Designing Realistic Educational Utopias Using (Mainly) Non-ideal Theory

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1. Justification in Moral and Political Philosophy

The justification of normative claims is a central problem for moral and political philosophy. Western philosophers have proposed a variety of methods to address this problem, including appealing to universalizability and the principle of noncontradiction, appealing to fundamental moral principles such as the Greatest Happiness Principle, and appealing to intuitions. They have also advocated various methods that rely on "idealization." In this essay, I discuss some idealizing methods with a view to determining which elements may be helpful in designing just educational institutions for real-world situations.

Methods purporting to justify normative claims must satisfy several necessary conditions of adequacy. Onora O'Neill specifies two conditions in her work on "followability" in practical reasoning.[1] O'Neill uses "followability" in two senses:

1. First, she notes that adequate methods of reasoning must be intelligible to and usable by everyone in the situation where they are being employed:

> [W]e fail to reason as soon as we make moves which we hold that others for whom we expect reasons to be cogent cannot follow; we must expect such moves to seem bafflingly arbitrary to those others.[2]

O'Neill calls this condition "followability in thought."

2. O'Neill also asserts that practical reasoning can advocate only proposals that are genuine possibilities for action in the relevant sphere:

> Proposals for action will therefore not be reasoned unless they are not only intelligible, but real possibilities for those who are to be offered reasons for certain recommendations or prescriptions, warnings or proscriptions…. We cannot give others reason for adopting principles which we do not think they could adopt.[3]

Methods are inadequate if they fail to generate political principles that are "followable in action" by those involved.

3. To these conditions, I would add that good methods must enable us to identify political principles that are specific enough to be action-guiding — while still bearing in mind that all principles require interpretation in context.

4. Above all, good methods must reliably generate political principles that indeed are morally acceptable. The worst way a method can fail is by rationalizing principles that legitimate injustice or wrongdoing.

2. Five Examples of Idealizing Methods in Moral and Political Philosophy

Much of the current philosophical debate about idealization in political philosophy focuses on John Rawls, in part because he introduced the term "ideal theory"

into political philosophy. However, philosophical practices of idealization began long before Rawls and so did critiques of them.

Here are five examples of idealizing methods used by philosophers to justify normative claims. All invoke considerations that are counterfactual and often empirically impossible.

1. The first method is imagining models of alternative and better societies. Ingrid Robeyns has called these philosophical models mythical "Paradise Islands."[4] Plato's *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, and the ideal of pure communism are widely recognized to be unattainable. Such idealized models are not intended to be working blueprints, guiding the details of real-world arrangements. Instead, they are intended for use as moral/political polestars — indicating general compass directions for travel but not specifying the best routes on the ground. In order for this sort of ideal theory to be action-guiding in the real world, it must be supplemented by non-ideal theory, which is used to figure out how the ideal may best be institutionalized in non-ideal conditions.

2. A second example of idealizing methods is social contract theories such as those developed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and others. Social contract theories recount stories about agreements made in an imagined state of nature. The agreements are generally recognized to be fictional.

3. A third idealizing method used by philosophers is postulating ideal agents or impartial observers.[5] Ideal observers are imagined to make moral judgments without being influenced by the biases that supposedly contaminate the thinking of those occupying particular social positions. Such agents or observers may also be imagined as "ideal" in other ways; for instance, philosophers may stipulate that ideal observers are in possession of all the non-moral facts relevant to the judgments they have to make and/or that they are ideal reasoners, immune to logical mistakes.[6] Philosophers using this method do not suppose that ideal observers could ever exist empirically.

4. The method of "reversibility" prescribes that moral agents should imagine being people other than themselves. Although such imaginative feats are impossible, this method is nonetheless recommended by several prominent philosophers such as R. M. Hare, Jürgen Habermas, and Seyla Benhabib.[7]

5. The final type of idealization that I will mention is the very large class of imagined philosophical cases presenting fictional brains in vats, fat men blocking the mouths of caves or being pushed in front of trolleys, children drowning in shallow ponds, and famous violinists being hooked up to the bodies of their hospital neighbors. Contemporary moral/political philosophy is full of these sorts of "thought experiments," many of which are impossibly far-fetched. Some philosophers relish the fantastical elements of such stories, while nonphilosophers sometimes ask how grown-up academics can play such absurd games.

Why are philosophers so fond of idealization? Different idealizing methods are rationalized in different ways:

1. In defending the Paradise Island approach, John A. Simmons suggests that political philosophy cannot necessarily be pursued piecemeal. "There is no reason to suppose in advance that justice in one domain is independent of justice in other domains." We need an "integrated ideal" to ensure proposals in one area will be consistent with proposals in other areas.[8]

2. Classical social contract theories were intended as "rational reconstructions" of human thinking about the moral authority of the state. They purported to justify the *prima facie* obligation to obey the law by showing that it would be in people's rational self-interest to accept the coercion and inequality that are intrinsic to state power because only the state can guarantee freedom and equality.

3. Ideal observers are heuristic devices intended to make vivid the regulative ideal of impartiality. Postulating them is supposed to help philosophers recognize bias in particular situations.

4. The method of reversibility is intended to help philosophers determine which moral prescriptions are truly universalizable by imagining whether or not they would be acceptable to others in differing situations.

5. Thought experiments are intended to clarify our concepts and normative judgments. They "pump" our often uncertain intuitions by asking what we would think in situations that are somehow analogous.

3. How and Why Rawls Uses Idealization

Rawls's *Theory of Justice* aims to determine what principles of justice would characterize a fair system of social cooperation, in which "the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled."[9] In addressing this question, Rawls utilizes several idealizing methods.

3.1. Beginning with the "Well-Ordered" Society

In developing his fundamental principles of distributive justice, Rawls postulates a "well-ordered" or "perfectly just" society that he recognizes to be unattainable in the real world. A central characteristic of this imagined ideal society is that "[e]veryone is presumed to act justly and to do his part in upholding just institutions" (*TJ*, 8). Rawls calls this a society of "strict" rather than "partial compliance." He also postulates the counterfactual assumptions that a well-ordered society is largely self-sufficient and "conceived as a closed system isolated from other societies" (*TJ*, 4–8). In thinking philosophically about the well-ordered society, Rawls explicitly brackets issues of injustice, such as punishment, just war, rebellion, and compensation (*TJ*, 8).

The "well-ordered society" is Rawls's version of Paradise Island. It is not only nonexistent but also empirically impossible. However, Rawls believes that clarifying "the nature and aims of a perfectly just society" provides "the only basis for the systematic grasp" of the more "pressing and urgent problems" of injustice and

partial compliance (*TJ*, 9). Rawls's thought is that philosophers can understand the confusing complexities of the real world only if they begin by reflecting on simplified models. He writes, "Thus while the principles belong to the theory of an ideal state of affairs, they are generally relevant" (*TJ*, 246). A well-ordered society is intended to offer "a conception of a just basic structure and an ideal of the person compatible with it that can serve as a standard for appraising institutions and for guiding the overall direction of social change" (*TJ*, 263).

3.2. Reasoning from the Original Position

In determining which principles would regulate a well-ordered society, Rawls uses a famously idealized method of justification. He postulates a hypothetical "original position" in which parties meet to discuss the fundamental and permanent principles of justice used to regulate the future society they will inhabit.

Just as the original position is not a real-world state of affairs, so the parties in original position are not real people. They are fictional humanoids whose characteristics are deliberately specified to ensure that they agree on predetermined outcomes. The characteristics that Rawls assigns the parties include freedom, equality, instrumental rationality, mutual disinterest, a sense of justice, and ties of sentiment to their immediate families. The parties are also located behind a "veil of ignorance," which prevents them from knowing their particular places in society, their fortunes in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, and their conceptions of the good (*TJ*, 12). Each of these characteristics is intended to constrain the agreements made by the parties so as to ensure that the resulting principles are freely agreed, impartial, and sustainable.

Rawls's aim in developing this elaborate "philosophical conceit" is to provide a method of justification stronger than either intuitionism or utilitarianism. Appealing directly to intuitions carries the danger of rationalizing conventional beliefs because our intuitions are developed in unjust societies and may be shaped by mistaken values. Intuitionism is therefore a morally unreliable method. Rawls is also critical of utilitarianism, which fails normatively, in his view, because it does not take seriously the separateness of persons. Methodologically, utilitarianism posits a foundational principle that is *a prioristic* and question-begging. Rawls presents thinking from the original position as a contrast to these methods. He intends it as an expository device that not only articulates our sense of justice but also explains and justifies it by demonstrating that his principles of justice are those that would be agreed by free rational agents. Rawls asserts that the original position allows us to attain imaginatively a moral perspective, or "Archimedean point," that is objective, impartial, and universal. "[T]o see our place in society from the perspective of this position is to see it *sub specie aeternitatis*: it is to regard the human not only from all social but also from all temporal points of view" (*TJ*, 587).

4. From Paradise Islands to Realistic Utopias

Despite the impressive scope and humanity of Rawls's theory of justice, many philosophers have argued that it fails to achieve its basic aim of guaranteeing equal citizenship to all. Specifically, it fails to guarantee equal citizenship to a number of

vulnerable populations, such as those who are racialized, or disabled, or caretakers for those unable to care for themselves, the last group being disproportionately women. Rawls makes clear his personal commitments to racial and gender equality in several passing comments, but he does not integrate these commitments into his philosophical theory, which disregards several aspects of human life that profoundly affect people's life prospects. These include racial injustice, disability, the household division of labor, and the need for hands-on care. Critics of Rawls have argued that excluding these topics from his model of the well-ordered society systematically biases Rawls's theory against specific populations.[10] They charge that Rawls's theory presents ideals of human agency and society that are not only practically unrealizable for many people but also morally inadequate. Indeed, justice-as-fairness may be ideological insofar as it obscures and rationalizes injustice.

Why does Rawls's theory ignore some systemic injustices? With respect to disability, household labor, and the care of vulnerable others, it may simply not have occurred to Rawls to question the Western liberal tradition of relegating these matters to private life, outside the domain of justice. With respect to racism, Rawls may have assumed that this (unlike income class) would not exist in an ideal society and so he may have thought that it could be considered later, along with other issues of injustice. Charles Mills argues forcefully that Rawls's lack of attention to racism suggests that he views this topic not as part of the primary subject of justice but instead as a philosophically secondary matter of "application."[11] Mills contends that the "endless deferral" of race by Rawls and his followers amounts to philosophically marginalizing deep structural injustices that fundamentally affect the life chances of every citizen in the United States.

In Mills's view, the inadequacy of Rawls's theory of justice results from the inadequacy of his methodology, particularly his reliance on ideal theory. In explaining this criticism, Mills draws on O'Neill's distinction between abstraction and idealization. O'Neill says:

> Abstraction, taken straightforwardly, is a matter of *bracketing,* but not of *denying,* predicates that are true of the matter under discussion. Abstraction *in this strict sense* is theoretically and practically unavoidable.… All uses of language must be more or less abstract and so must all reasoning.… Idealization is another matter.… An assumption, and derivatively a theory, idealizes when it ascribes predicates — often seen as enhanced, "ideal" predicates — that are false of the case in hand, and so denies predicates that are true of that case. For example, if human beings are assumed to have capacities and capabilities for rational choice or self-sufficiency or independence from others that are evidently not achieved by many or even by any actual human beings, the result is not mere abstraction; it is idealization.[12]

Using these definitions, idealized models are not merely simplifications; they are positive falsifications.

Constructing idealized models is a valuable and often indispensable method for developing scientific theories, but O'Neill and Mills agree that it is dangerous for practical reasoning. Mills charges that using idealized models is likely to distract philosophers from real-world injustice because "ideal theory either tacitly represents the actual as a simple deviation from the ideal, not worth theorizing in its own right, or claims that starting from the ideal is at least the best way of realizing it." He asks:

> Why should anyone think that abstaining from theorizing about oppression and its conse-
> quences is the best way to bring about an end to oppression? Isn't this, on the face of it, just
> completely implausible?[13]

Mills's challenge resonates with a long tradition of ridiculing philosophy as wish-
ful thinking, a tradition that motivated classical Marxism to emphasize an alleged
distinction between "scientific" and "utopian socialism."[14] Robeyns's language of
"Paradise Island" plays on this tradition, implying that ideal theory encourages
philosophers to become dreamers of impossible dreams.

Over the past two decades, philosophers have engaged in a vigorous debate
over the merits of ideal versus non-ideal theory. Elizabeth Anderson offers several
reasons why political philosophers should prefer non-ideal theory.[15] First, we need
to tailor our principles to the motivational and cognitive capacities of real people, as
opposed to ideal citizens. Second, we need empirically adequate understandings of the
underlying causes of injustice. Third, ideal theory may lack the conceptual resources
needed to recognize and understand real-world injustices. Anderson's overall point
is that constructing Paradise Islands is an unreliable method for thinking philosoph-
ically about justice because idealized models are likely to disregard aspects of the
real world that are crucially relevant to assessing the justice of existing institutions
and to determining the practical feasibility of proposed alternatives.

Some philosophers assume that relinquishing ideal theory means that political
philosophers must refrain from developing large-scale systematic ideals; for instance,
Simmons suggests that, without ideal theory, political philosophy could only be done
piecemeal and would be limited to addressing particular manifestations of injustice.
However, Anderson does not draw this conclusion. Despite her critique of ideal theory,
Anderson offers a far-reaching ideal of racial integration whose attainability is not
self-evident and which may easily be interpreted as advocating the elimination of
"race as we know it" — although Anderson stops short of this conclusion. When I
was younger and bolder, I advocated a classless, genderless society.[16] Are such large
and systematic ideals too speculative to have philosophical value?

In my view, one indispensable task for political philosophers (though certainly
not the only task) is to develop what might be called "realistic utopias," borrowing
a term from the later Rawls. Realistic utopias resemble Paradise Islands in being
fairly comprehensive or systemic models of better societies, but they do not neglect
immediate problems (such as racism) and are plausibly achievable from we are now.
To maximize the probability of developing ideals that are realistic in the senses of
being contextually relevant, morally adequate, and practically feasible, philosophers
should utilize a non-ideal or naturalized methodological approach. In the next section,
I sketch one such approach.

5. Using Non-ideal Reasoning to Design Realistic Utopias

5.1. Reasoning toward Justification Must Be Intersubjective

Justification is a social process that consists in giving accounts and exchanging
reasons. It is not enough to offer reasons for normative claims; others must recognize

the reasoning as sound. Rawls is well aware that justification is inherently social and he distinguishes it explicitly from logical proof:

> Justification is argument addressed to those who disagree with us or to ourselves when we are of two minds.… Thus mere proof is not justification. A proof simply displays logical relations between propositions. But proofs become justification once the starting points are mutually recognized, or the conclusions so comprehensive and compelling as to persuade us of the soundness of the conception expressed by their premises. (*TJ*, 508)

Despite recognizing that justification involves persuading others, Rawls's early reasoning is often characterized as monological. Not only does he offer an elaborate thought experiment, but the experiment postulates a discussion among parties imagined as identical with each other, all with the same motivations, valued goods, and reasoning strategies. It is actually misleading to present the parties' conversation as a discussion because the parties are interchangeable; no variety in perspectives is postulated, so the conversation is logically equivalent to a monologue. Discourse ethicists have led the way in pointing to the limits of monological reasoning. Conceptions of justice produced by monological practices can only be as good as the political imaginations of their authors, and everyone's imaginative capacities are inevitably limited. We can all construct theories that are internally consistent but we need to move beyond imagining what others might say to engaging directly with others in actual intersubjective reasoning.

Rawls is not oblivious of the real world, of course. He presents his theory as a proposal for other philosophers' comments, and his later work does in fact take up a number of their criticisms. However, Rawls's conception of moral justification is also monological in another sense. He says that the goal of a philosophical theory of justice is to describe the sense of justice possessed by a single person:

> I shall take for granted that these principles are either approximately the same for persons whose judgments are in reflective equilibrium, or if not, that their judgments divide along a few main lines represented by the family of traditional doctrines that I shall discuss.… [I]f we should be able to characterize one [educated] person's sense of justice, we would have a good beginning toward a theory of justice.… So for the purposes of this book, the views of the reader and the author are the only ones that count. The opinions of others are used only to clear our own heads. (*TJ*, 50)

This assertion is troubling. When people disagree, we often need to do more than clear our heads. We may need to change our own or other people's minds. Rawls acknowledges the possibility that our sense of justice might require "substantial revision" (*TJ*, 49), but his analogy between our sense of justice and our sense of correct grammar assumes that the likelihood of radical disagreement is remote. Although Rawls says, "If men's conceptions of justice finally turn out to differ, the ways in which they do so is a matter of first importance" (*TJ*, 50), his early work offers no suggestions for addressing such differences.

5.2. REASONING TOWARD JUSTIFICATION MUST BE EMPIRICAL,
NOT HYPOTHETICAL

Discourse ethics insists that normative claims cannot be validated through philosophical thought experiments but instead require real-world discourse. However, not all discourse will do. Briefly, discourse theorists regard moral claims as justified only if they emerge from processes of argumentation that conform to certain rules designed

to capture the conditions of "a speech situation immune to repression and inequality."[17] Habermas contends that these rules are not mere conventions; rather, they express the "unavoidable" or universal and necessary presuppositions of argumentative speech.[18]

Ideal speech situations, or "unrestricted communication communities," are rare and perhaps impossible in the real world. Humans are culturally diverse, socially unequal, and driven by many motives other than the search for truth. Habermas, of course, is aware of this and writes that, in real life, we must be satisfied with an "approximation adequate enough for the purpose of argumentation."[19] Just as scientific conclusions may be objective despite being based on evidence that is fallible in principle, so moral conclusions may be valid even when based on reasoning that is contestable in principle. Habermas thinks it is simply necessary to establish institutional measures "to sufficiently neutralize empirical limitations and avoidable internal and external interference so that the idealized conditions always already presupposed by participants in argumentation can at least be adequately approximated."[20]

Although Habermas recognizes that justifying normative claims in the real world requires designing discursive arrangements capable of ensuring that the voices of people in marginalized and vulnerable populations are heard and receive uptake, he offers no practical suggestions for accomplishing this. Perhaps he thinks that this is a task for political science rather than political philosophy. However, without some plausible grounds to believe that something approximating ideal discourse is possible in the real world, we have no reason to suppose that moral skepticism can be avoided. Without such grounds, the ideal speech situation is a discursive Paradise Island.

5.3. Reasoning toward Justification Must Be Inclusive and Fitted to Specific Contexts

At the moral heart of philosophical liberalism is the liberal criterion of justification, the idea that political principles must be justifiable to those who live under them. This criterion is intuitively appealing but also famously problematic. One problem concerns "followability in thought," the requirement that people be able to understand and utilize whatever reasoning method is used in justifying political claims. Many prominent Western philosophers have proposed models of justificatory reasoning that are exclusionary and therefore biased; for example, Theresa Tobin and I have argued elsewhere that, despite mandating the inclusion of all affected by a normative proposal, discourse ethics methodology is covertly biased against those with less power and privilege in the contemporary global order.[21] We go on to argue that this bias results from philosophers' holding overly idealized conceptions of both the mission and the method of moral epistemology.

Political justification always occurs in particular contexts. The need for it arises when a particular action or social practice faces a specific challenge and must be justified to a particular challenger or group of challengers. Justification cannot succeed unless the reasons offered are "followable" by everyone involved, and followability is always relative to particular audiences on particular occasions.[22] Real-world reasoning is always expressed via the concepts and cultural resources that are available in particular contexts, and this means that appropriate vocabularies and forms of

reasoning cannot simply be assumed, but instead must be negotiated and perhaps invented. It is question-begging and dogmatic to insist that only our reasons are good; those with whom we are disputing must also recognize them as good.

Tobin and I argue that taking seriously the inevitable situatedness of real-world argumentation requires rethinking the mission of moral epistemology.[23] We contend that it is a mistake to pursue a singular ideal of reasoning designed to regulate moral/political argumentation in all contexts. Rather than seeking one-size-fits-all models of justificatory reasoning, Tobin and I propose that moral epistemology should take its mission to be developing multiple models of reasoning suited to a variety of circumstances and accompanied by guidelines explaining the types of contexts where the practices prescribed by the models likely "fit" or work best.

Once the mission of moral epistemology is reconceived, then its method must also be rethought. Tobin and I advocate that moral epistemologists should employ naturalized methods that are in radical contrast with philosophers' more usual idealized method of armchair imagining. We propose beginning with case studies of real-world practices of reasoning toward justification, with special attention to situations characterized by diversity and inequality. Our idea is to identify models of reasoning that actually work, rather than models simply imagined to work, and to explain why different models "fit" different types of contexts.[24]

5.4. Reasoning toward Justification Cannot Be Entrusted to Philosophers Alone

Tobin's and my methodological proposal is not the uncontroversial claim that empirical information is required at the level of application; instead, we propose that conceptions of reasoning be empirically informed also at the level of theory. This means that philosophical models of moral and political justification must incorporate multidisciplinary scholarship at all stages. Identifying case studies of successful reasoning practices requires collaborating with scholars from many disciplines, and with moral reasoners who are not academics.

5.5. Reasoning toward Justification Must Be Reflexive

Philosophers working collaboratively to develop new philosophical models of justification must reflect continually on our specific identities and situations. Who are we, for whom are we philosophizing, what are our credentials and authority? This kind of reflexivity will help us stay modest and humble, to remember that, if our conceptions of justification are useful at all, they are useful only for particular contexts, not for all times and places. Like justice, moral/political justification cannot be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*.

6. Can Idealizing Methods Play Any Role in Justifying Realistic Utopias?

It is currently fashionable for philosophers to talk about naturalizing epistemology and methodology. However, "naturalizing epistemology" is interpreted in almost as many confusing ways as "ideal" and "non-ideal theory." The case-study-based version of naturalizing moral epistemology that Tobin and I advocate is distinct

from several other philosophical projects described as naturalizing epistemology. For example, we are not recommending what has become known as experimental philosophy, which collects survey data about peoples' moral intuitions, nor are we advocating the investigation of brains.

Tobin's and my version of naturalizing does not require rejecting all idealizing methods. Philosophy, like law, depends on arguments from analogy, and there is no reason to avoid fictional thought experiments that may sharpen our thinking so long as we remember the inevitability of disanalogies and keep in mind considerations of relevance to the real world. Even the much-criticized method of reversibility may sometimes serve as a good heuristic if we remain mindful of the limits and dangers of imaginative identification.[25] In general, many idealizing methods may be used tactically in reasoning toward justifying political ideals, provided that they are used cautiously in the context of broader reasoning strategies that are non-idealized and naturalized in the sense that Tobin and I describe.[26]

Although idealizing methods may play minor roles in justifying realistic utopias, the main role must be played by methods that are naturalized in the sense explained. Anderson suggests that we should start "from a diagnosis of injustices in our actual world, rather than from a picture of an ideal world."[27] Tobin and I would add that philosophers should examine how these injustices are understood by those involved. Only such a naturalized approach to justificatory reasoning enables us to develop philosophical ideals that are realistic in the following sense: they are contextually relevant; they include the moral and conceptual resources necessary for those involved to recognize existing specific injustices; they offer credible possibilities that are reachable from where we are now; and they are sustainable in real-world contexts.[28]

In the end, however, not even the best philosophical reasoning can guarantee that proposed utopias will be practically feasible. In non-ideal theory, as Anderson tells us, normative ideals do not function as unquestioned *a priori* standards of assessment but rather as hypotheses to be tested in experience.[29] Ultimately, we can discover how far our political proposals are genuine possibilities only by trying to build them in the real world. Anderson offers examples of some social experiments in the egalitarian tradition that have turned out to be unrealistic and others that have proved to work well:

> Various types of communal living have been repeatedly tried and repeatedly failed. Comprehensive centralized state-managed economies have been disastrous. Other experiments have been highly successful — democracy, social insurance, universal education, human rights.[30]

When we find that our utopias are infeasible or unrealistic, we must be ready to revise them. Unlike Paradise Islands, the epistemic status of realistic utopias is always provisional.

7. Designing Realistic Educational Utopias

If designing realistic utopias is constantly a work in progress, where should that work begin? So many injustices confront us that it can be hard to decide where to start. Feminist standpoint theory advises us to begin with the problems facing those who are marginalized on society's underside.[31]

A recent article in *The Nation* hints how this methodological advice might guide philosophers of education aiming to design a realistically utopian public school system in New York City.[32] The advice would recommend that philosophers should not begin with the much-discussed concerns of wealthy parents, such as overscheduling children, cronyism at the 92ⁿᵈ Street Y's nursery school, and addressing obesity by banning large sugary drinks. Instead, it would advise philosophers to begin by addressing the concerns of poor parents, which include underscheduling children and the lack of afterschool programming. Poor parents are also concerned about the shortage of public preschools and the way that the city's public pre-K lottery picks winners and losers among four-year-olds. They worry that their children's obesity results from the lack of physical education during the school day or in after-school sports programs.

All political philosophy is designed to address particular historical problems: Hobbes worries about civil disorder; Rawls worries about religious intolerance and class inequality; Anderson worries about unequal citizenship for African Americans. Addressing injustices experienced by those who are most disadvantaged in particular contexts, using the kind of naturalized and non-ideal reasoning that Tobin and I recommend, will help philosophers of education in developing ideals that are contextually relevant, morally adequate, and practically feasible. In other words, they will be realistic educational utopias.

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1. These conditions are similar to but not identical with those proposed by Alison M. Jaggar and Theresa W. Tobin, "Situating Moral Justification: Rethinking the Mission of Moral Epistemology," *Metaphilosophy* 44, no. 4 (2013): 383–408.

2. Onora O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue: A Constructive Account of Practical Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 60.

3. Ibid., 57–58.

4. Ingrid Robeyns, "Ideal Theory in Theory and Practice," *Social Theory and Practice* 34, no. 3 (2008): 341–362.

5. See Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer," *Philosophy and Phenomological Research,* 12, no. 3 (1952): 317–345. R. M. Hare postulates a superhuman "archangel"; see Richard M. Hare, *Moral Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

6. See Adam Smith, *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 2nd ed., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (1740; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer"; and Hare, *Moral Thinking*.

7. See R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 123; Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 65; and Seyla Benhabib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel: Communicative Ethics and Current Controversies in Practical Philosophy," in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 52.

8. John A. Simmons, "Ideal and Nonideal Theory," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38, no. 1 (2010): 5–36.

9. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). This work will be cited in the text as *TJ* for all subsequent references.

10. See Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Perseus Books, 1989); and Eva Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999). See also Charles W. Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 165–184.

11. Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 165–184.

12. O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue*, 40–41.

13. Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 171.

14. Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, trans. Edward Aveling (Chicago: Kerr, 1908).

15. Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 3–5.

16. Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983).

17. Habermas, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification," 88–89. In earlier work, Habermas spoke of the rules as defining an ideal speech situation but later came to prefer the terminology of an "unrestricted communication community" (*die ideale Kommunicationsgemeinschaft*). He also sometimes speaks of constraint-free or domination-free communication.

18. Ibid., 81.

19. Ibid., 91–92.

20. Ibid., 93.

21. Jaggar and Tobin, "Situating Moral Justification."

22. O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue*, 60.

23. Jaggar and Tobin, "Situating Moral Justification."

24. Theresa W. Tobin and Alison M. Jaggar, "Naturalizing Moral Justification: Rethinking the Method of Moral Epistemology," *Metaphilosophy* 44, no. 4 (2013): 409–439.

25. See Lawrence Thomas, "Moral Deference," *Philosophical Forum* 14, no. 1–3 (1992–93): 233–250; Alison M. Jaggar, "Feminism and Moral Justification," in *Feminism in Philosophy,* ed. Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 225–244; and Iris M. Young, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought," in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

26. The distinction between idealization and abstraction should not be overemphasized. Bracketing predicates may be logically distinct from explicitly denying their existence, but, as O'Neill notes, abstractions can be philosophically dangerous when they direct philosophers' attention away from things they should notice (O'Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue*). Moreover, as I argue here, some idealizations can be useful even in practical reasoning.

27. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration,* 3.

28. One might ask how much detail should be included in a realistic utopia. Here we should remember Naomi Scheman's point that what counts as accuracy in any context depends on our specific purposes; for example, what counts as an accurate measure of the length of a coastline depends on the purposes for which we are measuring the coast. (Naomi Scheman, *Engenderings: Constructions of Authority, Knowledge, and Privilege* [New York: Routledge, 1993] 206.) Philosophers need not design realistic utopias in full architectural detail. Not only is this an impractical aspiration; it is also inimical to real-world democracy.

29. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration,* 3–7.

30. Elizabeth Anderson in "Elizabeth Anderson Interviewed by Richard Marshall," *New Leveller* (2012), http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/the-new-leveller/ (accessed February 1, 2014).

31. Sandra Harding, "Borderlands Epistemologies," in *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

32. Betsy Reed, "How Bill de Blasio Changed the Conversation about Education," *The Nation* (December 2013), https://www.thenation.com/article/how-bill-de-blasio-changed-conversation-about-education/ (accessed March 4, 2014).