

The American Scholar's Paradox: Motivation, Manipulation, and the Ethics of Pedagogical Influence

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Abstract: Motivation in education remains an underexamined ethical domain. Commonly treated as a neutral or benevolent pedagogical tool, motivation is rarely scrutinized for forms of influence it entails. Motivation cannot be ethically justified by good intentions or positive outcomes alone; rather, the manner in which motivation is exercised is itself morally significant. Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The American Scholar*, a lecture delivered in 1837, offers a case in point. Emerson paradoxically uses *prescriptive* rhetoric, *hierarchical* speech, and *outcome-oriented* promises to awaken intellectual *independence*. Maxine Greene's conception of imaginative freedom and Nel Noddings' ethics of care resolve Emerson's paradox. Together, these frameworks reimagine ethical motivation as a relational, dialogical, democratic practice grounded in shared imagination, mutual recognition, and co-constructed purposes. Motivation becomes ethical when it sustains learners' authorship of their own becoming. Motivation is an ethical responsibility, one that honors autonomy without abandoning care and supports engagement without resorting to manipulation.

Autonomy is a widely invoked ideal in educational studies. It is celebrated as a value to be respected and carefully protected, and teachers are often urged to remain mindful of student autonomy as a defining feature of an ideal classroom. Yet, in practice, autonomy too often appears in an unexpected form: Students very *autonomously* choose not to engage, not to study, not to care! This tension raises a set of urgent questions for educators and theorists alike: How can one motivate students while maintaining their autonomous decisions? Educators may rely on persuasion, encouragement, or appeals to students' best interests, all of which are commonly assumed to be benign or even necessary. However, persuasion, even when well-intentioned, operates by steering another's desires or judgments toward a preferred outcome, and in doing so risks overriding the very autonomy it claims to honor. To persuade students into action may easily slip into coercion. Consideration of motivation as a moral phenomenon leads to a deeper ethical concern: How can one motivate without manipulating? To motivate without manipulating requires first understanding what manipulation is. Philosophers of ethics have long noted that manipulation is distinct from both coercion and rational persuasion. Manipulation operates, as Noggle (1996) argues, by leading another astray without their rational agency, steering emotions, beliefs, or desires toward outcomes the manipulator has already decided are appropriate. The line between encouragement and coercion, moreover, is rarely clear-cut. What begins as guidance can quietly become pressure, especially within asymmetrical relationships like those where teachers hold institutional authority over students. Acting for the student's own good — deciding what will benefit them, what they ought to value, or how they ought to grow — can easily slide into paternalism. Even when outcomes are genuinely beneficial, the process by which they are secured matters ethically. If students are moved into compliance without meaningful participation in deciding why or whether an action is worth pursuing, motivation risks becoming a subtle form of control rather than an invitation to agency.

The use of rewards further complicates this picture. When rewards are offered not as recognition but as leverage, they may cultivate dependence on external prompts, which is what Self-Determination Theory identifies as 'controlled motivation,' a condition shown to diminish intrinsic engagement over time (Ryan & Deci, 2000). While rewards are not inherently unethical,

their strategic deployment as incentives can function manipulatively when they are used to secure behavior in the short term without engaging the learner's understanding or desire. In such cases, motivation becomes less about supporting autonomy and more about engineering outcomes, a violation of learners' freedom. Even efforts grounded in care, encouragement, or benefit can exert influence in ways that compromise freedom and reveal a persistent ethical tension at the heart of motivation itself, raising a pressing philosophical question: What does it mean to motivate ethically? The idea of moral motivation makes a contribution to a broader conversation in philosophy of education about the ethics of pedagogical influence, a conversation that has, until now, attended more carefully to what is taught and to whom than to how influence itself is ethically exercised in the act of motivating students. Critical pedagogues, most prominently Freire (1970/1993), have exposed how hierarchical transmission models disguise authority as benevolence; yet this critique, powerful as it is, has largely focused on the structure of knowledge delivery rather than on the motivational rhetoric that surrounds and sustains it. Ethicists have examined manipulation as a form of influence *sui generis*, establishing the conceptual tools needed to diagnose it (Noggle, 1996, 2018). Still, these frameworks have rarely been brought to bear on everyday pedagogical practice, where motivation is still largely treated as an unexamined good. What remains underexplored, then, is the specific ethical dimensions of motivation as a practice: not merely its outcomes, but its manner, its medium, and the asymmetries of power it often inhabits.

Before proceeding, it is worth pausing on the key terms, motivation and manipulation, that animate this discussion, to examine how they operate in ordinary language. Autonomy, motivation, authority, inspiration, and influence are concepts that carry significant philosophical weight, yet, precisely at the level of common usage, ethical blind spots tend to form around these ideas. Attending to how these terms are commonly understood, therefore, is not a preliminary exercise but a diagnostic one. Etymologically, both motivation and manipulation derive from the Latin root *movere*: to move. Motivation, in its root sense, means to prompt action or set something in motion (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Manipulation involves moving or controlling something, or someone (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The shared root of motivation and manipulation reveals what educational discourse habitually conceals behind uncritical acceptance of motivation as a good thing: 1) to motivate *and* to manipulate is always, at some level, to move another, and 2) the line between moving and controlling is less clear than generally supposed. The blurry line between moving and controlling transcends semantics to disclose a conceptual entanglement. Autonomy, for instance, is defined as the state of being independent, free, and self-directing; yet authority — autonomy's apparent opposite — is defined as the power to influence or command thought and behavior, and in some contexts as a freedom or right to act (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Freedom paradoxically plays a role in the definitions of both autonomy and authority. Likewise, inspiration is defined as a motivating agent or influence, while influence is the power or capacity to cause an effect indirectly (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), placing it uncomfortably close to what manipulation does.

Precisely because terms so closely related are also so easily conflated, development of a consciously ethical understanding of motivation becomes essential in educational discourse. Positing motivation as our moral responsibility as educators positions us to resolve a foundational ethical problem in pedagogy: Motivation risks becoming manipulation when freedom is prescribed rather than co-created. If we are to investigate the boundaries between influence and autonomy in education, the ways in which motivational power is exercised, and explore whether motivation can ever be entirely free from coercion or asymmetries of power,

then motivation must be understood as an ethical practice rather than a neutral pedagogical technique. Motivation, I argue, serves moral life best when exercised through consciously relational dialogue and co-construction of imaginative freedom. To explicate this claim, I examine what I call “*The American Scholar's Paradox*,” using Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1837 lecture, *The American Scholar*, as a case study of the ethical tension at the heart of motivational discourse.

The American Scholar's Paradox

The American Scholar is a lecture delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1837. In this address, Emerson speaks to Harvard students about “self-reliance” and the importance of “trusting thyself”. His tone is unmistakably rousing, and the lecture carries an inspiring force. Yet, although I experience this essay as motivational, it is not straightforward to claim that Emerson himself was explicitly concerned with motivation. The term motivation, used to describe a psychological drive, does not appear until the late nineteenth century, with its earliest recorded usage *circa* 1870 (Merriam-Webster; Oxford English Dictionary). Since *The American Scholar* was delivered in 1837, Emerson may never have conceived of himself as giving a *motivational* talk. Nevertheless, regardless of Emerson's intentions or historical vocabulary, the lecture functions as a powerful motivational address insofar as it seeks to awaken intellectual independence, shape dispositions toward self-reliance, and move its audience toward a particular vision of scholarly life. Emerson repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of trusting oneself and achieving a distinct American culture to awaken intellectual independence in his audience. At the same time, he describes how such freedom ought to be achieved. It is here my concern arises: In attempting to inspire independence, Emerson begins to dictate his own terms of freedom, thereby paradoxically undermining the very autonomy he celebrates. By articulating not only the value of self-reliance but also the proper path toward it, Emerson shifts from calling for autonomy to prescribing its form. His prescriptive movement introduces an asymmetry between speaker and audience that risks transforming inspiration into direction. Emerson's slip makes *The American Scholar* a case study in which to explore the fine line between motivation and manipulation.

A most significant problem with *The American Scholar* lies in the fact that it was originally delivered as a speech. Speech, as a pedagogical medium, carries inherent risks for student autonomy. Like the lecture format, it is teacher-centered; relies heavily on authority and sustained teacher talk; and privileges rhetoric. Emerson's rhetoric in *The American Scholar* gives rise to one of the deepest contradictions in his account. Emerson's entire argument is predicated on the idea that the scholar must find his “own orbit” and not be “made a satellite instead of a system” (2003, p. 46). Yet, in the lecture format, he himself occupies the center, while students are positioned around him as recipients of his vision. Even as he urges them to construct their own intellectual systems, his rhetoric performs the orbital metaphor he explicitly warns his audience against. The very medium of his work becomes part of the problem: Emerson enacts the very hierarchy Emerson seeks to overcome. He was preoccupied with autonomy and self-reliance to such an extent, so focused on the end goal of his admonition that he failed to recognize the potentially manipulative power of his own prescriptive delivery and thereby produced *The American Scholar's Paradox*.

My concern is not to evaluate Emerson's ideas for strength or legitimacy. I happily concede that Emerson's thinking aligns with my own. I find the rhetoric in *The American Scholar* deeply charismatic and undeniably influential. However, the manner of Emerson's influence is what I

find ethically questionable. For example, Emerson initially addresses the students as “gentlemen,” only to immediately redefine their status to passive failure, referring to them as “meek young men,” forgetting, perhaps deliberately, that these students were once just young men themselves who “grew up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views” of others. Emerson reinforces this critique by noting that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were themselves once young men in libraries when they produced the texts that Harvard students now follow instinctively. Emerson’s concern lies with the bad judgement of blind acceptance. Cicero, Locke, and Bacon are grouped together not as thinkers to be rejected, but as examples of authorities whose ideas risk being absorbed uncritically. In such cases, Emerson insists, what begins as a guide can become “a tyrant.” Emerson is careful to warn that one must accept others’ views only after rigorous judgment. He openly cherishes the works of Goethe, Emanuel Swedenborg, Plato, and Shakespeare, citing them as historical authorities whose “authentic utterances” the discerning reader should seek (2003, p. 45). What he critiques instead is the wasting of “genius” in “other men’s transcripts of their readings.” As Emerson puts it, “genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over influence” (2003, p. 46). Even the most admirable thinkers can discourage or restrict new creation when followed too closely. In this sense Emerson likens students to “parrots of other men’s thinking” (p. 43), not as an outright condemnation of learning from others, but as a warning against the loss of “creative reading” which he proposes alongside “creative writing”.

Even if we grant Emerson’s intentions are ultimately constructive: to push students further, to awaken creativity, and to strengthen their intellectual self-esteem, the rhetorical labels he employs function in a counterproductive and ethically troubling way. By naming his audience as meek, passive, or unoriginal, Emerson undercuts their confidence, which in turn increases their openness to his message. Once addressed in terms of their incapacities, the students hearing the lecture are placed in a moment of disorientation. They are made acutely aware of a lack, a failure, or a deficiency that demands correction. In this state, the audience is primed to seek resolution, to escape the discomfort produced by these labels, and to recover a sense of worth or agency. Emerson’s rhetoric, by diminishing confidence heightens receptivity and operates perfectly as a subtle form of manipulation. Furthermore, Emerson presents the promise that once self-reliance is achieved, “the huge world will come round” (2003, p. 59), implying that success is a reward for adherence to his philosophy. He argues that the world’s coming round is not a goal to be pursued, but rather an inevitable consequence of self-reliance. The force with which this consequence is articulated, contradicts Emerson’s aim to dismantle intellectual dependence. Emerson’s focus shifts away from self-trust *per se* toward its anticipated outcome, framing autonomy as a goal-oriented attribute rather than an intrinsic drive. Emerson provides a powerful motivation that can easily be interpreted as extrinsic. The promise that the “huge world will come round” may cultivate reliance on outcomes, approval, success, dominance, rather than on intrinsic fulfillment of the “active soul”.

Emerson finds no help at all in the fact that the reward is framed as natural or inevitable. Describing intellectual independence in terms of “success” or “dominion” risks transforming an internal journey into a kind of transaction, where self-reliance becomes valuable not for its own sake, but for what it yields. Emerson’s ultimate aim was to cultivate an active soul and develop in his listeners the persona of “Man Thinking.” Emerson’s choice of the phrase “Man Thinking” is deliberate and philosophically loaded. Man Thinking is not a container of received ideas but a subject actively creating meaning. He does not seek rewards; he flourishes in the process itself. The more common phrase, “thinking man,” describes someone who habitually reasons before

taking action. Man Thinking, by contrast, names a human being in the act of thinking, continuously engaged in inquiry rather than defined by credentials, roles, or accumulated knowledge. The emphasis on thinking as something one does, not something one is, reinforces Emerson's broader call for intellectual independence and creative engagement. But it is precisely at Emerson's rhetorical highpoint that ethical tension intensifies. While Emerson celebrates thinking as process rather than outcome, his rhetoric gestures toward promised rewards and punishments. The language of success, inevitability, and recognition, however unintentionally, introduces a prescriptive logic that may orient the listener toward results rather than intellectually independent becoming. Emerson's rhetoric risks motivating through promise rather than participation, through projection rather than dialogue. Although his aim is to awaken self-reliance, the means by which he seeks to do so rely on hierarchical speech, evaluative judgment, and outcome-oriented assurance. Thereby, *The American Scholar* falls into the trap of pedagogical manipulation.

Man Imagining

The American Scholar's Paradox illustrates how easily motivation can turn into direction, and how a call to freedom risks becoming a new form of authority. In conversation with a professor of mine, we contemplated whether Emerson's manipulative pitfall would disappear if the same insights were expressed as a diary entry. Emerson himself writes about "the poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them" (2003, p. 52). A diary would reflect the same solitude of unpressured recording of truth rather than a public performance of persuasion.... Yet, even this version would remain paradoxical — a solitary record of thoughts about interdependence: The American Solitude. Likewise, a diary entry would not serve Emerson's ideal of the "One Man," the universal mind achieved not through solitude nor conformity, but realization of one's potential as part of the whole. He uses a foundational myth of how "Man divided into men ... just as the hand was divided into fingers." (p. 42) to emphasize that society exists because individuals were meant to be interdependent parts of a larger whole. Therefore, the scholar's ultimate duty is to connect with others through genuine self-expression by illuminating truth amid confusion, standing alongside others in shared struggle, and conversing honestly to one's *brother*. Maxine Greene's conception of freedom unfolds as a natural continuation of Emerson's vision. Greene's *Dialectic of Freedom* (1988) notes that freedom is pursued in reciprocity with others, not in privacy, but in public spaces. Where Emerson imagines the scholar becoming part of a larger whole through meaningful expression and shared striving, Greene articulates freedom as an imaginative and fundamentally communal pursuit. For Greene, freedom is neither solitary nor completely achieved in solitude; autonomy emerges through participation with others in the ongoing work of interpreting and reshaping a shared world.

Greene understands imagination as the capacity to perceive alternatives to what is given, enabling individuals and communities to resist closure and envision new possibilities. Central to imagination is what she calls *naming*, the critical act of identifying and articulating constraints that shape lived experience. For Greene, naming is conceptually necessary for intellectual independence. By naming obstacles and imagining alternative ways of being, Greene argues, individuals are empowered to overcome their constraints through action. Imagination disrupts the taken-for-granted and calls individuals toward awakening to newly perceived possibilities. Imaginative engagement requires a deliberate rejection of what Greene describes as the "cotton wool of habit, mere routine, and automatism" in order to "seek alternative ways of being and

look for openings” (1988, p. 2), precisely the forms of intellectual stagnation Emerson himself resists. For Greene, however, movement from constraint to possibility is fundamentally a pedagogical process, and the teacher plays a vital role within it. The teacher’s commitment to their own freedom is the key mechanism for awakening freedom in students: A “teacher in search of his or her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 14). In resisting routinized practices and fixed expectations, teachers engage in a dialectical process of identifying limits while simultaneously seeking alternative ways of being within the given world. The teacher thus becomes a catalyst who models freedom as an ongoing, unfinished pursuit and invites students into that shared struggle as freedom unfolds through dialogue. Greene emphasizes from the outset, in the introduction of her book, that freedom must be sought “in dialogue with others for the sake of personal fulfillment and the emergence of a democracy dedicated to life and decency” (p. xii). Dialogue aims to create opportunities for the articulation of multiple perspectives in multiple idioms. Thus, dialogue is not merely conversational but political as it redistributes authority by creating space for multiple voices to be heard. Rather than positioning the teacher as the sole arbiter of meaning, Greene envisions education as a democratic practice in which authority is exercised responsively rather than hierarchically. Greene suggests, “we may be able to empower the young to create and re-create a common world — and, in cherishing it, in renewing it, discover what it signifies to be free” (p. 23). Pursuit of freedom draws both teachers and students into a shared struggle to recognize possibility, resist closure, and imagine alternatives together.

Turning to Greene and her imaginative pursuit of freedom allows ethical motivation to emerge as a fundamentally democratic and relational process. When Greene’s conceptual framework is deliberately and carefully integrated into pedagogy, particularly through the practices of *naming* constraints and *imagining otherwise*, teachers nourish students’ autonomy. Rather than being prescribed or directed, autonomy is exercised through participation in meaning-making. Greene herself insists that when students are “provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions,” they are “most likely to learn to learn” (p. 14). Collaborative inquiry into possibility functions as the engine of ethical motivation. Learning to learn is not merely a cognitive achievement; it is an existential one. Through imaginative engagement, students encounter alternative ways of seeing and being in the world, discover that the given is not fixed, and realize their own agency matters in reshaping it in more rigorously democratic forms. Motivation does not arise from external pressure or promised rewards, but from the intrinsic pull of possibility itself. When students experience themselves as capable of imagining, questioning, and creating meaning alongside others, engagement ceases to be demanded, coerced, or manipulated, it becomes freely chosen. Students may autonomously choose to engage in classrooms, not because they are persuaded to do so, but because they recognize learning as a site of freedom rather than a circumstance of compliance.

Caring Our Way toward Motivation

To illustrate Greene’s pedagogy of freedom in more detail and to further conceptualize what ethical motivation might look like in educational practice I turn to Nel Noddings’ ethics of care. Noddings’ *Philosophy of Education* (2016) underscores that care ethics begins from the assumption that education is fundamentally relational and that learning takes place within webs of human connection rather than in isolation. Dialogue becomes the space in which ethical attentiveness can occur, allowing educators and students to encounter one another not as roles or functions, but as persons situated within a shared educational relationship. Noddings’ relational

understanding of care extends beyond the individual teacher-student interaction and unfurls into a broader sense of community in which authority is not eliminated but transformed, exercised through responsiveness rather than command. Specifically within this relational and communal context care ethics becomes indispensable to discussions of motivation. Motivation, approached “carelessly,” that is, without concern for care, can easily slip into persuasion, coercion, or subtle forms of control. Care ethics offers a necessary ethical counterweight by insisting that educators remain attentive to how they exercise their influence and how their words shape students’ sense of self and agency. Noddings writes that “we seek to enhance the other’s growth, but we do not threaten the other’s Otherness, and we do not define for another exactly what he or she must do or be” (p. 237). Her point clearly asserts that genuine motivation is grounded in care rather than control. From a care-ethical perspective, forcing students into actions we believe to be in their best interest is not an expression of care, but a violation of it. Consequently, motivation ought to be reconceptualized as ethical practice that resists the impulse to direct others’ becoming.

Likewise, Noddings (2016) explicitly cautions against confusing coercion with care, noting that many students come to believe that a caring teacher must necessarily be demanding or directive. Such assumptions, she warns, risk cultivating dependency, as “critical theorists and care theorists worry that such thinking may induce a permanent dependency on a strong boss or leader” (p. 230). Noddings’ insight casts Emerson’s rhetorical strategy in a new light. Even if his intentions were contributive to his audience’s own benefit, insofar as his tone remains persuasive and demanding, his approach would fail to motivate ethically within a care framework. Even if *The American Scholar* were reformulated as a series of conversations, where engagement occurs through dialogue; without careful attention to language and relational stance, Emerson would remain positioned as an authority who directs rather than a caregiver who accompanies. Noddings’ concept of engrossment becomes especially significant at this point. Engrossment refers to a form of nonselective receptivity, a way of attending to the other that suspends preconceptions and opens space for meaning to be mutually constructed through dialogue. Ethical motivation requires an engrossed relational stance in which standards, goals, and directions for growth are not imposed but co-constructed. Co-construction in classrooms, for example, minimizes the risk of dictation by positioning the educator not as an authority who directs, but as a companion who participates in the learner’s becoming.

Care ethics proposes that dialogue is the key to establishing caring relations, not merely as a technique, but as an ethical medium. Noddings notes that “genuine education must engage the purposes and energies of those being educated. To secure such engagement, teachers must build relationships of care and trust, and within such relationships, students and teachers construct educational objectives cooperatively” (2016, p. 237). To ensure that the motivation is authentic and not manipulative, the end goal must be mutually constructed by the students and the teachers. Purposeful engagement repositions the student as a subject rather than an object of education. Care ethics aligns closely with Greene’s insistence on agency and imagination. Greene reminds us that freedom emerges when individuals refuse predetermined paths and make their own choices as autonomous agents, forming “life-plans or projects for themselves in the light of readings of their lived worlds” (Greene, 1988, p. 6). Imagination, she argues, enables a “conscious adjustment of the new and the old”, allowing individuals to act meaningfully within complex and shifting conditions. With this understanding, motivation no longer operates through external pressure, reward, or compliance, but emerges from within the learner as an expression of agency. When students are positioned as subjects who actively interpret their lived worlds, motivation becomes intrinsic rather than imposed. Autonomy is not the absence of guidance but

the presence of meaningful choice, choice grounded in dialogue, imagination, and relational trust. Morally justified motivation is sustained not by authority that commands, but by relationships and conversations that invite. When educators attend carefully, adopting a position of engrossment, they cultivate conditions in which learners experience themselves as capable authors of their own projects. Autonomy is neither abandoned nor romanticized nor *manipulated*; but activated through imagination and nurtured through care. Ethical motivation takes shape as a relational practice that honors freedom not by withdrawing influence, but by handling it responsibly, creating spaces where students may come to act, choose, and engage on their own autonomous terms.

Motivation can manifest in many ways, but the morality of motivation cannot be reduced to good intentions or achieved outcomes. Good intentions do not absolve ethical responsibility. What ultimately matters is how motivation unfolds in practice. Any consequentialist account that focuses on ends achieved as the sole criterion of moral success tells only a small part of the whole story. John Dewey (1903) observes that a complete consequentialist analysis of an action requires answering three questions about it: 1) How well does the action achieve its intended end? 2) What sorts of attitudes and dispositions are required to engage in the action? and 3) How does the action play out as a system of social interaction? Sociological and psychological effects count as important consequences of action. If consequentialism turns a blind eye to extended effects of actions when assessing their moral worth, then consequentialism offers an inadequate analysis. However, when consequentialism includes in its analysis of moral value broader concerns about personal and interpersonal effects of an action, then even consequentialism must take into account the morality of the processes by which the action achieved its desired end. Moral assessment of motivation exemplifies theoretical adequacy in ethical analysis. Motivation is a process that shapes not only what students achieve, but how they come to understand themselves as learners, as agents, and as participants in a shared world. Ethical reflection cannot stop at satisfaction alone; it must also attend to how freedom, voice, and authorship are preserved, or diminished, along the way. Manipulation cannot be justified simply because it “works,” since the methods employed actively misshape habits, dispositions, and modes of participation. Motivation becomes ethically precarious precisely at the moment it is assumed to be self-evidently good, neutral, or benevolent. Explorations into the morality of motivation are necessary to unsettle the assumption that motivation is an unproblematic educational good and to move educators to more careful reflection on their own practices of influence. Just as counseling and therapy rely on explicit ethical frameworks to guide intervention, the conscious and subconscious practices of pedagogical motivation should not remain theoretically underexamined.

As educators, we cannot abandon the task of motivation altogether. To motivate without imposing remains both our greatest challenge and our ethical responsibility. That is why Greene's and Noddings' works hold utmost theoretical significance for examining the morality of motivation. Greene's and Noddings' works hold utmost theoretical significance for examining the morality of motivation. Greene allows us to imagine what ethical motivation might look like when oriented toward freedom rather than compliance. Greene insists that freedom is not a private possession, nor a final achievement, but an ongoing pursuit enacted in engagement with others. Building on this foundation, Noddings' ethics of care offers a crucial pedagogical principle that emphasizes dialogue. Care ethics reminds us that education is relational and that ethical responsibility arises within relationships, not outside of them. To care, in Noddings' sense, is not to decide for another what they should become, but to remain attentively responsive

to whom they are becoming. Through imagination, naming, and shared inquiry, teachers and students together learn to perceive and converse about alternatives to the given. Freedom is not bestowed or demanded; it is practiced through dialogue in communities. Greene's vision makes clear that motivation becomes ethical when it invites participation in collective work, imagining and reimagining what is possible. Motivation becomes ethical when it functions as a shared pursuit of freedom, grounded in dialogue, sustained through imagination, and enacted as praxis. Motivation calls for a theoretical and practical interrogation that treats influence, especially pedagogical influence, as an ethical responsibility. Treated as an ethical responsibility rather than a neutral technique, motivation demands a moral framework capable of supporting growth without manipulation and of honoring autonomy without abandoning care.

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