

# A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

*This essay has attempted to argue that education has an intrinsic value. Furthermore, the essay has justified the intrinsic values of education through various theories. Those theories are ethical intuitionism; naturalistic theory of justification; the concept of rational man and the concept of Imaginative man. Finally, it concludes that it is worth pursuing an education for values. As a matter of fact, divorcing the pursuit of knowledge from its intrinsic value distorts the entire enterprise of education itself.*

**Keywords:** *Educational Philosophies, Morality, Existentialism, Philosophical Realism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Intrinsic value constitutes the core of ethics. Philosophers have time and again invoked the concept of intrinsic value to conceptually evaluate various moral problems. Education being an important part of a civilised society, its significance, merits, scope and components have come to the public intellectual platform for debate and deliberation. The role of the philosophers has increasingly been crucial when it comes to the question of value education. With the allurements of commercialisation of education the role of an ethicist has become all the more remarkable that, perhaps the world looks unto the wisdom of philosophers for a new understanding on educational value. This essay has attempted to argue that education has an intrinsic value. Furthermore, the essay has justified the intrinsic values of education through various theories. Those theories are ethical intuitionism; naturalistic theory of justification; Concept of Rational man and the

concept of Imaginative man. Finally, it concludes that it is worth pursuing an education for values. Divorcing the pursuit knowledge from its intrinsic value distorts the entire enterprise of education.

## THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

Think of an instance. You are a person who does not have any regard for the other or for any morality. One day, you meet an orphan who is 90 percent physically challenged. Not out of compassion, but just, you pick up the orphan and take him to your home and nurse. You do not nurse the person because you can gain some good out of him, but you take care of him because he is a person with some value in himself. Someone might object that you take care of the person because of some benefit, but you say you do not nurse him because he can offer some benefit to you, instead you nurse him because he deserves to be nursed. Here we can make a distinction between the two values. First, you could have nursed him for some further benefit. That

benefit is known as extrinsic value. You take care of him because he has some value in himself, apart from any good he can do to you. That inherent good in the person is called the intrinsic value (Miri, 2014). It is easy to show the instrumental/extrinsic value of a person, but it is not easy to show the intrinsic value of a person. It should be imagined and agreed upon. A plant, irrespective of the fact that whether it can be of some good to me or no, its existence is valuable because it has some intrinsic value (Moore, 1960). It is good. The plant has some intrinsic value.

Common sense knowledge tells us that knowledge which is not useful instrumentally has a different value. That is, knowledge has value. That value depends not on use, nor can it offer further good; because it is an end. It is not good instrumentally but it is good intrinsically. Critics state that such an argument is the admission to the fact that we are not able to articulate an argument as to why knowledge has value in it. The following section will consider various theories to justify the intrinsic values of education. Those theories are ethical intuitionism; naturalistic theory of justification; the concept of rational man and the concept of an imaginative man (Moore, 1960).

Ethical intuitionism holds that ultimate values are objective but not a matter of argument or proof. Through our intuition, we can very well know objectively good and bad. We do not need any human argument to show that killing an innocent baby is wrong and helping someone in need is virtuous. We know it through our commonsensical calculation that killing an innocent is wrong and helping someone is praiseworthy. Intuitionism says that unless calculation does not terribly go wrong, we can quite easily make out what is good and what is bad.

G. E Moore spoke of Ethical intuitionism in his *Principia Mathematica*. Moore is concerned not only with the individual problem of intuitionism but also how and what should be the ultimate basis of our moral judgment. His concern was, what are the things that exist by itself. This can be known by intuition alone (Peterson, 1979). For G E Moore, the goodness of an intrinsically good thing cannot be

defined. Good is a simple property. Good cannot be analyzed and defined.

There are two kinds of things. Things are either simple or complex. Colour and goodness are the examples of simple things. An elephant is an example of a complex thing. The leg, eyes and the trunk of an elephant can be distinguished but goodness and color cannot be defined nor broken further to make an analysis. If goodness cannot be defined then can we recognize this? In fact, this confusion should dispel. There can certainly be some confusion as to, whether something is good or it is good because it is instrumentally good. When it comes to the intrinsic value of education, Peterson said that knowledge cannot be compared to justice, beauty, honesty and so on because all of them involve knowledge (Warnock, 1973). He believed that knowledge has its own intrinsic value. We need to think that what value we are willing to attach to it if it existed in isolation.

In fact, the most valuable things in the world do exist in our consciousness, for example, certain beautiful things like the beauty of flowers or human affection in a relationship. These beautiful experiences exist in our consciousness. We never doubt that such experiences are good in themselves. These values are good in themselves which is why we aspire for them. G. E. Moore did not agree to the fact that knowledge has intrinsic value. However, the method that Moore followed to that conclusion is noteworthy. Philosopher, RK W Peterson has followed the method of Moore to understand the intrinsic value of education (Mc Ranor, 1996).

Peterson asks a question: what value can we attach to knowledge? In comparison to other values like justice, beauty, and honesty where does knowledge stand? These values are good in themselves apart from the consequence that they can bring about (Maygene, 1990).

Peterson gives us ways to discern the self-worth of education (taking the view of WD Ross). Ross makes use of a technique for isolating an object that in turn will help in intuition. The inherent value of education becomes very clear when we make a

distinction between two world orders. In the first world order, we see that people have a perfect knowledge of the world. They know the universe and its function Heather (Gordon, 1994). In this thought experiment, people believed to have a better understanding and better state of information. When we make a difference between animate and inanimate object; truth from falsity, these consideration makes it possible to understand that knowledge has value. "In philosophy, there is always a danger that by posing questions wrongly we will set ourselves on the wrong track" The intuitionist advocate that we must lay emphasis not on the by-products but on the thing, itself (Richard, 1988).

## POINTS FOR INTRINSIC VALUE

In this section, the paper will analyze as to how the managing committee of the archival world makes an augment justifying the intrinsic value of archival. This argument can give us a better light to understand the intrinsic value of education. Mr. James O' Toole pointed out that we often preserve the original documents and papers because these original documents have a special value that cannot be transferred nor can they be replaced with anything. In 1970, in North America, a lot of people questioned the validity and the merit of preserving the original documents of antiquity. The North American Archivists learn the tradition of rather the scientific reason to have an intrinsic value of preserving the archives. The European opined out that the prime reason for them to preserve the original archive is to maintain the memory of action that otherwise can be wiped out of the history and the coming generation will not be able to witness them (Deci, 1981). However, the Americans took this idea little further and stated that more than the job of continuing with the tradition of preserving the memory it is all about preserving the memory of its intrinsic value that could be derived from the preservation of the original documents. The other problem faced by the American Archivists was that a lot of old documents and records were piling up in the museum, therefore, the officials persuaded them to destroy some of them. At this problematic time,

the activist resorted to the philosophical argument underpinning the intrinsic value of the original record prevailed and ultimately they succeed in preserving the old documents for a greater purpose. The event of 1997 was quite puzzling and significant. There was a high demand for the destruction of the old documents which would otherwise have some ramification to the General Service Administration. That is why the committee took up the case to begin the job of defining the intrinsic value of preserving these great documents. In 1979 this concept grew further, people began to argue further, that is the reason during the annual convention they raised the matter before a high powered committee to understand the relevance of preserving old documents. The high powered committee, in fact, showed its interest to revisit the significance of the intrinsic value of the archives.

**A naturalistic theory of justification:** If we deny the fact that, the pursuit of knowledge is not good then, we need to say that things are good for a man that must be determined by the human nature itself. This determination of good must be based on a scientific approach which is founded upon some facts rather than intuition alone. For ages, we have believed that the universe is a grand design. In this grand design, a human being is unique and at the centre. Think of the orderliness of the plants, animals, mines and many other amazing things of the world. If this world is so beautiful then there must be a designer. The designer has placed a human being on earth as master and keeper. However, there is an increasing doubt surrounding this teleological view of creation. Later, with the advancement of technology, understanding the origin of the world seems to be a hectic task. Charles Darwin's Origin of Species has revealed to us that human being is an accident. Evolution is the centre of all existence. A new way of understanding the nature has become very important. The naturalistic viewpoints ask us to consider the role of a rational man.

**Rational man:** Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics pointed out that man is special and unique. Man shares some property with the animal kingdom.

However, the unique character that makes man different from other creature is the 'rationality' of a human being. A man with the ability of rationality can pursue noble things. A rational man knows what is right and what is wrong. J. H Newman was the Rector of the Catholic University of Dublin; he wanted to make university education to pursue knowledge for its own sake. He made a distinction between liberal education and servile education. Liberal education should do with the mind. The Servile education should do with bodily labor. The liberal education is good in itself; it is an end. Newman further stated that "the central concern of a university should be a liberal education, which is to do with the mind. The other kind of education is known as the servile education, which has to do with the bodily labor, mechanical employment, commerce, or a profession." Newman further accepted the view of Aristotle who made a distinction between these two kinds of education. Knowledge is capable of being good at it. Although liberal knowledge does not bring about any beneficial consequences, yet, it is rewarding. It cultivates mind and thought. Therefore, Newman pointed out that philosophy and sciences could exert knowledge that might not lead to further consequence, nevertheless, this trains us for further learning. Aristotle viewed Eudemonia as the highest good. Eudemonia was inadequate when translated to happiness. Eudemonia was somewhat close to good life, wellbeing. Knowledge is about that, knowledge is eudemonia. Knowledge is an end. Therefore, liberal education was very important as it is valuable. It has an intrinsic value. That is worth pursuing (Deci, 1999b).

**Imaginative man:** Man has the power to imagine. We put it in words like imagine, imagery, imagination, image etc. These words have something to do with the mind. The work of the mind is original and foundational. Therefore, imagine being a property of mind, we can very well state that the human mind has the faculty to do a lot in our human personality. Imaginations guide human being to come to a creative conclusion. Therefore, some of the philosophers like, Warnock went on to say that

imagination must be respected more highly than anything else (Theodore, 1956).

Certain functions like dreaming, fantasizing, thinking are in the imagination. In the imagination, these factors continue to help in our human activities. Most of the original work, for example, research, discoveries, and invention do occur in the imagination. Therefore, we state that imagination has a lot of value. David Hume, to explain this cited the example of a dog. When we imagine about a dog, before we see a lot of dogs on the street we think of them in the mind, therefore, mental exercise is the beginning stage of perceiving real dog (James, 1993). Since there is a lot of significance of imagination in human life, cultivation of imagination should be an important part of knowledge value. Imagination is an intrinsic value. Imagination being an intrinsic value has an important role in the overall development of human personality (Jerry, 1975).

Researchers suggest that the teacher should have no hesitation in implementing any type of reward to be given to any student. However, in the late period, the claim has been modified and changed into a newer form in which the pupils were to be given rewards only in term of success and to engage them to study well. However, this argument will state that rewards are given on occasion of success, a sign of encouragement and motivate them to study then they lose the intrinsic value of their being. That sort of motivation need influence the teacher. This argument can have two results, first, by not promoting any reward on the occasion of doing a task very well, being hardworking, being original: these sorts of incentives will not make any impact in the functioning of a teacher. Secondly, when teachers do not give any incentive to promote smartness in the work; for obeying the teacher; doing the hard work faster; showing exception interest in the study, if the teachers are least bothered about this then the result is going to be gloomy and abysmal. Even though, the research does not indicate any kind of restriction as to giving a reward to the students to encourage academic performance, yet, they tend to suggest that there is

no harm in developing the attitude of offering incentives in case of academic success. Research suggests that the fact that motivating the students to outperform other students or performing in such a manner that would exceed even the academic standard is not a bad idea altogether. This tend too will not impact the overall growth of the students-most impotently this will not hamper the intrinsic character of a student (Schuster, 1971).

So as to employ a thought experiment let's assume various possibilities as to what will happen if the concept of reward is introduced in the classroom. Say, for example, there is a cap of 90 marks, anyone gets to this level is rewarded. The exam was so easy that everyone gets through the 90 mark. It was also said that those who get made would be given a reward. Many of the students got the reward, unfortunately, some could not get. Not because the unrewarded students were incapable rather, inspire of working hard they could not get the reward (Deci, 1999a). This concern makes the students frustrating (Edward, 2001). Therefore, this can hurt the intrinsic character and the morale of the students.

There is no way to measure out as to how to be the intrinsic value of a student having a reward and a student that does not have a reward. This distinction can cause a very bad impact on the student's morale. This can discourage them from growing forward in life. In such a case, there is no way to solve the problem of the students (Smith, 1975).

As a matter of fact, it is true that those who got the reward did not lose their confidence but people who failed to get a reward lost their moral and confidence. The research does not have a balance so as to help bother the rewarded and the unrewarded. It is not possible to give a reward to everyone at the same time, so also by not granting a reward, we could hurt the sentiments of the students. This can distract an hamper the growth of the students (Lawler, 1968).

## CONCLUSION

Values can either be intrinsic or extrinsic. Both intrinsic and extrinsic values can be contained in the same thing. There are qualities like courage, honesty, truthfulness, nonviolence, punctuality etc. are valuable in itself; they have intrinsic value. When we say that these qualities do not have intrinsic value then we are destroying the very substance of the thing. There are human values for example affection, love, friendship, parental relationship etc. are valuable, irrespective of the fact that they can bring any outward consequence to us. However, education is neither quality like honesty nor a relationship like friendship but education is an activity. This activity is the result of many factors like participants, teachers, curriculum makers etc. This entire endeavour of education needs a lot of care and caution; it needs the exercise of virtue. Education has intrinsic value. When we separate education from its intrinsic value then we are making a mistake. Value education is worth pursuing because it has intrinsic value no matter if it gives a material benefit or no.

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