Is philosophical ethics an educationally worthwhile activity for teacher candidates? On the surface the question isn’t especially controversial. If we agree that teaching has some notional ethical dimension it follows that philosophical inquiry is going to be an essential feature of teacher education, either directly through transmission of moral philosophical content or indirectly in terms of curriculum development. It should then come as no surprise that for many educationalists the question isn’t if philosophical ethics plays a role in teacher education so much as the where, the how and at what level of sophistication teachers should be introduced to it. Should an education in philosophical ethics involve reading key texts in the Western and Eastern traditions of moral philosophy, for example, or is it better acquired “naturally” through sustained inquiry into the difficult ethical dilemmas often encountered in the field?

Yet, the debate on philosophical ethics in teacher education runs deeper than questions of technique and pedagogy. Philosophical divides over whether the practice of teaching is itself the source of the distinctive norms and values that candidate teachers should be initiated into (exemplified in the recent rise in scholarship on “the moral dimensions of teaching” and its “internal” values such as care, honesty, and truthfulness) or whether teaching qua teaching is simply one social practice among many to which more general moral principles (i.e. equal respect for persons, equal treatment, fraternity and so on) are merely applied (Barrow, 1992). And, most fundamentally, they disagree on the epistemic function of a philosophical ethic, exemplified in ongoing debate about what a moral theory actually is (see Louden, 1992; Hooker, 2012). For example, on some accounts a good moral theory is Platonic, mapping out what moral goods are actually “out there” in the world much like scientific inquiry aims to uncover principles of nature. Others may see moral theory as an attempt to “reconstruct” our everyday ethical reasoning with the aim of clarifying our basic moral commitments (Rawls, 1971). Still others would argue that the use of the term “philosophical ethics” is too wedded to the purported vice of Western philosophy’s preoccupation with “abstraction” over “practice” and that it would be better to jettison the project of an culturally-transcendent ethics altogether (Baier, 1995; Hadot, 2002).

Of course, the fact of ongoing disagreement shouldn’t trouble us too much: disagreement is intrinsic to philosophical inquiry. Any exploration of the educational value of philosophical ethics for teacher candidates is going have to acknowledge this. However, I believe that
conceding the fact of disagreement too hastily misses out on something about philosophical ethics that has serious educational importance. Here is how: one might be tempted to reason that the educational value of philosophical ethics lies simply in the personal edification one experiences through participating in ongoing debate and deliberation about what is ethical. On this view, philosophical ethics does a good job of drawing teacher’s attention to the many and diverse ways that ethical issues present themselves in the classroom. Further, the intellectual seriousness of debate and reflection inspires them to take such questions much more seriously than they would otherwise. However, the fact of disagreement means that at the end of the day philosophical ethics doesn’t have much epistemic value for teachers. By “epistemic value” I mean that engagement in philosophical ethics can and should advance our ethical knowledge and understanding in ways that better positions us to assess the rightness or wrongness of ethical judgements.

Deliberation-as-edification rests the case for the educational value of philosophical ethics on the conclusion that the practice of moral theorizing is, at its best, pedagogically useful fodder for raising personal awareness of the character and consequences of our own actions. It leads us to the view that while philosophical ethics sensitizes us to ethical issues in the classroom it does little to aid us in the hard cognitive work of making difficult moral judgements, for on this view such judgments ultimately have little to do with knowledge and understanding and more to do with sentiment and character.

What’s exactly wrong with this particular take? Perhaps nothing. The philosopher Richard Rorty once approvingly described this approach as a sentimental education where the value of moral philosophy lies in its ability to manipulate our inclinations in such away that we “acquaint people of different kinds to one another so that they are less tempted to think of those different from themselves as quasi-human. The goal of this manipulation is to expand our reference of the term ‘our kind of people’ and ‘people like us’” (1999, p 73-74). A good education in philosophical ethics should increase our sphere of moral concern both with respect to the kinds of people we encounter and the particular situations we deem morally important.

My suspicion is that, given the stubborn fact of disagreement in moral philosophy, even the most philosophically inclined teacher educators may harbour doubts that an education in philosophical ethics has epistemic value. And this is where a sentimental education becomes attractive. For these teacher educators may nonetheless resign themselves to a vague sense that it would be better, on the whole, for teachers to spend time talking about ethics than not. Rorty’s sentimental education articulates this sense in clearer terms: through deliberation it is more likely that such teachers will acquire an expanded sense of “our kind of people”. Rorty’s hopes for a
sentimental education centred on diverse peoples overcoming their prejudices and learning to expand their narrow views on who was fully human and deserving of good treatment. For him, philosophers like Plato and Kant provided readers, not with an improved account of how to reason ethically (because there is no universalizable standard by which we can claim that our reasoning has improved) but with a better and more inclusive vision of how to live together as a moral community.

It could easily be argued that a sentimental education can apply just as productively to the teaching profession. Teachers have to work with parents and children from all sorts of different economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. And children themselves are not like adults in that they are at the very beginnings of a long-term process of acquiring the public language and concepts used by adults – what Wilfrid Sellars once called “the space of reasons”. Accordingly, to the uninitiated such children may seem almost proto-human in their ability to think, act and feel. A philosophical ethics of the sentimental kind, then, would do for teachers what Rorty wants it to do for the world stage: to ensure that the teachers have an expanded sense of “people like us” and be less likely than their non-teacher compatriots to see people of diverse backgrounds – and those in the state of childhood in particular – as a reason for prejudiced and inhumane treatment. (For those who doubt that such moral stakes are in play in the teaching profession need only take a cursory review of Canada’s history of residential schooling to see otherwise).

I don’t want to outright deny the sentimental value of philosophical ethics for teacher candidates. Asking students to read and discuss carefully what Kant is actually trying to tell us via the Formula of Humanity - to treat all others as an ends in themselves and not merely as a means - can often provoke nothing less than an expansion of the student’s moral universe. But a sentimental view would have us believe that having achieved this expansion we are free to toss Kant out the window, for what more can the Categorical Imperative really do but to offer a rhetorically powerful reminder of just how bad it is to be a free rider?

I think the sentimental view is mistaken. My aim is to offer an account of the educational value of philosophical ethics that takes a modest step beyond edification or sentiment and toward its epistemic value. This will involve two parts. First, I will argue that educationally worthwhile activities in teacher education satisfy specific criteria that reflect the public role of teachers in a liberal democracy – professionals who are able to justify their moral and professional judgements through the medium of public reason. An education in philosophical ethics is educationally worthwhile when it satisfies these criteria. Second, I will argue that, for teachers, educational judgements are a species of moral judgement and so part of being a morally responsible educator.
is an understanding of education as a field of inquiry per se. The latter requires sustained opportunities for philosophical inquiry into the values and aims of education. In this respect, an education in philosophical ethics focused on teacher practice presupposes an education for the moral dimensions of education.

**Philosophical Ethics as an Educationally Worthwhile Activity**

Is philosophical ethics an educationally worthwhile activity in teacher education for other than purely sentimental reasons? It would be wise to break this down into two separate questions:

i) What makes something educationally worthwhile in teacher education? (i.e. what are the criteria that an activity must conform to if we are to view it as educationally worthwhile)

ii) Does the teaching of philosophical ethics meet those criteria? (i.e. one can plausibly claim that philosophical ethics is an activity that can satisfy those criteria)

Complicating matters is that any rationale for philosophical ethics in teacher education presupposes that philosophical ethics is educationally worthwhile. But such rationales may appeal to educational criteria that are partial and only implicitly understood. What results is, I think, a distorted or incomplete conception of what makes an education in philosophical ethics worth undertaking. Accordingly, in this section I will review some candidate justifications for philosophical ethics. In doing so I aim to i) clarify the main features of the educational criteria that existing rationales have in view and ii) use those features as a starting point for constructing a more complete account.

**Philosophical Ethics as a Critical Ideal for Teachers**

One justification for an education in philosophical ethics is to transmit to teacher candidates a particular ethical conception of teacher practice. If moral philosophy can initiate students into that particular conception it might help to enable them to challenge those professional norms that, while dominant in the field, receive little in the way of critical scrutiny. For example, a philosophical ethic of care could inform a conception of teacher practice that better positions them to critically assess the (purportedly harmful) emphasis on competitive academic achievement dominant in many school systems today (Hyland, 2011).
The ability to think critically about the dominant professional norms and standards of one’s field is a laudable educational aim. Further, critical thinking cannot occur in the abstract and so teachers need disruptive exposure to conflicting and perhaps even radical critiques of those dominant norms. However, initiation into a particular teaching ethic alone seems unsatisfactory. When someone says that they are educated in philosophical ethics they likely don’t mean that they have mastered one particular intellectual tradition of ethical thought. Furthermore, the critical ideal approach is, at its best, aiming for critical thinking and not a mere change of opinion. The former involves a capacity for reason-assessment, the latter involves a change in beliefs which may not involve any reason-assessment whatsoever. There is a real sense in which an educated person is able to pry into the “reason why” of things, assess those reasons, and decide for themselves. But we can’t assume that critical thinking is going on simply because a process leads a teacher candidate to reject the prevailing norms of the field, not the least reason being that some of those norms may turn out to be eminently justifiable! The critical ideal approach comes close to grasping what I take to be a core feature of educationally worthwhile activities – the promotion of critical thinking – but confuses the issue by getting teachers to replace one dominant set of professional norms (those of the field) with another set of professional norms (the ones that teacher educators would prefer they held).

*Philosophical Ethics as Applied Ethical Theory*

One popular justification for philosophical ethics in teacher education is proffered by the “applied ethical theory” approach. On this view, teachers should be introduced to moral concepts that will best help them to reason through the various ethical dilemmas they are likely to encounter in the field. Paradigmatic here is the work of Strike and Soltis (1990; 2004). Especially appealing is their claim that teachers must be moved by reasons proffered by (and should be able to justify their ethical judgements to) other reasonable persons. As Strike (1990) puts it,

It is possible for teachers to be reasonable in their ethical decisions. There are commonplace moral concepts according to which conduct may be judged. Teachers should be able to know them, understand them, and be able to apply them to cases in plausible ways. For example, teachers can be expected to understand what is meant by such notions as due process, intellectual honesty, privacy or equality….[Teachers] can be expected to have reasons for what they do, and they can be expected to make a decision that is justifiable within the limits that ethical reasoning makes possible.
Strike’s argument makes a presupposition about the educational worthwhileness in teacher education that is worth paying careful attention to, namely, that part of what makes such an activity worthwhile is that it provides the teacher with a certain degree of “wittingness” about what they are doing. However, what Strike is suggesting here is not that the teacher knows the “reason why” of what they do in the private, reflective sense that was suggested by the critical ideal approach above (although it could include this). Rather, they are also able to direct this wittingness toward a public sphere populated by other reasonable persons and to whom they can justify their professional judgements accordingly.

I will revisit the role of public justification in more detail below because I believe it speaks to something of fundamental importance to teacher education in a liberal democracy. Nonetheless, there is something missing in the applied ethical theory approach. First, this approach largely decontextualizes ethical concepts from the philosophical-historical traditions that give rise to them. So while teachers may be witting in terms of their ability to articulate and defend judgements through appeal to particular ethical concepts, they are left relatively agnostic and unwitting about the justifications for those conceptual distinctions themselves. In fact, it is possible that teachers may come to believe that ethical reflection is exhausted through the application of such concepts – as if no further reflection on the ethical dimensions of their work is required. All this is to say that while applied ethical theory may point to an important feature of educational value it misses the mark with respect to other features. Surely the ethically educated teacher is someone who knows more than how to skilfully apply the handful of ethical concepts transmitted to them over the course of a teacher education program. While ethical concepts may be pragmatically useful in making relevant distinctions in classroom situations they do not necessarily offer much in the way of understanding those distinctions or their epistemic significance for moral judgement. Moral concepts are understood in the context of a moral theory and such theories may have profound (and profoundly conflicting) things to say about what matters, ethically, in classroom practice (or any practice for that matter).

**Philosophical Ethics as Moral Pluralism**

Another justification for philosophical ethics is its presumptive ability to help teachers deal with “moral pluralism”. What is moral pluralism? Teachers often encounter what they perceive to be conflicting moral goods in classroom situations. An interest in justice and an interest in care for others, for example, may point to different goods and such goods can conflict
(Strike, 1999). This leads to a perceived conflict in ethical decision-making. Should teachers assign grades out of a sense of fairness, or encouragement? If a student is struggling should we give them a good grade in order to boost their confidence? Is this fair to the other students?

A moral pluralist will argue that goods such as fairness and care are always “there” in the classroom. A good education in philosophical ethics will enable teachers to “see” all those goods and strike a reasoned balance between them (Strike, 1999). One can object to moral pluralism on philosophical grounds. What rational standard can a teacher use in order to determine what a reasoned balance should look like? If the moral life is inherently pluralistic the notion of a “reasoned balance” begins to look more like a matter of personal taste or preference, amounting to a sophisticated form of ethical relativism.

Candidate Criteria for Educational Worthwhileness in Teacher Education

I have offered a brief survey of some (certainly not all) of the arguments on the table for the value of an education in philosophical ethics for teacher candidates. I also claimed that various aspects of these accounts can be viewed favourably to the extent that they conform to necessary criteria of what makes an activity educationally worthwhile. However, I have until this point only hinted at those criteria. In this section I will attempt to clarify these criteria and justify them through reference to the public role of teachers in a liberal democratic society.

The Criteria of Teacher Education

An education in philosophical ethics should be more than sentimental – it should be epistemic, increasing the likelihood of a sound moral judgement by facilitating the autonomy and impartiality in those judgements. But one might counter that my assertion simply shies away from Rorty’s sentimental education – that what we are really doing is manipulating the sentiments of teachers so that they will be moved to treat others well in as many situations as possible, sympathetic to their students in matters of care and justice and consequences. What I call a “sound moral judgement” is really just a rationalistic way of describing an enlargement of our affective capacity to be good to others. How to reply? Well, yes, we can and should broaden teacher’s moral sympathies. And if teachers worked in a fully private sphere of practice a sentimental education might be largely un-troubling. As a closed community of practitioners, teachers could construct a shared sense of what is good for “them”, their work and those they taught. But teachers in a liberal democracy are in a different practical situation: there is an
expectation that they can in principle publicly justify many, if not all, their decisions to a diverse polity and their justification efforts cannot succeed through appeal to sentiment alone. The language of a liberal democracy is epistemic, not sentimental.

This last point speaks to how we should understand the criteria of teacher education. Teachers have distinctive civic responsibilities in a diverse liberal democracy. They have the collective power to alter the character and composition of the public sphere. They can exert similar influence over individual students. And children are compelled by the state to receive a formal education. But in a liberal democracy citizens should abide by, and be respected in terms of, a liberal principle of justification where decisions by those with special kinds of influence and others coercive powers should be accountable to citizens on the basis of good reasons. To the extent that teachers hold such power and influence, teacher education in a liberal democracy should be informed by such a principle. Accordingly, I argue that the educationally worthwhile activities of teacher education (philosophical ethics or otherwise) must conform to criteria that enable teachers to satisfy the justificatory demands that accompany teaching in a liberal democratic society. These criteria are as follows:

i) An educationally worthwhile activity must enable the teacher candidate to engage in public justification with respect to both his her particular professional judgments as well as his or her beliefs about the aims and values that serve as the larger context within which those professional judgements are made.

In a liberal democracy teachers play a key role in public life. Parents and the citizens in general should be able to understand and see as reasonable various educational decisions at the level of policy and practice. This applies as much to the particular learning theories that teachers are encouraged to take up in their practice as much as it does their ethical decision-making. Therefore, activities in teacher education programs must be taught in such ways that enable teachers to communicate their value and applicability to that public. To be sure, some aspects of teaching practice are very much about “knowing how” as opposed to “knowing that”, however, if a teacher is unable to explain or justify their decisions to other reasonable citizens they miss the mark in their public role. Teachers have to have a certain ‘wittingness’, not only in the sense that they know the reason why of what they do (they understand the rational standards that define any valid scientific theory of learning) but they can signal that wittingness to the democratic community through their ability to engage in reason-giving with those outside of their profession. This means, for example, that beliefs about educational theory, policy and practice be taught to
teacher candidates in such a way that leave the teacher free to engage in intellectual disagreement with such beliefs and, should they eventually choose to adopt some of those beliefs as part of their own teaching practice, give good reasons for those beliefs. For example, teachers focused on social justice as an aim of education should be able to make pedagogical and professional judgements that conform to the broader aims and values of education in a liberal democracy and that these judgements can be articulable to that liberal democratic public.¹

ii) An educationally worthwhile activity must lead to a transformative expansion of the teacher candidate’s knowledge and understanding of education in its philosophical, sociological, historical and other cognitive respects. Such cognitive transformation should enable teachers to view their decisions under a variety of forms of knowledge and enable them to justify their decisions on the basis of good reasons warranted by the standards internal to those forms.

A teacher can be educated in the sense that he or she knows, and can publicly justify, the basic principles that underlie the learning theories or developmental perspectives informing his or her practice. In fact, one way that we can say she has been educated is that she is able to view and articulate education under its psychological aspect – unlike other citizens, she can understand how mental processes play a role in learning and how those processes can go awry. In fact, internalizing a psychological point of view is transformative for her – once she knows that learners have a “psychology” her understanding of teaching and learning changes in important ways that cannot be unlearned (in contrast to those who believe that the mind is an Aristotelian tabula rasa).

iii) An educationally worthwhile activity must initiate teacher candidates in such a way that they come to value, in a non-instrumental way, about the knowledge and understanding that define education as a field of inquiry.

I mean “non-instrumental” in R.S. Peters’ sense of the term, which is to say that the teacher candidate is able to view knowledge and understanding of their field as having intrinsic value (1966). In our context I mean that they must care for, and be moved by, the extent to which and

¹ This stipulation does not entail social conformity nor the censure radical forms of social criticism. For a good example of what reasonableness constrains applied to the teaching of social justice should look like see Bialystock (2014).
ways in which the standards that define rational inquiry in disciplines such as sociology, philosophy and science address educational questions such what is worth learning, why that learning is worthwhile and what kinds of opportunities citizens should have to access such learning.

To be clear, I am not arguing that teacher candidates should value the knowledge and understanding that inform education for intrinsic reasons only. Rather, they should be able to take intrinsic interest in the public question of whether or not knowledge and understanding should be communicated in such a way that they value it intrinsically and questions like it. Teacher candidates should be able to value the knowledge, understanding and related forms of inquiry that informs their field for reasons other than its contribution to effective teaching or the role it can play in bolstering professional status in the public eye. I will say more about this criterion in the last section of the paper because I believe that it serves as an important, but oftentimes much overlooked, connection between the ethics of teaching and the values and aims of education.

The Ethics of Teaching and the Moral Dimensions of Education

I have offered a rough account of the educational criteria of teacher education. But what would an education in philosophical ethics that meets such criteria look like, and how might this differ from a sentimental education in ethics? As criteria, my account is going to do a better job of screening out what an education in philosophical ethics (and other activities in teacher education) should not be as opposed to specifying particular pedagogical methods, readings and so on. For example, philosophical ethics should not lean too heavily into one particular school of thought (Criterion I), but nor should it involve a superficial tour though all the “great” theories in the history of moral philosophy (Criterion II). And it should not be taught in such a way that students are only able to value informed ethical decision-making as means to staying out of legal or professional trouble (Criterion III).

However, I believe that an education in philosophical ethics holds distinctive value for teacher’s educational value judgements. This involves philosophical content that would not be required in say, other professional programs. Unlike ordinary citizens, teachers have a moral responsibility to protect the educational interests of the students under their care. Accordingly, their educational value judgements are a species of moral judgement – judgements that aim to satisfy that moral obligation. This means that a teacher who is unable to provide sufficient educational reasons for his or her actions in the context of teaching and learning is open to moral
criticism. In what follows I will make a case for this claim and point to what this means for an education in philosophical ethics for teachers.

The publication of *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching* is rightly regarded as something of a turning point for scholarship in the ethics of teaching (Goodlad, 1990; Campbell, 2008a). However, in a notable (and much neglected) critical review, Robin Barrows (1992) takes the collection as a whole to task on the grounds that its central premise is undefended: the assumption that teaching is a distinctively moral enterprise that sets it apart from other human practices. He rightly points out that in order for the concept of a distinctive “moral dimensions of teaching” to be vindicated it must be able to account for “what specific conduct on the part of the teachers would, while being morally acceptable as, of all human conduct ought to be, be educationally desirable in various contexts” (p. 108).

For example, Campbell (2008b) claims that teaching is a “moral profession” and that this is derived from the fact that the choices teachers make will impact on the well being of students (p. 104). Unlike medicine and law where professionals must keep moral principles in view as they apply their professional know-how, teachers carrying out their work just are acting from their ethical understanding (p. 105). For teachers ethical understanding and distinctive professional expertise are one in the same.

Barrows’ charge is that this and similar arguments in the teacher ethics literature fail to account for how such ethical understanding is educationally desirable in such a way that this understanding fully distinguishes teachers from other professions. A fleshed out version of Barrow’s objection goes something like this: imagine a person of unassailable moral integrity. Perhaps this person possesses virtues of character and a level of moral reasoning that set them apart from the average citizen. Now imagine that this person gets a job as an elementary school teacher. They maintain their moral integrity but they are completely unable to initiate students into any plausibly worthwhile understanding. But this is not because they are unskilled in pedagogy; rather, they have no thoughts about what education might be for or why. Imagine, for example, that they are highly judicious and caring in instructing their students how to play violent war games. We can claim that this person is a bad teacher, but we surely cannot claim that they are a bad person (p. 108). Barrow’s point is that ethical understanding in and of itself cannot explain what, if anything, is morally distinctive about teaching. In fact, Barrow’s position is that a teacher’s distinctiveness is in their cognitive, not their moral, role (p. 108).

We have good reason to push back a little on Barrow’s critique and take seriously the argument in favour of teaching as morally distinctive. When liberal democratic citizens become a teacher the adoption of this role confers a specific and distinctive moral obligation: to initiate
students, to the best of their ability, into worthwhile forms of knowledge and understanding. It seems to me that this is what sets apart teachers from average citizens, morally speaking. When Fagin teaches London’s street children to pickpocket he’s undoubtedly culpable of a moral wrong – he’s used his power and know-how to corrupt vulnerable children. But we’d fault anyone for acting in this manner, Fagins and teachers alike. But we wouldn’t fault Fagin were he simply to have not taken it upon himself to adopt London’s street children and shape their character in noble directions. There is nothing about Fagin or his civic role that suggests he has a special obligation to do so.

When a teacher neglects to make justifiable educational value judgements we can and do find moral fault. But the difference between Fagins and teachers here lies, not in the degree to which ethical understanding has point and purpose in their lives, but in the latter’s role-specific obligation to direct that ethical understanding toward sound educational judgements. Consider again, Campbell:

[E]thical judgement is called on every time a teacher strives to balance the fair treatment of an individual student with the fair treatment of the class group...while mastery of subject matter, proficiency in classroom management techniques...and a comprehensive grasp of evaluation and assessment strategies are integral elements of the competent teacher’s repertoire, it is the practical moral wisdom – the ethical knowledge- that is infused into every aspect of such technical abilities and the humanity teachers bring to their practice that distinguishes them as professionals.

(p. 105)

Campbell’s claim that that professional judgement is ethical and not merely technical cannot be overstated. But between moral judgements of the kind that would be made by any morally mature person and the technical judgements made by any well-trained trained teacher lies a sphere of educational value judgements. Insofar as teacher take this sphere seriously, moral rectitude and technical know-how won’t do on its own. Educational value judgements (pace Barrows) “infuse” every aspect of the teacher’s moral judgement. Unlike average citizens, classroom teachers should not make a clear separation between moral and educational judgements.

So consider again Campbell’s example of fair treatment. When dealing with fellow adults there is no question that fair treatment trumps encouragement. However, in classrooms we are trying to initiate children into forms of knowledge and understanding with specific educational aims in view and these aims inform our moral judgements in important ways. Sometimes, for example, we may assign marks in an encouraging way because we recognize that there are aspects of that student’s developing autonomy that we judge to be in need of greater support. A
moral respect for, and interest in, that child’s developing personal autonomy may in some cases trump the interest of classroom fairness. Furthermore, we make careful judgements, not simply in terms of how we transmit subject matter, but about what aspects of those subject areas (the values internal to the discipline that informs them, the propositional knowledge that comprises them, the epistemic practices that make them historically successful forms of inquiry) that are educationally worthwhile for the student. These are not quite matters of practical moral wisdom or, if they are, they are quite different from the practical moral wisdom of citizens who are not in the teaching role.

This is why any education in philosophical ethics that reflects the distinctive moral work that teachers do must incorporate knowledge and understanding of the values and aims of education. Philosophical ethics in teacher education should be directed at initiating students into traditions of ethical inquiry into the nature, scope and moral value of educational judgements. Such an education is indispensable to teacher’s moral responsibility to protect the educational interests of students. Furthermore, such an education is necessary if any approach to philosophical ethics is going to satisfy the criteria that I have identified above. For if we are to really see teachers as a “distinctive kind of professional” (Barrows, 1992, p. 108) such professionals should be able to engage in public justification of their judgements through appeal to the larger context of educational values and aims from which those judgements are drawn. After all, the very reason why teachers are in a position to hold legitimate moral and intellectual influence over children is because, unlike lawyers or doctors, it is their responsibility to ensure that such children are equipped with the knowledge and understanding they need in order to live good lives. Accordingly, a teacher candidate who cannot justify his or her judgements through appeal to this larger, and morally distinctive, educational context is limited in his or her ability to command public trust in a diverse liberal democratic polity.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that an education in philosophical ethics is a worthwhile part of teacher education when it satisfies three criteria reflecting the justificatory demands that accompany teaching in a liberal democratic society. Furthermore, I have argued that an education in the values and aims of education is necessary if an education in philosophical ethics is to satisfy those criteria. This is because the distinctively moral dimensions of teaching are distinct by virtue of teacher’s moral obligation to make value judgements that further the educational interests of students. An education for the moral dimensions of teaching, such as they are, presupposes an
education in the values and aims of education. One cannot achieve the first without having the latter.

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