending to. Someone who sees the value in moving in an orderly fashion in the school’s hallways ought to be able to express that some sense of safety and order is important to their well-being. We may even stretch the example and claim that a complete description would reflect virtues of respect, patience, and so on. These things may even be internalized as character traits: They are orderly, or they are cautious. Behaviours become more or less consistent across contexts as they are affirmed. Given the above example, it makes little sense that such a student would abide by the rule of safe movement through the school’s halls but then in turn be found running down the aisles of a grocery market. For this to happen there would have to be a contradiction in character which is more significant than a violation of the rules. Because the intention to follow those rules derived from an internal motivation to be cautious, prudent and orderly, these are characteristics that would be exhibited consistently. Alternatively, for those students who are motivated by external rules and extrinsic rewards only, this difference in contexts would not result in a contradiction. It is wrong to run in the school’s halls but the rule does not include the grocery lanes. Notions such as respect for safety, temperance, and order, should apply consistently through different moral spaces such that the socially responsible person would perceive the value of safety in both the school and the supermarket. The one student has not been brought to see the unity of self and the particular moral content of an action. Such a student could claim that they were
not behaving irrationally because they were behaving according to what they knew to be the rules. We would not call such a person socially responsible because he has not critically appreciated the force of the rule.

One goal of *The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* is to have students “demonstrate social responsibility”. I believe that this is a case of the document meaning more than what it actually says. I think the intention of the document goes further than simply a *demonstration* of behaviour. At least I hope so. But the more important question relates to the connection between the self and social responsible action. Unless we can argue that moral education involves some sort of character or identity education we are faced with a problem. Demonstrations of behaviour do not have to include strands of selfhood, genuine moral dispositions, or movements, or changes in character. Like the student who is motivated only by external rules, one can demonstrate something to which their self accords little understanding. One appears socially responsible if they do walk in the halls, if they do not steal, if they ask for things politely, if they do respect others and property.

We may inquire “Why do you show respect for property”? The particular student’s response may be something like “because I want to follow the rules of the school and the direction of my teacher”. In terms of becoming a person who can *think* about morality, educators have done little for this student save for manage their behaviour in a social setting. The student again is still not aware that it is their intentions, their motivations, and their character that ought to influence their actions. What we have is evidence that the student can act according to the confinement of the rule or mechanically
in response to teacher prompts. There certainly does not seem to be real evidence for saying student X is socially responsible or that student X is capable of thinking morally.

All of this suggests that what we ought to be concerned with in educating morality is to what extent educators can move the whole self towards thinking about morality. This suggests that if there are some aspects or goods that ensure social responsibility is achieved, then these goods ought to be the object towards which the self is moved. These goods are the virtues which are integral to the moral tradition of social responsibility. Instead of talking about demonstration, we ought to be concerned with the embodiment of virtues. This means that rather than simply knowing one can demonstrate behaviours indicative of a certain moral concept, we need some way of moving the individual to actually become or embody the virtue supporting the moral concept we notice in the behaviour. We need to know that what we are observing is a socially responsible person and not someone just acting socially responsible. This project lends itself more to the goal of appropriating rather than simply demonstrating moral concepts and virtues.

Virtues Securing Social Responsibility

The three virtues I have chosen have particular relevance to the tradition of social responsibility. They are empathy, reasonableness, and integrity. Yet before these virtues can be acquired, one must know that they are in fact virtues and be able to recognize situations where they might be demonstrated. This is what has been called the capacity for moral perception. For Aristotle this broad capacity would include the intellectual virtues. From this capacity the ability to reason about the other-related or personal virtues becomes possible.
For a true education or immersion into the tradition of social responsibility, or for any moral tradition, the intellectual capacity to be able to 'see' morally is just as important as educating the virtues themselves. One must be able to describe the characteristics of a situation that make it moral. For Burnyeat this is the that of moral development: describing the moral content of a situation, while identifying the 'issue'. The remaining aspect is the why of moral development, which I tried to cover in Chapter One, placing the emphasis on understanding reason and argumentation as well as justification to others. Essentially, this is the departure point for understanding about the virtues.

**Reasonableness**

In order to understand moral notions like justice, rights, and fairness, one must possess a disposition to be reasonable in the sense that reasons of fairness, for instance, mean something to them. That is, a student must work on being reasonable. This involves partially a departure from egoist perspectives. Many students understand and can identify instances of injustice especially when they are the subject of such a perpetration. Yet the idea of reasonableness entails that one is motivated by reasons in light of others’ attempts to articulate moral argument.

From this disposition of reasonableness we can reach more advanced moral understandings. Because as a tradition social responsibility is concerned with how we understand our duty towards others, ourselves, and the world, it is essential to possess a virtue which allows for inter-subjective communications between people about obligation.
and duty. Students must be able to evaluate, assess, and act upon their deliberations about these duties and obligations. Only a virtue of reasonableness will promote such deliberation on the part of students. Efficient skill at complying with the rules may secure a general principle such as school safety for one; however, it does not secure the individuals' ability to deal with moral events outside the limited structure of such systems. If the description of a socially responsible person includes the independent ability to temper the passions and in doing so concede to the power of reason, then a notion of the autonomous disposition of reasonableness must be embodied within the tradition of social responsibility.

**Empathy**

More complex virtues, such as empathy and integrity require building upon the foundations of dispositions of reasonableness. For in evaluating the worthiness of such virtues for oneself, the student will be relying upon their respect for reasons that count in favour of such virtues. The value of empathy as a virtue inherent to the tradition of social responsibility is partly due to the enhanced ability of the student to take on multiple perspectives. Seeing moral situations from others' perspectives is an important aspect of moral development.

While for the most part I have left the issue of how our emotions inform our moral knowledge to the sidelines, I want to emphasize that the perspectives we can achieve, through the display of empathy, allow us a way into others' emotional states also. On many theorists' views, this is a valued way of knowing, namely in feminist
thought, that reason alone cannot provide. Through empathy we often either discover
that we would like to feel the way others would, or we would not like to feel the way
others would, in a given situation. Furthermore, we can augment our understanding of
how our actions would make another feel were we to perform them. The sense of feeling
here informs our moral knowledge and we can subsequently reason about the way we are
feeling as a result of occupying alternative perspectives. We should not discount the
credibility of knowing through emotion that empathy allows us. Empathy is especially
relevant to social responsibility as a moral tradition again because it is essentially a
tradition that is other-related. It is a tradition that has to do with our duties and
responsibilities towards others. It is empathy that is behind moral notions such as caring
and emotional understanding.

**Integrity**

Integrity on the other hand I suspect is a difficult virtue to instill in children. I
suspect the reason it is a difficult concept to understand is because we all feel as if we
already have achieved some degree of it. The problem is something like this: I may or
may not demonstrate integrity measured objectively. Yet, I always feel like I am my own
person. I wear what I like. I listen to the music I like. I eat what I like. I know from
experience that eleven and twelve year olds think they are expressing individuality when
they sport the latest fashions. The difficulty comes in relaying the subtle difference
between acting as an individual and acting consistently according to your values.
Possessing integrity ensures that we act according to those things towards which we are
reasonably and morally moved. It ensures a consistency of behaviour in accordance with each person’s understanding of right. It is not merely an evaluation of whether one acts as an individual or not in a weak sense. Integrity ensures the rationality in our moral behaviour in terms of our unity with our sense of self. If our behaviour demonstrates aspects that are not in accordance with who we are and what we value, then we have in the most meaningful way breached our commitment to integrity. Not only are these behaviours incommensurable with our own sense of self, since we can not personally affirm such action, they can also be reduced to acts of irrationality.

For a tradition of social responsibility, the virtue of integrity is required to allow for the independent way in which we hope children will behave. When guided by strict rules, genuine acts of integrity do not often come to the fore. It is not against my personal constitution to act according to orders that seem reasonable even though I may not completely endorse them on a personal level: they are rules to be followed. So following rules when they are not extremely morally abhorrent, but perhaps just personally unfavourable, do not call into question the relevance of integrity in the situation simply because following such rules is not a matter of internal contradiction. Integrity becomes important in following a course of action that one knows to be right in the absence of other guiding constraints. The moral independence required in moral development must be founded on some ability to understand the pattern of moral behaviour as being consistent with some personal orientation towards the good. One’s

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8 This is not a statement that enjoys blanket truth. For instances where extreme moral abhorrence is demonstrated, for example during the holocaust, one who displays integrity should feel opposed to following the rule. My claim here does not amount to truth in claiming that one still possesses one’s integrity in light of all compliance with rules. What I am suggesting is that some school rules, such as respecting the learning environment, or moving quietly in the halls, when directed by rules do not constitute a breach of integrity when one follows them but does not personally affirm their worthiness.
ability to maintain this orientation towards the good in their behaviour is morally independent and possessing of the virtue integrity.

Response to Relativism

Additionally it is important to note that my argument does not result in a type of relativism. It is possible to imagine that, when we put the emphasis on the student coming to terms with his or her moral beliefs, that their conclusions may be far from favourable or wrong from the teacher’s perspective. For all this argumentation and moral modeling, it is possible that the student may not be moved by the power of the teacher’s reasons. Additionally, it is possible to imagine that one may come to possess many of the virtues embodied in social responsibility yet act in very wrong ways. This point was brought to my attention by Marvin Burkovitz in his discussions on the moral identity. He suggested that without the moral propensity to be good or to follow moral principles, existing concomitantly with the possession of virtues, the possession of virtue alone is not a guarantor of right action. His example was that many acts that are heinous, it would seem by nature, require the possession of many of the same virtues embodied in the right act. A thief must possess an unyielding courage to commit herself to situations where danger and lifelong consequences are on the line. Likewise, I can only suspect that patience, determinism, modesty are also virtues fitting for the fast fingered criminal.

In light of such examples obviously the ends are as important as the expression of virtue. This was the reason for my drawn-out explanation of the moral tradition being the sort of “rule guide” or “convention model” to set such ends in a group’s historical
narrative. The role of reason again is also important in making sure that the moral ends are in line with the display of certain virtues. Our capacity to reason about the ends of our motivations and the consequences of our efforts aimed at being socially responsible links the possession of virtues with some sense of the good in one's life. Nel Noddings makes this point clear as well.

If I firmly believe that an act one of my students has committed is wrong, I do not enter a dialog with him on whether or not the act is wrong. Such dialog could not be genuine. I can, however, engage him in dialog about the possible justification for our opposing positions, about the likely consequences of such acts to himself and others, about the personal history of my own belief. (Noddings, p. 240)

If such dialog is a goal in moral education, it is important to reflect on how my arguments thus far are conducive to and help promote such ends. The virtues, reason, moral traditions, and capacities of moral perception all share dimensions of the Nodding's quote. It may be helpful to ask the question what would be required for this dialog to occur? This is the subject of the final chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
Young Students and the Power of Literature in Developing Social Responsibility

Introduction: Concerns for Practice

A teacher convinced of the importance of moral education may still be left with questions or concerns about how my suggestions could look in the practice of developing moral lives. I am continually reminded in my practice and in my area of research of the need to bridge the theory practice gap as it also determines the extent to which teachers are likely to pay mind to important aspects of theory. Remaining entirely in the abstract and the domain of theory would inhibit the applications of some of my ideas in practice.

As such my objective for the concluding chapter is to offer some possible answers to how my suggestions could be applied through simple and relatively informal methods. In my own classroom, my goals have been to help students develop their own conceptions of moral concepts and virtues. It is important to note here that I want to respect values of diversity but this does not mean opening the door to an extreme relativist position.

The Power of Good Literature

One way to assess students’ understandings of moral concepts and virtues in moral education is through good literature. Stories that address the presence or absence of moral concepts and moral agency tune in students keen abilities to compare the lives
of characters in stories to their own. Comparing lives with different moral dimensions brings out, almost naturally, the concepts and notions that are so important to moral education, and students' understandings of social responsibility as will be evident in students' responses to literature.

There are many stories we could choose. As an example, Brave New World (1932), through its impoverished and child-like portrayal of human agency reveals the stark contrast between the value of truly free choice and its lack. George Orwell's 1984 (1949) also reveals moral positions incommensurable with those present in our lives. These are just two examples of stories that force us to turn our reflections toward what makes a good life. This is the sort of reflection that I seek from my students when they engage this type of literature. I chose a book with similar themes to those found in 1984, or Brave New World, but featuring an adolescent protagonist. The name of the novel is The Giver, by Lois Lowry.

The Informal Study

I worked with two classes over a period of two years. Participating students were at the grade six and seven level. Both classes were diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion with equal numbers of male and female students. My procedure was simple and straightforward for a couple of reasons. First, I did not want to heap too many tasks upon the students as I felt this process had to be a personally generative one for them. I did not want their responses to be attempts to please the teacher or to follow a set of expectations. Everyday I read aloud one chapter from The Giver, and following the
reading I put two or three written response prompts on the board. Students were invited to write freely about one or more of these prompts. The prompts I selected closely mirrored the moral concepts presented in the story. They were selected to bring the moral notions into contact with students’ experiences.

One thing became very clear through the novel studies. In writing about moral concepts in an open and non coercive way, students were coming to terms with moral concepts for themselves. In the words of Mathew Lipmann, the students were ‘thinking for themselves’. Far from being a trite and seemingly obvious observation, students became less focused on parroting back the content of rules or teacher expectations, and intent on struggling through some dense moral material in the story. I can also say that the ‘atmosphere’ in the classroom was very different from most other lessons. Because students were not being graded on assignments, they chose to write about what they genuinely found interesting or relevant. Instead the collective generative energy was evident in the class discussions that followed the reading as well as in their written responses. My conclusion was that students were both identifying the moral concepts important to their lives and recognizing the personal dispositions and attitudes necessary to preserve the health of such moral concepts.

In this chapter I want to provide the reader with three connections to bring the entire thesis full circle. First, I will offer a brief synopsis of the story and its more important concepts central to the theme of social responsibility. Second, I want to offer some of the students’ responses to the prompts I initiated for their writing to describe the types of thinking that this activity generated. Last, I want to conclude by trying to tie in
The results of this narrative of my practice with the important arguments I put forward in this thesis.

The Giver

The Giver, like Huxley’s Brave New World or Orwell’s 1984, presents an anti-utopia, or distopia, a world in which ordinary and often unexamined values central to the life we know, have been discarded, twisted, or destroyed. Conceptions of happiness, a good life, even what it means to be human, are radically altered in these worlds. A well-crafted distopian novel holds up a mirror (however distorted) that challenges us to take stock of what is important in our own lives, and to reassess the worth of our pursuits. Distopias present a vision of the world in which moral concepts such as autonomy, freedom, and responsibility are so changed as to be unrecognizable. Yet their absence is strongly, often achingly felt.

The story of The Giver is set in the context of a peaceful, prosperous society, known only as the “community.” On the face of it, the community has tackled many of the troublesome ills of modernity. Poverty is nowhere to be seen and all community members have adequate food and shelter, allowing them to lead lives as contributing citizens. In this sense, the community epitomizes the greatest good principle favoured by rule utilitarians. Very quickly however, the distopian elements of the community become evident. Through meeting the characters, we find out that because values of pragmatism are paramount, the conditions individuals live under are predetermined and institutionalized. As Hilary Putnam (1986) writes of the society in Brave New World, the
price paid for satisfaction in the novel “is a deliberate infantilization of the human race. People are conditioned to remain emotionally adolescent for their whole lives.” (p.58)

In The Giver, careers are decided for members through the deliberation of a small Committee of Elders. Families are structured according to strict notions of functionality and look exactly the same in every dwelling with two parents and two children. Individual and collective behaviour is monitored using large outdoor speakers that are placed conspicuously throughout the community. Social interactions are regulated in order to limit distractions that could disturb the daily functioning of the community. For example, puberty is regulated by administering pills to quell feelings of lust. The physical vision of citizens is genetically altered to remove any vibrant colours from their sight, leaving only shades of grey and sepia. Emotional vocabulary has been flattened and made colourless, too. There is no love only an obligation to care for a particular other’s physical needs. There is no anger, only mild irritation if a rule is transgressed. Chronic transgressors, the aged and infirmed (those without utility value for the community) are painlessly eliminated by injection of a drug in a process known as “release.”

One person, known only as The Receiver, shoulders a strange and onerous burden. He is the sole recipient of all memories of the world that existed before the creation of this deliberately utilitarian community. Whether the memory is pleasurable or painful, beautiful or ugly, no community member except the Receiver has access to a single phrase, image, sight or sound from a now-distant past. As the novel opens, the Receiver is aging and must now pass on his store of memories. He has become “the Giver” who will release his burden to the boy chosen to assume his role. The new Receiver of Memory will inherit the languages of pain, happiness, joy, sadness, along
with the artifacts of an entire lost culture: art, music, literature, architecture, philosophy, religion, etc. The new Receiver will soon possess an entire tradition of experiences and emotions. As a result of his unique inheritance, he will also take on the responsibility of making moral appraisals for the community, appraisals that cannot be made by community members in the absence of such knowledge and understanding.

One need not make a wide conceptual leap to determine that the role of individual agency in moral appraisal is lacking in this distopia. The moral traditions of the community have been left behind along with individual agency. Quickly we realise that the ends of the community, regardless of their impressive and seemingly humanitarian scope, are meaningless and perverted when they are severed from the moral compasses and languages of the individual. Through using a backdrop void of moral and cultural tradition, Lowry forces us to recognize the role our various languages play in developing, and preserving the traditions that have meaning for us. Perhaps foremost among these are the ethical traditions within which questions of what counts as a good life can be genuinely explored. By showing us the absence of individuality, free choice and any deliberation about ends, Lowry forces us to address some difficult questions about our own world. She encourages us to see the importance of reviving, and re-colouring what may be an impoverished moral landscape before all is lost, as it was for the community in her distopia. She asks us to reflect on the importance of moral languages in terms of the vitality of our own traditions. By detailing a world in which neither happiness nor sadness can be fully understood or realised, she challenges us to reassess the meaning of happiness and the pursuit of a good life for ourselves.
If this removal of agency were not rich enough to provide us with the emotional deflation of our confidence in the community, it is apparent also that any sense of social responsibility is limited by their inability to discuss concepts considered moral by us and in the end by Jonas. This becomes evident through the examination of how moral concepts, or the lack thereof, are presented in the novel. In actual fact it is not even accurate to say “present”, because it is really through the absence of moral concepts in the community that this is revealed. Moral concepts indispensable to us are often misrepresented or completely obsolete in the story. As such the members of the community have lost a connection with moral concepts that inform their sensibilities about how to act in social situations. Without this ability to morally appraise knowledge, responsibility becomes particularly moot as does the question of defensible responsibility.

**Absent Concepts**

Lowry’s book is full of what I call “absent concepts”. The use, or disuse, of absent concepts causes the reader to reflect upon the moral complexities imbedded in our languages. Within the novel, language defines every object and feeling in complete terms of functionality and strict definition. As a result, language carries no moral implications past the direct meaning of a word. For the students this is a particularly useful construction to impress upon them how many notions of morality are actually imbedded in our languages and that these languages and concepts imply also a moral obligation in some sense that cannot be ignored. They realize very quickly that abstract terms, which may have a *prima facie* specific, direct meaning in our language can also have deeper teleological boundaries. Additionally, students realize the comprehensive meanings of
these languages are often important to the way we situate ourselves in relation to others and that further, these relations imply some sort of expectation of behaviour.

What are absent concepts in Lowry’s book? Absent concepts in the context of The Giver are those terms which are either: a) obsolete and replaced by more specific concepts without the burden of moral implication, or b) concepts whose meanings have been altered to limit abstract interpretations of the word, yet in turn lose the meaning as readers would normally understand them. It is important to note here that these concepts are only absent from our perspective as readers. Characters in the community have no knowledge of concepts that used to be. It is not evident, for instance, that the characters have any knowledge of missing such concepts as colour. Many absent concepts are significant concepts that give meaning to a human vision. These are concepts that rely on the individual to situate him or her in relation to some good which implies greater moral agency than is acceptable for the characters in the novel. Like the robots in the earlier example, characters in The Giver could not defend any sense they might have of the “good life” because their behaviour is not regulated with any telos in mind.

In a sense, it is useful to try to perceive this arrangement as similar to the one proposed by Plato in the Allegory of the Cave. It is not the case that for the characters that these “ideas” do not exist. Instead, concepts of colour, love, and justice are only known to a select few members of the community who sit on the Committee of Elders. In a sense they are the lucky few who have been led outside the cave to a greater vision of physical, emotional, and moral reality. For what it is worth then, the potential for ordinary members of the community to access the languages to deal with these concepts is not the first step. As the analogy goes, these people are seeing everything in a falsely
objective form: shadows on the cave wall. Therefore, it is not even granted that they can think about these concepts even if they did possess a vocabulary of terms. The eternally secluded cave dweller would not conjure up images of the Sun and the Moon by simply receiving these items of vocabulary. We, the readers, enjoy a privileged position of objectivity in relation to these concepts.

Let's look at a couple of ways Lowry communicates the idea that without certain moral concepts, the social and emotional landscape that is left is unfamiliar to us.

**Love**

When Jonas asks his parents if they love him, his parents' reasonable reply is that using "love" would not be an accurate way to describe their relation to him.

"Do you love me?"
There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. "Jonas, you of all people. Precision of language, please!"
"What do you mean?" Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated.
"Your Father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete," his mother explained carefully. (Lowry p.127)

The concept of love has become obsolete and in effect is missing from the lives of the characters from the story. His parents reply that a more accurate description of their relation is that they care for him. Care in this sense delineates the function of parenting in relation to Jonas: a behaviour. Love on the other hand has become obsolete since on a purely utilitarian view, the concept of love does very little to maximize the effectiveness of a greatest good principle or help us in determining a procedural course of action.
Furthermore, the characters' emotional growth is so emotionally stunted that the reasonable boundaries of the concept of love really do not make any sense to them.

In many cases love implies greater levels of complexity in our lives and those around us. In effect, love could prove to work to the opposite end of the community's goal. Because love is a value which is exclusively reserved for the province of choice, it does two things. Firstly, it remains unpredictable and cannot be quantified in any sense. It would definitely complicate any notions of well-being as understood by the community. From the Kantian perspective we can include that our ideas about love are largely phenomenological and this type of transcendence over experienced reality is not conducive to the type of rule utilitarianism governing the collective ends of this community. Our conception of love is a special concept as it allows us by definition to apply it differently according to values determined by agent autonomy. Criteria in this sense are far from standardized and would hinder matters of procedure in the community. And secondly, the concept and value of loving often comes at odds with the pragmatic course of action. We often cite loving someone or something as a reason for acting in a way that logically may seem irrational. Irrationality in this sense is the charge that one is not moved to act on good reasons that they themselves judge to be good reasons. (Scanlon 1998) That is we fail to be moved by powerful reasons not because of some inability to be moved by logic, but rather because in some sense the agent is weighing the force of some reasons logically applied on the one hand with the value of love on the other. The concept of love often implies a social obligation that may move an agent to in act in ways that objectively appear irrational.
Love is a moral concept and requires a value of choice as shown above and in Chapter One. Having a gasp on the meaning of such a concept requires that students weigh its value with respect to other important values in their lives. Furthermore, breadth of vision in loving gives further meaning to other aspects of life. Moral languages cannot embrace the concept of love in a without realizing that it will at some point require moral appraisal in different situations. For instance, within a relationship where love exists we expect different things from the subjects of this feeling in all aspects of moral life. We could say that a loving relationship requires moral appraisal to recognize some different type of obligation to the people whom we love set aside from what we owe to others. Caring, in the case of the novel, has been used instead of love because, in the context of extreme utilitarian principles, loving does not make any sense as it implies more that is compatible with a greatest good principle: namely treating some people differently. Caring can be shown as duties owed in relation to some set of applied rules, but in order to love we must be able to be responsible and autonomous. We must be able to recognise and appraise competing values and act on a sense of justified obligation as was my assertion in Chapter One.

**Students’ Responses to the Giver**

The employment of absent concepts in approaching students’ understandings of moral concepts in the book was particularly useful in order to turn each student’s reflective lens inward. In describing the nature of moral concepts students could not help but use their own frame of reference to comment upon the moral shortcomings of the community. However, as this turn inward took place, greater personal discoveries were made about how our values, virtues, and moral notions exist together. As it turned out for
many of them a realization occurred of a definite struggle between competing values in their own lives. Very quickly, making sense of the moral priorities these values claim on our personal lives became the focus of much of their attention. Endeavours such as struggling with competing demands of the moral concept of love, or attempting for themselves to articulate the many different measures of happiness, and the attempt at asserting just how important their agency was in the process of all of this are just a few of the discoveries evident in students’ responses to the novel.

In this section I just want to briefly detail how students’ responses began to reflect some of the aspects that I have argued are inherent to learning about social responsibility. I mentioned earlier in the argument in Chapter Three that learning about morality was more than just receiving lessons about ‘rules’ and ‘morals’. Instead I suggested that there is more to it, which has to do with the student beginning for himself to affirm knowledge in the strong sense of the word. This is indicative of a process whereby students are learning and discovering concepts while at the same time justifying to themselves and others the importance of choice.

Students’ responses reflected this process. Because the activities were not actually lessons about morals or rules, neither were students’ responses. Students’ responses had very little to do directly with how people ought to conduct themselves. These types of assertions would be extrapolated from their responses about more basic concepts. Instead students’ responses reflected the type of deeper thinking about moral notions associated with social responsibility rather than the behaviour aspects of socially responsible action. As such, students were being confronted in their study with the struggle to define, describe, and argue for the more foundational moral concepts that
support the more structured system of rules concerning behaviour. Through this process students were becoming moral agents as they affirmed moral concepts which were important to them however absent in the novel. Students developing their awareness of themselves as moral agents was perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the challenge because with it came the realization that our choices ought to be choices that matter to us.

It was no small matter for students to begin to realize that their choices came with costs and benefits, such as the realisation that some sense of freedom does not come without complications. Because of the nature of absent concepts, life in the community was presented by Lowry, with a certain degree of ease. Moral entanglements were not complicated and did not haunt one’s ability to think clearly. All of the complications involved in loving and in being truly happy, as mentioned in the synopsis, were not moral concerns that required attention. Furthermore, characters did not possess the virtues to secure such goods as free thought anyway. For starters, as I have indicated elsewhere, a community member could not even avail themselves of the languages that would make any type of social agency possible.

For the students this is perhaps the most offensive part of the entire story. They are not willing to accept that their freedom to think could be jeopardized in such insidious ways as the community has managed. Yet at the same time they realize just how difficult it is to balance competing values in attempting to adjudicate moral dilemmas. In this way ‘community’ life is very appealing to the students because all of the ills of modern society have been alleviated in the community. But for students the cost is too great. The price paid for our agency is in the coinage of risk, moral dangers, and the possibility of moral failure. As one student, Brie, has phrased it,
If there was no suffering then there would be no caring either. In the story, the Giver gives Jonas a memory of a man in a battle field shot and bleeding to death. That is the price we pay in order to live in a country where our choices matter. I myself really wish there was an easier way but as long as we have choices we will have different opinions about things.

Brie clearly has come to terms with the belief that suffering is a necessary condition for true caring to occur. In other words the concepts are only given their meaning in terms of what we fear in their absence. I suspect that what Brie is alluding to is that the cost of being able to have choices that matter, is that life will not always be as easy or simple as life in the community. Choices will not always be easy to make and the path of action most likely is never clear in terms of choices that really matter. People will make poor choices, choices that cause harm, and choices that may differ from someone else's. Brie's realization of this shows that she is coming to terms with a sense of reasonableness in which she accepts that some degree of difference in opinion is apt to accompany different moral situations. Engaging the different priorities that certain values hold in her life she is experiencing the authenticity of moral adjudication and dilemma.

There is another important aspect to Brie's comment. Throughout the current document on social responsibility choices about how to behave seem easy, even effortless. The criteria in The Performance Standards fail to take into account the courage sometimes required to make the right choice or follow a responsible path. Clearly Brie does not feel that it is easy to make choices that matter but that part of the actual difficulty is inbuilt in the cost for having such ability. Another girl, Sophie, deals
with a similar realization that making significant choices involves complexities. When asked if, and how *The Giver* caused her to think about her life she responded:

Yes, *The Giver* does cause me to think about things in my own life and in others but in my life I think about if I really do need all of the things that I have now to keep me happy. Am I really happy now? I think about if I did not know about the stuff in my world and I was in a community with the Giver. Would I be more happy there because of there is no (sic) competition and everything is equal and fair?

Sophie is confronting the idea that while many personal aspects of her life are valuable to her, she enjoys some more than others. Her concern for fairness and equality shows this to be so. Within *The Giver* this strict, often extreme, concern for egalitarianism provides Sophie with the backdrop upon which she can examine her own beliefs about the nature of competing values in her experience. What she cannot see in *The Giver* is how strict utilitarian concerns can leave any room for values relative to the agent such as love or freedom of choice. The moral dilemma she faces is how to ensure levels of fairness and equality that she wishes for everyone while at the same time protecting the unique values and choices that individuals make. Hilary Putnam offers a similar yet extended account of the impoverished moral lives in *Brave New World*. The community in *The Giver* is one where the rules of strict preference-based utilitarianism apply much as they do in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. In much the same way as Sophie did, Putnam illustrates the struggle between the appeal of preference-based systems and other values such as choice, happiness, and love. The end result for Putnam is that utilitarianism relinquishes very little if any space to these other values.
The defence of liberal values, especially the defence of intellectual freedom cannot be entrusted to Utilitarianism if the only way the Utilitarian can defend them is by smuggling them into his definition of ‘happiness’, in what is, after all, an intellectually undefended way. Utilitarianism is an inadequate vision for just the reasons that Kant gave: the uselessness of the notion of ‘happiness’, and the insensitivity of happiness-based ethics to issues of means. (Putnam, p. 60)

While Sophie was not questioning the ability of utilitarianism in a formal sense to incorporate her other values in the same way as Putnam does, she was questioning the extent to which it was possible to have both a completely equal community and maintain personal liberal values. For Sophie, the literature presented a reason for comparing aspects of her own life with the worth of shared moral notions such as equality and fairness. To Sophie, The Giver presented a challenge to weigh the worth of certain values in accordance with the weight she saw fit to give them for herself and their importance as collective social goods. This seems to be a strong indication that Sophie is beginning to think in ways that are socially responsible.

Brie too struggled with much the same perspective as Sophie, however from a more global standpoint. Brie was attempting to come to terms with the fact that liberal values such as happiness and equality are reproduced at the expense of many in the world who are impoverished. Brie suggests that perhaps many people who do not enjoy the most basic levels of subsistence may at once trade their materially impoverished life for the ones presented in The Giver. She is hinting that our concern with liberal values such as intellectual autonomy, are only of concern if we can meet our basic levels of subsistence. “I bet that if you asked people in other countries such as Africa that they would trade everything they ever had to live in a place so organized where food is
delivered to you daily and they all get a fair share of everything.” While Brie’s response may be slightly presumptuous, she does demonstrate the virtue of empathy. The degree of empathy of which she is capable of achieving allows for a certain rational distance from her own perspective to critically analyse it. I would suspect that she is also relying on the underlying assumption that the freedoms we enjoy are not enjoyed by everyone. To claim that the social climate in our world is any better than in The Giver is suspect.

This type of critical reasoning about our own social climate supports the claims about reasoning I made earlier. Brie’s concern for other peoples and cultures demonstrates social responsibility. However, along with this demonstration is the need for a well-argued position in order to justify the validity of such comments. Taken together, these are two aspects of social responsibility emphasised in earlier chapters.

Lastly, students began to demonstrate and express the fruits of their independent thinking about the content of moral knowledge. I was extremely excited about this occurring because it suggests that movement towards acquiring knowledge in the strong sense was taking place. At one point near the end of the novel I felt that students were struggling with the complexity of concepts that they had previously used in simple ways: words like love and happiness. Responding, I simply asked them after reading and experiencing alternative perspectives on happiness (or the lack) and love (or the lack), what they took these words to mean. Some students began to construct their conceptual understandings very differently. One student in particular demonstrated the possibilities for engaging such primary moral questions in our curriculum.
Greg's response demonstrates above all a maturing perspective on moral issues. Greg is able to encompass the interrelated nature of many values that contribute to moral understandings. This requires, I believe, some enhanced capacity to see the moral content in a situation. I emphasized this in the section about virtues and moral capacities. Within his conception of happiness, he includes notions of autonomy, other-related values, and reasonableness to suggest the complicated nature of our concept of happiness.

Happiness is an inexplicable word. You cannot tell someone what happiness is; you must feel happiness: you must show it. Happiness does not come alone; it comes in a package of feelings. In The Giver, all feelings are eliminated. The feelings are destroyed and are forgotten things of the past...To me a world without feelings isn't a world at all; it's just somebody playing with a marionette and we are the puppets.

In Greg's thinking it is now evident that he has abstracted the notion of happiness in order to deal with it in a very holistic sense. This type of thinking was not observed in many students' responses. I have included it to show the potential that young students have to think and express themselves in the realm of philosophical morality.

Reconciling Three Concepts in the Study

The question and challenge remaining here is to clearly tie together the major themes of reason and value, moral tradition, and unity of self and action — as important aspects of a moral education in social responsibility — with the study of literature. Can we determine that students' moral lives are any richer as a result of studying The Giver? Have they, through their participation in the activity, grown morally in any way? To answer this challenge I will offer some direct evidence that students' thoughtful
responses are evidence of an altered moral perspective relating to all three aspects important to social responsibility. However, I feel obligated to qualify this conclusion. The narrative I provided was a single investigation of changes in students' moral understandings. What seems to be evident through the discourse they engaged are the beginnings of moral thought that has the potential to address more completely, and in a more detailed manner, the moral aspects of social responsibility. What I will offer as evidence is the suspicion I have about where students' responses indicate they could be going given a much more protracted effort.

Perhaps where literature is most useful in moral education is that it encourages one to investigate and reflect upon the disparities between various ways of life. I mentioned this earlier and it is useful to revisit after presenting students' responses to the novel. Specifically, I asserted that when faced with the moral experiences of characters that are so different from themselves, certain moral concepts important to students and our tradition as a whole are brought to bear on their responses. According to M.J. Pardales (2002), students' tendencies to think about moral concepts in certain ways are determined by their usual and regular association with them. He suggests a child attributes meaning to moral concepts based upon past experience with the concept. "At any given moment, our prototype of any moral concept is the average of all of our experiences where that moral concept played a role" (Pardales, 428). Additionally, as we have new experiences our prototypes are refined as we incorporate new experiential knowledge. However, without the type of moral imagination that can be cultivated through literature, it is not likely that we will have the possibility to grow. Thus it is not
likely that the content of such knowledge will come into question as it is constantly verified by routine experiences we continue to have.

What students’ responses to distopic literature indicate is the ability to re-assert and strengthen the knowledge of our moral tradition by imaging a range of experiences. Some aspects of the moral tradition that students need to be initiated into are very difficult to perceive. I suspect it is in part because these aspects of our moral tradition are so pervasive that it is hard to imagine the contribution they make. Yet through the “cultivation of the moral imagination” through distopic literature, possibilities for travel into very different lives, and therefore into very different moral traditions, arise. Instead of applying rules, students want to express just how different their lives are from those they see in the novel. Expressing this has become important to them. What they invoke in support of their positions is most often the moral concepts cherished by our moral tradition and they sometimes do it with sophisticated argument. In this way, immersion into a moral tradition is occurring as students make explicit values they recognize as invaluable to their own lives.

So we have distopic literature such as The Giver confronting students’ prototypes for moral knowledge with irregularities and differences that demand that students re-examine their own positions. Sophie wants to know how to reconcile personal liberal values when they come into conflict with social programs and group values. Furthermore, she is initiating an investigation into some of the most central aspects of our tradition: love, happiness on the personal level – and equality and fairness on the social one. She has not discovered part of a tradition but has come to interpret its nature in much the way Putnam did. Philosophers such as Thomas Nagel (1991) also address the
traditional tension in our moral experience between priorities in social and personal life. Sophie is now a participant in the dialogue relevant to our tradition.

In terms of the role of reason and value in moral education Greg's example best describes how one can become fluent in argumentation and analytical skills in moral education. I have to mention that students would be expected to keep improving the longer the study went on. The focus on reason would be a component of a more comprehensive moral education program. However, in discovering for himself that the value of happiness is one that cannot be narrowly defined, Greg must invoke some very advanced – for an 11 year old – means of expressing such values as they relate to happiness as an end. Without an emphasis on deliberation and dialogue about the richness of our moral experience we can possess neither the means to defend it or the sensibility to understand it.

Throughout moral deliberation the role of the teacher is important. I presented students with prompts that guided them toward the construction of arguments such as Greg's. Deciding the ends to which one wants students to be able to argue, in a moral sense, is extremely important. I had chosen happiness as a personal value from the beginning. I offered students the opportunity to build upon their experiences with both the feeling and the term as a morally laden concept. Their expression of the attributes of the term was entirely personal, yet the teacher’s role in directing the deliberation aids students in being able to express clearly the interpretations they make. This may include pointing out moral content in the earliest discourse.
Limitations of the Study

I mentioned that one of the limitations of this informal study was its ability to actually measure how students changed their actions or behaviours in response to working with literature. This also limits my ability to suggest ways in which the students met the criteria of developing unity of self in action. It is worth mentioning though that the perspectives that students offered in their writings seemed to be genuine and sincere expressions of their beliefs. If a student breaks a rule we often are satisfied with an apology or some admission that they are aware that their behaviour requires revision in the future. However, in the case of genuine moral education we are interested in getting to know more about how the student thinks and arrives at knowledge. It seems that these students made visible some inner aspects of themselves that would not have come to light through activities suggested by the document on social responsibility. The reason students' responses were powerful is because they arose from the students' moral intuitions. Who they are in some sense is wound up with reconciling the contradictions and tensions of competing values. It is a big step in identity recognition to realize that certain values are important to one's moral self, as Greg revealed in his response.

Another area for further research would comprise a detailed investigation of the role of the teacher in developing students' moral intellects according to the model I have laid out. My role in the study as been under emphasised here. The teacher must in some sense have a preconceived idea of what constitutes the tradition of social responsibility.
As such, if all teachers do not possess shared understandings of social responsibility at some level then initiation into a tradition of it would be inconsistent or confusing at best.

Lastly, as I have alluded to a couple of times previously, I have neither resolved the puzzle of the conceptual status of social responsibility in a decisive way nor have I provided a conclusive enough argument to suggest how social responsibility as a moral tradition in its own right would be able to respect other minority cultures in an environment of pluralism. I have suggested ways that this could take place as well as other options for precisely defining social responsibility in relation to a moral tradition. However, on the whole, both of these aspects would provide a hearty challenge for anyone wanting to take them on exclusively and seek more definite answers. I do not have the same to investigate these interesting elements here.

Concluding Remarks

The whole purpose of my project has been to re-assert the importance of a view of moral education full of richness, complexity, and authenticity. While the social responsibility document is well intentioned in terms of actions that may be compatible with those promoted through moral education, it deals inadequately or not at all with competing values, personal ends, and the general complexities of actually deciding “what is to be done”? On the face of it behaviour may be the crux of our concerns in moral education, however, moral judgement is far more complex that acquiescence to a rule book. It involves a greater investment on the part of the student and it requires greater attention by the teacher, attention that goes beyond assessment of actions. For instance, we could rarely appeal to the criteria in *The Performance Standards on Social*
Responsibility in order to decide what to do. The realm of moral judgment and moral emotion is beyond the scope of The Performance Standards. Our moral tradition is characterized by decisions that are very difficult to make for the reasons I have discussed in this thesis. We are destined to fail when we try to limit moral education to a strict gathering of narrowly defined principles or criteria. In my classroom the students demonstrated through their responses that they are coming understand this aspect of our moral tradition.

It is through the cultivation of our moral imagination – and in so doing reflecting on the richness and diversity of moral experience – that we are able to consider not just one type of moral end, but a host of different answers to the question of how one ought to live. One of the traditions that provides answers to this question is that of social responsibility. What students achieve through studies in literature is a deeper immersion into the complexity, and richness, and the beauty, of the moral tradition of social responsibility that has evolved over many years and been expressed through many different narratives. Our conception of social responsibility, as a guiding theme for moral, education must be clearer. Our understanding and implementation of it must reflect, much like students experiences with moral imagination, the diversity and subtle nuances of bona fide moral judgment directed by interest in living a good life. Asserting strong roles for the three aspects of the moral tradition of social responsibility, I have described in this thesis is a step in moving toward a fuller understanding of what moral education could do for students.

While The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility mirror the ends we might wish students to support through action, identity, and value, they fail to
involve the student as an autonomous participant in living out these ends. Its major shortcoming is not in its intent, but in failing to help the moral lives of students flourish. It ignores the need to explore some of the core values that have been secured historically in ethical thought. Most significantly, as Pardales asserts, the student’s abilities to make moral judgements outside of the direction of ‘rules’ is limited by the lack of value placed upon their moral imaginations. “The corollary to this is an uncultivated moral imagination which will probably have impoverished prototypes and metaphors, a weaker sense of narrative and dull moral perception” (Pardales p.432). While students may act morally, according to compliance with some set of standards, their ability to think morally is impeded without a rich sense of the diversity of moral possibilities in living a good life.

For my part I have added to this tradition with respect to three main understandings of what a more perspicuous conception of social responsibility might look like. In doing so I have used The Performance Standards as a point of departure and tried to complement and clarify our understanding of the intellectual, historical, and personal sources of social responsibility. I arrived at the need to emphasize development in at least three areas: the role of reason and values, the importance of a moral tradition, and the need for a marriage between the self and action.

Throughout moral education, however and whenever it occurs, language will be the commodity of the practice. The ability to think will be predicated upon the ability to enter into intelligent dialogue about deeper meanings of concepts or knowledge under scrutiny. It ought to be expected that as an autonomous agent I will be able to answer in defense of my actions as well as my opinions. Furthermore, it is through intelligent,
reasonable agreement on moral knowledge that we secure credibility for what soon become moral principles. This aspect of moral education – affirming, reaffirming, and constructing moral principles in their students' languages – cannot be marginalized as I argue it has been in The Performance Standards. The Performance Standards invoke and employ principles that need to be accepted in a strong sense by the student: through reasoned judgment and eventually epistemic responsibility. Justification, expression, and adjudication are all important in this process. In defense of this view, I argued that the importance of reason and value ought to be emphasised in a perspicuous account of social responsibility.

Second, I argued that the principles presented in The Performance Standards on Social Responsibility are not arbitrary concepts developed for the first time and manifest primarily in British Columbia Ministry of Education documents. To the contrary, the moral concepts that underlie the demands of such curriculum are in some cases traceable to the birth of western thought. These underlying concepts, in many cases, are what give meaning to the reasons one employs to defend a moral standpoint. This lineage is not delineated clearly, nor emphasised in The Performance Standards. I asserted that immersion into the narratives of our moral tradition ought to be a component of our becoming socially responsible. For the sake of emerging intellectual autonomy, students need to understand their relationship to this tradition.

Finally, I argued that while the two understandings of social responsibility are important in a general sense, students need to buy into the tradition on their own terms. This buy-in is best described as the affirmation that one's moral identity is expressed in the act itself: responsible action stems from a personal sense that one is a moral agent.
As such this includes all personal aspects of the agent. This leads me to question what types of personal dispositions, or virtues, would be necessary to bring about the ends of socially responsible action. I argued that the socially responsible person possesses certain virtues that allow for him or her to act in certain morally responsible ways. Virtues such as empathy, reasonableness, and integrity are all virtues that secure the most likely possibility that an agent will affirm for herself the value of socially responsible action.

I hope to have opened up the discussion and initiated some interest in others who are interested in teaching social responsibility in a more philosophically accountable way. I have determined conclusively that a wider conceptual berth than the one provided by The Performance Standards is needed to adequately accommodate the complex subtleties involved in reaching a more perspicuous account of social responsibility in moral education. There is room for a more detailed empirical study into students’ responses to literature, especially anti-utopia literature as well as a need to progress further with a more detailed conceptualization of social responsibility. I would like to see how students’ moral development progresses through time with respect to diverse moral narratives and students’ moral languages. However, this would require a protracted study and is certainly not the province of a Masters thesis.

Lastly, this thesis is not only for the ears of policy makers and educators. Our document for social responsibility in B.C. schools is the product of much collaborative effort. The changes I have been suggesting are well within the means of the people who have conceived such a well-intentioned document. In many ways what is required is both more and less than what is currently provided in the document: more emphasis on the student as an autonomous moral agent is necessary as is less emphasis on unthinking
acquiescence to rules for behaviour. Schools will still have rules and students will continue to break them. However, I believe all students should have the opportunity to decide for themselves the most basic notions of how to live a good life.
Bibliography


