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The Good Life of Teaching or the Life of Good Teaching?

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In his recent monograph, Chris Higgins (2011) offers a remarkably original, thoughtful, and provocative argument for “an ethics of professional practice” for teachers. His study brings together a wealth of ideas and authors not often discussed in relation to each other, and it draws out elusive themes and ideas often overlooked in most analyses of teaching.

From the outset, I must admit my interest about both sides of “the two main discourses about teacher motivation—the inspirational and the suspicious” (2011, 1) and thus about (a) music teaching as a “noble service” (2011, 1) provided to students, society, and culture; and (b) the problematic “hidden springs of self-interest” (2011, 2) that can challenge, even compromise, any assumption of an altruism of music teaching. Music education is unique regarding both motivations, especially due to the “sacralization” of classical music that has transpired since the rise of the public concert in the 19th century and the virtuoso composers, performers, and conductors who have become its gods—with aesthetic theories becoming the holy texts of this fundamentalism, and teachers serving as the clergy who promote ‘good music’ and evangelize ‘music appreciation’ in schools¹ (public or private, mandatory or voluntary²).

I begin with a survey of virtue ethics, then consider some implications of selected issues raised by Higgins for music education. Along the way I offer some cavils that I argue qualify some of Higgins’ conclusions about “the good life of teaching.”

Virtue ethics

From the first, Higgins seeks to explain “why we need a virtue ethics of teaching” (1), thus raising questions and issues that overlook, are sometimes at odds with, and sometimes overlap other normative theories. But, he writes:

[I]t is not enough to list, as most introductory texts now do, virtue ethics as one species of ethical theory along with consequentialism, deontology, contractualism, etc. If virtue ethics means simply a modern meta-ethical position in which character is stressed over principles and consequences, most of the

important contrasts will be lost. After all . . . these various rival moral theories are actually united on key issues. (2011, 43, n.4)

This qualification notwithstanding, Higgins explores his idea of a “neo-praxis” (12) virtue ethics more than he addresses points of agreement among rival normative theories. He often relies on Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* ([1981/1985] 2007) but, elsewhere, MacIntyre cautions ([1967/1998] 2007) that the vocabulary of ethical/moral discourse is especially problematic: the differences between the ancient Greek meanings of terms, for example, and contemporary meanings pose special problems for philosophers and translators. Higgins notes, then: “The English term virtue can sound quite moralistic, indeed. The work of philosophical retrieval would be easier if terms were simply lost; instead they become distorted” (2011, 43, n.4). Surprisingly, he does not seem to provide a straightforward definition of what *he* means by “virtue.” He does, however, offer many provocative descriptions and examples along the way that may be his way of “philosophical retrieval” of what the term offers without its moralistic overtones.

If we begin with Aristotle’s concept of virtue (*aretē*),³ the classic source of virtue ethics, it is difficult to ignore its relationship to practical consequences and the complex intersections between ends and means. Recent translators of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* define virtue as: “The excellence of a specific type of thing . . . that marks the peak of that thing and *permits it to perform its characteristic work or task well* (Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 316, italics added).⁴ An earlier translation confirms that

the Greek word traditionally translated as ‘virtue’ (*aretē*) has not the specifically moral connotation that ‘virtue’ has acquired in modern English. ‘Excellence’, which is sometimes used by Ross [the translator], is less liable to mislead. Thus moral virtue will be excellence of character, and intellectual virtue excellence of intellect or intelligence. (Ackrill and Urmson in Aristotle 1998, xxvi)

Thus, for Aristotle there are two kinds of virtue: *ethical* excellence depends on a set of personal character traits, such as generosity and patience.⁵ These Aristotle attributes to how a child is raised and educated by parents and social models. In contrast, *intellectual* excellence involves the ongoing acquisition of understanding and mastery of cognitive skills according to three primary variables: *nous* (intelligence) and *epistēmē* (knowledge) combine over time to produce *sophia* (wisdom). *Epistēmē* is itself categorized into three types: *theoria*, *techne*, and *praxis*.

Theoria involves theoretical, speculative, and metaphysical inquiry about eternal truth and beauty. Its active form is contemplation in leisure time and is, for Aristotle, the source of happiness and the ‘good life’ (see Book 10). Importantly, however (and unlike Plato), Aristotle argued that ethics (virtue) involves *practical reason*, not theoretical speculation (Aristotle 1998, 154–58).⁶ And the needs at stake promote a deliberate rational choice (*proairesis*) and serve as the criteria for judging the value and virtue (excellence) of an action. The actions that follow from such choices thus “fall within the scope of the ‘practical’ sciences (*episteme praktikai*), i.e., ethics and politics, that have as their object the good that is aimed at by action” (Peters 1967, 163; see Aristotle 2011, 225). Consequently, an action is virtuous (excellent) to the degree that the need it is ‘good for’—the product or result (*ergon*) sought by praxis—is well-served, thereby avoiding radical relativism, subjectivism, or emotivism where whatever an agent prefers to believe or accept is the sole criterion.⁷ Aristotle’s concept of virtue, then, was decidedly practical, especially as regards praxis as an essentially ethical undertaking that involves the wellbeing of other people.

Since their well-being or flourishing is at stake, two ethical criteria obtain: the virtue (a) of ‘right results’ judged in terms of the practical needs of those served as diagnosed by “correct reason” (Aristotle 2011, 133, 254); and (b) of avoiding negative consequences—the traditional ethic of “do no harm.” Thus praxis is best understood as ‘right’ or ‘virtuous’ action (“acting well” or *eupraxia*⁸) that is ethically concerned to bring about clear, clearly needed, and decidedly consequential benefits for those served—in our case, for students—and, therefore, that is self-ful for the agent. “In the strict sense of the word, then, all action [praxis] is moral; it involves deeds for which we may be praised or blamed” (Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 305). Failure is a matter of *dyspraxia* and, in the recognized helping professions, a potential concern of *malpraxis*.

In those professions, then, professional “practice” is effectively understood as “praxis”—not simply as the proficient employment of conventional skills or standardized techniques (*techne*) (see, e.g. Higgins 2011, 101–108). When approached as *techne*, teaching instead becomes the *technical delivery system* of stock lessons or lesson formats that I have termed “methodolatry” (Regelski 2002)—a one-size-fits-all, craft-like, prescriptive or formulaic approach that regards students as identical ‘products’ on an assembly line—rather than as a professional praxis that necessarily observes ethical care-fullness in diagnosing students’ individual needs and differences and that promotes ‘right results’ on their behalf.

This active ethical dimension of praxis is *phronesis*: the intellectual excellence of being prudent—wise, far-sighted, and well-informed—in promoting the practical ‘goods’ at stake, and in doing no harm. These criteria, in turn, depend upon the subset of Aristotle’s four secondary intellectual virtues—all of which can be educated and improved and that result in praxial knowledge and, therefore, progressive practical wisdom over time.⁹ Resourcefulness (*euboulia*) involves acquiring information needed to make effective decisions; judgment or diagnosis (*gnomē*) rationally chooses what is ‘right’ and just regarding the ‘goods’ at stake for those to be benefitted; understanding (*sunēsis*) analyzes relevant conditions and complications; and cleverness or versatility (*dēinotes*) copes flexibly with the present and (over time) changing needs of individual students (and society or the community) and with the always unfolding uniqueness of each situation (cf. Vardy and Grosch 1999, 28–29).

Teaching music thus entails an *ethic of care* that centrally involves *caring for students* and their needs at least as much as caring for musical ‘standards’, the needs of the music program, a teacher’s preferences, and so on (see, e.g., Noddings 2005, and Silverman this volume). It also involves being *care-full* in choices of curriculum, pedagogy, methods and materials, assessment, and teacher accountability. This ethical disposition involves (a) diagnosing a student’s unique needs—in the case of music teaching, the cognitive and musical skills that enhance present and future musical flourishing—not dictating them; then (b) analyzing the complex variables that effect the curricular ends-in-view;¹⁰ then (c) choosing and acting on the best course of action; and finally (d), reflecting on results to determine whether (or what) further or remedial steps are needed. This entire cycle comprises praxis. Therefore, when teaching is understood as praxis, the idea of “reflective practice” (Schön 1987) is redundant: praxis is by definition reflective.¹¹ Accountability—practical and ethical—is thus an essential ingredient of the ethical *disposition* to ‘right action’, not simply a formal ‘ought’ of duty theory, or of what Higgins’ calls “moral professionalism” (2011, 35–42).

It is in regard to such ‘right results’ that virtue ethics can overlap with *consequentialism* where (1) the consequences of an action (for good or ill; anticipated or actual), and (2) how consequential (important) those results are for those served are the dual criteria of ethical actions. Actually, there are several varieties of consequentialism (also known as *utilitarianism* since it stems from the concept of ‘utility’ that was introduced into ethical theory by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill): for example, whether the actual

overall consequences of an action are more useful than others; which will be the best of the *most likely* consequences;¹² and whether consequences will benefit everyone involved, or everyone except the agent? One version, relevant here, allows that benefits for the agent (i.e., teacher) are ethical to the degree that the needs of those served are also met.¹³ Another version of consequentialism makes it a *duty* for the agent to consider the ethical and practical consequences of an anticipated action, thereby overlapping with duty ethics. In this view, then, teachers have the duty to consider the consequences for students of their teaching (methods, materials, curriculum, etc.); both the potential benefits and potential harm (or lack of consequential usefulness).

Perhaps not surprisingly, for Aristotle, *practical wisdom is governed by theoretical virtue* (Aristotle 1998, 34–35; 154–58).¹⁴ Thus, “virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means” (Aristotle 1998, 155); “the one determines the end and the other makes us do the things that lead to the end” (158). In this sequence, theoretical excellence *first* decides on the good ends to be sought, *then* practical wisdom (phronesis) decides on the means that best lead to those ends. So ‘good teaching’—both in the sense of teaching that benefits students and in the ethical sense—starts with an informed, clear-sighted, and well-reasoned vision of ‘right results’ or ‘good ends’ that advance the life well-lived, not with an *a priori* choice of supposedly ‘good methods’. The latter can be judged only in terms of how well they serve the former. This requires a thoroughly reasoned philosophical approach to the many practical values at the heart of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and accountability—something that, as is noted in more detail below, Higgins broadly addresses in critiquing the narrowness of typical teacher education programs (2011, 241–78). In turn, to further solidify the importance of reflection to praxis and the ends-means continuum, Aristotle also points out that *practical wisdom informs philosophical theorizing* (Aristotle 1998, 158). Throughout the *Nichomachean Ethics*, then, he counsels his readers to look to elders and status-quo social practices as the basis for understanding, choosing, and educating.¹⁵ Accordingly, theoretical virtue (excellence) regarding philosophical considerations of value guides praxis while eupraxis, in turn, informs theory in its future applications.

This ‘applied’ aspect of virtue ethics is always governed by Aristotle’s original insistence on the practicality of ethical reasoning and actions. For such pragmatism, then, worth or value is seen in the notable difference resulting from an action—in ethical terms

regarding schooling, the useful consequences promoted for students. If results are neither clear in demonstrating their pragmatic worth and virtue, nor clearly beneficial (and consequentially so) in enhancing the wellbeing of the students served (and of society), then *ethical relativism* raises its ugly head and ‘anything goes’. In other words, when all teaching is ‘good enough’, ethical accountability is ignored and teachers can judge themselves to be virtuous and take self-satisfaction from their efforts with seemingly good conscience. As I argue below, then, the fact that many music teachers are too easily self-satisfied with their efforts (or serve personal ambitions more than students’ needs) tends to becloud some of Higgins’ discussions of self-fullness and teaching as a helping profession. Where there is no possibility of admitting to mistakes, there can be no virtue.

A virtue ethics of teaching

As admitted, I am among those who struggle with the question of whether “teachers are either serving students or using them” (Higgins 2011, 1). This concern directly confronts the motivations of teachers, the rewards of teaching as one’s ‘life work’ (versus as one’s ‘job’ or means of earning a living) and the very prospects of teaching as a helping profession (versus as specialized employment). And, of course, it is central to any consideration of ethics.

From the first, I was struck by Higgins’ scant mention of what is variously called “applied,” “situation,” or “practical” ethics—although, in a manner of speaking, I suppose, Higgins’ entire study may be just that—the “application of ethics or morality . . . to practical issues” (Singer 1997, 1) in teaching.¹⁶ While *normative* ethics pose either a single criterion or a set of interrelated criteria for guiding and judging ethical actions, *applied* ethics analyze the ethical challenges of the typical cases faced by an ethical realm and postulate ethical principles suited to dealing with the predictable particulars of such cases. *Professional* ethics thus fall into the domain of applied ethics because each profession copes with different, predictable ethical challenges according to the particular needs of those served.

However, whether a professional ethic is enshrined in *statutory law* to protect the public or is followed according to passed on *ethical codes* or traditions (or, as is often the case, both), the principles tend to become *normative* for that profession. Furthermore, many—though not necessarily all—bases of an applied ethic are often related to or derived from a normative principle; they get ‘fine-tuned’ according to the typical needs and practices of particular professional practices. Hence, applied ethics—and, I think this is certainly true

of an applied ethics of teaching—often takes guidance from more than one normative theory, thus demonstrating that “these various rival moral theories are actually united on key issues” (Higgins 2011, 43) when it comes to applied ethics. On the other hand, the idea that applied ethics amounts to a kind of policing of professional practice according to ethical criteria that are somehow separate from the praxis itself leads to ignoring the ethical status of any practitioner’s dispositions in general—in teaching praxis or in life. Virtue ethics, thus, is concerned with the ‘whole’ person in all the various roles, subject positions, and capacities, and this seems to be at the heart of Higgins’ argument.

The idea of an applied ethics of *teaching* (or, what Higgins’ does not address directly, a wider conception of an applied ethics of *education* that embraces all facets of the educational enterprise called “school,” not just teaching: curriculum, the hidden curriculum, questions of power, authority, ideology, etc.¹⁷) is relatively new. Of course teachers are keenly aware of common sense ethical criteria—such as not dating their students; and they know about and are obliged to follow statutory laws—such as against corporal punishment. But they often give little thought to the important ethical implications of virtually every teaching decision they make. A primary virtue of Higgins’ study is his consideration of a wide variety of such ethical issues—although they are sprinkled across his analyses of various themes and in notes. On the other hand, Higgins does not directly address the range of ideological and ethical issues addressed, for example, by critical pedagogy or the important ethical distinctions among indoctrination, propaganda, training, and education (see, e.g., Kincheloe 2009; Snook [1972] 2010). And he offers little in the way of ‘practical’ instances of the ethical considerations he raises (see, e.g., Mackenzie and Mackenzie 2010; for music education, see Abrahams and Head 2005). But on very basic questions, such as whether teaching is properly a helping profession (or even a profession), his musings are instructive, if often more provocative than conclusive.

The sake for which one acts: its “ergon”

Also notable is insufficient mention of an ethical responsibility for the demonstrated *learning* of students—the ‘help’ that should be at the heart of Higgins’ discussion of teaching as a helping profession.¹⁸ There seems to be little doubt that, for example, medicine, law, and social work are professions that exist to *help* (i.e., benefit) patients and clients. Those who typically produce negative results or no consequential benefits for patients and clients would

soon be out of business or removed from professional practice by peers. Higgins' account of teaching is somewhat one-sidedly philosophical—as it might well be, given his focus on ethics. But the question of what qualifies as a profession, and thus the distinction between “moral professionalism” and “professional ethics” that Higgins attempts to draw (2011, 35–42) would also profit from social theory.¹⁹

He does cite William Sullivan's rehearsal of the three conventional criteria for status as a profession: “(1) Specialized training in a field of codified knowledge usually acquired by formal education and apprenticeship, (2) public recognition of a certain autonomy on the part of the community of practitioners to regulate their own standards of practice, and (3) a commitment to provide service to the public which goes beyond the economic welfare of the practitioners” (Higgins 2011, 35–36). In comparison, sociologist Max Weber “delineated the characteristics of the ‘ideal typical’ ” professional as based upon models from medicine and the law:

[T]hey were self-employed providers of service, they entered their profession because they were ‘called’ to it out of some deep personal commitment, and their qualifications were based upon possession of ‘expert’ and esoteric knowledge. In addition, their knowledge base could be acquired by only a select few who underwent long and rigorous study. Their services dealt with serious, often life-or-death matters, and they were remunerated by fees from clients. Communication between professionals and their clients was legally privileged so that courts of law could not require its disclosure. Most import, entrance to these professions was controlled by professional peers who set requirements for entry, training, and certification. Boards of peers also developed review processes to maintain standards and competence. (deMarrias and LeCompte 1998, 150).

Both definitions, however, pose problems regarding teaching as a profession. While the disciplines taught in schools involve codified knowledge, teaching itself is not a similarly rigorous discipline; many teachers ‘do their own thing’ in a veritable anarchy of practices. The concept of malpractice is non-existent.²⁰ The commitment beyond remuneration is—or at least should be—a criterion of teaching professionalism; it goes to the question of altruism discussed below. Here, however, its relevance is that the ‘sake of that for which one teaches’ is to benefit students and the community, at least as much if not more than the teacher. There is much controversy in the USA about teacher accountability as judged by performances on international and national standardized tests. But Higgins is satisfied to speak of the teacher's responsibilities to set students on the path of life and similar noble (and often vague) projects. I submit that failures to produce predictably significant benefits²¹ for individual students and the community (and society) reflect an ethical weakness that calls into question the

professionalism of a teacher and the status of the profession. It should be mentioned, then, that malpractice (viz., malpraxis) in the helping professions is a violation of the *ethical duty* for ‘due care’, not a failure to observe “standard practices” since the clients served are each their own case study.²²

Altruism

The first of Weber’s criteria of a profession is altruism—the ‘saintly’ motivation for entering teaching. The key reasons that motivate someone to enter teaching are, then, central to determining the ethical propriety of that person’s teaching and life projects. Higgins is concerned, following Dewey, to “rethink vocation outside of the duty/inclination and altruism/self-interest dichotomies” (Higgins 2011, 120) that he believes often characterize discussions of it.²³ However, altruism, if understood as action undertaken for the good of others, is an inescapable component of the ‘help’ motive that is usually associated with the various helping professions.

Actions that involve people (praxis) are undertaken with some end in mind other than merely being virtuous for its own sake: as already noted, virtue (functional excellence) is assessed in relation to the ‘rightness’ of the ‘help’ envisioned and the ‘goodness’ of the consequences attained for those served by an action. This does not mean, however, that in being altruistically motivated a teacher necessarily relinquishes the self-ful benefits that Higgins wants to stress. As noted earlier in connection with consequentialism, a teacher can benefit—musically or otherwise—to the degree that ‘right results’ are promoted for the students served.

Furthermore, if by “vocation” we understand the *teleoaffective* conditions of being ‘called’ to a certain kind of work, we need to consider what those conditions are. For practice theorist Theodore Schatzki, teleoaffective structures amount to “a collection of possible orders of life conditions” that link the various sayings, understandings, rules, and doings of a practice by expressing “hierarchized orders of ends, purposes, projects, actions, beliefs, and emotions that fall within a certain field.” Thus, “what it is for a person to pursue ends and purposes is for the sought states of affairs to be objects of her intentions, desires, hopes, and wants” (Schatzki 1996, 100–01).

Now the possible hierarchies of ends, projects, and so on composing a practice’s teleoaffective structure are those that are normative for participants in the practice. As is immediately obvious, however, the entirety of a practice’s organization is

normative. By “normativity” I mean, in the first place, oughtness or rightness.²⁴ The understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structure that organize a practice specify how actions (including speech acts) ought to be carried out, understood, prompted, and responded to, what specifically and unequivocally should be done or said (when, where . . .); and which ends should be pursued, which projects, tasks, and actions carried out for that end, and which emotions possessed—when, that is, one is engaged in the practice. (1996, 101; see also Schatzki 2002, 83–88)

Here again, then, there is an important distinction to be made between the teleoaffective ‘calling’, benefits, and interests of one’s ‘life work’, and the self-sustaining benefits of ones ‘job’ or employment (livelihood).²⁵ Higgins often conflates “altruism,” “vocation,” “calling,” “occupation,” even “craft” (see, e.g., 2011, 120–130); and he ignores *avocation* in regard to teachers’ out-of-school *vita activa*—an important source of value and identity for many music teachers. However described, as Higgins admits, “the interests of the practitioner . . . the *existential* meanings of vocation” (2011, 121, italics original; see 119–25 for the full argument) are extremely relevant, yet often overlooked or ignored when it comes to a teacher’s motivations and rewards. A ‘calling’ to a particular profession or vocation need not be made simply on the basis of altruism, though; it can very well (and often does) include self-interest and commitment. Interest in what, or commitment to whom, and why? These are primary questions, and vexing ones, especially when it comes to music education. Music teaching appears to be an exception to, or at least a complication for Higgins’ concept of self-ful teaching and for “restoring to its central place the question of the flourishing of the practitioner” (Higgins 2011, 10) as part of a virtue ethics of teaching.

To begin with, much has been written and argued about to no satisfactory conclusion in music education circles (e.g., *ACT* 2007) concerning music teacher *identity* (and related aspects of roles,²⁶ subject positions,²⁷ etc.): the degree to which they ‘identify’ as “musicians” and (or versus) “teachers.” Much has also been written about whether the two roles, identities, or subject positions need to be in balance; are in an unavoidable state of dynamic or creative tension; are sometimes in irreconcilable dialectical conflict; or if one or the other role functions as the dominating nexus or gravitational center around which other needs, expectations, and values revolve (see, e.g., the *ACT* 2007 editorial). Whether music teachers “teach music or students” is an issue that has been batted around for decades. However, the issue remains completely unresolved in both theory and practice—although, at its very heart, it is a problem confronting any ethics of professional practice. It makes a vast difference, therefore, in the teleoaffective structures and conditions of teaching whether a

music teacher is self-fully rewarded more (or mainly) by (a) the music, by (b) the rewards of music-making with children and youth, or by (c) ‘helping’ students in consequential ways to take fullest advantage of the life well-lived through music. The ethical implications of self-fulness are affected, accordingly.

In this, music teachers may be exceptions: they often *are* musicians, while other teachers are rarely practitioners of the subjects they teach (see Higgins 2011, 192–95). In most nations, music teachers have been trained as musicians; and they also tend to regard making music as a major goal of their life project. The temptation is great, then, for them to be self-fully rewarded by the music-making they do with their students²⁸ and, consequently, to assume that just performing music with students (or providing ‘experiences’ and ‘activities’ in general music classes) is automatically educative. This assumption is usually based on beliefs that the value of such musicking is aesthetic and thus aesthetically educative—an all too easy ‘cop-out’ when it comes to ethical accountability in terms of ‘right ends’.²⁹

This temptation is stoked all the more by the public plaudits given teachers who direct ensembles in concerts.³⁰ One result is directors who ‘perform’ their ensembles as an organist does the organ pipes, with little concern for what is contributed of a lasting nature to the musicianship and dispositions of the students. A related problem is that the music curriculum comes to consist of x-years of concert literature. Whether graduates show any evidence of a disposition or ability to continue performing, or have more ‘refined’ (or even different) musical tastes than the rest of public, goes unexamined: such benefits are simply taken for granted. There is no empirical evidence to support such claims; and the value of school music for the relative few who participate in ensembles appears to stem primarily from their status as ‘activities’ meeting these students’ social needs. This is hardly a benefit that legitimates the extensive resources needed for such ensemble programs.

Then there is the problem of teachers who teach music as though protecting it from students! These teachers often congratulate themselves for their high musical standards, but their teaching practices often reveal a host of serious ethical failings. First of all, when ensembles are granted academic credit, music directors are virtually the only teachers who can remove or deny students admission to their classes; and these are often done simply on the grounds of a student’s interest, ability, or comportment. This makes a mockery of the premise that public school music education should contribute to the *general* education of *all*

students.³¹ Secondly, under such academic conditions, awarding meaningful grades (etc.) becomes ethically problematic—for students who do not understand why they receive less than laudatory evaluations; or where all in the ensemble receive the same grade; or for those who are regarded as “teacher’s pets.” Furthermore, there is the ethical weakness of highly competitive auditions, seating challenges (etc.) where one student’s successful achievement necessarily comes at the expense of the failure all others!

While ensembles can often achieve quite commendatory levels of musical achievement, too often the students’ independent musicianship, artistry, and potential for life-long musicking are poorly served. In order to achieve such results, music directors often resort to rote teaching, fear tactics, psychological manipulation, embarrassment, extrinsic motivations and rewards,³² and a range of other ethically questionable stratagems. Such tactics risk psychological ill-effects at a very sensitive point in students’ emotional and social development; and still other practices lead students to quit (see, e.g., Turino 2008, 98), thus failing to serve their musical needs. Finally, as a result of the extraordinary authority music teachers have to choose their own students, ensembles often consist of a very small number of select or self-motivated students.

I have elsewhere denominated as “musicianists” those teachers who, with quasi-religious zeal, put music, musical values, and their own musical interests and needs in the forefront of their teaching practices, thus treating their students as proto-professional musicians in the same way they were treated by their university directors and studio teachers (Regelski 2012b). For musicianist teachers, then, *music* per se, is the reward, the goal, the ergon to be promoted, and students are but means to such teachers’ musical ends. In this they fail to meet one of Kant’s categorical imperatives (duties): “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity . . . never simply as a *means*, but always at the same time as an *end*” (trans. Vardy and Grosch 1999, 58; italics added).³³

With this overlap of duty and virtue ethics, we can note that music teachers may often have a variety of motives that they regard as their ‘calling’—some more altruistic than others. Informal surveys of freshman music education majors I conducted in the 1980s and 90s³⁴ revealed some interesting patterns—and concerns. By far, most gave as their career motivation something to the effect of “I want to be just like” a favored music teacher; but they were usually unclear about the values to be emulated. Others enjoyed their school music ensemble experiences and wanted to continue them from the other side of the podium. Many

said that they were interested in “sharing” their love of music with students, although “sharing” sometimes seemed to fall too easily into just “making music” with students. More than a few were children of teachers and the lifestyle was an attraction, with music the subject they were best at and, thus, most interested in teaching. Some simply said, “Because music is the thing I do best”—but qualifying that they did not want to compete in the professional world. Many allowed that the only way their parents would let them be music majors was to be music education majors—a more stable, predictable living than the competitive music world.³⁵ A few were motivated by an outstanding teacher; while it was not always clear what their criteria for ‘outstanding’ were, many in this category were focused on an elementary general music teacher. Rare, indeed, were those who wanted to teach *better* than teachers they had, often reasoning that while they had succeeded, many of their friends had been ‘turned off’ to school music by bad teaching. Some simply said they enjoyed working with young people (e.g., in summer camps, Bible school) and wanted to do that using their musical skills and interests.

Such a complicated range of ‘callings’ in music education (and there are many subtle variations and combinations) surely complicates the status of self-ful, selfish, and selfless teaching.³⁶ The entire issue is worth addressing with music education majors, especially regarding their recruitment, to help clarify such important distinctions in their minds and, hopefully, to avoid motives that can lapse into selfish teaching which rewards the teacher’s musical (or other³⁷) needs more than it advances students’ musical opportunities throughout life. Not to be overlooked is simply the ‘calling’ of wanting to work with students and of deriving self-ful benefits from that alone—regardless of the subject taught. A problem faced by many teachers is that students do not usually ‘love’ the subject as much as the teacher does. But, aside from the teacher’s personal interest in the subject matter, many simply like working with young people. They are challenged in positive ways by the many “working conditions” (Higgins 2011, 177–204) of schools and schooling that Higgins (and some teachers) regard as negative, and they are rewarded by success with and the respect of students despite, or because of overcoming such conditions.

In Finland, for example, teaching is at the top of the list of the most respected professions, along with doctors and lawyers. Thus, many of the negatives and sacrifices that Higgins identifies in connection with teachers who are self-less simply do not obtain in that country. Similarly, being a *sensei* in Japan is a noble status that is observed across society and

throughout life.³⁸ A key variable, again, can simply be the ‘calling’ of working with young people, being energized and rewarded by them in countless ways. I recall a music education class that was studying growth-typical behavior of adolescents when a second year student questioned, “Why do we have to study this? I don’t even like kids. I just want to teach music!” At which point heads snapped in the direction of the student, who covered her face, turned, left the room, and soon quit her music education major. Some very competent musicians end up in teaching but adopt a kind of ‘defensive’ mode of mistrust or a ‘distancing’ of themselves from students in favor of a single-minded focus on music *per se*. Just as some wish to save religion from religionists, so music education often needs to be saved from musicianists.

Careers

The overlapping questions of ergon, the ‘goods’ for the sake of which one teaches, and of altruism and the rewards expected of teaching by newcomers, go to the issue of career—the longevity of a teacher’s ‘life work’ in schools. Currently, in the USA, 46% of new teachers leave after five years (according to one recent report in the news). Clearly, then, whatever they expected of teaching was unrealistic. Perhaps they were like the doctor who complained that all the patients were sick, or the pilot who expected only good weather. Perhaps they lacked an authentic sense of altruism or ‘calling’; or whatever self-fullness they anticipated or needed simply failed to materialize. This can be a result of the maze of complaints many teachers have about administrators, parents, teaching conditions (etc.). But weaknesses in the teacher’s practice can be a reason: poor teaching is unlikely to produce self-ful results beyond earning a living. Far too many teachers of this kind continue to teach year after year, either ‘burned out’ by the demands of their ‘job’ (but continuing on the ‘job’) or ‘burned up’ with a long list of resentments.

I simply cannot agree with Higgins’ assertion that when teaching is selfless it follows that it cannot be sustained (2011, 159); “that it does often turn out that it is precisely the teachers we respect the most, those whose selfless dedication to making something happen for other people is an inspiration, who burn out the fastest” (159).

[I]f we accept the premise that the best teaching requires a high degree of selflessness, we must add the caveat that such selflessly altruistic practice is not sustainable. An educator who always put students first may achieve wonderful results

for a time, but ultimately the teacher's own thirst for development will reassert itself.
(160–61)

First of all, it is no doubt true that altruism can be difficult to sustain; but there are many other variables that sustain long, successful, and self-ful teaching careers. Thus, I resist the premise that good teaching requires a high degree of selflessness if, in fact, the teacher's motives for entering the profession have been realistic and, in fact, the teacher is rewarded self-fully by a range of variables that Higgins does not acknowledge. For example, the various disciplines taught in schools are constantly evolving, and teaching any subject is quite different as the years unfold. This is particularly the case for the rapid developments in the music world: the proliferation of “musics” and musical media of various kinds. Such developments in a subject alone can be enlivening and sustaining. Children and society change, too, always presenting new problems and challenges for teachers. Methods and materials are constantly evolving, adding new interests and goals. In music education, for example, there has been a veritable explosion of technological “apps” for musicking of various kinds, many of which are being used by teachers who did not grow up in such a technologically mediated music world and who often learn from their students. And the best teachers, especially those with long and distinguished careers, manage to set for themselves ever-new challenges to undertake—rather than “burn in” (i.e., ‘burn-outs’ who stay ‘in’ teaching) as Higgins claims is inevitable. Precisely the “receptivity to the newness in new situations” (Higgins 2011, 11) that is a key trait of phronesis (practical wisdom) in virtue ethics (111–44) prevents many fine and experienced teachers from devolving into the kind of asceticism Higgins seems to think is unavoidable.

I believe he puts too much emphasis on the self-sacrifice of teachers as their supposedly primary guiding purpose. Teachers who entered the field with the intention of putting students first (much as parents do in having children and doctors do with their patients) are likely to be self-fully rewarded by regularly doing so successfully. Teachers who like working with students are naturally rewarded by such efforts, whatever the subject taught. And teachers whose professional development and personal dispositions are constantly fueled by a kind of action research ethos need not look outside of teaching for growth-potential, nor are they as likely to burn out or burn in. Recently, a music teacher wondered aloud to me about “Where to now?” after 22 years of very successful teaching,

only to continue with a long recital of plans for the next school year that would provide new challenges and projects and, thus, new self-ful rewards.

I must admit that in reading Chapter Five I sometimes wondered how familiar Higgins is with today's schools; how often he is in them and has worked with teachers; has known teachers whose competence has grown over the years; has followed the careers of successful teachers who, in fact, live "the good life of teaching" for a full and rich career? One of the variables of practical wisdom (phronesis) that is at the heart of Aristotelian virtue ethics is the *praxial knowledge* (practical wisdom) that grows simply from accumulated practical experience. He often seems to lose track of the Aristotelian stance mentioned earlier concerning the creative tension or hermeneutic circularity between ends and means:³⁹ in fact, teachers can meet their own needs precisely through succeeding in helping their students reach their ends, set their own projects. A teacher recently offered, "I love children. I'm one of those people who wants to make a difference in a child's life" as her reason for following her "dream" despite declining respect for teachers in the USA and, thus, declining interest in teaching as a career.⁴⁰

Higgins writes early on of "the fact the teacher hesitates to say of the well-educated pupil what the carpenter says of his completed table: look what I have made. Teachers instead want to say to their students: look what you have done, what you have made" (2011, 8). To the contrary, it is evident that successful teachers (like successful parents) do both: they are rewarded by the success of their efforts to "make a difference in a child's life" while still crediting the student for accepting and profiting from the nurturance offered. The concept of *in loco parentis* is not just a legal principle; the best teachers are in effect 'parenting' their students (and in many ways beyond subject-learning) and the best parents are effective teachers. Successful teachers are *authoritative* to the degree they help students set their own projects and achieve their own goals; *authoritarian* teachers push students to fulfill the goals the teacher (or institution) has set for them. The potential for self-fullness of each condition is quite different.

I believe that Higgins' project of "restoring to its central place the question of the flourishing of the practitioner" as "the *first* step in constructing a virtue ethics of teaching" (2011, 10; italics added) is problematic, even dangerous. Self-fullness *is* important to sustaining a long career,⁴¹ but I do not take it to be as central a condition or the first criterion of ethical praxis. Furthermore, his notion of self-ful flourishing seems overly tied to and

delimited by an excessively austere concept of an altruistic ‘calling’. Thus, his understanding of the multi-faceted motivations and rewards of teachers seems tendentious and not particularly helpful. I suspect, for example, that many teachers who might read his account of “the hunger artist” (145–76) will not recognize themselves or their most valued colleagues.

Helping

Much of the foregoing concerning altruism and careers turns on the condition of *helping* that is the key variable in the recognized helping professions. Where a profession exists precisely to ‘help’ people, the very act of doing so is not necessarily self-less, and this is probably even true for certain other fields such as carpentry and auto repair: the reward (other than monetary) of a job well-done, of being self-ful about a problem well-diagnosed and solved, is what can elevate such ‘jobs’ to the status of one’s ‘life work’. Many teachers who retire after long careers continue to teach in some volunteer or other circumstances. A student returning from her first week of student teaching exclaimed: “This is so great. I can’t believe they actually pay people to do this!” Yet Higgins (2011, 8–9) seems to doubt that teaching is properly a helping profession.⁴² This and the tendency to marshal all kinds of criteria for categorizing this or that (e.g., whether teaching is a practice or profession) lends a certain abstract loftiness to such discussions that can overlook more down-to-earth considerations. The question of whether teaching is a helping profession or practice, then, is not easily answered with an either/or characterization based on a long check-list of criteria.

In the commonly accepted understanding of a helping profession,⁴³ teaching exists in order to ‘help’ students—our clients, if you will—and communities (and, through both, society). Earlier, the question of whether teaching is a profession was broached, since teaching does not seem to fulfill all of the traditional criteria of an autonomous profession. Sociologists thus consider that teaching may be one of the *semiprofessions*; not autonomous but, rather, practices “‘bureaucratized,’ within formal service organizations” where the practitioner’s professional status “is less legitimated” (deMarrais and LeCompte 1998, 152). I have urged, then, the professionalization of teaching—in our case, music teaching—as a guiding ideal by, among other means, developing a strong and effective professional ethic that is predicated from the first on providing the ‘help’ on which its existence is based (Regelski 2012a).

In autonomous helping professions, the ‘helpful’ result at stake is usually clear, both in mind and in practice: to restore health to the patient, to serve the legal client’s needs, and so on. Even in semiprofessions such as nursing and social work the expected benefits are clear, in usually multiple forms. In fact, sometimes the ‘good’ served is so evident that the status of the profession is tied directly to the needfulness of the ‘help’ provided, as appreciated by the public and those helped. In teaching, the ‘goods’ at stake are, in the main, determined by curriculum and by various visions—of teachers, students, parents, the public, politicians, society, big business (etc.)—as to the benefits to individuals and society of an effective general education. While it may not always be clear to students why they study history or literature, the value and importance of the humanities, sciences, mathematics, and language arts are evident—although often obscured when these are taught as ends in themselves and thus regarded by students as “merely academic.” Music education, however, is lacking substantial clarity and agreement among practitioners as to the ‘help’ it presumes to contribute to the general education of all students and to the community.

Under the aegis of the many noble sounding clichés of the “aesthetic education” banner, many music teachers are beguiled into thinking that just ‘doing’ music—performing it in ensembles, and ‘activities’ and ‘experiences’ in general music classes—is the *raison d’être* of school music, on the assumption that being engaged musically is automatically aesthetic and, therefore, automatically aesthetically educative. As viewed by the public and school authorities, however, this all too convenient assumption is bluntly called into question as music is more and more pushed to the periphery (even eliminated) under the pressures of budgets, political ideology, and by the way school music has become an isolated island unconnected to the wider music world at large. The resulting legitimization crisis has music educators almost everywhere engaging in advocacy—in effect, advertising—of school music and the ‘goods’ that it purportedly offers. When its claims as “aesthetic education” are used as criteria for judging its actual worth (so-called immanent critique), it falls short, if only because any purported aesthetic benefits are not observable and the contribution of teachers to aesthetic experiencing of music amounts to an empty promise: learning several years of concert literature, or “experiencing the concept of melody,” in fact has not sufficiently impressed school officials, taxpayers, and politicians (most of whom underwent school music) of its value. Thus, the ‘help’ contributed by school music is seriously in doubt in many communities and nations.

I have often proposed the model of a helping profession as an *action* or *guiding ideal* for *professionalizing* music education (e.g., Regelski [1993] 1998). On the assumption that the recognized helping professions are typically guided by applied ethics of various kinds, I have thus argued for the importance of an applied ethics of music education for legitimating the field as a helping profession because of the kind of care and prudence (*phronesis*) that actually produces benefits that are helpful, clearly beneficial, to the life well-lived through music (Regelski 2012a). Action ideals are not idealistic in the utopian sense of a state of perfection that can be reached once and for all times.⁴⁴ Being a “good parent” is an action ideal; being a “good friend” is an action ideal; being a “caring person” is an action ideal. Each, then, is a vision of a range of ‘goods’ that are goals towards which to strive, never becoming so self-satisfied (or so self-ful?) as to pronounce one’s accomplishments as finally achieved. ‘Good teaching’ as helpful teaching then is an action ideal, and so is the prospect of teaching as a helping profession.

However, because music education as a field lacks general agreement as to such curricular ‘goods’ its *ergon* is unclear—to school authorities, the public, students, and often to music teachers themselves. Again, Aristotle counsels that “some activities have as the end (*telos*) a product (not necessarily an ‘object’: a frequent Aristotelian example is that health is the *ergon* of medicine) while others have as their *telos* the activity itself. This is, in general, Aristotle’s distinction between the activity known as *poiesis* [*techne*] and that called *praxis*” (Peters 1967, 61). But even if music teaching is regarded as a craft of passed-on skills useful in producing a product that is widely valued and unquestioned by society [i.e., *techne*], the *ergon* in question becomes at best the next concert, or a performance of this or that action song, or rhythm band activity, or Orff instrumentation as though for their own sakes. The sake for which one acts, the agreed upon ‘good’ or usefulness served—a prime criterion of the “excellent making” (*poiesis*) of *techne*—is completely unclear, unaccounted for, and can thus only be claimed. If, instead, music teaching (and teaching generally) is pursued as *praxis*, then ‘right results’ and the care (*phronesis*) of means chosen to bring about those ends meld as two sides of the same coin: ends and means fuse, and ‘right action’ is at once ‘right results’ for the ‘correct reasons’, both for the self-ful teacher and needful students.

Lacking such agreement on action ideals—what students learn to do musically at all, better, more mindfully, with more enthusiasm, or more often as a result of teaching⁴⁵—the field of music education is reduced to a less than professional status and its ‘helpfulness’ (and

needfulness) called into question. As noted in some detail earlier, without clarity of ends-in-view and observable ‘right results’ as criteria of the success of teaching actions, the means of teaching (and of assessment and accountability) risk becoming ends in themselves (e.g., the next concert, music competition success, high-stakes testing in the USA, grades, etc.⁴⁶) that have little to do with education in the most noble and important sense of that concept.

Being “professionalized” entails teachers who to aspire to the conditions, values, and virtues commonly associated with a helping profession: by helping in ways pointed to by both consequentialism and virtue ethics, and thus by teaching practices that promote significant, positive consequences, and unmistakably ‘right results’ for the ‘correct reasons.’ This is *first* a matter of curriculum, *then* of methods by which curriculum is enacted. As noted earlier, the first depends on ‘correct reasons’ reached by philosophically sound thinking, the second on ‘correct choices’ governed by phronesis as accumulated *praxial knowledge*. While self-fullness is an important ingredient in virtue ethics, a helping profession is not entered primarily to help oneself.

Practice and praxis

The preceding selection of themes leads to making an important distinction between the terms “practice” and “praxis”—a difference that obtains whether the praxis is understood in the Aristotelian tradition or in the neo-Marxist sense of action undertaken to make a difference in the lifeworld. To his credit, Higgins has produced a very detailed taxonomy of criteria that qualify a ‘doing’ as a practice.⁴⁷ His analyses and arguments against MacIntyre’s reservations about teaching as a practice (e.g., MacIntyre, in MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 4–6), are very instructive and substantially add to the growing literature of the “practice turn”⁴⁸ (Schatzki et al. 2001) in contemporary philosophy and social theory.⁴⁹ However, Higgins makes little mention of the already rich scholarship that informs this ‘turn’ and continues to advance it. He acknowledges that, for MacIntyre, “teaching itself is not a practice, but a set of skills and habits put to the serve of a variety of practices” (Higgins 2011, 191; MacIntyre, in MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 5) and thus that there is, for MacIntyre, no such autonomous ‘thing’ as a teacher “plain and simple” (Higgins 2011, 191):

[T]eaching is never more than a means All teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods. The life of a teacher is therefore not a specific kind of life. The life of a teacher of mathematics, whose goods are the

goods of mathematics, is one thing; a life of a teacher of music whose goods are the good of music is another. (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 9)

The premise that “all teaching is for the sake of something else” has been discussed above in connection with the melding of ends and means in praxis. The conclusion, however, that teaching is “not a specific kind of life” goes seriously off the rails⁵⁰—not just in terms of most scholarly accounts but in terms of the perspectives of most teachers. Particularly problematic is MacIntyre’s unelaborated claim that the ‘goods’ in the life of a music teacher “are the good of music,” a topic discussed earlier in relation to whether music teachers “teach music or students.” Along the way I have also argued that it is students who are (or should be) ‘helped’ to avail themselves of the life lived most fully, in part through music. I have argued, too, that musicianist teachers for whom the prevailing motivation is the “good of music” (or their own musicking) present a host of ethical problems to themselves, the field, and even to music since school music, by definition, is a very limited kind of musical practice of its own.

The issue seems to boil down to whether “practice” is understood in the sense, or under the conditions and criteria of “praxis” as advanced in Aristotle’s virtue ethics. It is exactly the ‘practice’ mentioned earlier of teaching various subjects as ends-in-themselves (as mere school ‘subjects’, or as introductions to this or that ‘discipline’) that leads to the “merely academic” criticism of students; and to the legitimation crisis created when school music is pursued as end in itself, with little carryover to out-of-school musicking or adult life. Despite his doubts about whether teaching is a practice, MacIntyre expresses concern about the impoverishment of schooling as “a preparatory institution, within which the students are contained until they are ready to participate in ‘the real thing’.” “Good schools,” he suggests instead, are places where “students already become practitioners”; places for “apprenticeship [into ‘real’ practices] through training by means of inescapably laborious drills,” and places “of genuine, if small-scale cultural achievement within which a variety of practices flourish” (He cites, as an example, “making music to some purpose”) (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 9⁵¹).

This brings several further considerations to mind. First, it is readily apparent that practices of all kinds are learned according to one or more informal or formal processes that, along with the continuing need (personal, social) served by the practice, perpetuate and often advance it. “Teaching is surely rightly viewed as integral to each distinct practice, as the

function through which each takes care of its own perpetuation in successive generations of apprenticeships and initiates” (Dunne, in MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 7). That school music so rarely leads to what MacIntyre above calls “the real thing” outside of and after graduation from school fuels the legitimation crisis discussed earlier. Moreover, when people (of any age) learn an instrument by informal means (e.g., from family, friends, the local music store, private teachers, on their own) it seems that, in fact, musicking (of whatever ‘real’ kind) *does* become an important ingredient in their life trajectories, much more so than is the typical result of formal school music. Finally, instruments (and other technologies) that are musically self-sufficient and satisfying hold forth the most ample opportunities for musicking throughout life. Yet, school music favors large ensembles, not such more accessible options.

Too often, then, the “making music to some purpose” mentioned by MacIntyre is short-circuited to a ‘shelf life’ of the students’ school years and to mounting the next concert—a purpose that does not inspire the kind of continued musical involvement that is fully integrated into the lives of graduates. This kind of continuous and fully integrated involvement we might call—in a play on Higgins’ title—*the good life of musicking*. The many purposes, ‘goods’, and practices that music can serve⁵² are lost in the aura of noble sounding but speculative aesthetic premises, and school music becomes a short-lived, limiting musical world of its own, for graduates and teachers alike.

If “practice” is equated with the conditions and criteria for “praxis” as described by Aristotle, it probably makes little difference which term is used. Here and there Higgins does refer to “praxis” and its associated conditions and criteria (often in notes). And his account of Joseph Dunne’s analysis (Higgins 2011, 190–98; see also Dunne 2005) is a step in the direction of an Aristotelian understanding of teaching “practice” as “praxis.” However, we must be cautious about equating practice with praxis: the word “practice” (including some of its uses in practice theory) can be wrongly equated with mindless habits, behaviors, activities, and routine undertakings of many kinds. And “teaching practices” are often taken to refer only to a collection of supposedly universal “best practices” in which the usual ethical and other criteria and conditions of praxis are either submerged, denied, ignored, or violated. In such “practices” the ethical criterion of “excellent making” fails to address what is ‘made’, how well, for whom, or its actual use-value. Thus, an applied ethics of teaching—and of professionalizing music teaching—is, to my way of thinking, best focused on praxis, with its virtue ethic of phronesis and emphasis on ‘right results’ for the ‘correct reasons’; and on the

tangible criteria stipulated by consequentialism, where ‘right results’ are judged by the pragmatic difference or usefulness made in students’ present lives and ensuing life projects.⁵³

Conclusion: The good life of good teaching

Higgins is rightly concerned with “the good life of teaching” and with the importance of self-fulness, in that praxis is rewarding as an end in itself. As Aristotle puts it, praxis is “that by which an individual ought to choose the good things, namely, one’s true benefit, which, in the best case, is the possession and activity of the virtues that pertain to the good things simply” (Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 271). However, in his discussions of justice, prudence, care, self-restraint, intellectual virtue (etc.), Aristotle is clear that the ends for which one acts, the ‘goods’ served, are the necessary other side of the coin. For example, of justice he writes: “justice alone of the virtues is held to be another’s good, because it relates to another. For it does what is advantageous to another”; and, “best is he who makes use of virtue not in relation to himself but in relation to another. For this is a difficult task” (Aristotle 2011, 92–93).

Difficult indeed!—since praxis deals always with other people and their needs. By its nature it is always focused on “the chance to help someone find their true business” (Higgins 2011, 196) and the agent—the teacher—is rewarded by the quality (importance) and functional degree (pragmatic usefulness) of the ‘help’ promoted. Such are the usual criteria of being a helping professional. It is equally evident, then, that merely ‘laboring’ in a ‘job’ *called* a helping profession does not in itself make one a “helping professional.” It is also clear that many—including teachers—who thus ‘labor’ with no further rewards than values extrinsic to the praxis itself (everything from monetary, to prestige, to the wielding of power, etc.) do not meet the appropriate self-ful conditions of eupraxia. In fact, to the degree that being self-ful and self-fish can be extremely difficult in theory and practice to distinguish, and that the latter can thus be too easily confused with the former (especially by practitioners not given to such subtleties or self-reflection), the need to stress praxial conditions, criteria, and consequences of teaching—in other words, teaching as praxis rather than *techne*—is all the more important.

Since education . . . is essentially concerned with facilitating human flourishing, teaching well is inseparable from realizing (a particular conception of) the good. For this reason teaching cannot be thought of as a *techne* in Aristotelian terms and educational reflection is closer to ethical deliberation. Teachers must cultivate not

only flexibility in application of educational methods, but practice wisdom about educational aims. (Higgins 2001, 96).

This concern goes in part to Higgins' last chapter and his appeal there to the need for a liberal teacher education that goes well beyond methodolatry, clinical delivery, and mere mastery of content (see also Higgins 2001). Music teachers are typically well-trained in music, though often narrowly: the extent of their understanding of musics other than the classics is not usually a function of their formal training but of their informal learning, and personal interests and efforts. Music teachers are, however, often too keen in their pursuit of technicist teaching methods and materials, a 'bag of tricks' for putting their musical expertise into practice with students. The aspect of praxis that focuses on 'doing' as its own reward can overwhelm the authenticity of their 'calling' to teaching. Such musicianist teachers are 'called' to music more than to students, community, society—the important other side of the educational coin.

Higgins' call for a teacher education organized around "the virtue of practical reason," and one that gets teachers to "think critically about the social fabric they have been enlisted to renew" (2011, 278) is perhaps least likely to result from the musical *training* music teachers typically receive. The 'conservatory mentality'—the *hidden curriculum* of what besides music is learned in studio teaching, in ensembles dedicated to the pursuit of professional artistry, the unquestioning obedience and submission to authority and tradition (etc.)—is not conducive to the kind of instructional praxis that is "the very focus of humanistic, liberal learning" (Higgins 2011, 277). The idea of "liberal" in relation to training musicians and music teachers does not spring to mind! There is more than a casual relationship (indeed, it is often a causal one) between "conservatory" and "conservative"; and this too often devolves into "essentially illiberal vocational training," to use Higgins' expression (2011, 277). A liberal education, as Higgins says, involves not just a "transmission of content but a transformation of persons" (2011, 276). Thus, regarding teacher education:

Having been taught to question assumptions, define terms, explode clichés, connect ideas, and look at ideas from different angles, and so forth the liberal learner may be shocked by how often her education courses devolve into cant, and cliché, how often they oscillate between a mockery of science (transmission of inert facts) and a mockery of art (talk-show constructivism in which each student shares personal, experiential truth before heading his or her own way). If we want teachers to be reflective, imaginative, incisive and non-reductive in their teaching then we ought to

introduce their practice to them in reflective, imaginative, incisive, and non-reductive ways. (2011, 277)

Whatever cavils may be raised about Higgins' stimulating considerations of self-ful teaching and ethics, the conclusion above and many of the arguments that lead to it point to a crucial need to re-think the preparation of music teachers from a narrowly based training in music, with a few 'how to' methods courses and a teaching practicum appended, to a truly liberal and liberating praxis in both the pragmatic and ethical senses.

Finally, the focus of educational *Perennialism* on 'great works' (see, e.g., Knight 1998, 107–12) and on the transmission of 'accepted culture' and 'good music' is decidedly biased against newer musics, and it works against a teaching ethic that transforms the social and musical status quo by, in part, empowering teachers to musically empower students. Music teachers need to recognize the 'blindness' inherent in Perennialist music education, engage the wider world of music, and conceive of music as living, vital, social praxis—not a museum collection (Goehr 1992) to be savored only in leisure time. They need to become far more concerned about what they can do to 'help' students, the community, and society to embrace the contemporary and future music world and capitalize upon its many benefits for society and culture.

As long as "the good life of teaching" for music teachers is merely one in which they self-fully immerse themselves musically in schools, I suspect they will be personally and professionally unsatisfied in many ways. As Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*: "To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. Nothing is more tragic than failure to discover one's true business in life, or to find that one has drifted or been forced by circumstance into an uncongenial calling" (Dewey [1916] 1985, 318; on "vocation" see 316–30). Furthermore, the legitimation crisis facing school music will only worsen as long as school music teachers continue to ignore the vigorous world of music outside their doors, and continue their efforts to counter it with the 'good music' of school.

Both as regards the self-fullness of teaching music and the promised benefits for which music education exists, Higgins' "good life of teaching" is the result of a *life of good teaching*: the former depends on the latter! An applied ethics of teaching, then, is not a kind of policing of teaching practice, but an integral part of teaching as praxis. We teach who we are; and who we are is in large part the ergon of our teaching.⁵⁴

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Notes

¹ On this aesthetic “sacralization of culture” see Levine 1988, 85–168; on the “apotheosis of art” see Shiner 2001, 187–224; on the “music appreciation movement” in music education in the USA., see McCarthy 1997.

² E.g., in Europe, the different kinds of municipal (community-based) music and arts schools that are either by fee or tax supported.

³ Higgins’ framework for “an aretaic professional ethics” argues that “self-cultivation and self-regard are a proper concern of ethics and the flourishing of the practitioner a proper concern of professional ethics” (2011, 10–11), and he puts an emphasis on what he calls “self-ful” (2011, 2) motives that sometimes go overlooked in Aristotle’s virtue ethics. However, as a result, the virtue of the ends (*ergon*) for which actions are taken to begin with and that serve in effect as criteria for judging the excellence of such actions sometimes get under-stated. Higgins’ attention to *ends* (by whatever term) is explored mainly in endnotes, as is his take on claims for MacIntyre’s widened concept of virtue. For Higgins’ departure from both Aristotle and MacIntyre see 81–92; notes 8, 9).

⁴ Two different translations of Aristotle are cited and quoted in this essay. The more recent translation, however, is superior and comes with a valuable interpretative essay and glossaries of terms (etc.) by the translators. References to translators' interpretive essays and glossaries in this 2011 edition are cited in this essay as "Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011." Thanks to Peter Gouzouasis for bringing this translation to my attention.

⁵ Eleven or twelve (depending on the translation): Courage, temperance (moderation), liberality (generosity), magnificence (majesty befitting greatness), magnanimity (high-mindedness; greatness of Soul), proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, tact, friendliness, and justice (righteous indignation). Virtue is postulated as the mean between two vices: e.g., courage is the virtuous mean between recklessness and cowardice (see Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 303).

⁶ "Happiness . . . is held to reside in leisure. . . . The activity of the virtues, bound up with action [*praxis*]" (Aristotle 2011, 224).

⁷ This temptation can be a liability for the self-ful rewards that Higgins promotes since it is easy to beguile oneself into believing that one's actions have been virtuous when the 'goods' for the sake of which they were undertaken have not been achieved, are not consequential, or cannot be observed. See MacIntyre [1981/1985] 2007 for a critique of emotivism; 6–35 and *passim*.

⁸ "Of action, then, choice is the origin—that from which the motion arises but not that for the sake of which one moves; and of choice, the origin is one's longing and the reasoning that indicates what it is for the sake of which one acts. . . . Now, thinking itself moves nothing, but thinking that is for the sake of something and concerned with action [*praxis*] does, for it serves as the starting point [origin: *archein*] also of an art concerned with making something [*techne*]: it is for the sake of something that every maker makes what he does, and the thing made is not an end simply (rather, it is an end only relative to something and of a given person), but the action performed is an end simply. For acting well [*eupraxia*] is an end, and one's longing is for this end. Hence choice is either intellect marked by a certain longing or longing marked by thinking [*dianoētikē*] . . ." (Aristotle 2011, 117; translators' clarifications in brackets). NB: For Aristotle, "longing" has a technical meaning: it comes from the verb "which means most literally, 'to reach out for' or 'to stretch toward' and hence by extension 'to strive for,' 'to yearn for,' 'to long for.'" Thus "the interplay between longing and reason is crucial in the formulation of choice," (Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 311) and choice [*proairesis*] is central to action [*praxis*]. These points are important regarding the "longing" of teachers (what results they strive for, for their students and for themselves—*ergon*, "the sake for which one acts")—and for choice (regarding all details of teaching) and reaching successful ends (*eupraxia*). This is one of many passages where means and ends exist for Aristotle in a state of creative tension—one that some interpreters think Aristotle leaves unresolved (Bartlett and Collins in Aristotle 2011, 237–302, especially 274)—except for his conclusion that "contemplation" that is for-its-own-sake and independent of the external 'things' of the world is the truest source of happiness (Chapter 10). This distinction, this tension, is not particularly stressed by Higgins, perhaps because he does not accept it (2011, 82; n. 9) or views it, instead, in terms of a hermeneutic circularity (2001, 96–97).

⁹ According to Peters (1967, 157), early Greek thinkers regarded *phronesis* as a virtue involving intellectual or informed control over one's actions. For Plato, however, it came to

involve the “intellectual contemplation” and rational understanding of his Ideal Forms. In decided contrast, in the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle restricts phronesis to the practical aspects of the ethical sphere and stresses the importance of a praxial knowledge-base as the basis for practical wisdom. See also Higgins 2011, Chapter 8.

¹⁰ “Ends-in-view” as understood in the pragmatism of Dewey; and curriculum as “action” or “guiding ideals” as discussed below.

¹¹ In this, as described later, it differs significantly from uses of the term “practice” that refer to mindless, unreflective habits and routines and, thus, that lack an ethical dimension. See Higgins 2001 for a critique of Schön 1987 along just such lines.

¹² The difficulty of making accurate predictions is a common criticism of consequentialism.

¹³ See Regelski, 2012a. More on this follows as regards music teaching and Higgins’ concern to emphasize the “self-ful” dimension of ethically virtuous teaching.

¹⁴ “Virtue is not only the characteristic that accords with correct reason, but also the one that is *accompanied* by correct reason. And prudence [phronesis] is correct reason concerning such sorts of things.” (Aristotle 2011, 133; emphasis original).

¹⁵ This somewhat communitarian side of Aristotle’s virtue ethics (sometimes also associated with MacIntyre; see MacIntyre [1981/1985] 2007, xxii–xiii for his denial) that looks to a community as a source of ‘common sense’ values and traditions of practical wisdom has some obvious problems. As is often the case, practices that are taken for granted as ethical by a community (e.g., Wall Street), in fact are not, or are ethically discredited by philosophers and other critics (e.g., feminists). Despite Aristotle’s reliance on community models of good character and prudent action, for instance, slavery was a taken for granted fact of life and “citizens” included only men. Similarly, many common practices in teaching—and certainly in music education—are (or should be) the subject of ethical scrutiny with the aim of revealing ethical dimensions and failings the ‘community’ of educators has overlooked or denied as ethically relevant.

¹⁶ He does at one point write, “it becomes clear that education simply is applied ethics, the enactment of more or less explicit visions of human flourishing (some of which, of course, we will find wrongheaded or impoverished)” (2011, 148). This reference to “simply” strikes me as an odd manner of addressing the point: as though teaching is “simply” a delivery system of curricular “visions” that might be “wrongheaded or impoverished.” If this is his idea of “applied ethics,” it is difficult to understand medicine, law, the ministry, or therapy as “simply” delivery systems for visions of human flourishing, some of which are “wrongheaded or impoverished.” And certainly, the depth of Higgins’ own account of the day to day working conditions facing teachers efforts makes the “simply” less than convincing—though it should be admitted that teachers who long for “the” perfect instructional method *do* seem to crave such simplification. However, they usually miss the point of teaching as an essentially ethical praxis and their efforts are concerned more with *techne* and a technicist delivery system. Perhaps Higgins’ concern here is his interest in making a distinction between, on one hand, “moral professionalism” and “codes of ethics” (2011, 36) and, on the other, his concept of a professional ethics that entails “shaping one’s life as a whole” and thus includes one’s choice of work as of ethical relevance (2011, 9–10). Elsewhere he mentions that “the phrase ‘applied ethics’ suggests that education is but an

afterthought, an auxiliary to some sort of pure inquiry into the good” (260) but concludes that “just as our visions of human flourishing inform our pedagogies, so our knowledge of what brings us closer to the good stands to teach us something about the good itself” (26), thus making applied ethics not one concern of educational praxis, but the very heart of it.

¹⁷ In connection with moral education, he does mention “the larger domain of educational ethics, by which I mean the study of the thick conceptions of human nature and excellence animating all educational theories and practices” (148). But within an applied ethics of education (or of schooling) I would include the ethical dimensions of virtually everything that takes place in schools. Despite the admonition not to confuse the institution of schooling with the practices that take place in it (e.g., see Dunne, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 8), nonetheless teaching *per se* is only a part—albeit an important part—of the ethical consequences of the school experience for students. For example (and Higgins’ analysis is heavily weighted towards North America and has serious liabilities regarding schooling practices in other countries), in Japanese schools time is set aside each day for the children to clean their school and playground; this, and the fact that individual schools are rated according to their students’ performances on national tests, leads to an “our school” ethic that easily transfers to one’s duty to “our” environment, country, and workplace. Similarly, class monitors control classmates during the serving of lunch in their classrooms while the teachers leave to have their own lunch and rest break. And classes are divided into small groups of 5–6 students, called *hans*, with each *han* in effect accountable for the progress and deportment of its members, and even for a certain degree of assistance to members with ‘special needs’. Practices such as these have important ethical consequences, the effects of which carry over to life after graduation.

¹⁸ Higgins defines (again, in an endnote) Aristotle’s sense of an *ergon* as “an outcome of a process, variously a work achievement, or product. It can also refer to the function of characteristic task of an activity” (2011, 81; n. 8). Yet direct references to or examples of the pragmatic ends for which teaching actions are undertaken, and the relation of such ends to virtuous action are often missing, understated, or vague.

¹⁹ “A moral philosophy . . . presupposes a sociology. For every moral philosophy offers explicitly or implicitly at least a partial conceptual analysis of the relationship of an agent to his or her reasons, motives, intentions and actions, and in so doing generally presupposed some claim that these concepts are embodied or at least can be in the real social world” (MacIntyre [1981/1985] 2007, 23).

²⁰ Unless you consider national or state teaching certification as controlled by peers—and, even then, it is almost impossible to remove an ineffective teacher.

²¹ For Aristotle “the good of a thing is described in terms of its function” or “proper activity” and “the good of man is this activity on a level of excellence” (Peters 1967, 62). “The virtue of a thing is relative to its proper work” (Aristotle 1998, 198).

²² Put another way, it is a failure to observe norms of ethical practice. More follows on problems of equating “practice” and “praxis” when it comes to professional ethics.

²³ Higgins offers no examples or evidence for this characterization—though the assumption suits his argument. As I shall suggest below, it is not immediately apparent that altruism and self-interest need to be mutually exclusive: the latter can be fulfilled by the anticipated and

actual rewards and benefits of the ‘calling’ in question. Many are ‘called’ to professions that are self-fully satisfying, despite predictably unpleasant working conditions. Consider, for example, hospital emergency room staff, forensic pathologists, or embalmers.

²⁴ By “normativity” Schatzki also means “acceptability”: “In sum, the range of life condition orders embraced by a practice’s teleoaffective structure is the range of orders that it is correct or acceptable for participants’ behavior to express when participating in the practice” (1996, 102). Thus, normative ethics of some kind may or may not be implied depending on the practice and whether it benefits people.

²⁵ For example, some professors are criticized for being more interested in the ‘calling’ to their ‘life work’ as scholars than in their ‘job’ (occupation, employment) as teachers; and especially in situations where their scholarship contributes to their careers much more than to their disciplines or applied fields of practice—such as the improvement of teaching. As regards professions, I modify Arendt’s tripartite division of the *via activa* into labor (e.g., that earns a living), work (techne that produces useful ‘things’), and action (praxis as a ‘doing’ that involves others), and I stress instead one’s ‘life work’, one’s ‘calling’ to a practice, to a particular kind of life or life-project, to a way of ‘being in the world’, or of contributing to the world. (I am indebted to Vernon Howard for the distinction.) The ‘work’ done in this sense provides ample evidence of the doer’s commitments and values. A ‘calling’ as one’s ‘life work’ is precisely a matter of praxis, where ‘doing good’ is rewarding (self-ful) when a beneficial and consequential end is achieved. Alas, such distinctions get lost in terminological differences: for example, Dewey often refers to the ‘calling’ of a ‘vocation’ as one’s “occupation” (e.g., Dewey [1916] 1985, 319–20). My discussion herein of ends and means is not, however, to be confused with the narrow instrumental technicism critiqued by Higgins (2001, 93–96). Instead, I am concerned to stress the importance of ‘right ends’ to eupraxis and to the self-ful benefits of ethical actions.

²⁶ Roles are “axes about which arrangements of lives [are] organized, above all in institutions (via interlocking patterns of behavioral expectations and prescriptions that constitute roles)” (Schatzki 1996, 196) and that, in a manner of speaking, are ‘scripted’ to be ‘played’ or improvised according to the requirements of different situations and practices. The roles of teacher, husband/wife/partner, parent, child, grandparent, musician, athlete, man/woman, Christian (etc.), can all intersect in a given person’s life, each with sometimes different, even competing expectations, criteria, values, and ethical implications. MacIntyre thus worries about

the phenomenon of social compartmentalization, of the increasing extent to which each particular area of life is delimited, with its own norms and prescribed roles, so that the self is in danger of being liquidated into those roles, presenting one persona in the home, another in the workplace, a third at parties or in a bar, yet without anywhere to recollect who she or he is as a human being and to reflect upon what the point and purposes of the whole may be, so that one can better understand the parts (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 3; see also 10 on integrated life narratives).

Role theory in sociology lost a certain amount of favor at the end of the 20th century (Scott & Marshall 2005, 569–70), but for present purposes, one’s role as a teacher intersects with a host of other roles, each with its own expectations and ethical implications, making the self a

nexus or locus of multiple roles and complicating any single or simple notion of self-fullness. Which self: the teacher or the musician?

²⁷ “A subject position is a signifier, or linguistic expression, that categorizes people and receives its classificatory meaning from its use in particular practices” (Schatzki 1996, 196). It involves “a range of beliefs, expectations, hopes, feelings, understandings, and the like”; and “rules” that “regularly assign different actions, duties, or forbearances to the occupants of different positions, just as teleoaffective structures standardly evince a patterning of ends, projects, tasks, and even emotions among positions.” “In any event, a person’s identity consists in the collection of subject positions she assumes in participating in a range of practices” (197), each of which makes different demands and has different implications for identity or self—again complicating the ethical implications for the self that is self-fulfilled by Higgins’ self-fullness. Which self, as engaged in which practice, at which time, according to which rules, understanding, expectations, norms, and teleoaffective structures? Higgins’ concept of self-fullness can thus depend uneasily on hypothesizing a core or ‘true Self’, a central (or centering) nodal point or “narrative unity” (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 9–10) that involves some kind of stability or gravitational pull that keeps the various subject positions arising from various practices (or roles) from spinning out of control. Again, in a confusion of terminology, Higgins (following Dewey) treats “vocations” as types of roles or subject positions: “If someone has a calling as a doctor, for instance, this does not preclude further vocations, say as a parent, socialist, photographer, and town member” (2011, 119). The problem remains, however, of the self-fullness differently involved in each, especially if in conflict.

²⁸ Again, the ethical issue turns on whether it is (a) the musicking *per se* that is rewarding; or (b) the pleasures of the engagement through *students* with music; or (c) simply the joy of working with young people and being energized by them and their various needs (on the role of *energeia* to ends-in-view, see Peters 1967, 56, pt. 4). I do not have the sense that Higgins’ has considered the ethical potentials of these different dynamics (about *dynamis*; see Peters 1967, 43–45). Many music teachers are quite busy and rewarded as musicians in many ways outside of school. Those who are (or who live where musical avocations and side-lines are readily available and satisfying) may be less tempted to meet their own musical needs through their students.

²⁹ Higgins’ observes a similar wariness when, elsewhere (Higgins 2008), he critiques arts education for its self-congratulatory claims and clichés, although his analysis there focuses on poetry and visual arts in the spirit of Dewey’s theory of art as experience.

³⁰ And might even explain why so few promote chamber musics of various kinds where a conductor/director is not in front of the group to receive the plaudits.

³¹ Legitimizing the extensive support needed for ensemble programs by taking credit for identifying and nurturing a small number of future music professionals is equally problematic. Not all subjects taught in schools identify and nurture prospective professionals: history, for example, is not taught simply to promote a coterie of future historians but as a staple of what it means to be generally well-educated. Music education is indeed an odd-bedfellow in schools if it can only make claims as pre-conservatory training of very few students.

³² E.g., the ethical complications introduced as regards students' *intrinsic* (inner-directed) valuing of musical excellence for its own sake and rewards, versus the *extrinsic* (other-directed) rewards of grades, winning competitions and seating challenges, and other such variables of what has been called the "need for achievement" (nAch)—i.e., the need to simply be recognized as 'good' at something; e.g., by friends, parents (McClelland 1973).

³³ Of Kant's imperative, MacIntyre writes, "The difference between a human relationship uninformed by morality and one so informed is precisely the difference between one in which each person treats the other primarily as a means to his or her ends and one in which each treats the other as an end. . . . [T]o treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my purposes by adducing whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion (MacIntyre (1981/1985] 2007, 23–24).

³⁴ These surveys were associated with a freshman course, Introduction to Music Education.

³⁵ Many of these were coaxed by studio teachers into becoming performance majors or double majors in performance/music education, and some these in turn became university professors. Very few went on to careers as performers. This is another complication of the university music world: the ethic by which studio teachers can enjoy a self-ful focus on the best students in their studio and, on the basis of those students' accomplishments, advance their own tenure and promotions.

³⁶ Needed are longitudinal studies of entering students' motivations (reasons) for choosing to become music teachers. Subjects should be queried at various points in their preparations, determining which students (i.e., those who gave this or that reason) continue and graduate; which students actually enter teaching; which students remain in teaching; and whether their reasons for continue to teach resemble the ones that drew them to music teaching in the first place (cf., Bladh 2004). Case studies and narrative research of music teachers in mid-career and of teachers leaving after long and successful careers can also offer much of value for working with music education majors and orienting their motivations and anticipations of self-fullness in productive ways.

³⁷ As Higgins acknowledges, some teachers simply relish power and authority over students. Music teachers can be particularly susceptible to hubris. Consider the band teacher who declined to attend general faculty meetings because, "I've got the best band in the state and have better things to do." Moreover, students rarely get to choose a teacher the way one is free to choose a doctor, lawyer, dentist, or therapist. And when these latter do not meet our needs, we are free to choose others. Because this is rarely the case in schools, teaching carries with it an increased ethical responsibility for accountability.

³⁸ One's former sensei will always get the deeper bow.

³⁹ He does write elsewhere: "Even if teaching is artisanal in certain respects—insofar as teachers strive to execute certain techniques efficiently, reflectively, and artfully—it also demands reflection on whether the ends themselves are worth pursuing" (Higgins 2001, 95). Aristotle writes that "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, or practically wise without moral virtue. But in this way we may also refute the dialectical argument whereby it might be contended that the virtues exist in separation from each other" (Aristotle 1998, 158).

⁴⁰ *Education Week*, October 31, 2011:

http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2011/10/30/465582infutureteachers_sp.hym1?tkn=RNZ.

Accessed 11/2/2011. Or: “I was a counselor at the local town camp, so I was the boss of a lot of 4-year olds. That’s probably my earliest memory of being in charge of something. I had about 15 or 20 of them, and I really loved it. I remember people saying, ‘You’re really good at this.’ And what was I good at? It was the ability to wrangle these 4-year olds and point them all in one common direction” (Barbara DeBono, quoted in Bryant, 2011).

⁴¹ Especially given the shortage of teachers, the large number of ineffective teachers, and the increasing right-wing ideological attacks on teachers in the USA, opposition to teachers unions, problems of “value added” teaching tied to high-stakes standardized testing (etc.). Teachers often complain that “we don’t get proper respect,” yet as critics have often noted, teachers unions’ focus on blue-collar working conditions have weakened their standing in the USA—unlike Finland, where teachers are highly respected, in part because 100% of them come from the top 10% their high school graduating classes, and teaching is a valued profession. Going into teaching, then, is not a step down for them (e.g., the way it is for so many professional musicians who end up seeking teaching certification after failing to make a career as a musician—or after not enjoying such a career) but a positive career choice. Again, sociology has a distinct view of this: “Functionalists [and many teachers, it would seem] . . . compare teaching *up* to doctors, lawyers, and priests. Critical theorists [and taxpayers?], in contrast, focus on the character of teacher’s work itself. They compare *down*, finding teachers to be more comparable to factory workers than to autonomous professionals” (deMarrais & LeCompte 1998, 154; italics original). It may well be that a certain misbegotten type of self-fullness (i.e., where the ‘work’ of ‘working conditions’ is understood in Arendt’s terms) on the part of teachers is responsible for the increasing trend in the USA to compare teachers ‘down’ to blue-collar ‘jobs’. On such bases, a 2011 study by a right-wing think-tank concludes that USA teachers are overpaid as ‘workers’!

⁴² Indeed, he argues that “the very idea of a helping profession is incoherent” (2011, 155) because “there is something awry in the fundamental logic of the helping professions: the helper cannot be a helper if she see herself as mainly a helper” (170)—where practitioners are seen as “mere helpers, servants, satellites revolving around their clients (170; see 161–74). While philosophy should challenge taken-for-granted notions such as those about the helping professions, Higgins’ focus on the need “*for* teachers to pay attention to their own needs and desires” (2011 171, italics original) runs afoul of exactly his acknowledgement of ‘scoundrels’ (and other problems) and, in particular, of the not-atypical temptations I have already mentioned in my discussions of music education and musicianists. The idea of a helping profession where practitioners focus first on helping themselves is dangerous—and Higgins’ caveats about “self-indulgence” (2011, 172) are instructive.

⁴³ Do a Google search of “helping professions” and be prepared to spend hours exploring the topic. Higgins’ single-minded focus on the ‘flourishing’ of the teacher again leads to losing sight of the ‘good’ that teaching exists to serve (the other-focus of its ergon): promoting learning, and helping students in a variety of other ways. While “self-cultivation” (2011, 3) is certainly an important facilitating variable, it is not as primary as Higgins argues. Self-ful benefits come most honestly and fruitfully from serving others well.

⁴⁴ MacIntyre, however, argues that “there is some point to being Utopian. Our actual schools, even the best of them, will always fall short in numerous ways. But we need a Utopian concept of the curriculum and of other aspects of school life in order to provide an instructive measure of achievement” (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 15). His notion of “Utopian,” however, seems mainly in accord with the notion of guiding or action ideals as explained in what follows.

⁴⁵ In his discussion of the “Utopian” ideal for schools, MacIntyre offers this criterion: “The test of the curriculum is what our children become, not only in the workplace but in being able to think about themselves and their society imaginatively and constructively, able to use the resources provided by the past in order to envisage and implement new possibilities” (MacIntyre, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 15). Thus does he bridge status quo ‘transmission’ accounts of schooling with action ideals for ‘transforming’ individuals and society.

⁴⁶ Or become means to non-educational ends; e.g., many elementary general music (and art) teachers hope that their presence in the school is not just to provide scheduled breaks for classroom teachers.

⁴⁷ Though it is less clear (or convincing) what bearing the question of whether or not teaching is a practice has on an ethics of teaching.

⁴⁸ Viz: “[A] collection of accounts that promote practices as the fundamental social activity. Such theorists as Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Jean-François Lyotard and Chantal Mouffe agree that practices are not only pivotal objects of analysis in an account of contemporary Western society, but also the central social phenomenon by reference to which other social entities such as actions, institutions, and structures are to be understood” (Schatzki 1996, 11). “Missing from this roll call, however, is the thinker who perhaps focused more intensely than anyone else on how practices carry understanding and intelligibility, Ludwig Wittgenstein” (12). See also Tuomela 2002. Practice theory provides a rich account of music as a social practice and of the conditions of teaching as praxis. Higgins’ acknowledges praxis in his consideration of Arendt (2011, 101–10) but otherwise seems to be satisfied to use the two terms interchangeably.

⁴⁹ This is a body of literature music educators would benefit from studying both as it applies to music and to music education

⁵⁰ Dunne, for example, argues against MacIntyre by claiming that “teaching is the ‘good of a certain kind of life’” (Dunne, in MacIntyre & Dunne 2002, 7) and qualifies as a practice for that and several related reasons (7–8).

⁵¹ We should feel free to doubt the need for and, thus, to avoid “laborious drills.” The pleasures of music do often depend on considerable effort, but these efforts best avoid such “no pain, no gain” connotations.

⁵² See Turino (2008) for a useful distinction between participatory and presentational musicking.

⁵³ Actually, given the pragmatic thrust of Aristotle’s position on praxis, consequentialism *per se* need not be addressed. Doing so, however, does tend to focus curricular attention on actual and important consequences and thus can serve as a corrective to the selfish claims of musicianist teachers and the noble-sounding aesthetic education ideology.

⁵⁴ The same can be said of research and scholarship. Thanks to Liora Bresler who introduced me to both notions.

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