

**Ethics-Based Philosophical Inquiries in Canadian High Schools Hold the Potential to Shape  
Future Canadians into Sincere and Respectful Democratic Citizens**

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The purpose of this paper is to present and defend the idea that the introduction of carefully selected philosophical concepts may provide an opportunity for Canadian students to critically analyze their situations or tasks, enabling them to make well reasoned rational choices. The study of ethical inquiries through various cultural sources can become a good catalyst to inspire students to think mindfully. Therefore, including the study of ethics in the Canadian high school curriculum may benefit students in many facets of their lives. For example, introduction to various cultural sources may benefit Canadian society as a whole by promoting the sentiment of fraternity among Canadian youth, and offering the potential to give Canada a future generation who are sincere and respectful democratic citizens. John Dewey, an educational reformer, suggested that:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which have kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (Noddings 2013, 12)

Dewey realized that healthy human interaction is dependent on sincere cooperation and collaboration. This is only possible through a genuine understanding and mutual respect between the members of a given society, which occurs when the members of a society critically assess both old and new ideas in a respectful manner (Noddings 2013). Similarly, philosophers have for centuries postulated that a strong personal character in young people may be developed by the regular practice of critical thinking through philosophical reflection. This is revealed by Timothy

E. Duff, who indicated that Plutarch, the Greek biographer and philosopher, credited an individual's sense of sincerity towards others as a product of good education. This was observed by Plutarch by studying the life of Themistokles, an Athenian politician, who was an extremely intelligent but impetuous, arrogant and boorish man. Plutarch explained that the reason behind Themistokles' negative attributes was the lack of education that taught virtue. According to Plutarch, philosophical reflections help students to develop mindfulness. Plutarch did not deny the importance of a practical education which teaches students to be productive and ambitious in life; rather, he stressed that practical education should be accompanied by the teachings of virtue to avoid the development of negative traits in young people.

Plutarch's emphasis on the teaching of virtue along with practical education for youth is still valued in modern societies. As Francis Breslin has also stressed since the nineteen [eighties](#), most high school students' inquisitiveness is not satisfied by the standard educational curriculum, which they find boring and unchallenging. Based on such concerns, Breslin suggested that philosophical inquiries in high school provide an opportunity for students to discuss and analyze the respective arguments, provide rebuttals or objections, and enable them to better empathize with others. Such practice of observation and critique among students will bring forth their best answers by generating critical thinking. They may be able to observe how logical reasoning can also lead to fallacies, allowing students to assess their own assumptions and pay attention to the proposed arguments of others. Engaging with other students on matters of conscience will teach students to become better listeners and keen observers. Breslin asserted that engagement in philosophical enquiries will teach students how to think, not what to think (Breslin April, 1982). Similarly, Nel Noddings, a professor of Education at Stanford university, states that in present school systems, most students are unfortunately not excited by their school

studies. The untapped potential of these students becomes invested in less desirable activities such as gang involvement or delinquent behaviour. Noddings believes that critical thinking skills are important in acquiring self-knowledge to uphold the Socratic motto “Know thyself.” It has been proven that when humans find themselves interested in something, they find it easy to direct their energy at that task (Noddings 2013, 124 -126). Such personal reflections for students may reveal their own shortfalls, may urge them to make decisions for themselves, and may encourage them to take charge of their personal development.

Canadian students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds which have established belief systems that are usually rooted in certain religious or traditions-based ethics. These families may regard exposure to various ethics-based philosophies as a threat to their own value systems, instilling skepticism in their children about their own religious or traditional values. As noticed by Martha Nussbaum, religious loyalties play a significant role in resisting curricular changes in schools (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 258).

Moreover, Francis Fukuyama points out that it is generally a false belief that peoples’ economic interests play a leading role in their lives; rather, he states that what people greatly value is recognition of one’s dignity and status (Fukuyama 2018, 81). Ethics-based philosophical discussions in high school classrooms can provide the opportunity for students to learn the important concept of human dignity. Martha Nussbaum reminds liberal educators to reckon once again with Socrates’ proclamation—for which he laid down his life—that “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being,” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 9-10). Nussbaum states that Socratic inquiry into the human soul is not only central to Western liberal education, but to other non-Western cultures as well. Most educators believe that philosophical inquiries urge students to think and argue for themselves (Nussbaum, *Not For Profit* 2010, 47 - 48).

I am not suggesting that students should be introduced to Nietzsche's idea of self-grandeur or Sartre's existentialism of extreme individualism. In my view, such philosophical arguments do hold strong bearing in the quest of finding one's own path in life, but these advanced philosophical ideas might be more suited to post-secondary study. What I am recommending are the following philosophical notions: the Platonic cardinal virtues of pursuit of knowledge, temperance, courage, and wisdom; the Aristotelian concept of 'golden mean,' where extremes are avoided to make well-balanced choices; Epictetus' principle of happiness and freedom, which dictates knowing one's own limits while making the best of one's life; and Hume's concept of human reason as a slave to human passions (desires). The study of these ethical concepts will provide opportunities for Canadian high school students to inquire into the most fundamental lessons of life.

It is important to clarify what I mean by philosophical inquiries in Canadian high school classrooms in comparison to Quebec's mandatory model of Ethics and Religious Culture program in public schools (l'Education 2008). I am not suggesting that philosophical inquiries should be presented in elementary schools; rather, I am suggesting that grade ten is a good stage at which to introduce students to philosophical concepts, because usually by that stage most students would be able to recognize and distinguish the importance of their own family's traditional values. This is supported by most studies in human developmental psychology. For instance, Erikson's stages of human development show that humans spend their childhood and adolescent years learning about concepts of trust, right, and wrong. By their mid-teens, people start recognizing the difference between themselves and others, and developing their identities by inquiring into who they are and their needs for survival. Erikson noticed in his research that the stage of young adulthood (late teens and early twenties) holds a significance in human life, since

they are foundational years for inquiry into the concepts of self and relationships with others. The quality of these realizations makes a profound impact on the rest of their lives (J. W. Kalat, *Development (Erikson's Description of Human Development)* 2014, 166 - 167). Human psychological studies confirm that humans are more open to new information in their youth than in their mature adulthood, and this psychological aspect is common to most cultures and countries (J. W. Kalat, *The Origins of Personalities* 2014, 478 - 480).

Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel Prize laureate in Literature, has recommended that an introduction to multiculturalism in childhood would transform students into citizens of the globe. Tagore believed that if different religious and ethnic traditions—such as festivals of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims—are celebrated from early childhood in an educational setting, students would cultivate long-lasting friendships without any cultural prejudices (Nussbaum, *Not For Profit* 2010, 84). I partially agree with Tagore's views; I agree with his crucial realization of the need to cultivate a strong social bond among students from different cultural backgrounds, and with his emphasis on global citizenship. But such an approach will also dilute meaningful religious celebrations into frivolous seasonal festivals. Parents may find this approach a repudiation of their sacred beliefs. Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, observed that humans' personalities are carved out by understanding the meaning of their spiritual belief system (J. W. Kalat, *Personality* 2014, 466 - 467). Therefore, there is a need to respect students' faith-based traditions. First, students should not be exposed to other forms of ethics until their own religious or traditional values have been instilled in them. A child's religious and traditional observance in the early developmental stage should be determined by their parents. Canadian public schools should have no authority to discuss religion in any capacity in elementary schools. Secondly, while offering a study of ethics in Canadian high school classrooms, references should

not be singled-out from any one religion or tradition. The ethical inquiries via philosophical discussion I am proposing should form part of a secular study without emphasizing any religious or traditional belief system. This may teach students that all humans strive to find the truth. Educational materials from various ethical traditions stressing human characteristics such as curiosity, dignity, compassion, and empathy may enlighten students' understanding of human connectedness. In general, ethics-based philosophical reflection may train students to become mindfully critical and reflective thinkers.

To support my above recommendation, I will discuss and address the concerns outlined by the Canadian Philosophical Association in regards to philosophical inquiries prior to postsecondary education. By incorporating the views of past and present multidisciplinary scholars, I will clarify why an introduction to philosophy as a subject prior to post-secondary education has been observed as a threat to one's own belief system. Moreover, by using the observations of these scholars I will show how the discussions of philosophical concepts in high school classrooms could enhance students' understanding of themselves and others. To do this, I will discuss the importance of self identity, dignity and its origin via Fukuyama's philosophy through an explanation of such concepts. I will use Kymlicka's explanation to discuss the phenomenon of Canadian multiculturalism. I will use Sandel's argument to highlight the importance of contesting ideas in public debates. I will point to one of the founding ideas for liberal democracies with the help of Nussbaum's observation that the pursuit of economic prosperity is an important state affair; however, liberal education lays the foundation of liberal democracies. I will discuss the meaning of virtue and the importance of human connectedness via MacIntyre's scholarly expertise. With the help of Epictetus' philosophy, I will show why it is

crucial for humans to develop an effective thinking skill. Finally, I will discuss the significance of religion and liberalism in the Canadian context.

### **Some Common Objections for Teaching Philosophy to Young Minds**

The Canadian Philosophical Association (CPA) states that, generally, there are three main reasons against teaching philosophy in Canadian classrooms:

- *Philosophy is dangerous when introduced prior to internalizing the social norms of society at the age of adolescence*

A plausible reason for this objection is commonly rooted in either the lack of interest in ethics and morality or in the staunchly held doctrines of families or cultural groups. First, there are people who consent to the practical approach in life and strive for results that are rationally supported. These people observe that the concepts of ethics and morality are social conventions that may impede human progress. A recent appeal regarding medically assisted suicide and the Supreme Court of Canada rulings on legalizing euthanasia are examples of the most recent form of appeals to humanistic pragmatism (Dignity 2015-2019). In contrast, under the rubric of ethics and morality based on religious ideologies, assisted suicide and euthanasia are both considered the killing of a vulnerable human being, which is committing a sin against humanity. When rationality becomes an overarching concept for all human activities, then a human being's capacity to reason anything they desire will never fail. As Hume has asserted, human reason is the slave to human desire (Hume 1738). Contemporary ethicist and philosopher Michael Sandel reveal this interplay between human reason and desire where the sentiment of love, compassion, and empathy rooted in the concepts of ethics and morality are put aside to achieve financial objectives. Sandel states that human greed has made betting on strangers' lives via buying health

insurance for strangers a \$30 billion industry in the USA. The sooner the stranger dies, the higher the profit investors make (Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy* 2013, 5).

Fukuyama points out that the 2008 financial crisis took place because bankers were rewarded for short-term profits, and when their risky investments blew up in few years then no one was held accountable for such negligence (Fukuyama 2018, 14). Behavioural economists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky disclose that in general, people economize on hard work by riding on herd psychology (Fukuyama 2018, 14). Such examples illustrate that some humans are self-centred by nature, are satisfied if their objectives are achieved, and are unconcerned with repercussions that may result from their actions. A person who studies philosophical concepts, especially by means of ethical inquiries, would likely consider the ethical aspects of financial markets rather than solely focusing on securing his or her personal financial gain. I am not asserting here that people who study ethical philosophy are immune from moral decay, and neither is it my intention to assert that people who do not study ethical philosophy are morally corrupt. What I mean to convey is that philosophical inquiries urge people to assess their conscience, and this process of self-analysis encourages humans to treat others as they want to be treated.

Second, there are people who are convinced that certain established rules in the form of religions or traditions are the ultimate way to live one's life. This perspective may infringe the rights of the individual members of the group to choose freely from an array of different world views. For example, a group may propose group-libel laws that extend the same legal protection to group members that are usually reserved to protect ethnic minorities from racial oppression by larger societies. This type of protection has been requested by some Muslim communities in western countries to protect members of Muslim communities from Islamophobia by non-

Muslims. Sir Salman Rushdie, a British Indian novelist and essayist, has warned about the motives of group leaders who seek group-libel laws. Rushdie suggests that external restrictions (such as group-libel laws) open the door for internal restrictions; therefore, it is reasonable to think that Muslim leaders may use group-libel laws to prevent internal apostasy from their own group members, rather than to control expressions of non-Muslims (Kymlicka 1996, 43).

- *Since philosophy is generic, it must be incorporated by another subject to provide a content support.*

If philosophy means a love of knowledge, then it is fair to ask what knowledge should be embraced and what knowledge should be shunned. This is the exact reason why I want young Canadian minds to learn to be critical when knowledge is presented to them. Exposure to diverse ethic-based inquiry in Canadian high school classrooms may help students to develop and adapt their thinking skills and, in turn, will help them to become affective and effective adults.

According to Bertrand Russell, like any academic discipline, philosophy also primarily seeks knowledge that gives unity and coherence to other sciences by means of its critical examination on the grounds of human convictions, prejudices, and beliefs. Russell states that the utility of natural sciences, by means of scientific and technological advancements, serves humanity, so the study of natural sciences is encouraged; similarly, the study of philosophy should also be promoted, since the discovery and utility of natural sciences needs ethical guidance. Philosophy may not have direct utility to serve mankind in the sense that having a formal education in the money market could secure a job. However, it does hold significant potential to indirectly benefit others through those who study philosophy (B. Russell 2010). This has been exemplified by many philosophers whose sincere contemplations on the human condition have enabled humans to recognize their natural rights, which has become a foundation

for contemporary human rights. [Throughout history](#), philosophical reflections have made people contemplate many good ideas that have benefited humanity as whole (B. Russell 2010).

It is amusingly ironic that professionally supervised philosophical inquiries in Canadian classrooms have raised the various concerns mentioned and discussed above (CPA 2017), while other problems go unexamined. There are potential dangers for young Canadians from exposure to global web pages, which are loaded with all sorts of acceptable and unacceptable information on vastly diversified topics, while unharnessed young minds are left to toil with the unfettered freedom of the present era.

As per Statistics Canada, Canada has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest rate of bullying in the 13 year-old category from a survey of 35 countries, one in three adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied recently, 47% of Canadian parents report having a child as a victim of bullying, 73% of victims reported that they were cyber-bullied, and 40% of Canadian workers experience bullying on a weekly basis. The study [suggests that](#) any participation in bullying increases the risk of suicides in communities.

According to CPA, students who are trained to critically think through philosophical inquiries are most likely to become responsible and respectful adults, and this would also benefit Canadian society in general. CPA also states that it is a known fact that theoretical reasoning and moral judgement are developed over time, if young minds are exposed to an environment that encourages the development of these traits through the fields of logic and ethics (CPA 2017). Furthermore, CPA reveals that introducing philosophy in schools is not a new idea. Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, the founders of Program of Philosophy for Children, started to teach philosophy to children in the 1960s. They believed that the main purpose of education is to

cultivate an ability in young minds to use their reasoning with their actions, and through philosophical reflections the ability to reason can be enhanced (CPA 2017).

### **The Study of Ethics May Hold Hidden Agendas**

David E. Purpel (1999) stresses that deliberate attempts to make students behave in public schools is not a new idea; Purpel asserts that, rather, this act of disciplining via formal education has its roots in the colonial era. Purpel states that Christianity was once used to instill discipline in the name of God, but in the current era people are made to behave in the name of democracy. Purpel states that it is all about politics; the separated powers of politicians and educators capitalize on the moral character of their society. Character education movements usually arise in a political arena having a specific interest in specific ethical or moral character (p.86 - 87). Purpel strongly argues against politicizing educational values. He suggests that if politics must play role in education then educators should embrace politics so that it is not privileged or exclusive and so that it empowers everyone. I disagree.

If Purpel's cynicism is correct, then education in any form means indoctrinating young minds to commit to the act of compliance. Humanity would have never faced any conflict and it is a dream that is yet to come true for humanity; but alas, even God created Adam and Eve, who did not survive the human's innate urge to seek new knowledge. If humans can force the next generation to completely commit to their ideals, then there would not have been Socrates who laid down his life to defend the essence of a mind to think. The French Revolution would not have taken place. And I would not be writing this paper, hoping to resurrect the thinking spirit of Socrates in the young minds of our age by urging the Canadian educational system to teach ethics-based philosophical reflections in Canadian classrooms. Rusnak and Ribich reveal that the

literal means of education is *'to lead out,'* to bring forth human capabilities that are necessary to develop appropriate ethical, moral, and value-driven behavior (Ribich 1997). Any sincere educator would not agree less.

To some extent, Purpel makes a fair observation. Educational curricula can easily become vehicles to target members of religious, political or communitarian philosophy. This can be exemplified by a variety of curricular preferences in various countries, and Purpel sees this as the typical pitfall of philosophy itself, which concerns many contemporary intellectuals. However, Purpel raises a valid point when he asks why humans are so concerned with their children's upbringing. The obvious answer would be that it is an inherent quality of all living creatures to train their young in survival skills, but humans have surpassed this basic primordial instinct of survival. Humans are inspired to teach their children more complex precepts such as courage, compassion, justice, empathy, self-control, fairness, patience, trustworthiness, honesty, respectfulness, loyalty, and the list goes on. But why? Perhaps the answer lies in our hope to train the next generation to cope with their human condition and to find their purpose in life. I will discuss this later through the lens of Aristotle and McIntyre.

So far, I have discussed the major concerns in regard to ethics-based philosophical inquiries in Canadian high schools. Now, I would like to present the arguments that are in favor of such inquiries. Since identity politics holds a significance in contemporary Canadian society, in-class based discussion about self-identity in relation to family, religion, culture and what it means to be a global citizen demands first attention. It may also help students to understand the hierarchical nature of personal and social relationships while clarifying the priority of each domain, and the ways in which these relationships contribute to and shape students' values and personal identities. This strong sense of personal identity in humans leads into my next topic.

### **The Concept of Human Identity**

In order to train Canadian students to act respectfully towards their fellow students and to develop into responsible and productive citizens, it would be helpful for them to understand the origin and the concept of human identity. Fukuyama reveals that the desperate events of the current world indicate that human motives are not merely based or limited to economic self-interest. Brexit happened in Britain because some Britons believed that exiting from the European Union would mitigate the cultural and economic crisis and would allow Britain to act as a sovereign state in the economically anemic EU region. Donald Trump became president of the United States because his voters believed that the outsourcing of major industries was the reason behind the American financial crisis and they agreed with the slogan “let’s make America great again.” Russian president Vladimir Putin’s reference to the collapse of the former Soviet Union as a tragedy, the remorseful sentiments of the Chinese government of Xi Jinping about China’s “one hundred years of humiliation,” the emergence of anti-immigrant and anti-EU parties, the controversies over the burka, niqab, and burkini, and the Black Lives Matter movement are all phenomena that can be defined by humanity’s persisting struggles to define a human’s identity and their recognition by their fellow human beings. Thus, these examples are not just rooted in economic turmoil; rather, their roots reach deeper in the human psyche where the fear of the unknown and others resides. In the case of Western countries, these sentiments of fear and anger are awakened by the continuous influx of large numbers of immigrants. According to Fukuyama, economic grievances appear more detrimental when established norms

that are a source of that group's dignity is challenged and disrespected by the introduction of new cultural norms and practices in the host countries. Economic satisfaction or dissatisfaction cannot be the sole reason, and neither can they provide the complete answer for what brings satisfaction to humans' psyches. The establishment of right-wing parties such as the National Front in France, The Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, The Alternative for Germany and The Freedom Party in Austria, expresses that a sense of identity overarches economic sufficiency (Fukuyama 2018, 5-11).

Fukuyama states that the concept of human's identity is not a new one. The sense of self identity arises from one's inner self or the true self (inner world) and the distinction it feels from its societal role and norm (outer world). What is new is that the modern individual holds the inner self as authentic, thus it is intrinsically valuable while the outer society is systematically wrong and unfair. Hence, a society is wrong and it needs to improve by making changes that accommodate a variety of individual choices. Since one's inner self holds or at least longs for self-respect, it is rooted in the concept of human dignity (Fukuyama 2018, 10). The claim that a human's inner self holds intrinsic value may not get the consent of some philosophers, however, many philosophers would agree that the inner self is valued for its own sake or in its own right (Zimmerman 2019).

Fukuyama further states that the concept of human dignity itself has been ascribed varied meanings in different cultures. In some cultures, the attribute of dignity is only extended to members of groups such as warriors, which in a contemporary world could be the members of the army, navy, military or police, who are willing to lay down their lives for a higher cause. Other cultures may consider human dignity to be associated with one's social status, ethnicity or nationality. Either way, this inner sense of self-respect or dignity is driven by one's urge to be

recognised and accepted by others in terms of his/her existence and the life choices he or [she makes](#). So, one's sense of dignity and self-respect can be fulfilled for one's own sake (Fukuyama 2018, 40). Fukuyama explains that behavioural economic theories have been successful in explaining human behaviour concerning material aspirations; however, these theories fall short when it comes to explaining the motivations of people who act beyond their material interest, such as a soldier who lays down his life to protect civilians or a suicide bomber whose personal beliefs justify the killing of civilians (Fukuyama 2018, 81, 11).

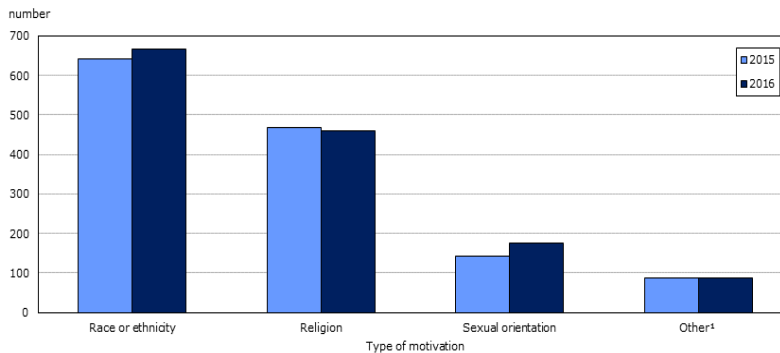
The fact that Canada is committed to multiculturalism means that philosophical inquiries based in ethics may enhance the overall understanding of the 'self,' among diverse Canadian students. Fukuyama presents a convincing proposition, grounded in philosophical accounts [of the](#) human psyche (Greek for soul), which can be an answer to humans' quest to affirm their identities. To explain this further, Fukuyama turns to Socrates' exploration in regards to the nature of the human soul. Socrates explains that the human soul is comprised of two parts: desiring and rational. The desiring and rational parts of the human soul are constantly engaged when people make decisions. Humans can desire as much as they want, but the rational part of their souls keeps them from acting on all their desires. The rational part of the soul keeps human's irrational desires in check and makes them calculate good bad consequence prior to his/her actions of pursuing his/her goals (desires) (Fukuyama 2018, 19-24). The desire part of human's soul is most likely to win in such internal tug of war between the human desire and the rational part of the soul; but what's interesting is that, actually humans use their faculty of reason to justify their wants. Perhaps, Hume's assertion that reason is a slave to human's passions, rests on such observation into human nature (Hume 1738). According to Socrates, there is also a third component of humans' souls which operates independent of a desire and rational parts of a

human's soul that Socrates called 'thymos,' or the spirited part of a human's soul. Socrates asserted that, the spirited part of humans' souls operates on anger and pride that seeks recognition. Fukuyama explains that this spirited part of the human's soul is the basis of contemporary fad in identity politics (Fukuyama 2018, 40-41). Although, it is too early to make any assumptions about the affect of contemporary identity politics in human societies. Whether its going to be a short-lived trend or it is a another intense afford of human's primordial urge towards soul searching. However, to diagnose the issues that surround the identity politics is beyond the scope of this paper. All I intend to achieve through this paper, is to provide an opportunity for young Canadian high schoolers to learn about this complex relationship between their mind (rational) and body (sensual). The two leading aspects of their beings from which their actions are derived. Understanding one's self will allow students to come to know about the concept of human psyche and its constituting parts and the process that lead to their perception of 'self-identity.' This would allow students to notice that the people around them may belong to different ethnicities but they all long to be respected by other fellow human being.

### **Canada as a Multicultural State**

Will Kymlicka, a Canadian political philosopher, proposes that the *poly ethnic right* of immigrant groups in a liberal democracy such as Canada safeguards immigrants from becoming homogenized within the dominant society. *Poly ethnic rights* allow immigrants to preserve their heritage while integrating into the larger society. Although these rights are protected by the Canadian Charter Rights and Freedoms, the expression of different cultures in Canadian society may receive different forms of alienation or harassment from other Canadians. Unfortunately, such adversarial sentiments are currently increasing in Canada, as depicted below by Statistics Canada (Gaudet 2018):

**Chart 2**  
**Number of police-reported hate crimes, by type of motivation, Canada, 2015 and 2016**



1. Includes mental or physical disability, language, sex, age and other similar factors (e.g., occupation or political beliefs).  
**Note:** Information in this chart reflects data reported by police services covering 99.7% of the population of Canada.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

To address culturally-based tensions in multicultural countries, Charles Taylor suggests that large societies must not only accept the diversity of ethnic groups, but they must also embrace the diverse ways that immigrant groups associate with the larger society, a theory he calls “deep diversity.” Taylor’s theory explains that if a member of an immigrant group sees his/her citizenship status and individual rights in a multicultural country as constitutionally protected, their ethnic identity (which may be important to them for many different reasons) may not affect his/her sense of citizenship. This person may consider himself/herself as an equal member of the larger society, leading to tolerance towards different ethnicities.

Taylor may be suggesting the same old liberal sentiment of tolerance with a new label of “deep diversity.” Taylor points out that his theory is not applicable to national minorities such as the Cree and Quebecois, for whom being a Canadian means being a constituent part of Canada. In addition, he notices how loyalties to religious ideologies can further complicate the process of integration into a larger society (Kymlicka 1996, 189-190).

Taylor’s theory of “deep diversity,” can only emerge from one’s internal understanding, which means extending equal respect to others’ religious or moral convictions that do not harm

others. This can be observed as a version of extended respect to one's own religious or moral beliefs. For example, I recently came across a post on Instagram by a staunch member of a visible and vibrant minority in Canada regarding the Notre Dame fire in France, that read: "stop crying over the damn building, and worry about things that actually matter in the world." A person with such attitude toward others' convictions not only fails to extend respect toward others' sentiments, but rather brings his/her own values under negative scrutiny. A plausible reason behind such insensitivity could be a lack of emotional intelligence. Perhaps, if these same words were written about an iconic building within this person's faith then his/her perspective would be the polar opposite. Ethics-based philosophical inquiries would provide an opportunity for young Canadians to understand the important difference between being straightforward and being rude. Unfortunately, cultural insensitivities via verbal expressions are common in multicultural societies, a corollary of the right of freedom of speech and expression in liberal countries. To be fair, it is a small price to be paid in order to have the right to voice one's opinion. Currently however, this right to express one's self often gets misused, and results in projecting insensitive sentiments toward others. This situation can be remedied by philosophical reflections via cross-cultural ethical studies.

Another aspect that is obvious here is that external protection such as legal Charter rights do not guarantee protection from culturally-based prejudices expressed by other members of a society in many ways. The most common prejudices are expressed by passing, stereotypical comments, or by an assumption of cultural superiority. One way to address these inherent misconceptions in liberal democracies is to cultivate conscience in people by discussing and addressing such ethical issues. And high school students may be good candidates for such a project, due to their mental malleability.

Moreover, all Canadians are encouraged to adopt an attitude of tolerance towards the members of other ethnicities; as Kymlicka states, “tolerance is itself a fundamental liberal value,” (Kymlicka 1996, 154). I would argue that due to the sentiment of tolerance, liberal states are now facing recent uprisings of right-wing extremism and populist movements. The word “tolerance” is derived from the Latin *tolerare*, meaning “to put up with, countenance or suffer” (Forst 2017). According to this, when a person tolerates another person it means that they are suppressing their disagreement, and it is a well-known fact that a bottled-up feeling ends up exploding. Kymlicka also points out that tolerance towards something will always entail intolerance to another thing. Maybe it was a bona fide liberal mistake to promulgate the sentiment of tolerance, which was expected to be effective only in a temporal sense. However, it becomes a bad idea to expect people to restraint their sentiments of disagreement for a longer period of time, since it cultivates feelings of resentment. Added to economic inequalities, this feeling of prolonged resentment within different cultural groups has resulted in right-wing extremism and in most populist movements in the Western liberal states. If liberal societies had promoted the principle of acceptance based on a genuine understanding, rather than a temporal notion of tolerance, they would not be as socially fragmented as they are now. As Kymlicka himself also suggests:

a vague commitment to the value of cultural diversity, by itself, may not generate a strong sense of identification with the existing country, or the particular groups that cohabit it (Kymlicka 1996, 191).

Canada should now start accepting the fact that being a Canadian in the present era surpasses the boundaries of Europe: contemporary Canadians come from many parts of the world and these unique heritages should not merely be tolerated but be fully accepted by all

Canadians. Studying ethics via philosophical reflections that are not bounded to particular religious or cultural values would allow students to reflect on their own beliefs and values without being judged or confined by a dominant ideology. Out of such sentiment for their heritage, students would then justify the extension of these sentiments toward others. As is pointed out by Marie Battiste, a professor in Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan, learning is rooted in one's language and culture. The integration of the knowledge of one's own culture and language with Western knowledge maximizes the learning outcomes within learners. Such a pedagogical approach in education may assist students to realize the humanity of their self and of their fellow students, which Battiste believes is a holistic way of learning for all students (Battiste 2016).

It is true that philosophical reflections are possible through the study of literature. However, literary texts depict various cultural norms and ties that is geared to reinforce a certain cultural message in students' minds, which is not my goal. Neither is it my intention to undermine the importance of literature studies. In general, literature reading serves as a window into the past, so that students may improve present society within a certain cultural framework. For example, the Chinese writer Cao Xueqin addressed the importance of personal social roles during the Qing dynasty in his story 'Dream of the Red Chamber' (Xueqin mid-18th century). Henrik Johan, a Norwegian writer and playwright, points out the psychological struggles that women may experience under the social norms of one's society through his dramatic character Hedda Gabler (Ibsen 1891). Naquib Mahfouz, an Egyptian author and Nobel Prize Laureate, has illustrated the common urge to find the God figure among humans in the Eastern context in his story 'Zaabalawi' (Mahfoz 1963).

What I am proposing is to give students an opportunity through philosophical inquiries to think ethically solely as human beings, not just as Chinese, Norwegian, or Egyptian. Considering Canada's diversity, the young minds of Canada should be given an opportunity to think about what it means to be a human being. Students should learn the meanings of cultures and traditions and should ask mindful questions about why humans have cultural norms and traditional practices. Classroom discussions will allow Canadian students to learn about different kinds of cultural and traditional rationales that are observed in contemporary Canadian society in the forms of religion and secularism. This will provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their own cultural and traditional practices, and this self-examination may urge them to realize the importance of their own and other's cultural and traditional practices and the equal respect they both deserve. Such inquiries may teach students to consciously treat all cultural norms and traditional practices with the same degree of respect they would expect for their own culture and traditions.

### **Racism and Prejudice in Canada**

Ben Levin discloses that Canada's immigration rate is among the highest in the world. It welcomes approximately 250,000 migrants and refugees per year, which is one percent of its population. Additionally, in 2017, Canada welcomed 286,000 permanent residents and over 44,000 refugees, protected persons and people admitted under humanitarian, compassionate, and public policy considerations. By adopting a historic multi-year level plan, Canada also anticipates Canadian annual immigration levels to grow to 340,000 by 2020 (G. o. Canada 2019). Levin states that immigration from many diverse cultures has greatly diversified Canadian demography. In general, most Canadians are proud of the fact that, despite the cultural differences among Canadians, most Canadians live in harmony within their diverse communities

(Levin 2008). Levin states that overall, the Canadian government takes sufficient steps to accommodate these diverse ethnic realities in a reasonable manner, but cultivating a comprehensive educational system that could cater to all ethnicities in Canada is the foremost challenge for Canadian school systems. There are many educational choices that are already in place to serve these distinct ethnic backgrounds, such as: aboriginal-focus schools; black-focus programs; single-sex programs; religious schools within the public system; and bilingual and heritage language schools or programs. Still, there are many traces of unacceptable levels of discrimination faced by many immigrants and second-generation Canadians. An IPSOS poll conducted for Global News (2017) reveals that 25% of Canadians reported that they faced prejudice, which has increased by 8% since 2005 (Abedi, Global News 2017). Whereas, the IPSOS poll for Global News (2019) shows that 49 % of Canadians do not see racism as a serious problem in Canada while 43 % thought that Canada does have racism related issues (Abedi, Global News 2019).

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of racism or prejudice is not new in Canada. The presence of these two negative human sentiments can be traced back to the dawn of the Canadian federation, in the form of Anglo-French political and territorial disputes to enforce assimilation of those who did not descend from English or French heritages, such as Indigenous people, Chinese, Sikh and other contemporary ethnicities of that time. Almost every Canadian government has struggled with the presence of racism and prejudice in Canadian society, and these negative sentiments have been a constant challenge in every Canadian era. One of the arguments that critics of diversity present is that strong pluralistic societies not necessarily result from racial preferences. Neither do such measures of racial preferences among ethnic groups reduce prejudice, nor do they help with economic inequalities. Rather, the sense of racial

consciousness may culminate in racial tension between students coming from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. This often results in damaging the self-esteem of minority students. Meanwhile, affirmative actions towards minority students may provoke prejudice and resentment among white ethnic students, who may see affirmative actions as an unjust preferential treatment. This does not mean that affirmative actions are unjust, but what it is suggesting is that affirmative action measures are likely to do more harm than good (Sandel, Justice 2010, 172). Unfortunately, this is exemplified by the death of a nine-year-old girl, Amal Alshteivi, a Syrian refugee who committed suicide at her home in Calgary after getting bullied at her public elementary school (Doll 2019).

Fortunately, racism and prejudice have roots in ignorance, and there is an opportunity to counter such ignorance in people by appealing to their conscience. This method is most effective at a young age, although the word 'racism' is often used wrongly to refer to culturally-based bias and prejudice harboured by people who do not share cultural similarity. The word "race" describes people with similar physical features or regional affinities. The phenomenon of cultural intolerance is not racism (Fredrickson 2003, 170). The study of ethics may guide students to the realization that the larger idea of a diverse society means that various cultures may hold various cultural values. However, the main aim of preserving their heritage remains the same for all cultures, although these ethnic values are mostly communitarian in nature, which may undermine individualistic choices (Kymlicka, p.34). One of the reasons to encourage the study of ethics among Canadian high schoolers is that a philosophical reflection based on ethical inquiries would teach students to respect the freedom and autonomy of an individual member within the ethnic community, values that Kymlicka was concerned to instil (Kymlicka 1996, 75). The study of ethics will not only allow students to be sincere towards students coming from different

cultural backgrounds, but it will also generate a malleable attitude in students so that they can accept dissent within their family or community. When students consciously choose to accept these different aspects of being human, they may come to a better understanding of how to deal with various forms of cultural pressures within Canada's pluralistic society. If Canada aspires to be a multinational state, whose cultural fabric is woven from the many distinct minorities that live in harmony, then the Canadian educational system should introduce the study of ethics in high schools as a grass roots agent to eradicate the sentiment of 'others' from Canadian society.

Levin states that there are worries that recent and second-generation immigrant groups will feel alienated from mainstream Canadian society, and will continue to face unacceptable levels of discrimination, especially in workplaces (Levin 2008). To avoid such future complications, it is about time that Canada gets off the [150 year-old](#) horse of the redundant political tradition of being a modern, tolerant federal state of English, French, and Aboriginal heritage. It does not recognize any Indigenous language as its third official language, but does recognize English and French as the two official languages of Canada. I am not advocating for Canadian nationalism here; on the contrary, there cannot be a sentiment of nationalism within Canada, since a nation shares a common history and culture comprised of common religious or cultural traditions with an official national language or languages that overarch other regional dialogues. Canada is literally founded upon Indigenous land by the major political rivals from England and France, with two official languages: English and French. These two political powers see themselves as the founding nations of Canada, but they have nothing in common other than their European origin. In addition, Canada's evergreen cultural rivalries to gain greater political influence continue to hinder the process of achieving a well-defined Canadian identity. Canadian political parties' use of microtargeting, which means to filter voters

through peoples' likes and dislikes via social media, is a recent example of this political competition in Canada (Thomson 2018).

One way to avoid internal dissent in Canada is to educate young students about the importance of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the significance of the rule of law in Canadian society. It is not by any means my intention to undermine the efforts of current educational curricula. All I am suggesting is to incorporate the study of philosophy as an extra educational tool to cultivate a conscience that shows respect for communal ties, accepts an individual's freedom to choose, and gives importance to logical reasoning. Being tolerant means that a person purports to have a superior understanding over the one who is tolerated. Therefore, the sentiment of superiority is intrinsically embedded in the notion of tolerance. One can argue that being tolerant means to have control over one's self and does not connote the degradation of another. This complex notion of tolerance results in continuous cultural tension and confrontation within Canadian society that is evident in the above IPSOS search and Statistic Canada's report. The possible solution to addressing such social disharmony in Canada may also lie in acknowledging the hypocrisy embedded in Canadian society.

Michael Sandel suggests that politics of avoidance neglect the importance of challenging and contesting peoples' disagreements, which provides them with opportunities to understand the underpinnings of the opposing arguments. This suggestion may hold the potential to reach common consensus in order to establish a just society (Sandel, Justice 2010, 268-69). Likewise, Noddings points out that collaboration emerges by communicating differences, which demands listening and talking. It is widely believed that learning through dialogue is an essential component of critical thinking, which is a crucial skill in working life and in being an enlightened citizen. Dialogue emerges from care; it is intellectually stimulating and allows

humans to explore ideas, raise questions, argue points and decide whether or not the subject is worth pursuing (Noddings 2013, 10, 121-122). Introducing the study of ethics into the high school years is a valuable way of providing the opportunity for such communication exchange, so that through genuine understanding, the overarching need for Canadian unity can be achieved.

### **The Importance of Philosophical Reflection in Liberal Education**

Martha Nussbaum states that although democratic values of self-governance, free speech, respect for differences, and understanding others are still desirable, very little effort has been made to transmit these values to the next generation. Pursuits of wealth urge schools to produce profit-makers rather than to cultivate sincere human beings who become thoughtful citizens. She asserts that the reason people advocate for philosophy courses for all undergraduates is that philosophy stimulates students' minds to think for themselves in both content and pedagogy, which is valuable for democratic governance. However, Nussbaum notices that the ability to think and argue is seen as dispensable when it is compared to skills that can be marketable (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 48). Nussbaum suggests that education is one of the tools that may address the current social challenges, but only if society invests in developing its young members into responsible democratic citizens, the type of citizens who may uphold democratic institutions that are founded on mutual respect and do not lapse into violent rivalries based on cultural hierarchies (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 27-28).

Nussbaum explains that the urge to overpower others is entrenched in the human psyche, and this is demonstrated by infants' capability to establish a social hierarchy by enslaving their parents with their demands and needs (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 31). She notices that most children learn from their adults and act in a similar pattern; this means that children may also share their adults' biases towards others, which Nussbaum refers to as "projective disgust."

In disgust psychology, this experience is defined as fully irrational magical thinking that is also associated with racism, prejudice and other types of group subordination. Nussbaum points out that projective disgust operates on self-repudiation from others who lack social power and almost universal in nature that constantly hindered the establishment of democratic quality. However, this can be addressed by shaping people's attitude towards weakness, need, and interdependence via social norms and laws (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 33-34).

Nussbaum draws readers' attention to Rousseau's great work *Emile* (1762). Rousseau emphasized that cognizance of human weaknesses was central to the whole purpose of education. Rousseau believed that realization of one's own weaknesses made humans sociable and turned humans towards humanity. Rousseau explained that humans' sense of chauvinism—based on their heritage, race, religion, or nation—convinces them that they have right to rule those who do not belong to their group, who are seen as lesser than themselves. A feeling of chauvinism-fueled invulnerability in humans feeds a sentiment of disgust for others. To overcome that sense of superiority and narcissism among humans, Rousseau suggested that educators must address students' self-centeredness. In order to cultivate a sense of vulnerability among students, they must also be given emotional education via a wide range of narratives so that they feel others' experiences of pain and happiness. Nussbaum points out that Rousseau's model of education will provide students with insights that assert that the realization of an individual's own inadequacies holds hope for decent human communities through common solidarity (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 31-40). Therefore, studying the character training within Rousseau's *Emile* will expose students to a concept of human vulnerability, and it will teach students that feeling vulnerable is also a part of being human. It may also convince students that, with one's sincere effort, one can overcome personal imperfection. The lessons

from *Emile* may teach students about the importance of free society and the importance of freedom itself. It may urge students to value cooperation and collaboration with others and will teach students important lessons of mutual respect. Given that Canada's HDI value placed 13<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries (Development 2019), most students attending schools in Canada come from financially stable families and are well taken care of. Studying the character's development in *Emile* may create a mirror image for most students, and this experience may help them to realize the importance of self-efficacy.

Nussbaum agrees with Fukuyama that Socratic thinking is important for democratic governance due to its inherent capacity to inspire self-reflection through active, critical thinking. To support her claim, she discusses the most distinguished and prominent practitioner of Socratic education, John Dewey (1869-1952), who virtually changed the American understanding of schooling. Dewey believed that an educator's central job is to train students as active, curious, critical, and mutually respectful democratic citizens, and the teachers of liberal arts are provided with an opportunity to teach students in that way. Education may hold the potential to secure students an economic profitability, but their sensibility and sensitivity towards their fellow human beings will profit humanity, and this is the basic democratic principle for Dewey (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 64-67).

Nussbaum states research shows that people misbehave when they are not held personally accountable. A shelter of anonymity, being a part of a faceless mass, brings out the worst in people. The escalating use of social media in contemporary Canadian society legitimizes discussions about self-integrity in high school classrooms, which are directly linked to cyber-bullying incidents involving Canadian youth. Psychologist Stanley Milgram's well-known experiment shows that people hold a high level of deference to authority and would perform

actions that they do not agree with. Most young students are vulnerable beings simply because they lack experience in life. Discussing matters that involve trusting adults in authority can be highly beneficial for most students and this may also aid in different aspects of their lives. For example, it can teach students that adults who interact with them must observe the limits of verbal and physical boundaries. These may include schoolteachers, managers at work or even their close relatives and acquaintances. Likewise, an experiment by psychologist Solomon Asch reveals that people willingly go against well-defined evidence to remain aligned with the opinions of their peers, and this shows that peer pressure brings out unusual subservience in human beings. Psychologist Christopher Browning used both Millgram's and Asch's experiments to study the actions of young Germans in a police battalion who murdered Jews in the Nazi era, and asserted that those who failed to shoot Jews felt ashamed of their weakness. This further solidifies the findings of Millgram and Asch, that the influence of authority and peer pressure makes normally well-behaved people engage in humiliating and stigmatizing behaviour toward others if the situation allows (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 40-44). The experiment of psychologist C. Daniel Batson shows that vivid imagery and narratives of the plight of [others cultivates](#) a sense of sympathy in people and sympathetic emotions generate a sense of well-being for others and deflate aggressive urges toward others. Nussbaum acknowledges that empathy is not morality, but empathy provides crucial grounds for morality which may lead into feeling compassion towards others. She suggests that schools hold the power to positively shape the forces of overpowering dominant groups, peer pressure, unhealthy subservience to authority, and common stereotypes by teaching students the importance of accountability, cooperation, reciprocity, and responsibility through curriculum content (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 36-37).

Nussbaum asserts that humanity deserves respect and empathy. Liberal education teaches students to overcome parochialism and will enable students to observe that sometimes human reasoning may lead humans in the wrong direction. An educational system with an emphasis on profitability and a focus on global markets will produce good profit-makers and will contribute to the forces of dehumanization. She states that the humanities may not train students to earn higher pay checks, but they teach students far more precious things than just money; they teach students how to make the world a place worth living for all human beings (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010).

For Nussbaum, the main purpose of liberal education is not political correctness but rather the cultivation of humanity. For her, being educated means not only learning lots of facts and mastering techniques of rationality, but rather learning to be a human being who is capable of love and imagination. Such a human being has the ability to critically question oneself and one's traditions, and is able to acknowledge oneself as a part of the whole humanity in this inescapably interconnected world (Nussbaum, Not For Profit 2010, 36-37).

### **The Importance of Thinking**

In contemporary societies with the prolific dissemination of public education, people have gained more autonomy to live according to their likes and dislikes. The abundant availability of basic necessities such as food, shelter, and health care has shifted people's attention toward luxury goods such as imported cars or high-rise condos. To attain such luxury goods, one must train for a profession that yields higher earnings, and since studying humanities means earning less annually as compared to engineering or computer sciences, faculties of humanities at universities are facing a dwindling future (S. Canada 2017).

External (obligations toward others) or internal (personal desires) pressures to accumulate material goods could undermine philosophical reflections; on the contrary, maybe philosophical reflection is what humans need to realize that no amount of wealth could bring peace to the human soul. To raise human beings who are at peace within themselves, we need the teaching of positive attitudes towards both success and failure. It is crucial to realize one's own limitations. The study of Epictetus' philosophy of life would introduce concepts to students that will create an awareness of their own strengths and deficits. To be able to recognize one's own vulnerability would allow students to be respectful towards the shortfalls of their fellow students. Epictetus suggests that one must clearly be aware of the power one holds to change or not to change the situation that one may face in life (I, p. 110), and it is through this reality check that one should properly desire (II, p.120), anticipate (III, p.120), recognize (IV, p.120), and alter one's perceptions (V, p.120) (Epictetus 1951).

To avoid errors in understanding the philosophical texts, the humanities are needed much more now than ever. The phenomenon of subjectivism of the literary world, unfortunately, can be applied to Epictetus' 'The Encheiridion.' Due to its equivocal nature—and Epictetus' life lesson of a person creating their own reality—it has been misinterpreted as encouraging people to do what they want. This is especially true with the rise of a Google generation, who can find information at their fingertips, take information at face value, and are prone to custom-fitting the information to meet their ends. This can be particularly dangerous for young minds since they are empty vessels and vulnerable to manipulation. Nussbaum recalls the Senecan idea that the world is messy, puzzling, and complicated, and everyone needs to engage in active thinking to critically assess one's own situation (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 35). This was the

main purpose of Epictetus's writing, which holds the potential to encourage young minds to become selfless optimists.

The presence of cultural diversity in Canada provides Canadian high school systems with an opportunity to undertake this worthy project of teaching philosophy. By learning to reflect on their circumstances, students can learn about the importance of the self, which often gets contested or even defeated by fulfilling the external (cultural or familial) obligations. Psychological research in the field of culture studies shows that, in general, there is a phenomenon of group polarization among most cultural groups. Group polarization urges the group members to promote ideas that support the group's solidarity, and this often results in extreme decisions that may not be favorable for all members of the group. However, it is also observed that individual members of the group may express different opinions if they are free from group pressure. Group members observe group polarization under the rubric of "group think," which means that members do not dissent from the group's decisions because they do not want to tarnish their group's image (J. W. Kalat 2014, 457). This inner conflict between personal conscience and external cultural demands is common among individuals who live in multicultural countries like Canada. Carl Jung observed that humans are spiritual beings (J. W. Kalat, Personality 2014, 467); since most cultural norms are entrenched in religious traditions, this explains why group members abide by the rules of group polarization and group think phenomena even if they do not agree with the group's decisions. Their sentiment for their religious affiliation urges them to consent to aspects of group polarization and group thinking.

On the contrary, Austrian physician Alfred Adler, who founded the Individual Psychology school of thought, stressed that all humans want to overcome their feeling of inferiority by striving to achieve excellence and fulfillment in their lives. According to Adler,

each human creates a master plan to pursue a sense of superiority in their competitive activities (such as social or economic successes) and takes extreme measures to achieve self-esteem. In Adler's view, however, healthy personalities are those who not only focus on their own welfare, but also take interest in the welfare of others (J. W. Kalat, *Personality* 2014, 168). The study of Epictetus' philosophy will help students to be sincerely mindful about their personal, familial, educational and professional obligations. It may urge students to seek balance in life while staying positive in their realities. These contesting concepts of human passion and human reason are what I turn to next.

#### **Human Reason is Slave to Human Passion**

MacIntyre observes that for Hume, the exertion of an individual's will is nothing more than the effect of pain and pleasure that gives rise to an immediate passion of desire and aversion: grief and joy or hope and fear. Therefore, according to Hume, certain impressions directly or indirectly constitute passions that generate human actions. Thus, Hume explains how humans operate under two types of instincts (passions) that are intrinsically implanted in human nature: (i) Humans are attracted to good will (calm passions), which makes them feel good about themselves; and (ii) Humans burden their consciousness through committing harm (violent passions), which makes them feel bad about themselves (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 300).

MacIntyre acknowledges that humans rationalize their passions, however, reason alone cannot produce an action. Reason is exercised. Human reason can only present a choice between two or more conflicting or corresponding ideas, but it is always humans who get to choose according to a particular situation and time in order to produce an action or not. MacIntyre suggests that humans should always count on the strength of virtue and mind that controls a

human's good and bad inclinations, to encourage calm passions that produce good results, while inhibiting violent passions to avoid harming one's self or others (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 301).

According to Plato and Aristotle, a human's faculty of reasoning is considered good, because it regulates activities that make humans capable of distinguishing good from bad. From this point of view, a human's passions need to be educated and redirected. So human beings as rational beings make choices according to rational inquiries. Unfortunately, Hume remained unconvinced by the concept of temperance in human nature (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 301), and asserted that:

A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 301-302)

MacIntyre states that according to Hume's above assertion, passions are neither true nor untrue, neither do they have or lack rational justification, and can or cannot be consistent or inconsistent with the requirement of reason. With the given explanation for passion, Jerome Neu, an author and a professor of Psychology at the University of California, states that what Hume observed in the eighteenth century as human passion is now in the twenty-first century understood as human emotion. MacIntyre explains that passions can be contingently associated with judgements and beliefs; however, judgements and beliefs are not passions. Rather, they are the products of personal convictions, while passions are held to no set anchor of any rationality. In contrast, emotions are complex patterns that are regulated by disposition, actual feeling, and judgements, and are expressed by actions in a way so that each element is a necessary part of the whole. For this reason, the relationship of judgement to emotion is not a contingent association

of judgment and passion, as Hume observed (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 302).

MacIntyre explains further that a human's faculty of reasoning has an initial practical role to evaluate their motives by raising questions and providing answers regarding the action proposed by the person's passion. Human reasoning is involved to question the nature and existence of things that are urged by a human's passion. Second, based on cognitive reckoning, a human's reason prescribes meaning to achieve the ends set forth by human passions, the ends that may or may not be pursued by a human. Passion is only satisfied when an action takes place, and therefore passion itself is not sufficient to be a catalyst for human action. Human passions only motivate action, but it is reason which adequately informs humans as to whether the action should be pursued or not (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 304).

MacIntyre states that humans are constantly interacting and competing with each other, and this requires a skill of right judgement; this, in turn, requires training, in respect of pursuing goods that are needed to live a good life in the given social or political structure of one's life. This is no different than the concept of training a sculptor or a competitive athlete—these characteristics can only be obtained by practicing and mastering certain skills pertinent to the field. Likewise, to develop the capacity to compare, identify, and order goods that one may need in life requires the training of one's own character. This form of training will teach young minds to control their untamed passions through reasoning, while choosing to live with themselves and others in harmony. The active pursuit of such a development will transform young people into mature citizens who will willingly recognize the importance of collective consent in order to maintain unity (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 2014, 110). The concept of dependency upon the collective becomes the most desired and founding attribute of a

community. MacIntyre emphasizes how the virtues of an individual's autonomy in current societies are understandably correct; however, in order to exercise the independent agency adequately, it must be accompanied by the virtue of acknowledged dependence (MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* 2014, 8).

For example, parents normally assist their child by providing care and education. While children cannot reciprocate in this manner, they require a virtue of compassion in order to take care of their parents in their old age or in the event of their illness. MacIntyre advocates virtues as being indispensable to human flourishing, and without developing some sense of intellectual or moral virtues, humans are unable to develop practical reasoning, or unable to take care or educate others (MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* 2014, 97-100). In the past, the cultivation of virtues such as loving and caring for one another rested on religious organizations, but with the rise of secularism these virtues are most often sacrificed at the altar of individualism. In contemporary Canadian society, the effects of religious teachings are diminishing and there are not many young people who are interested in religion. However, almost all young people attend schools, at least in Canada. Therefore, cultivating such virtues in students at the high school level is necessary because it will not only prepare young people to realize their familial obligations, but it may also give Canada a future generation that may not rely on hospice care for their loved ones, which can economically benefit Canadian society as a whole.

### **Whose Virtue and Why?**

MacIntyre explains that there are many types of virtues originating from different religious and cultural practices. For example, he reveals the Homeric list for *aretai*, Greek for "character excellences," which in English is translated as "virtue or excellence," such as physical strength, which would not be considered a virtue in the present era. Possession of physical

strength in contemporary society is not seen as an element of character excellence. Similarly, Aristotle saw the importance of friendship as a virtue. According to this, Homer placed importance on physical strength to cultivate good warriors, whereas Aristotle favored the mind in the cultivation of civilized Athenian men. MacIntyre reveals that The New Testament lists faith, hope, and love as virtues, while the highest human activity for Aristotle is *phronesis*, Greek for “practical wisdom” or “pragmatism.” The only virtue that is shared by Christianity and Aristotle is the humility which Aristotle saw as opposite to magnanimity. Likewise, Jane Austen’s Christian point of view saw constancy as the prerequisite of all virtues, whereas Benjamin Franklin understood cleanliness, silence, industry, even vengery as virtues.

Virtues are different for different people depending on time, situation, and place. For Homer, virtues depended on the social role of a person. Thus, if a man is a warrior king, then attaining physical strength and courage are his virtues in order to excel at his social role. According to Aristotle, man’s virtues are dependent on man’s *telos* or purpose, and this would decide what human qualities were his virtues. For Aristotle, virtues are the means to an end. However, one must keep in mind that purpose-driven ends hold the potential of being corrupted by recognizing only the end primarily in the spirit of competition and greed (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2007, 181-203). The income inequality of the world and the atrocities committed in the name of religion are examples that show the flaws of this method. The OECD Centre for Opportunity and Equality (2018) reports that for the past half century income inequality among the OECD countries is at its highest. The richest 10% of the population earn an average income equalling about nine times the poorest 10% of the population, which is 7 times higher than it was twenty-five years ago (OECD 2018).

MacIntyre points out that the promotion of democratic individualism in modern societies has diminished the value of virtues leading to the communal good, and instead focused on individualistic preferences, which often are in conflict with the notion of a purpose-driven lifestyle where virtues are considered an intelligible good. This democratized self with no social content and no necessary social identity can assume any social role and adhere to any point of view. This total detachment from social particularities permits anyone to act as a moral agent. Therefore, the basis of moral agency is a matter of self, and thus moral agency cannot be constrained by any social role or cultural practice (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2007, 32-33). This type of society promotes self-centredness in individuals whose actions are based on a desire of possession; therefore, individual pluralism divorced from social ties owes nothing to anyone and expects nothing from anyone. Contemporary advertisements for reverse mortgages targeting mature homeowners and encouraging them to cash out their wealth right to the penny before they die is a perfect reflection of such individualistic pluralism.

MacIntyre asserts that a person who aims to live a good life requires a set of virtues that define a good life. This itself can be a whole lifetime project – a purpose driven life. (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2007, 203) This notion is now restricted almost completely to various religious surroundings, whereas ironically, it is most needed in diverse classrooms to uphold democratic principles. Because ultimately, the observance of democratic principles requires the virtue of public unity to achieve necessary social harmony. Thus, social harmony is the demand for the current inescapable interconnectedness of humans. Promoting the virtues of cultural integration in high school classrooms based in ethical inquiries may secure a better social and political reality in Canada. One of the downsides of Canadian multiculturalism is that ethnic groups often limit themselves within their cultural-based communities, and separate themselves from larger

society based on their religious and cultural orientations. This leads into the next topic of how religious ideologies affect the political culture of Canada.

### **Religion and Canada**

Religion has always been a fundamental force in shaping the Canadian political landscape. The process of Canadian federation was forged by the cultural differences of Eastern and Western Canada, where the East was predominantly French and catholic, and the West was mainly English and Protestant.

A century of social and political struggles of the British and the French culminated in S. 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which gave constitutional protection to the Protestant minority in Quebec, and the Roman Catholic minority in Ontario to have their separate school systems. The Anglo-Protestants and the French-Catholics not only opposed each other, but they put their differences aside and joined together when it came to excluding other religious groups from Canadian society. Canada did not allow Jewish immigration until the 1930s. Christian elitism prevented Mackenzie King from naming David Croll to the federal Cabinet, which proves that Canada once engaged actively in antisemitism. In addition, the Sikh and Muslim communities have faced their share of ongoing discrimination on the basis of their religious observations.

Quebec's Bill 21 prohibits the wearing of religious symbols for public service employees (Leckey 2019), and illustrates the constant struggle within Canada with public disputes based on religious ideologies seeking political reforms. However, the succession of Jagmeet Singh, a fervent Sikh who does not shy away from expressing or discussing his Sikh faith, as the leader of the New Democratic Party suggests that Canadians have not fully given up on religion. Since religion continues to shape the Canadian political landscape, this might legitimize an objective study of various religions (with selected sections emphasizing social harmony among all

humans) in Canadian high school classrooms. As an academic tool, the study of various religions can be used to neutralize students' sense of superiority about their own religious and cultural associations. Further, the study of various religions revealing common themes of human betterment may eliminate the religion-based prejudices among students and will allow students to realize that all religions seek to bring hope to humans' existential plight. This also has potential for developing young Canadians who may genuinely understand the sensitivity of such matters, and who are well-informed on religious topics.

Meredith McGuire, a professor of Sociology and Anthropology, states that religious beliefs influence a great deal of people's lives and in order to understand the earliest foundations of discipline in any larger society, sociologists seek to understand religion and its influences within a particular society. However, due to the nature of deep personal reverence towards one's religion, it is hard for most people to understand the social aspects of religion. McGuire states that religion is both social and personal. Even in the form of deep mystical experience, it derives its meaning from the socially available symbols that uphold significant values established from a cultural interpretation of any given society. Religion is personal since, in most cases, not all members of a family would adhere to their religious values equally, even if they have all grown up in the same religious environment of the household. The intensity of one's religious convictions varies from person to person and is often subjective to change. Individuals' inclinations for indifference, conversion, and change are examples of such volatility in religious practices, which are mostly dependent on external factors such as social, political, and economic factors (McGuire 2002, 6).

Often, individuals may feel discomfort when their own cherished faith is not treated as superior to others. McGuire states that disagreements can be neutralized by educating individuals

in a manner so that they will not be offended. For instance, if a flower is analyzed by a botanist, he/she may study its physical appearance as compared to other plants. An artist could interpret the same flower's image on a canvas but will not be able to capture the image of the whole flower in one image. The mystic could use the image of the flower as his/her focal point, and a child could examine the flower as an addition to a bunch of other flowers. Such an analysis could educate individuals on how people's perspectives differ and how none of the perspectives have the ability to explain or change the actual existence of the flower. They only show how different people perceive objects and ideas differently (McGuire 2002, 6-7).

Max Weber states that modern life is a "disenchanted" world since modern humans work hard but do not hope for a heavenly reward (McGuire 2002, 285). The fragmentation of social institutions into specialized roles has altered the structure of society that was once considered a joint force to address social issues. Secular social organizations have diminished the role of religious organizations that once led the industry of charity. Similarly, medical and legal institutions have acquired much power over society. For example, charities used to operate under the umbrella of religious or social organizations, while in present day medical institutions significantly depend on their own charitable events. Whereas the definition of right and wrong or good and bad came from religious or cultural practices, today supreme court judges get to define the meaning of morality. This institutional differentiation has led these organizations to compete for more social power. Religion, in contrast, is practiced in the private sphere; it may influence an individuals' morality, but religion should stay out of the realm of influencing public policies. For example, in the Scandinavian countries, religion influences the public realm far less than that of the United States; nonetheless, this privatized 'Protestant humanism' still upholds the significance of the liberal status quo (McGuire 2002, 286-287).

Likewise, Jean-Paul William states that ultra-modernity not only is capable of freeing individuals from religious institutions but also reduces the role of religious institutions within the larger society (McGuire 2002, 301). McGuire states that this disengagement of private and public spheres has caused a difficulty for some individuals in constructing their stable identity, and asks "how one can understand one's self if the community of memory, the traditions has become voluntary and uncertain?" (McGuire 2002, 302).

Similarly, the importance of this community of memory and traditions is also referred to by MacIntyre as "social particularities," that provide individuals with their particular social identities. An individual can be a son/daughter, brother/sister, uncle/aunt; they can own one's family's history, inheritance/debts, rightful expectation and obligations; and they can be a member of a clan, village, tribe, city or nation. All of these particularities hold the answer for what a good life an individual could live, since individual realities constitute the meaning of an individual's morality. MacIntyre reveals that men and women who deny the facts and realities of their lives live with no history. These individuals dwell too comfortably and completely in their partial or particular reality, resting on some universal maxim that usually causes these individuals to behave worse than individuals who stand by their strong social and historic ties (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2007, 219-221).

In addition, Nodding notes that although in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the United States was obsessed with the ideas of individuality and self-sufficiency, the mass interconnectivity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands the recognition of a healthy level of interdependency that focuses on relations rather than on moral agency. To point out and address the social problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a need to encourage interagency cooperation within families, agencies, and nations (Noddings 2013, 10, 118). Concepts such as McGuire's "community of memory,"

MacIntyre's "social particularities," and Nodding's "interagency cooperation," have roots in social obligations that are often nestled within some form of religious observation. Thus, discussing religion in high school classrooms may allow students to understand the concept of interdependency in a clearer sense, and may help students to become effective democratic citizens.

The present age of global interaction and dependency is redefining the meaning of religion, which Canada cannot afford to disregard. Religion has always been a significant social and political force in Canada; therefore, instead of avoiding religious dialogues, Canada should encourage religion-based discussions in high school classrooms in order to ease the tensions between religious and nonreligious groups. This can be achieved by the in-class study of carefully-selected religious excerpts from various religions. The observance of similar recurring themes—such as reconciling through forgiveness based on love and compassion—in different religions may aid in strengthening Canadian democratic principles of individual rights. As an educator, Battiste has also acknowledged that to live a good life and to raise good human beings, learning has to have a holistic approach that is place-based and spiritually-oriented (Battiste 2016). Western democratic principles are liberal in nature and to teach liberal values in a respectful manner means to provide opportunities for students to learn about different traditions and cultures under the umbrella of ethics. On the contrary, Purpel warns that educators have to be cautious when teaching ethics that they do not try to inculcate specific religious or social ideologies into mainstream society, which I will discuss next.

### **The Pitfalls of Teaching Comparative Cultural Studies**

A major concern that parents have regarding their children is that exposure to alternative perspectives may divert their children's focus from their own traditions, which Nussbaum sees as

a legitimate concern. However, Nussbaum states that current global interdependencies urge education systems to train their students to think as global citizens.

Cultivating such global citizenries are possible when students are not ignorant of traditions that differs from their own culture. Studying different cultural views will not only encourage students to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their own traditions, it will also allow them to have a clearer understanding of their own cultural values (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 114-115). As stated by John Searle:

one of the most liberating effects of liberal education is in coming to see one's own culture as one possible form of life and sensibility among others. (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 115)

Nussbaum asserts that non-Western cultures are neither monolithic nor static. In addition, these cultures are constantly changing and interacting with other cultures. Given the complexities involved in studying Confucianism alongside Marxism, where the former emphasizes traditions and the latter criticizes it, a contemporary Chinese woman would criticize both views. Introducing these cultural studies in schools is not a simple task and will require expert academic instruction in the given fields (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 117).

According to Nussbaum, when one encounters a new culture, it is only natural to interpret the new with what one has witnessed, and this is common in teaching the history of philosophy. Nussbaum refers to this as a vice of "descriptive chauvinism," which can be exemplified by the understanding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Aristotelian concepts that were foreign to western philosophers. The Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*, which is a complete and flourishing human life that lacks no activity to better or complete one's life, was understood as a state of being pleased and satisfied in the modern English culture. Aristotle's ethical theory was not based on assumptions about how people want to maximize their satisfaction or their

preoccupation in duties, but rather on striving to live a life involving activities that hold intrinsic values, which include moderation and courage in accordance to one's life (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 119-120).

The counterpart of "descriptive chauvinism" is "descriptive romanticism," which Nussbaum explains as a romanticized longing for an exotic experience by highlighting the odd and mysterious aspects of other cultures. This is based on an observation that one's own culture is entirely different and incomparable to other cultures, and ignores the similarities that may exist between cultures. Nussbaum reveals that this vice distorts both western and non-western cultures. In a way, when western young minds believe that India holds the answer to spirituality, without fully grasping the importance of the Indian religious tradition, they undermine the values of western religions. Similarly, when young Indians are fascinated by the glitz and glamour of western culture's music and fashion, they undermine their own significant cultural accomplishments in art and poetry. "Descriptive romanticism" explains how easily humans can reach simplistic conclusions about complex issues in western and non-western cultures. Therefore, Nussbaum advocates that good academic instruction is needed to prevent young minds making such naïve mistakes around cultural beliefs that comprise the ethical components of all cultures.

Nussbaum states that the best way to discuss unacceptable cultural practices is to see them as common human problems in the sphere of life. Human beings must make their own choices, confront their own morality and cope with their own needs, desires, and fears while continuing to plan their life ahead, to some extent. By discussing controversial cultural issues within the boundaries of classrooms, students will have the opportunity to recognize the shared humanity of all human beings and, simultaneously, students will learn that most cultures have

similar problems. Salkever and Nylan state that the origin of philosophy is embedded in such common searching to find the answers to how one can think outside of prescribed social roles, how to confront the fact of death, and the problems of innovation and continuity (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 137-139). Nussbaum emphasizes that good teaching should not be uncritical of another's views. One way to do this is to study other cultures with sensitivity and open-mindedness (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 144).

Of course, cross-cultural studies are not to be used as a smorgasbord of cultures where students pick and choose the ideas that appeal to them without understanding the importance of their own historical origins or cultural values. In the education curricula, foremost importance should be given to the regional historical, political, and social context prior to introducing other material from non-western cultures. Nussbaum states that the primary goal of teaching cross-cultural studies is to awaken students' curiosity and to train them to welcome new knowledge with ideas to address human conditions, for instance enhancing humans' economic and social conditions globally; and meanwhile, defending the knowledge that respects an individual's freedom to choose and encourage intercultural relations (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 2000, 144-147).

### **Conclusion**

In the past year when I first proposed introducing an ethics-based philosophical inquiry in Canadian high-schools for grades ten, eleven, and twelve, I was convinced that Canadian students from diverse cultural backgrounds would benefit from ethics-based philosophical inquiry. In order to cultivate sincere and respectful democratic citizens it is important that all students must respect each other, regardless of their cultural, social or economic backgrounds. Now, with the rise of extreme right-wing politics and the recent rise in popularity of populist

movements in Europe, along with Nussbaum's many urgent appeals through her books for strengthening liberal education in North America, I have come to believe that it is not just important but crucial that Canadian school systems look into training young minds from a high school level to deal with the present politics of segregation. If Canada wants its future generation to pass on true democratic principles of unity on the basis of sincere understanding, then it needs to accommodate the study of ethics-based philosophical inquiries in high school classrooms as a constructive tool to teach young minds the significance of democratic institutions within Canadian society.

I have considered the common concerns expressed by the Canadian Philosophical Association regarding teaching philosophy to young minds and have tried to address these concerns with the support and input of philosophers and contemporary scholars. With Purpel's help, I have pointed out how the study of ethics can be manipulated by governmental and educational authorities to derive a certain outcome from students' behaviour, that may further their own political or educational agenda. By building on Fukuyama's explanation of human identity, I have shown that the concepts of human dignity and honour prevails in human life. Thus, the study of self via philosophical reflection would allow students to become aware of the relationship between their inner selves and their desires. The ubiquity of identity politics makes it crucial for young minds to clearly understand their selves and the basis of their desires in order to make well-assessed choices.

With the help of Kymlicka, I have discussed the concerns in regards to diversity in Canada and Canada as a multi-nation state. I have also discussed the important need for the sincere sentiment of equal respect among all members of culturally diverse groups in contemporary Canadian society. Where the old concept of tolerance has failed to eradicate

cultural insensitivities and prejudices, contemporary Canada should realize the need for sincere mutual respect for all Canadian cultural heritages to build stronger Canadian solidarity. This can be achieved by offering educational curricula that trains students to think as human beings first, prior to considering themselves Hindu, Jew, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or British, French, German, East-Indian, Arab or African. This self-introspection may awaken students to realize the common aspects of all human beings, which are to feel secure and have hope for the future. These humanly aspirations are only possible through strong and sincere democratic institutions.

If multicultural societies are not rooted in sincere respect for other ethnicities, then there will always be room for cultural prejudice and racism. I have discussed the issue of cultural intolerance in Canada as illuminated by Sandel and Nodding's assertions that a politics of avoidance neglects the importance of contesting ideas in public debates. If that may hold the potential to come to a consensus and to train individuals for such interactive debates, it is better to get individuals to develop such skills at a young age.

As supported by Nussbaum's view, the recent version of liberal democracies seems to be preoccupied by economic prosperity and to have somewhat neglected the actual meaning of liberal education, where education is not just seen as a means to an end. Rather, education should be seen as an opportunity to generate new ideas by critically examining the old ones. Liberal education cultivates young minds to become independent yet sincere in reasoning in order to become affective and efficient democratic citizens. I have also discussed the importance of democratic education through the lens of Dewey's principles of education, resting in the Socratic pedagogical approach of questioning and critical examination, where being educated means to find one's own self rather than merely reiterating teachers' accounts.

I have used MacIntyre to emphasize the importance of understanding the concept of virtue ethics and the important role it plays in understanding the importance of one's own life and its meaning. The idea of individual liberty is an important cornerstone in liberal society; however, MacIntyre's explanation of the social narrative would be a good idea to discuss with Canadian students to show them the importance of their own heritage and identity, which plays a crucial role in their lives and in their relationships with others.

Thinking is innate to humans, and its importance is discussed through assessing the principles of Epictetus. The idea that students may benefit from learning to adjust their own attitude towards others will help them to stay positive in their own lives. Often humans' personal inclinations render them self-centered. MacIntyre reminds us that one owes one's success in life to those who helped one to become an independent thinker. The idea is deeply rooted in the sentiment of human compassion and fraternity. Exposure to such thinking will teach young minds the importance of communal connectedness that is crucial for the whole notion of human unity.

I have discussed the idea of religion in the Canadian context, shown that individuals are deeply connected with their faith-based convictions, and addressed how religions continue to shape the boundaries of social and political interactions. Religious discussions in Canadian high school classrooms under the umbrella of ethics hold the potential to address religious-based prejudices, and such discussions are crucial for any robust democracy.

Nussbaum suggests that comparative studies of different cultures can be used to soften controversial topics in the classroom. Educators must teach objectively and must have a comprehensive knowledge of cultural values and practices that they teach so that they do not undermine or over-emphasize the importance of certain cultural practices.

Above all, it is important for Canadian students to thoroughly understand the principle of liberalism and its ethical concerns in order to fully understand and practice democratic rights with sincerity. Students gaining insights from in-class ethical discussions into human nature may gain understanding about their own natural inclinations, and may learn about the important aspects of the 'self' and its role in the process of human's decision making. This may be applicable in many situations such as skipping class, procrastination, sexual interactions, substance abuse, or how to be a productive democratic citizen.

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