Higher Education as Self-Realization – An Intrinsic Argument for the Public Funding of Higher Education

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Vienna, Austria
2021

Abstract

Many arguments for or against full public funding of higher education in the literature are premised on its instrumental aspects; while this thesis provides a different argument for full state subsidies of higher education based on its intrinsic value towards self-realization. In this regard, the arguments focus more on what it terms non-essential higher education, which are the disciplines mostly belonging to humanities and the arts.

The argument in this thesis is again qualitatively different from the major arguments because this is not *exclusively* applicable to higher education. It covers every activity that human beings can derive meaning from, as self-realization here is conceived in a wider sense than its common Western connotation. The thesis defines every activity that brings individuals meaning or purpose in life as self-realization, and says all such activity is of utmost and equal value. For this reason, this thesis claims that public funds, barring the essential costs of society, should be dedicated to the pursuit of all these activities. This would include non-essential higher education among countless others like counting blades of grass or watching television all day.

However, as resources are scarce and basic human necessities must be met, this thesis adopts Rawls' theory which states all financial decision in society should be made to maximize the benefits to the least advantaged groups. Therefore, the social value or outcomes of all activities are relevant. This thesis argues that higher education, including non-essential higher education, also plays a central social role, and as such, should have priority in receiving public funds. Here, it also argues that justice can require recipients of non-essential higher education to participate in a fair social scheme that distributes essential labor among all capable members in society. This is therefore a supplementary, but general moral principle. It also provides a secondary argument- if a classification of the intrinsic value of different activities can be plausibly made, self-realization would be the most appropriate normative standard for it. The key argument here is that by all these standards, non-essential higher education has a strong claim to public funds.

Acknowledgements

"The Teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness.

If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."

Kahlil Gibran, 'On Teaching,' in The Prophet.

I offer these lines by Gibran for my supervisor and – Teacher, Dr. Anca Gheaus, as I do not have words of my own to convey my gratitude or awe for her - also because I am convinced of the truth in this message of the Prophet, and I believe Anca is the Teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple – and the best Teacher I have ever had.

I would like to thank her not only for every suggestion, comment, advice, guidance or her time she has provided me with in the course of writing this thesis, but also for her endless kindness towards me, even beyond the thesis or coursework; when the Austrian authorities has been less than kind, for example.

I am also grateful to Dr. Andres Moles, who has read various ideas of the thesis at various stages, and provided extremely useful suggestions.

I would also like to thank all other teachers at CEU who has also been very generous. I cannot name them all, but I should at least mention Dr. Zoltan Miklosi, if not for his special kindness, certainly for his course, which was my first on Political Philosophy; and the thesis stemmed from my love of the discipline that he kindled. I would especially like to thank Dr. Tolga U. Esmer from the Department of History at CEU, and also Dr. Andrea Kirchknopf at the Center for Academic Writing, whose comments helped improve my writing as much as anything ever did. I am also sincerely grateful to everyone at the Political Science Department, who has always been very efficient, and what is more important, very kind!

I should also thank my family, and my friends, who make my life so that I am able, and willing, to work. I should at least name two of them– Tashmia Sabera, in Vienna, also a student of CEU, who has heard ideas for all my theses many times and shared her thoughts, always insightful and encouraging, and but for whom it is doubtful I would be in CEU in the first place – which would have been a great loss; and the great Niaz Mahmud Noor-e-Rashid of Khulna, in Dhaka – where I have been for the duration of the course in this strange session of 2020-2021, and who has made my strange stay stranded in my own hometown easier for me.

Contents

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Introduction:

With universities around the world opting to secure more of their funding from tuitions, there is a philosophical debate on who should bear the costs of higher education - students or the wider public - and to what extent. Arguments premised on the instrumental purposes or values of higher education, both for or against full public funding, generally receive more attention in the literature. This thesis argues that human beings have a fundamental need for self-realization, which is also intrinsically valuable; and higher education is one of the most important ways of self-realization, and for this reason, the costs of higher education should be borne by the public, subject to the difference principle and the fair equality of opportunity. Hence, this is a two-part argument- (a) Self-realization is a fundamental aim of human lives and is intrinsically valuable; which makes a fundamental aim of justice to promote, for each person, as much access to self-realization as possible and hence, public funds should be allocated to the pursuits of self-realization, in all its countless forms; and (b) Higher education, including non-essential higher education, is a particularly significant way of self-realization apart from being instrumentally valuable, and for this reason it should have a priority in receiving public funds. Both (a) and (b) are subject to the

principles of justice as fairness formulated by John Rawls, and discussed in Chapters I and III respectively.

The rather large claim regarding self-realization being a fundamental goal of human existence is defended in the first chapter. Self-realization, for this thesis, means every activity pursued by individuals that they find meaningful. It is therefore wider than the Western conception of the notion, which essentially denotes the cultivation and application of one's talents, or in other words – human flourishing. It not only includes all forms of human flourishing, but every process which provides life with a purpose, or makes life meaningful for individuals. For some it will be about cultivating and applying intellectual and artistic talents, i.e. human flourishing, for others about raising a family and for yet others counting blades of grass, to use Rawls' well-known example. Furthermore, this thesis claims no hierarchy should be made between different modes or processes of self-realization if different individuals find them equally meaningful.

This naturally gives rise to the question that if self-realization is conceived so generally, whether there is any special value in higher education, at least to such an extent that it can claim public funds, on the very ground of its contribution towards self-realization. The argument advanced here is that society should support *every* form of self-realization *including* through higher education, because self-realization is a fundamental aim of human existence and thus intrinsically valuable, and hence the aim of justice should be to facilitate it.

However, as resources are scarce, the allocation of funds to the various ways of self-realizing needs to be guided by a moral standard. In this regard, the instrumental value or outcomes of the activities in question need to be taken into account in the first place. Secondly and only as a secondary argument, it is suggested that self-realization can also operate as a standard on its own to measure the intrinsic value of different pursuits. The

significant point here is that on both these grounds, higher education should have a high priority for receiving public funds. The third chapter presents and discusses this key point involving the special value of higher education for self-realization.

Prior to that, a brief overview of the literature regarding the major arguments on who should bear the costs of higher education is discussed in the second chapter. I have mentioned that these are mostly based on higher education's instrumental value, and Paul Bou-Habib shows that three of the four key arguments, both for and against public subsidies, are indeterminate, and the other one is implausible.[1] I engage with his critical evaluation of these at length and register a few disagreements with his conclusions. More consequently, I demonstrate the limitations of providing arguments for costs of higher education premised solely on its instrumental aspects. However, the thesis accepts Bou-Habib's conclusion that Rawls' theory of justice can help address the concerns regarding the indeterminacy of distributing the costs of higher education, and argue that if self-realization as it is conceptualized here can be situated within the theory, higher education can enjoy a privileged position when it comes to receiving public funds, both for its instrumental and intrinsic values, owing to the central role it plays towards self-realization.

For this reason, Chapter 3 discusses the value of higher education in much detail, so that a case can be made for its public funding within the core framework of the thesis. It should be mentioned that the thesis makes a prior and morally relevant classification between education and higher education, and another pertinent one between essential and non-essential higher education. Both these categories are explained in this final chapter, but a brief overview can be provided here for convenience's sake: Education has been conceived as the process of imparting knowledge and skills by educators and receiving knowledge and

[1] Paul Bou-Habib , "Who Should Pay for Higher Education?", *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 44, no. 4 (November 2010) : 479-95

learning skills by students; whereas higher education is the search for knowledge, undertaken by advanced and junior researchers, or faculties and graduate students. That is, higher education is understood as the creation or the pursuit of knowledge and the exercise of human skills, which necessarily has to be built upon existing knowledge and the training in the skills in question. Therefore, education and higher education must always complement each other in institutions of learning.

The thesis focuses its arguments on the areas of higher education considered to be less 'essential' or important, – e.g. humanities and the arts. The reason for this is precisely because it is considered to be less important, and occupying, as a result, less privileged positions when questions of its funding are discussed. The distinction between essential and non-essential higher education are made on the basis of what is (more) necessary for the functioning of society, and the limitation of this functional classification is also discussed in the chapter. In this connection, as a supplement to the principle argument, I suggest recipients of non-essential higher education can be required to participate in the essential labor of society as per a fair scheme which justly distributes such work among everyone in the society. This is also relevant for people who wish to self-realize through paths which are considered even more 'unproductive' according to outcome-based views, – for example, by counting blades of grass or tearing sheets of paper. Subject to the principles of justice, which includes participation in a just scheme distributing essential labor, they should also be able to pursue such paths of self-realization freely and fully.

To argue for the different values of higher education I take aid of the major philosophers of education. Martha Nussbaum is a prominent champion of the humanities and arts in contemporary philosophy of education, who argues that these are particularly important for democracy. Hers is also an instrumental argument for the most part, but is useful to establish the priority of non-essential higher education. She builds her theory around

the ideas of John Dewey and Rabindranath Tagore. This thesis also uses these major thinkers of education and also draws heavily from Humboldt and Aristotle to establish the relations between human flourishing, which is one of the main components of self-realization, and higher education. This supports the case for public-subsidies of higher education as it establishes its prime role in aiding self-realization.

I accept that for essential purposes, funds can be diverted from non-essential higher education to essential higher education, and from all higher education to other essential purposes like food production or emergency healthcare etc. This is contingent upon the scarcity of resources in society. If resources are available in society for the costs of essential necessities at a reasonable level, higher education should receive funds as matter of justice. If more funds are available, other activities like counting blades of grass and tearing sheets of papers should also receive public funds. These claims are all subject to the principles of justice, which may require participation of all in the essential labor of society as per a fair scheme. This is the core contribution this thesis seeks to make.

Chapter I

Self-realization

For Aristotle, and the Western tradition, self-realization is the cultivation and application of one's talents.[2] The concept adopted here goes beyond this notion which is essentially concerned with realizing human talents, or to use another term- human flourishing, and includes every activity or pursuit that brings meaning and/or purpose to individual's lives.

Although I find this notion of self-realization convincing for most purposes, I am also convinced by Rawls' opinion on comprehensive philosophical doctrines.[3] However, as the thesis is about higher education, it *needs* to make arguments based on human nature. The idea of the human being adopted here has a fundamental need for 'meaning', which is also the idea around which the concept of self-realization is built. It thus offers this very broad notion of self-realization as an alternative, a better replacement even, to the 'conception of the good' found in Rawls, which is also used essentially to conceptualize the 'free and equal persons' for his scheme of justice.[4] Regardless of whether self-realization is an improvement over the 'conception of the good,' my hope is that it is at least compatible with justice as fairness, by being able to perform the latter's function within it.

[2] Kai Nielsen, "Alienation and Self-Realization," *Philosophy* 48, no. 183 (January 1973): 21-33. See also: Hanne Laceulle. *Aging and Self-Realization* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018): 113-19

[3] John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, no.3 (Summer 1985): 239-48

[4] Id. 231-34

The idea of intrinsic value of various activities or things is also premised on this central role of meaning in self-realization. This thesis assumes that finding a meaning or purpose in life is a fundamental human necessity and therefore intrinsically valuable. All activity or exertion an individual performs to this end, i.e. to find meaning in life, is an act of self-realization. To put it differently, it is only through the processes of self-realization that one can find meaning in life, as every activity that brings meaning to individuals is *by definition* self-realization. Pursuing higher education is a central way of finding meaning. It follows therefore that pursuing higher education is intrinsically valuable, in addition to the instrumental value it may have, as are all other activities that are examples of the process of self-realization.

It should be noted that these activities are not intrinsically valuable because they are instrumental to self-realization, but because they are themselves constitutive of the processes of self-realization. Self-realization does not have an existence separate from its innumerable manifestations and therefore, if self-realization is intrinsically valuable it means all examples of it are also intrinsically valuable. This is an important point to note as the thesis argues that the costs of higher education should be borne by the public for its intrinsic value, in addition to its instrumental ones. A result of this view is food, clothing, shelter, and other such fundamental human necessities including 'basic' education, at least as long as they are considered valuable only for sustenance or a basic level of human development, is only instrumentally valuable for self-realization. Food and clothing can only be intrinsically valuable as instances of self-realization when they are valued by individuals for the meaning it provides their lives with, over and above the basic functions of survival or security.

This chapter advances the first of the two-part argument made in the thesis, namely: self-realization is the ultimate or a fundamental aim of justice and therefore all public funds should be dedicated to this end, subject to the constraints imposed by the principles of justice.

For this, it discusses the inter-related concepts of self-realization, autonomy, and consumption, to clarify each of these concepts, in the first section. The second section situates self-realization, as it is conceived here, within Rawls' theoretical framework. This is an important step for arguing that the aim of justice should be to facilitate self-realization of everyone in society.

1.1 Autonomy, Consumption and Self-realization

Autonomy is the act of self-determination in the pursuit of life's goals.[5] When an individual takes decisions freely she is exercising her autonomy and whenever an individual makes an autonomous decision to pursue a certain activity, she does that so that she can self-realize - as the very pursuit of that activity is self-realization. According to Rawls, individuals opt to live autonomous lives in the original position because they recognize the intrinsic value in leading such lives (people exercise *rational* autonomy in the original position; and enjoy *full* autonomy as citizens).[6] It follows therefore that even if a person's life-choices can be questioned from an outcome-based view, she should be able to make those choices because making autonomous decisions over her own life is of fundamental importance to her. However, when autonomy is conceived in this way, there is a danger that it can be conflated with self-realization in its broader connotation provided in this thesis, so that the two terms lose their separate meanings –

I maintain that the two terms are analytically distinct- autonomy is about having control or liberty over one's choices, while self-realization refers to the ultimate aim or

[5] Christopher P. Niemiec, Richard M. Ryan, and Edward L. Deci, " Self-Determination Theory and the Relation of Autonomy to Self-Regulatory Processes and Personality Development," in *Handbook of Personality and Self-Regulation*, ed. Rick H. Hoyle (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 170-72

[6] John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, *Revised Edition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1971, 1999), 452-56; and more fully in " Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: Rational and Full Autonomy", *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 9 (September 1980): 515-35

purpose of the choices, regardless of what they are, and whether the 'outcomes' of the choices are good or bad. The 'outcomes' are understood as narrow instrumental benefits to the individual herself or society; for example, engaging in an instrumentally useful profession like plumbing or teaching. In other words, even when a person is making 'bad' choices, by letting some of her innate potentials remain fallow instead of cultivating those potentials, she is prioritizing some other innate properties within herself (perhaps her predisposition to enjoy leisure by doing 'unproductive' things like watching YouTube or playing video games all day) and thereby progressing on her own unique, and very personal, path towards self-realization.

Rawls also wrote that mere consumption can become a tiresome routine and Robert S. Taylor points out that valuing offices or positions for the income, power or social status they bring is similar to consumption.[7] However, if something is valued for its *intrinsic* qualities, individuals can pursue it and find it meaningful throughout their lives and Rawls believed there are such intrinsic rewards in the performance of social duties.[8] Note that this presupposes that consumption cannot have intrinsic qualities or value because it does not carry the intrinsic reward of performing a social duty. I submit that individuals can find consumption to be intrinsically valuable for the joy and meaning the activity bring to their lives, or in other words, because of its role towards their self-realization.

Even if we accept that certain pursuits can be objectively and plausibly considered to be empty consumption, I argue that *autonomy* is not able to distinguish between meaningless consumption and more worthwhile pursuits without a normative standard. Self-realization can again be proposed to be the most appropriate standard in this regard. Consider this – food, clothing, shelter are all fundamental human necessities. Individuals can however value

[7] Robert S. Taylor, "Self-Realization and the Priority of Fair Equality of Opportunity", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1, no.3 (January 2004): 337
[8] Id. 339

these things over and above the basic *instrumental* functions of sustenance or security they provide. For instance, a person can consider it her life's *purpose* to *consume* as much good food as she can. It is certain that she can consume more food than is good for her health and well-being. But, it can be cogently argued that justice should not interfere with her choice to consume as much food as she wants on the ground of her health as it is her *autonomous* decision, and because liberty should have priority. However, justice can require from her not to consume more than is necessary or reasonable, for reasons of scarcity of food and the rights of others to access this resource. Similarly, regardless of whether consuming more clothes or houses than necessary is empty consumption or not, the fair equality of opportunity (FEO) and the difference principle (DP) may proscribe doing this in cases of extreme scarcity. But note that it is intuitively difficult to apply this criterion for education in the same way, even if it is showed to be just as bad for personal well-being when 'consumed' in excess. It can be argued the reason for this is that 'excess' education is still more beneficial for self-realization than excess food, clothing or shelter. Self-realization is primarily used in its narrower connotation of human flourishing here, but which is still an important component of self-realization in the way it has been conceptualized in this thesis, i.e. processes by which individuals derive meaning in their lives.

What I am suggesting here therefore is a normative standard that can provide us with a tool to judge the value of particular and separate autonomous pursuits of the good life, and proposing self-realization to be the most appropriate standard in this regard. It can also be argued that if pursuing or 'consuming' a particular interest, including education, should be avoided beyond a reasonable degree, it is precisely because beyond that degree it does not contribute to self-realization but rather harms it, again in the sense of human flourishing. However, it should be noted that this argument is only secondary for this thesis, which primarily argues that all forms of self-realization, including consumption, have a claim of

justice to receive public funds, subject to considerations about fair or just distribution of resources. But this secondary argument is still useful as it is able to demonstrate the difference between self-realization and autonomy, and the improvement of a theory that incorporates both over one that only relies on 'autonomy.'

1.2 Situating Self-realization within Rawls' Theory

If self-realization as it has been presented above is a comprehensive doctrine, it would perhaps not be compatible with Rawls' theoretical framework, as he argued against relying on particular controversial theories or philosophical systems in the justification of state action.[9] However, if there is no pre-determined idea of what form self-realization must take for anyone in society, and individuals retain full autonomy to pursue their own conception of it, subject to the difference principle (DP) and the fair equality of opportunity (FEO), it can play a similar role as 'conception of the good', which is a core component of the theory. In this regard, I argue self-realization also has advantages over 'conception of the good'. Consider this statement from Rawls- "[t]he fact that we have a compelling desire does not argue for the propriety of its satisfaction any more than the strength of a conviction argues for its truth."[10] But self-realization places more importance on individual desires than the 'conception of the good', because the former takes individuals more seriously than the latter. Self-realization, as it is conceived here, can thus be considered an improvement. But, the more important point in this connection is that it can perform a similar function as 'conception of the good' performs in Rawls' theory.

[9] John Rawls, "The Priority of Right and the Ideas of the Good," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1988): 252-253

[10] John Rawls, "Social Unity and Primary Goods," in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, eds. Amartya Kumar Sen & Bernard Arthur Owen Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 171

Rawls used the 'conception of the good' to conceptualize the nature of the free and equal person in his scheme; the proof of a person being free resides in her capacity to possess a conception of the good (that she could also revise freely if she wanted later on).[11] Without this idea or analytical tool, his theory could become too mechanistic, individuals in society appearing as mere cogs in a just social system or basic structure.[12] To put it more colorfully – their reasons for existing on earth would only be to participate in a social scheme which is the most beneficial to the least advantaged. This point is extrapolated from Rawls' description of what it means to have a 'conception of the good', or more accurately, to lose one: "We think that if we were suddenly without these particular convictions and attachments we would be disoriented and unable to carry on. In fact, there would be, we might think, no point in carrying on."[13]

This is not to contest that participating in a just basic structure that is just for everyone in society is greatly valuable intrinsically or meaningful in itself. But individuals can *justly* have desires separate from this solemn duty that all share. For this reason, the concept 'conception of the good' can be argued to have a central importance within the theory, as it captures the fact that individuals can have, and pursue, their own ideas of the good in their own lives, subject to the principles of justice; it makes people who they are (a 'free and equal person') in society. This thesis argues that 'self-realization' performs this same function within the theory better. It argues for self-realization instead of preference satisfaction, or doing what one wants to do autonomously, or pursuing one's idea of a good life i.e., her conception of the good, because self-realization is wider than all these ideas and includes each of them within its scope. I am unable to think of any human activity which cannot be an instance of self-realization, because we can find anything in existence or in our imagination,

[11] John Rawls 1985: 241
[12] Id. 240- 42
[13] Id. 241

meaningful – and that is the only condition which needs to be fulfilled (the condition is thus psychological; an activity can be an instance of self-realization for one person but not another if the former finds it meaningful and not the latter.)

Now, Rawls writes "[t]hat for us is the fundamental question of political justice: namely, what is the most appropriate conception of justice for specifying the terms of social cooperation between citizens regarded as free and equal persons"[14] and that the "idea of social cooperation requires an idea of each participant's rational advantage, or good".[15] Then, if 'meaning' replaces the 'good' here, and if justice as fairness applies because it represents the most appropriate conception of justice, it follows that justice as fairness must aim at realizing this very aim of 'meaning' for all free and equal persons. This is the key argument advanced in this section; as the argument regarding the costs of higher education rests on the claim that the aim or purpose of justice is not simply to enable individuals to participate in a just social system, which may or may not be equally intrinsically or personally valuable for everyone in society, but ultimately to enable them to live meaningful lives, which is equally and intrinsically valuable for everyone.

Furthermore, it can also be argued that everyone in the original position could agree that the *purpose* of autonomous human lives, if they had to agree on one purpose, is self-realization, in the way it is conceptualized here. If that were the case, it would make the task of this thesis easier. I am partial to this view for my conviction regarding self-realization. However, I do not wish to insist upon it because of Rawls' powerful arguments against relying on particular or controversial philosophical doctrines. The thesis can proceed with the understanding that it is a fundamental aim of justice of fairness to facilitate the meeting of human beings' need to live meaningful lives, for the reason provided above.

[14] Id. 234
[15] Id. 232

All arguments regarding self-realization in this thesis are premised on the understanding that everyone has a fundamental need to find a purpose or meaning in their lives. Apart from their biological needs, it is conceivable that human beings have fundamental psychological needs as well.[16] 'Meaning' is certainly a psychological phenomenon, and this thesis neither prescribes or proscribes any individual from finding meaning from any particular process. Rather, it says that people can find meaning from innumerable activities, and calls all of these activities examples of the process of self-realization. It allows every individual to define self-realization and pursue it in her own way, with full force of her individual autonomy. The core of the claim is that everyone has a fundamental need to lead a meaningful life in contradistinction to a meaningless one. If anyone has any reason to continue to live their life rather than end it, it is because life is meaningful for her in some way. That reason which supplies her with the will to live, be it love for her family or the joy of watching TV is always a reason for her to live and therefore meaningful, and intrinsically valuable, and an instance of self-realization.

Thus the premise that human beings have a fundamental psychological need for meaning can perhaps be considered reasonable; and also, for reasons discussed above, the claim made based on it that public funds should be allocated to the pursuits of self-realization in all its countless forms – subject to the FEO and DP. However, appeals to self-realization in thinking about just distribution of resources may be itself a comprehensive conception of the good, but, I hope, one that can meet broad consensus. In case the consensus is broad, but not full, I admit that my views are not fully compatible with state neutrality.

This chapter, thus, has presented a theory of self-realization that makes an intrinsic case for higher education – and also situates it within Rawls' theoretical framework. This is

[16] Paul T. P. Wong (ed.), *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Applications (2nd ed.)* (New York: Routledge, 2012). See also: Viktor E Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (*(4th ed.)* Translated by Ilse Lasch. Boston : Beacon Press, 1959/1992.

important because all arguments in the thesis have been made against the backdrop of Rawls' philosophy. The reasons for this, apart from my own partiality towards Rawls, are discussed at length in the next chapter.

Chapter II

Major Arguments on the Costs of Higher Education

This chapter presents the background discussion to the two-part argument advanced in the thesis, by engaging with Paul Bou-Habib's critical overview of the four major arguments in the existing literature on who should bear the costs of higher education. I show that the argument he identifies as implausible, which is the first one discussed, is not so. I also engage at length with the other arguments he analyzes, before endorsing his conclusion that Rawls' theory of justice can help redress the concerns regarding the indeterminacy (and implausibility) identified in the arguments. I also discuss the limitations of providing arguments for costs of higher education premised *solely* on its instrumental aspects.

2.1 Who *should Pay for Higher Education, and Why?*

All arguments regarding who should bear the costs of higher education depend on what purpose it is premised to serve. There is no consensus on this point, even though many are premised on instrumental purposes, which can be categorized into two groups – (1) economy-centered value or function, including contribution to the knowledge-economy through innovation and (2) democracy-centered purpose, by fostering and promoting civic and democratic skills and knowledge among citizens.[17] Other functions of higher education,

[17] See for example: Joanna Williams, "A Critical Exploration of Changing Definitions of Public Good in Relation to Higher Education," *Studies in Higher Education* 41, no. 4 (2016): 619-630, Chavanne Peercy and Nanette Svenson, "The Role of Higher Education in Equitable Human Development," *International Review of Education* 62 (April 2016):139–160, Roy Y. Chen, "Understanding the Purpose of Higher Education: An Analysis of the Economic and Social Benefits for Completing a College Degree," *Journal of Education Policy, Planning and Administration (JEPPA)* 6, no. 5 (2016): 1-40, and Rómulo Pinheiro, Gerald Wangenge-Ouma,

its cultural roles for instance, can mostly be reduced to the democratic and economic factors as well.[18]

Paul Bou-Habib classifies the arguments into two groups.[19] The two arguments in the first group mandate state funding of higher education and the other two in the second group provide rationales for individual contributions to the costs. I am discussing these in turn below:

The arguments for (full) public subsidies appeal to positive externalities or the economic and democratic benefits (outcomes) that higher education produces.[20] These rely on fairness and incentives respectively:

1. Fairness – The fairness argument states that as higher education benefits all citizens, the tax-payers have a duty of fairness to contribute to its costs. This in turn can take two forms based on two different rationales–

   Fair distribution – For a fair distribution between the producers and beneficiaries of the positive externalities borne from higher education, unless those who do not produce the benefits but enjoy them, contribute *some* costs, they will benefit from these without incurring *any* costs. On the other hand, those who produce the benefits (students and graduates) have to incur the costs (labor) for production. Therefore, for reasons of fairness, non-contributing beneficiaries should contribute to

Elizabeth Balbachevsky and Yuzhuo Cai, "The Role of Higher Education in Society and the Changing Institutionalized Features in Higher Education," in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance*, eds. Jeroen Huisman, Harry de Boer David D. Dill and Manuel Souto-Otero (London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

[18] Paul Chatterton, "The Cultural Role of Universities in the Community: Revisiting the University - Community Debate," *Environment and Planning A* 32, no. 1 (January 2000): 165-81

[19] Bou-Habib: 479-95

[20] Id. 482-84

the costs in some way to make the distribution fair, and they can do so by paying taxes to subsidize higher education for all.[21]

Bou-Habib argues against this view as follows: in addition to whatever benefits higher education produces for non-graduates, graduates receive the added benefit of higher incomes over their lifetime. Therefore, non-graduates who are not contributing to higher education through taxes are not affecting fair distribution of the costs and benefits, and as such, this rationale is implausible.[22]

I disagree with Bou-Habib as the graduates would also contribute taxes for their incomes along with non-graduates, whenever they earn them. In other words, they would incur the costs of higher taxes for their higher incomes, regardless of whether their earning power is due to their having attained higher education or not, in addition to the costs of labor for producing the positive externalities from which, all, graduates and non-graduates, benefit. If the non-producing beneficiaries do not contribute taxes to enable these graduates to produce benefits through higher education, for which they would also be contributing taxes themselves when they earn any income, it places an unfair burden on the graduates' part as they incur double costs of labor and taxes to attain the benefits they produce themselves.

If this criticism of Bou-Habib is correct, it means that the fairness argument is not implausible. Therefore, the non-benefit-producers have a duty of fairness to contribute to the costs of higher education. This duty is contingent upon recipients of higher education producing benefits which can be causally connected to their higher education, and also non-graduates actually receiving or enjoying these benefits. While it is reasonable to assume that graduates do produce benefits, in various quantifiable and non-quantifiable ways, that all in society, including non-graduates, enjoy; it is a

[21] Id. 482-83
[22] Id. 482-83

difficult prospect to calculate the benefits produced by graduates as a consequence of their having received higher education, and the appropriate amounts of taxes to be paid by non-graduates to compensate for them. I think it would be wrong to assume or state that the production of *any* amount of benefits that non-graduates receive would be an argument for *full* state subsidies of higher education. In this regard, the calculation should also account for the harms the graduates or students may (or may not) produce as a result of receiving higher education, which is once again a difficult prospect. Therefore, the ultimate result of the arguments based on fairness is that it is not implausible or indeterminate in theory, but may as well be so in practice, because calibrating the benefits and harms, and the taxes due as a result, is close to impossible.

Kantian universalizability – Kantian universalizability requires us to act or contribute towards goals that we want others to strive towards for our own benefits. It is pertinent to note that producing positive externalities always have costs, if not financial, but of labor. Therefore, if no one incurred *any* costs for the production of benefits or positive externalities, no benefits can be produced. As Bou-Habib writes, the Kantian principle would therefore require everyone to contribute to these costs as everyone has an interest in the benefits that higher education brings forth. Those who do not contribute to the costs through their labor by attaining higher education, can contribute to the fiscal costs of the production by paying taxes for it.[23]

Bou-Habib states there would always be individuals who would benefit from receiving higher education *financially* and would want to contribute tuition-fees to attain it, even if it is not funded by the public. However, whether higher education would get public funding would depend on the availability of funds and the priority or

[23] Id. 482-83

value of higher education in the total public scheme, owing to the social outcomes it produce. Kantian universalizability is unable to provide such a hierarchy of values, and as a result we need to resort to a different moralized standard of social needs to determine if higher education would qualify to receive public funds. Therefore, this strand of the positive externality based argument is indeterminate as it does not provide such a moralized standard itself.[24]

I use both these arguments based on fairness and Kantian universalizability in Chapter III to argue that recipients of non-essential higher education have a duty to contribute to the essential labor in society as per a just scheme.

2. Incentives – The other argument based on positive externalities depends on incentives, which can be briefly expressed in this way: society needs to incentivize pursuing higher education by making it free or affordable and/or otherwise attractive for individuals through subsidies. However, this is an efficiency-based argument and efficiency is but one consideration of justified policy. It competes with other considerations like the equality of opportunity. For instance, it may be more efficient in terms of economic productivity to invest in a class of people; a social group like the landed-elite, for instance, instead of making higher education available to everyone, as that group can produce more economic value for all in society under right circumstances. But this policy militates against fair equality of opportunity, and denies those individuals or classes who are deprived of the opportunity to gain higher education social bases of self-respect, and to pursue their 'conceptions of the good' or *meaning* in life, and thus it would be barred by the FEO.[25] Therefore, it would mean

[24] Id. 482-83
[25] Taylor 2004: 334-35

that under specific circumstances, efficiency could be a good reason to subsidize higher education, and not so in certain other circumstances.

For this reason, Bou-Habib argues efficiency as a principle is not enough to establish a tax subsidy on its own, but has to be combined with other policies (e.g. tax and transfer) that justly distribute *efficiency gains* in all circumstances. We would need a separate theory of justice to help us identify a just distribution scheme of efficiency gains (for instance, social policies should be designed to benefit the least-advantaged), which makes this argument in of itself indeterminate, as it does not carry with it such a theory of justice.[26]

After this, Bou-Habib discusses two arguments providing reasons for individuals to bear costs of higher education themselves, at least in part:

1. The more pressing expenditures argument - Essentially, this argument states that there are many services that public authorities are duty-bound to provide the public (education, healthcare, essential infrastructure and economic growth etc.), and as there are limited funds available, the state must prioritize the services it subsidizes by considering their importance, and higher education can fall behind on the priority scale. Bou-Habib mentions this argument does not show why public expenditures have to be designed in a way that higher education falls outside its remit, when it can be designed in a way that it falls within it, and this makes this argument indeterminate.[27]

   I do not think that higher education can always be subsidized if funds are scarce, and it is *generally* accepted that there are more pressing needs. However, I

[26] Bou-Habib: 483-84
[27] Id. 484-86

agree that determining the importance or urgency of various needs requires a moral standard that is not provided by this argument itself and as such, it is also indeterminate. Moreover, this is clearly not an argument generally applicable to all fields of higher education, but rather needs to classify it into various subfields on the basis of outcomes they produce for the society. As an illustration, consider this – as the government cannot provide healthcare without medical stuff or roads without engineers, the technical-education that train individuals in these fields and other *essential* professions, can require the establishment of a different state-funding regime, in comparison to higher education in literature, music or art appreciation for example, if these are not considered as important for society. It can be noted that Bou-Habib does not make such a classification in his paper.

This thesis makes such a classification between various forms of higher education and focuses its arguments for the public funding of the arts and humanities, as they are considered by some to be less essential for society, in the next chapter.

2. The beneficiary-must-pay argument - This argument claims that those who benefit from a certain thing should at least share in the costs of its production. This is similar to the fair distribution argument discussed above in its method and structure, and differs in who it identifies as the beneficiary of higher education. The fair distribution argument stated that non-graduates benefit from higher education recipients' contributions to society, and therefore should contribute taxes to bear its costs; while this argument provides that tax-funding makes non-graduates pay more than they benefit, and therefore, students should at least contribute to the fees or costs of higher education.

Bou-Habib uses examples of a cosmetic nose surgery and a life-saving heart surgery to argue against this argument. Both persons would certainly benefit from receiving public funds to bear the costs of their respective surgeries. However, it can be reasonably accepted that the cosmetic surgery should be self-financed but not the heart surgery. If the beneficiary-must-pay argument is accepted in an unqualified form, both persons should pay for their own surgeries, which makes this argument implausible, as the heart-patient has a reasonable claim of justice to subsidized surgery.[28]

This argument can be made plausible if it is made contingent upon pre-existing justness of situations. To continue the current example, it can be posited that without or before receiving the benefit in question, the person desiring the nose-surgery was not suffering from an unjust situation, while the person needing a heart surgery was. Therefore, only the latter should be compensated by public funds while the former should bear the costs for her surgery. Although plausible, Bou-Habib finds this version of the argument indeterminate as it does not provide a standard upon which the justness of pre-benefit situations can be judged, once again.[29] Unlike Bou-Habib, I have argued that the fair-distribution argument is also plausible, and I certainly agree with him regarding the plausibility of this form of the beneficiaries-must-pay-argument. I also agree that as this form of the argument requires a theory of justice to judge the fairness of pre-benefit situation, and as it does not contain such a theory, it is indeterminate.

After reviewing these arguments, Bou-Habib argues that Rawls' theory can address the concerns with indeterminacy and implausibility he identifies, by providing a *general* theory about people's fair shares of resources and opportunities. Specifically, this includes an

[28] Id. 486-87
[29] Id. 486-87

account of whether higher education is part of individuals' fair pre-benefit baseline, as in the heart surgery example. It also provides a standard for determining "how the funding of efficiency gains ought to be divided between taxpayers and graduates, and tell us what people may legitimately be taxed to fund, and what priority various expenditures should have."[30] However, Bou-Habib does not provide definite answers and concludes his paper in this way:

> "At least at the normative level, the guidance offered by that approach is very simple. We should not automatically assume that tax-funded higher education is a 'basic right' and neither should we assume that it is a privilege for which graduates alone should pay. Rather, we should strike the balance between taxpayer and student or graduate funding according to what would most improve the lifetime income prospects of the worst-off members of society. Determining the best way of striking that balance in terms of policy specifics is still, of course, a Herculean task. But without the Rawlsian approach, the standard arguments offered in the higher education debate would leave us even further out at sea."[31]

The argument is therefore that higher education should be financed in a way that maximizes the financial prospects of the worst-off, and a consequence of this general principle is that the question of paying for higher education would be settled differently in different empirical circumstances. This is a general point which is not contested, and the claim that Rawlsian justice best addresses the gaps in the extant arguments is also endorsed by this thesis; but I think Bou-Habib's assertion that we should not automatically view it as a 'basic right' is consistent only with an instrumental understanding of higher education. Notice, all arguments discussed above have been based on instrumental purposes of higher education.

If the sole function of higher education is to prepare individuals for economic roles, the economic system in place in the society (e.g. capitalism or socialism) would dictate its

[30] Id. 488
[31] Id. 493

nature or contents to a large degree. For instance, if art appreciation is not considered economically (or democratically) productive or useful for the society, it would not attract the four arguments and no case can be made for public subsidies for it. Arguments also cannot be advanced for making tuition fees free for both domestic and international students as a general moral principle, if higher education is only instrumentally valuable in this economic or political way. These are some of the reasons for eschewing a solely instrumental vision of higher education, but the most important reason for this is the role it plays in self-realization, which has been showed in Chapter II to be intrinsically valuable, and also fundamentally important. This thesis therefore claims the very nature of higher education, and also Rawls' theory, require that the instrumental vision of higher education be complemented with an intrinsic one. To state the point more clearly- had Bou-Habib's conclusion been that we should strike the balance between taxpayer and student funding of higher education according to what would most improve the *self-realization* prospects of the worst-off members of society, I would have little reason to disagree with him. This is in essence the argument this thesis provides, that the aim of justice should be to facilitate self-realization of all in society, subject to the Rawlsian principles of justice.

Hence, Bou-Habib's position that Rawls' theory is indispensable for determining the exact nature of the duties for bearing costs of higher education is plausible. However, the nature of the *precise* duties would also vary between an intrinsic and instrumental understanding of higher education. If it is viewed as a good which allows individuals to access other things – like a good job, higher incomes and wealth, increased social respect, etc., then we are conceiving it as an *instrumental* good like money. Seen in this way, both procedural and substantive aspects of the FEO apply to it.[32] Procedurally, access to higher

[32] Robert S. Taylor, "Rawlsian Affirmative Action," *Ethics* 119, no. 3 (April 2009): 476-506

education should be non-discriminatory, unless consistent with DP.[33] Substantively, the FEO would mandate state subsidies so that higher education is affordable for students regardless of their social background, and/or scholarships for poor prospective students.[34] The DP and FEO could also have higher education incorporate as many people in society as possible or economically sustainable. As for the content being taught, the DP would have higher education serve the economic and democratic needs of society, so that students can productively engage in economic and political lives after graduation. Taken together, if it is conceived in this instrumental manner, both DP and FEO apply, and can mean more higher education for more people at subsidized or free-of costs, which should make its champions happy.

If higher education is valuable for helping one's autonomy and developing one's human capacities, separate to or in addition to its role in helping individuals access other good things in life, the DP and FEO applies to its distribution in the same way discussed above. But, perhaps a stronger case can be made for making it accessible to as many people in society as possible, on public subsidies. Moreover, and significantly, its content should reflect more than societal economic functionalities and allow for greater freedom of the students and researchers to pursue their varied individual interests in learning and researching. If higher education is valued because it brings personal meaning to those who pursue it, regardless of its contribution to developing their native talents or human flourishing, the implications for the arguments on its costs and contents would be similar to human flourishing; and the case of more autonomy and freedom in the pursuit of learning or researching would become even stronger. This reflects the first part of the core argument in the thesis: self-realization or pursuing activities that individuals find meaningful is fundamentally important because of its essential intrinsic value, and hence the project of any

[33] Id. 478-79
[34] Id. 478-79

scheme of justice should be to facilitate it as much as possible. Higher education is one of the important ways in which individuals derive meaning in life, and in conjunction to all its instrumental values, it forms an *additional* reason why all its costs should be borne by the public, subject to the FEO and DP.

Higher education, in all its forms, does accrue benefits to both the individuals who attain it and to others in society. For example, everyone, including the least advantaged, can benefit from good doctors, proper bridges etc., and this is an argument for *essential* higher education based on its instrumental features. Similarly, if art appreciation is taught at universities it can mean that everyone can benefit from living in a society where art is properly valued and appreciated. This is a similar instrumental argument for *non-essential* higher education. Dewey and Nussbaum also say that humanities, which are considered by some to be less essential, are necessary for democracy; and democracy is valuable in part because it is instrumentally good.[35] Instrumental outcomes are always crucial, as the application of DP (and FEO) is incumbent upon benefits accruing to the least-advantaged groups in society, therefore also for the arguments regarding public funding of higher education. This thesis argues higher education, essential or non-essential, should be funded by the public for its crucial role in self-realization, in *addition* to their instrumental features or value.

It should be noted with special regard in this connection that self-realization is not valuable only because of the personal fulfillment or purpose it brings individuals. Everyone in society benefits from self-realized individuals, if it means their individual talents are more developed (on an outcome-based view, for talents like surgical or teaching skills, for example) and because it is a joy to experience self-realized talents of every individual, no matter the content of her particular talent (on an intrinsic view); and a joy to witness all

[35] See Chapter III

individuals leading meaningful lives on their autonomous terms in the wider sense of self-realization (also on an intrinsic view).

After these discussions about arguments for and against public funding of higher education in this chapter, and of the value of self-realization for everyone in society and its virtues as the goal of justice in the first chapter, this thesis needs to establish that higher education is an important way of self-realization. Self-realization certainly needs material provisions as well as liberties or liberal rights, and education is an especially significant provision and opportunity in this regard.[36] Basic education is a tool for self-realization like food, shelter, language and other material and immaterial properties, while higher education is a process of discovery and creativity, illustrated by the undertaking of scientific experiments, producing literature and other works of art. Hence, higher education *is* self-realization, and a theory that takes self-realization seriously has to take higher education seriously, not only because of its instrumental contributions towards professional or political development but especially because of its intrinsic properties. These relations between self-realization and higher education are explored more deeply in the final chapter.

[36] Ronald Barnett, "Knowing and Becoming in the Higher Education Curriculum," *Studies in Higher Education* 34, no. 4 (June 2009): 429-40

Chapter III

Higher Education as Self-realization

Imagine a complete ban on music, poetry and all the other arts. Would one of the most important arguments against such a ban not be that it deprives human beings of a key aspect of their humanity itself?

People should be able to express themselves freely and enjoy other basic human freedoms, and it is not right to take these away from them. But on the basis of what precise moral principles, however? Freedom is one of the most important ways of claiming an autonomous human life, which is perhaps what everyone would claim for themselves behind the veil of ignorance. But it can still be asked why human beings should choose to live their lives autonomously at all. Thus, and significantly, the line of thought regarding the ultimate good for human beings cannot be completed without some recourse to human nature, and this thesis only claims that human nature requires living a meaningful life, whatever form it takes, as the goal of human life. This completes the line of thought in providing a plausible reason for the moral worth or priority of freedom and autonomy, and it can hardly be contested that self-realization or meaningful pursuits in life, including especially human flourishing, are important in themselves.

As has been discussed previously, the intrinsic value for the purposes of this thesis is measured by self-realization, which is any process that brings meaning or purpose to individual's lives. This applies to areas of higher education both closely connected to essential labor of society and to areas not as closely connected to it. I focus the discussion on

the latter, i.e. what is called non-essential higher education here, as it seems to require more arguments to receive public funds, after explaining these concepts in the first section.

3.1 Education, and Essential and Non-essential Higher Education:

The analytical distinction between higher education and education made here should be discussed first. This thesis argues for public finance of higher education, and assumes education is a basic necessity of life like food and water, which should therefore be part of everyone's pre-benefit baseline. Moreover, the argument for public funding of higher education depends on its role towards self-realization. The distinction between the two is thus significant. This thesis has attempted to avoid ontological difficulties and philosophical controversies that we meet with in this regard, in the spirit of Rawls, – for instance, the post-modern critiques regarding the nature or existence of knowledge or possibilities of learning. It rather makes a simple, and hopefully, intuitively appealing distinction between the two, which can be put in this way: education is the process of acquiring existing knowledge, and higher education is the process of adding to it.

The concept of knowledge therefore plays an important role here, as I agree with writers who think knowledge should have an important place in educational discourse.[37] Knowledge is similar to art and most other human skills as it serves instrumental purposes but is also valuable on its own. To produce more knowledge (and art, furniture, bridges, trains and all), one needs to access existing knowledge in the first place. All educational process is, thus, individuals' encounters with knowledge.[38] Now, education is the process of acquiring knowledge, or in other words, imparting knowledge to students by teachers. It is

[37] Michael F.D. Young, *Bringing Knowledge Back In* (New York: Routledge, 2008)
[38] Barnett: 429-440,

how one is trained in the ways of acquiring and producing more knowledge or in any other specific human skills. Seen in this light, education would appear to be an instrument, like food or shelter. On the other hand, higher education is the search for knowledge, and the actual *exercise* of a human skill –which has to be built upon existing knowledge, or individuals need to be trained in the respective skills first. It is not merely accessing existing knowledge or learning a skill, but adding to it or exercising it respectively. It is the act of undertaking scientific experiments, and the actual act of composing (or appreciating) a symphony or a poem, and making a biscuit or a chair, and not the instructions on how to write it or conduct the scientific experiment. Of course, one needs to learn by doing, and therefore education and higher education must always go hand in hand in institutions of higher learning. But higher education *is* self-realization, just as counting grasses and tearing papers are.

This discussion is relevant for the other key distinction this thesis has made, that between essential and non-essential higher education. It diverges from the usual classification made in the literature between Humanities, Arts and the Social Sciences (HASS) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines,[39] which also has normative consequences, as the STEM subjects are identified as more valuable for the economy. The distinction adopted in this thesis relies on yet another intuitively appealing notion –

Human societies require the meeting of certain basic necessities to function, which in turn require human labor to provide, prepare and maintain. Food production, waste management, traffic coordination, medical services, emergency relief etc. are some of many examples of essential work that fits this description. Essential higher education covers these

[39] Paul Benneworth and Ben W. Jongbloed,"Who Matters to Universities? A Stakeholder Perspective on Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Valorization," *Higher Education* 59 (2010): 567–88

fields that are necessary for the functioning of society. Agricultural sciences, medical education, engineering and most vocational training like plumbing, carpentry, cooking etc. would be a few examples of it. If economics, political science, law etc. are essential for the maintenance or better-functioning of society, then social sciences would also be placed in the essential category, as opposed to HASS *versus* STEM. Non-essential higher education would mostly constitute of the arts and the humanities. Theater, dance, movie-making, languages, literature etc. are some examples of the disciplines or fields of study belonging to these two categories.

It should be obvious that this classification is not precise. Language and linguistics, not to mention philosophy, are necessary disciplines for both STEM subjects and the social sciences. Sculpting would be hard to distinguish from woodworking, carpentry or stonemasonry, as all could be classified as art. These examples demonstrate that all human knowledge and the search for knowledge are interrelated and cannot be precisely demarcated, whether by their outcomes or otherwise. This in itself is an argument for the public funding of higher education of the humanities and arts on instrumental grounds, as they complement the better understanding of the 'essential' disciplines.

This thesis argues every discipline of higher education should be publicly funded, if only individuals find pursuing those fields meaningful. Therefore, it does not need to make any classifications within higher education for its *core* argument. However, it has recognized that certain basic needs are shared by all in society, and as such the disciplines that train individuals in providing for these basic needs can be considered as objectively essential, and for this reason it provides a supplementary argument: The just distribution of the essential labors among the members of society needs to account for individual skills and interests, but this labor should be shared by every capable member of society, precisely because they are essential for *everyone*, for reasons of fairness and Kantian universalizability, discussed in the

previous chapter. It is beyond its scope to prescribe such a scheme for fair distribution of all essential labor, but imagine that such a scheme exists as it is possible to design a reasonably fair system. Beyond the contributions to essential necessities of society, every individual should be able to pursue activities or goals that bring her personal fulfillment.

Now, even though all particular or different activities people pursue may be of equal value from individual perspectives, these should not receive public funds equally. This is not only because every activity or field *require* different amounts of funds, but also because the social benefits or instrumental aspects of every activity should be taken into account when determining the allocation of public funds to particular activities for reasons of justice discussed in previous chapters. It can be certainly argued that higher education that trains individuals in essential services or work should be funded by the state. If the necessities are indeed 'essential', the society needs to incentivize the pursuit of its education and training; and the incentives would naturally go even beyond making it free if requisite numbers are not attracted to it even after it is made free.

It can also be plausibly argued that those who pursue higher education in areas which are not as intimately connected to essential work need to contribute to the essential labor is some way. The precise nature of the labor to be contributed by particular individuals is again covered by the scheme I have asked readers to imagine for the thesis. But to venture an illustration, perhaps they can be required to dedicate a few hours per week to essential labor, where both the hours and the labor are fair and suitable for each of them. Additionally, they would also contribute taxes, along with all other members of the society for their incomes. Furthermore, the number of people who receive (non-essential) higher education can also be controlled to conform to available public funds. Having accepted these conditions, I argue that non-essential higher education should be fully state-subsidized not only because of the instrumental benefits they bring, but also because of their intrinsic value. If sufficient funds

are available after every public sector (including higher education) that is essential or instrumentally valuable receives reasonable amounts in a society, every individual should receive sufficient funds to pursue their particular interests, be it counting blades of grass, watching YouTube videos all day, or tearing sheets of paper. This is the key argument this thesis advances. It only remains for this thesis to show that (non-essential) higher education forms an especially important way of self-realization; this is undertaken in the final section below. Readers should be warned that this section shall use major philosophers of education in a very major way.

3.2 Higher Education as Self-realization:

Is higher education, like the arts, a form of self-expression or essential feature of being human? When it is conceptualized as seeking knowledge, to understand and to know what one does not understand or know already, it plainly is. It is a manifestation of curiosity or 'wonder' that is inherent to human beings, and this wonder should be allowed pursuit, discovery and expression through the arts, sciences, -in other words, through higher education in the way conceptualized above. Therefore, higher education or the search for knowledge is an essential feature of humanity and human self-expression. Or in other words, higher education, as conceptualized here, is self-realization. This hardly needs mentioning that humanities and the arts are especially important in this regard; hence, they are especially valuable intrinsically for their role in self-realization. Disparate thinkers like Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill agreed on this intrinsic aspect of seeking knowledge in general and the importance of arts and humanities education in particular. Search for knowledge was important for Mill in his quest to reform Benthamite utilitarianism into one that places great importance on the cultivation of *higher order pleasures*, which especially involved

appreciating poetry.[40] His arguments rests on knowledge being an end in itself, as it can certainly enable us to enjoy poetry, but serves little practical utility.[41] For Kant, the pursuit of knowledge is intimately related to enlightenment. He placed a fundamental importance on the faculty of philosophy in the public scheme of the university, for its role in the broader pursuit of knowledge and for protecting truth from political and religious authorities.[42]

However, according to Eric T. Weber, the approach to education in Rawls' theory is skeletal or peripheral, as he believed it to be valuable only instrumentally to other purposes, and not in itself. For this reason, he describes education's role to be of a 'minimal political task' within his theory.[43] But as Rawls had adopted Royce's view of personhood in the 'Theory of Justice,' Weber states that his educational theory could be broadened, as this robust understanding of personhood can reasonably be expected to require education for flourishing. But Rawls drops this rich conception of personhood in 'Political Liberalism.'[44] Therefore, Rawls' theory needs to be stretched considerably in order to incorporate a robust understanding of civic education, let alone aspects of education which are more intrinsically valuable, according to Weber.[45] But I have argued Rawls' theory can incorporate a robust understanding of education and also support a strong conception of its intrinsic value if a correspondingly robust conception of self-realization were to be situated within it. As self-realization, as theorized here, can perform a similar function to 'the conception of the good' in Rawls' theory, it can support a robust conception of personhood and human flourishing – and also, an intrinsic understanding of (higher) education.

It should be noted at this juncture that most philosophers of education have some concept of human flourishing upon which they build their respective theories of education.

[40] Williams (2016): 620-21
[41] Id. 620-21
[42] Id. 620
[43] Eric Thomas Weber, "Dewey and Rawls on Education," *Human Studies* 31 (December 2008): 362.
[44] Id. 366-368, 363
[45] Id. 367-9

That education should principally aim at developing human potentialities or talents, or advance knowledge and pursue justice is not a new idea. Socrates would have agreed with the claim that (higher) education's goal is to search for the truth, and the ultimate purpose of searching for the truth is to help people lead *meaningful* lives.[46] More pertinently, he would have scorned the idea that (higher) education should only aim at economic efficiency, through promoting the knowledge-economy and training people for economic roles or otherwise, instead of training people to live meaningful lives by helping them gain knowledge through the search for truth.[47]

Martha Nussbaum agrees completely with Socrates, and is a prominent defender of the humanities and arts, and also of the Socratic Method, in the contemporary philosophy of education. In her book 'Not for Profit' she laments the neoliberal turn in higher education which reduces it to an economic commodity and turns economic efficiency into its only goal.[48] In this regard, she notes that the nation-state has come to play the most important role in contemporary political discourse. Every activity has now to be directed to the service of the nation-state, and nation-state has but one goal, - that of more and more economic growth. In this book she advances two arguments – both premised on the idea that economic growth should not be a goal in itself, but a means to enabling or unlocking meaningful lives of the people. The first argument is democracy requires certain human skills and capacities which are cultivated best by humanities and arts education. They are essential for developing skills like critical thinking, tolerance etc. which are in turn essential for the citizens if democracy is to function and function well. This view is certainly at home with the enlightenment philosophers, Kant for example, discussed above. Nussbaum's second argument is that the

[46] Ivica Kelam and Jasmina Sagadin Vučićm, "The Applicability of the Socrates Method of Education in Education Today," *Pannoniana* 3, no.1-2 (2020), 138-140
[47] Id. 137
[48] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010)

aim that neoliberalism sets for society as its highest goal – economic growth, also requires human skills that are honed by arts and humanities education. Without these skills economic growth cannot be attained or sustained.[49] As should be obvious, both are strong arguments for public funding of non-essential higher education.

Nussbaum's democratic argument is indebted to John Dewey, who has been called the most important American philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century.[50] His philosophy is built around the idea of 'inquiry', which is the term he uses for knowledge, or the method of acquiring knowledge,[51] and democracy as social-organization, i.e. it is conceptualized more comprehensively than only a political system.[52] However, in opposition to the Ancients, he attacked the philosophical preoccupation with 'truth', and replaced it with inquiry.[53] This move is criticized by some,[54] but the central role of education that he argued for, not only within his theories, but within the *entire* project of philosophy, and also within social and political organization has great merit and is pertinent for our present purposes. To quote Dewey: "if we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men, philosophy may even be defined *as the general theory of education.*"[55] One can hardly stress the importance of education in clearer and stronger terms. The role of education for Dewey is to instill democratic skills in people, but education is also intrinsically valuable as it enables the realization of human capabilities.[56] This is why there should be a concerted public effort to

[49] Id. 10-11
[50] Bertrand Russell (1961), *A History of Western Philosophy, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, First published in 1946, 1961), 774
[51] Aaron Stoller and Eli Kramer, "Introduction: Toward a Philosophy of Higher Education," in *Contemporary Philosophical Proposals for the University*, eds. Aaron Stoller and Eli Kramer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 5
[52] Id. 774, 777
[53] Id. 775-82
[54] Russell: 774
[55] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University, 1916/2001), 336
[56] Weber: 366, 368

improve the quality (and quantity in terms of participation of all) of education.[57] If this idea is combined with Rawls', we will get a view in which public funds should be used for education, including higher education, only subject to the other needs deemed necessary by the DP (and FEO), which is the result this thesis is arguing for.

Nussbaum also owes a great debt to Rabindranath Tagore. She uses him to argue for a wider goal for education and democracy that goes beyond the narrow confines of the nation-state. Dewey could have agreed with this thesis's representation of higher education as self-realization, but if not, Tagore certainly would. Tagore, like Dewey, is one of the most important thinkers of education in the history of thought, and his ideas have been extremely useful for this thesis; one of his oft cited quotes on education goes- "Life has no aim but needs education, this has no meaning at all."[58] Tagore believed education is one of the key things to help realize life's ultimate aim. Now, what *is* life's ultimate aim? Students from the University of Dhaka once wrote to him asking this question, with the intention to publish his letter in reply in a dorm magazine. This is what he wrote in reply:

> "There is no easy answer to the question how to make human existence meaningful. Every human being has been endowed in her nature with capital to journey through life autonomously. If she is able to use that, that is, her own special power properly, that is what is meaningful for her. In general, the advice someone can give are not useful. There is no other way but for one to intimately ask oneself about her own needs."[59]

[57] Id. 365-68, 373-79

[58] রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, 'লক্ষ্য ও শিক্ষা', শিক্ষা, প্রথম প্যাপিরাস প্রকাশ, অগাস্ট ২০১০, ঢাকা, পৃষ্ঠা ১১৭(Rabindranath Tagore, *Aim and Education*, printed in '*Education'*, (Dhaka: Papyrus, August 2010), 117, My Translation)

[59] সৌমিত্র শেখর, 'ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ও রবীন্দ্র-রচনা'. প্রথম আলো, ০৩ আগস্ট ২০১৮ (Soumitra Shekhar, 'Dhaka University and Rabindra-Literature', Prothom Alo, 03 August 2018, My Translation), Accessed on 15 June 2021, Available here: https://www.prothomalo.com/onnoalo/%E0%A6%A2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%93-%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%9A%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE

I think all his educational ideas have this goal in mind; that is, to enable human beings to fully realize their inner 'capital,' to live life to the fullest. This is certainly applicable at the individual level, but it also applies at the collective context. He wrote this in this connection-

> "The cities are the best examples of American civilization; through these urban establishments, human beings have proclaimed their own autonomous glory. And, the hermit's forests* have been the highest example of India's civilization; in these hermit's forests human beings have calmly and solemnly realized the union of their soul with the entirety of nature.
>
> No one should think, I want to pronounce this endeavor as India's only endeavor. I rather want to say with special regard that there are no limits to the diversity within human beings. They do not reach towards the sky in a single line like the Palm tree; they spread themselves in countless branches in all directions like the Banyan tree. The direction it feels most comfortable in going, if we let the branch travel towards that same direction fully, the tree finds fulfillment, and therefore all branches find it beneficial.
>
> The history of a human being is biological in nature. She grows up in profound life-force. She is not a thing to pour into a cast like iron or brass. It is useless to hope to satisfy the ignorant customer, under the spell of the current fashion, by casting all mankind in the same factory just because the price of a particular civilization at a particular time has rocketed up in the market."[60]
>
> * তপোবন: Literally,- the grove of an ascetic or the forest where a hermit lives. This is the best translation of the word I was able to do.

We know Tagore was far from a nationalist, but he still thought that every nation should pursue their conception of the good in their own way, and not merely copy another because it is deemed by current opinion to be more 'civilized'. This in a way is the essence of democracy – every collectivity of people exercising self-determination, or freely choosing their own paths towards development. (Higher) education is essential for democracies as it

[60] রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, 'তপোবন', শিক্ষা, প্রথম প্যাপিরাস প্রকাশ, অগাস্ট ২০১০, ঢাকা, পৃষ্ঠা ৮৬-৮৭ (Rabindranath Tagore, '*Forest'*, printed in '*Education'*, (Dhaka: Papyrus, August 2010), 86-87, My Translation)

enables the people to discover what they want. (Higher) education is also the most important thing which enables every individual to realize her inner *capital* to the fullest extent possible. If the realization of inner capital is intrinsically valuable, which it evidently is being the very purpose of life for Tagore, education is extremely valuable for its role in helping individuals realize their inner capital. This corroborates both parts of the argument advanced in the thesis, that realizing inner capital is a significant way of leading a meaningful human life, which also includes all ways through which human beings can find meaning, and that (higher) education is an especially important necessity in this regard. I need hardly mention the special significance of humanities and the arts within higher education here.

Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas, built on the idea of *bildung* or the inward development of human beings, closely resemble Tagore's. The purpose of education according to Humboldt is to help the inward self-formation of man. *Bildung* incorporates the necessity of social union and harmony to help human beings in their inward development, and, more significantly, places a great emphasis on freedom in the pursuit of knowledge. In the 'Theory of Bildung', Humboldt writes- "The man concerned only with the heightening of his powers and the elevation of his personality would find an excellent lesson in this work, which would set out before him, simply and comprehensibly, the influence that every business of life can exercise on our inner Bildung."[61]

This parallels the discussions above on how every human activity a particular human being chooses can help them in their particular inner-paths towards self-realization. Humboldt is saying that human beings have to work upon the world, but the work finds full meaning when it is directed at her own inner development-

[61] Wilhelm von Humboldt, Gillian Horton-Kruger (Trans.), "Theory of Bildung," in *Teaching As A Reflective Practice: The German Didaktik Tradition (1st ed.)*, eds. Ian Westbury, Kurt Riquarts, & Stefan Hopmann (New York: Routledge, 1999), 60

> "At the same time, however, the person who pursues a single task will only there learn to conduct his business in its proper spirit and with an awareness of its greater signification. …*If,* however, he works only for power and its enhancement, he may satisfy himself only when he expresses his own power perfectly in his work. … The consuming purpose of genius everywhere is only to satisfy the inner compulsion. The sculptor, for example, does not actually wish to present the image of a god, but to express and make fast the fullness of his plastic imagination in this figure. …There are always several external means of conducting any of life's business, but only this intellectual attitude can determine the choice among them, can determine whether it is to find a lesser or greater degree of satisfaction."[62]

Therefore, even though human beings need the world for all their activities, it is human beings themselves that are at the center of all activity. Their work only finds meaning when its purpose is to satisfy the inner compulsion they feel. Hence, all activities are made in or towards the world, but are directed at their inner fulfillment. In relation to this discussion of human activities, Humboldt evidently looks beyond the humanities and sciences and refers to all human action in general (again, in the same spirit as the present thesis), but his essay on *bildung* is primarily concerned with the humanities and sciences.[63] He also discusses the cultivation of nature as an expression of humankinds' efforts, which also closely parallels Tagore's emphasis on the role of nature in education. For Humboldt, people's entire external activity, that is, these acts of self-determination or *bildung* is nothing but an endeavor against futility, and this striving against futility is the very purpose of our existence- "it is the ultimate task of our existence to achieve as much substance as possible for the concept of humanity in our person".[64]

His educational ideals in practice form the basic tenets of liberal education today (although now being displaced by neoliberalism), which calls for students and teachers to

[62] Id. 60-61
[63] Christoph Luth, "On Wilhelm von Humboldt's Theory of Bildung Dedicated to Wolfgang Klafki for his 70th birthday," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 30, no. 1 (1998): 46-49
[64] Id. 45-46 and Humboldt: 58

have maximum possible freedom (autonomy) to pursue their academic interests.[65] This is especially significant in the context of higher education, the field where he put his ideas into practice. Students, in particular, because of their limited knowledge of their own abilities and propensities, require the freedom to explore their varied interests for their *bildung* or inward development, which is an unceasing process like self-realization, but applies to learners in all stages of their pursuit of knowledge. Humboldt clearly considered this inward development to be intrinsically valuable, as apparent from the passages quoted, and for this reason higher education is both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable in his view. His philosophy also parallels the idea of self-realization presented in this thesis, and if combined with a Rawlsian framework, it can support the arguments for the state funding of higher education, including humanities and the arts.

Now Humboldt and Tagore have been more appreciative of the functions of higher education in unlocking human potentials and to enable human beings to live meaningful lives; Dewey and Nussbaum also agree with this ultimate goal of education, but choose to reach this destination through democracy. The latters' arguments are that education, especially in the fields of humanities and the arts, cultivates essential democratic skills among citizens, which are necessary for the proper political functioning of a society, which in turn enable all people to live meaningful lives, although Dewey conceived democracy very broadly. The difference is subtle; as Nussbaum also adopts Tagore's educational philosophy, and there is little reason for her not to agree with Humboldt's educational theory that places such great importance on the humanities. But the distinction is useful, and Aristotle may have belonged to the latter group with Dewey and Nussbaum in believing higher education should be publicly funded because of its political role in promoting better citizenship, ultimately for the purpose that all can live meaningful lives in the political or democratic society in

[65] Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Humboldt Revisited: Liberal Education, University Reform, and the Opposition to the Neoliberal University," *New German Critique* no. 113 (Summer 2011): 159-196

question. Before discussing Aristotle's educational theory, his basic philosophical positions can be briefly discussed-

Teleology permeates much of Aristotle's thought, which is the idea that natural beings, including humans, constantly progress (or change) towards the realization or fulfillment of its own ultimate *teleos* or purpose. Rawls discussed a specific principle borne out of this general structure of Aristotle's thought, which he termed the 'Aristotlean Principle' in the 'Theory of Justice.' He describes it in this way: "other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity."[66] Therefore, the Aristotlean principle is evidently a principle of motivation, and Rawls even employs evolutionary biology to support its truth, in need of a concept of human nature once again. Thus, Stephen Wall and others have noted, Rawls seemed to consider this principle of motivation, true to human nature, to have normative force as well. As for instance, Rawls noted that the principle conveys Aristotle's idea that the exercise of natural powers is a *leading intrinsic human good*.[67] This obviously echoes this thesis's arguments regarding self-realization, as it has also been conceptualized as participating in activities that one finds meaningful, which includes the processes of developing one's inherent or native potentials, and also that of self-realization being a leading intrinsic human good.

Rawls' also argues that this principle is not perfectionist as it does not identify any particular activity as valuable, which also resembles self-realization presented here.[68] However, Rawls provides a second, and according to him, a more fundamental reason for this principle not being perfectionist, which is that his account of the good for persons does not

[66] Rawls 1971, 1999: 374
[67] Steven Wall, "Aristotelian Principle," In *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, eds. Jon Mandle and David A. Reidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17–19.
[68] Id. 17-19

depend *on the truth of the Aristotelian principle.*[69] If this principle of motivation is incorrect and did not apply to an individual, then the good for that person would not include activities that allow him to develop her talents, but other activities that *are* good for her. He uses the example of the man who only enjoys counting blades of grass to make this point, as a rational plan for him would not involve developing his talents. Therefore, the Aristotelian principle is situated within Rawls' subjective ideas about the human good.[70] The formulation of self-realization I have argued for can well incorporate the passion for grass-counting if the individuals pursuing this activity find it meaningful and therefore the problem does not arise in that regard as well. As it has been previously discussed, self-realization can be an alternative to the 'conception of the good' in his theory in a functional sense. It is plausible that Aristotle would also find self-realization conceived in this way to be *a* purpose of human life and goal of justice, even if he would not consider counting grasses as self-realization like the present author. But more pertinent to the present discussion is how he would have viewed the role of education for realizing human capacities, so that its importance in social and economic schemes can be determined –

The last chapters of Aristotle's 'Politics' discuss the education of children. The very last words in 'Politics', even though written with regard to musical education, capture his general idea about the purpose of education according to educational philosophers[71]:

> "Moreover, if there is a certain sort of harmony that is suited to childhood, because it has the power to provide both order and education at the same time (as seems particularly true of the Lydian harmony), then it is evident that these three things must be made the defining principles of education: the mean, the possible, and the suitable."[72]

[69] Id. 17-19
[70] Id. 17-19
[71] Felix C. Robb, "Aristotle and education," *Peabody Journal of Education* 20, no. 4 (January 1943): 210
[72] Aristotle, *Politics* C.D.C. Reeve trans. (USA: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998): 242

The 'suitable' here is translated elsewhere as 'becoming,'[73] and means that the content of education to be administered should be appropriate for the age of the child and incorporate social values.[74] The 'possible' refers to the inherent potentials of the child and the 'mean' here refers to the golden mean which is another key component of Aristotle's thoughts.[75] Applied to the education of children, this idea would provide for a flexible schooling to address the requirements dictated by the possible and the suitable or the 'becoming' of children, – in other words, to help children in their natural development (or self-realization through human flourishing).[76] Therefore, while Aristotle certainly did not overlook the instrumental purposes of education as evidenced by the requirement of 'suitablity', his ideas relevant to the purpose of education prominently supports a central place for self-realization, in the narrower sense of human flourishing, as they are based on the ideas of inherent talents and the psychological or biological needs human beings have to realize them. His ideas of education should be applicable *pro tanto* to higher education. As he writes at length on how education should be designed to deliver this goal (in 'Politics', significantly), it can be assumed that he thought education has an important role in delivering this goal of realizing natural human capacities.

Even if he considered education to be *only* instrumentally valuable, a case can be made for full public subsidies of higher education within Aristotelian philosophy, because of the central importance he placed on education in helping realize human capacities, which is a goal of justice. But considering how he conceived of realizing inherent human capacities as a leading 'intrinsic' good, and the fact that he considered education to be essential for this

[73] Robb: 210
[74] Id. 206-12
[75] Id. 206-10
[76] Id. 206-13

process of realizing inherent capacities, it is plausible that he would have accepted education to have intrinsic merits as well. Regardless of his position on the intrinsic value of education and, by extrapolation, of higher education, it should be likely that he would have agreed with state subsidies for it to those selected to receive it, because of its role in helping realize their natural human capacities; especially if it is accepted that the number of students being accepted into higher education can be limited by social and economic policies. In sum, Aristotles' ideas clearly support the narrower understanding of self-realization, i.e. human flourishing, and for this reason it can support public funding of higher education. It hardly needs mentioning that (higher) education for him covered both essential and non-essential strands as it is classified here.

These views on higher education and its relations with various understandings of human flourishing, all of which are important components of the idea of self-realization espoused in the thesis, belong very much to the mainstream of philosophy. Aristotle, Humboldt, Dewey and Tagore are all regarded as central figures in the philosophy of education. The project of education being centrally connected to the development of human capacities, it should come as no surprise that all of their views depend on some idea of human flourishing. It can also be said that human flourishing would remain a central preoccupation of their (comprehensive) political and moral philosophies, and none, including Aristotle, would deny the central role of education in bringing about human flourishing. There can certainly be disagreements among them as to the degree of this centrality, but that should not discourage us, especially if we combine the core of their theories of education with John Rawls' philosophical achievements. As the version of self-realization adopted in this thesis is compatible with Rawls' theory, it should be able to redress the peripheral role Rawls delegates to education in his scheme; while the centrality of education in the various schemes of social organization can be supplemented by the moral and methodical rigor of justice as

fairness. To conclude, higher education is a central political task owing to its important role in aiding self-realization, which includes but is not limited to human flourishing, and for this reason should be subsidized by the state or society to the highest extent, subject only to the requirements imposed by the difference principle and the principle of fair equality of opportunity.

Conclusion:

The four arguments for or against full state subsidies of higher education that Bou-Habib analyzed are premised on instrumental aspects of higher education; the principle contribution this thesis has tried to make is that the intrinsic value of self-realization as higher education can constitute a *different* argument for the public to bear its costs. This argument is qualitatively different and separate from those four arguments not only because they rely on various instrumental features of higher education, and mine is based on the intrinsic value residing in higher education, but also because this is not exclusively applicable to higher education. It also covers every other activity that human beings can derive meaning from, and says that every such activity is of utmost and equal value because it provides individuals with a purpose to live their lives. It conceptualizes higher education *as* self-realization, as it does all other personally *meaningful* activities. For this reason, this thesis claims that all public funds, barring the necessary costs of society, should be dedicated to the pursuit of these activities. But, this should not run counter to environmentalism or other such concerns, as it can well incorporate ideas of sustainable development, rights of future generations, and animal rights among others.

However, as we must accept the reality of scarce resources and basic human necessities, this thesis adopts Rawls' theory which states all financial decision in society should be made to maximize the benefits (self-realization prospects) of the least advantaged groups. Therefore, the social value or outcomes of all activities are relevant. In this regard, this thesis has argued that higher education, including non-essential higher education, also plays a central role and as such should receive public funds on a priority basis. But, I accept that justice in this situation can require recipients of non-essential higher education to

participate in a fair social scheme that equitably distributes essential labor among all capable members in society. This is therefore a supplementary moral principle to the principles of justice. Apart from this supplementary, but general moral argument, the thesis provided a *secondary* one – if a classification of the intrinsic values of different activities can be plausibly made, self-realization would also be the most appropriate normative standard for it. In this standard as well as the usual instrumental ones, non-essential higher education would be an especially important factor for self-realization, as its various intrinsic and instrumental features identified by the leading educational philosophers discussed here prove.

The argument provided here being that the costs for higher education should be borne by the public, it has obvious practical relevance. It can also be followed up by other related practical issues; for example, whether industries should be allowed to participate in the funding of higher education, and if so, to what extent and under what conditions. Provided that the corporations do not attach conditions to funds that affect autonomy of its recipients, so as to harm their capacity to pursue self-realization, their contribution to higher education costs could be welcome.

A second important argument that can follow is that if a state limits the number of international students it admits into its universities, it should provide similar opportunities to domestic and those international students it *does* admit, because everyone has an equal claim to find meaning in their lives through self-realization. Therefore, the higher education of international and domestic students alike should be subsidized by the public. In this regard, the international students pursuing non-essential higher education can also be required by justice to participate in a scheme which distributes essential labor among everyone in that society fairly.

All points in the thesis, of course, are subject to the two principles of justice found in Rawls. Justice might even require diverting funds from essential higher education to more essential areas like food production or housing or basic education, but if the arguments presented in the thesis have been convincing, the necessities need to be particularly urgent to be able to claim a diversion of funds from higher education, including non-essential higher education.

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