

## The entitlement to realise potential

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### I

A report to the New South Wales Government on the education of gifted and talented students declares that 'The talented are possibly the most disadvantaged group in our schools, for they generally have not received sufficient stimulation to achieve their full potential'. (Macdonald 1977 p. 2) The remark is a monstrous absurdity—the plights of street children and many aborigines are simply ignored. However, the general idea, that bright children are being deprived of their entitlements, is widespread in the literature and in government practice. There is pressure for the diversion of scarce resources, money, but especially time, from ordinary students to gifted ones.

There are arguments about how students with high potential should be treated that depend on consequences to other students and to society, and those that appeal to the entitlements of the students themselves. The most popular consequentialist argument supporting special treatment appeals to the benefits that we may hope students of high potential will provide for us all. Trying for equality, it is said, fosters mediocrity and conformity, to our long-term detriment. (Benbow and Stanley 1996)

Like all consequentialist arguments that appeal beyond the immediate future, this one runs into problems of guessing unpredictable outcomes. It is not immediately obvious, for example, why students who are told that they are superior to others in virtue of their genes and also in virtue of their education will not believe that others are of less value to society, and then simply of less value than they are. There are good historical reasons for being cautious about policies that would separate people on the basis of their genes especially now that the invention of genetic engineering and the discovery that we can clone a variety of mammals have transformed our options. There are worries about depriving disadvantaged groups of their future leaders.

In his famous article 'The Idea of Equality', Bernard Williams draws the following analogy. We suppose that an operation can be performed to ensure that a child is given those genetically determined advantages which lead to school success—given, we might add, an effective gifted and talented students program. However, the operation is very expensive, and can only be done for the children of wealthy parents. Williams held that it would be unjust to allow the operation to be done, and that it would be unjust to develop it in the first place. (1977 p.148) We are now almost in the position that Williams outlined. If there are genes that create high intellectual potential, we will soon know which ones they are. The chances are that they will be patented, or the market restricted in other ways. They will become very expensive, and only the wealthy will be able to ensure that their children have the right genes. But even without that, the longer-term effects of selecting genetically superior children for particular social classes would be the separation of society into two gene groups. The consequences of that are not clear. Nevertheless, after the events of the 1930's, it would be a bold person to predict that they will be beneficial.

Then there are problems about the institutions we might set up to teach students of high potential. It has long been the case that the children of wealthy parents are more likely to be "discovered" to be of high potential. (Owings, J. et al. 1995; Macdonald 1977 p. 13) It is predictable that in a capitalist and increasingly unequal society, wealthy and powerful parents will try to advantage their children by getting them into schools or classes for the

gifted, the more these are seen to advantage their students. Indeed, there are coaching colleges now that attempt to achieve just that. The consequence may be the institution of genetic screening of children who score well in tests for selection. Other means of excluding the interlopers are really attempts at the same thing. Finally, there are slippery slope concerns about the use of practices in education as precedents for social worth criteria in hospitals.

The case is not that these gloomy predictions are more likely to come true than the rosy futures painted by the supporters of programs for the gifted. It is just that there is no way of being confident either way. The future is entirely too murky to see that far ahead.

## II

But if there are strong claims of justice or of rights to special treatment for genetically superior children, we would be morally obliged to accede to them, whatever the consequences.

What is claimed by way entitlement for students of high potential? It is asserted that students are entitled to realise, fulfill or reach their potential, (Lafrance 1997; George D.R. 1994; Freeman 1994) that they are entitled to maximise the realisation of their potential, that they are entitled to maximise their potential. (Brennan 1977 p.108) The first two claims assume that potential is fixed, presumably genetically, while the last assumes that it can be altered, but that there are limits to the extent that that can be done. We have, as it were, a potential to develop potentials. There are arguments that gifted students are entitled to progress faster than other students, or that they are entitled to superior outcomes. There are also differences as to whether educationally relevant potentials are one or many. Dewey asserted that education should provide the means for people to realise their diverse and differing talents and abilities. (1944) Lupart and Pyryt (1996) speak of achievement/potential discrepancy, in terms that imply that students of high IQ (whom they assume to be students of high potential) should perform better in school than students of lower IQ. Their argument implies that in an ideal world, there would be perfect correlation between a student's place on a table of IQ's and his/her place in class.

Arguing that students of high potential are treated inequitably, Benbow and Stanley (1996) accuse opponents of 'an extreme form of egalitarianism [that]...involves the pitting of equity against excellence, anti-intellectualism, the dumbing down of the curriculum, equating attitude and achievement testing with elitism...and the insistence of schools to teach all students from the same curriculum at the same level'. Shyly asserts that both the child who is being educated and the defective embryo have the right to all possible help to develop their potential fully. (1987 pp.221f)

Let me start with the maximisation of realisation of potential. When I was 11 years old, I briefly enjoyed getting into fights with my fellow students, so that I could knock their heads against the brick walls of the school. My teacher, not thinking that I should fulfil my potential to be an assassin, persuaded me to desist. My potential as a hit man was never to be fulfilled. Not all potentials are for good. Not all should be realised; and some should be extinguished. Israel Scheffler called the assumption that they should be 'the myth of uniformly valuable potentials.(1985 pp. 12-16)

Even where potentials are for good, it does not follow that they should be realised. For some are better than others are, and we may have to choose. One reason that we may have to choose is that potentials cannot always be realised simultaneously. They may be incompatible in the circumstances of our society—you cannot be a High Court judge and a brilliant surgeon. Life is too short. Some are incompatible for physical reasons. You cannot

be a great opera singer and a good French horn player, or a ballet dancer and Mr. Universe. Scheffler calls this point the myth of harmonious potentials.

From the exposure of these two myths alone, it is obvious that you cannot determine what students' curricula should be simply by looking at their potentials. Some fairly complicated value judgements are involved. But there are other reasons. The maximum realisation of the potential for scholarship, say, could only be done by using up a great deal of one's brain. It would then be impossible to live a normal life. Again, it is usually desirable to develop a student's abilities in areas where they do not shine, in order to provide them with some flexibility in the future. You might think that you should find out what a student's talents (or potential talents) are and work to improve them. This can be very poor advice. Sydney has quite a number of singing teachers living in it who were encouraged by their school teachers in the belief that they could become concert or opera singers. One such had the misfortune to be dyslexic, in the days before dyslexia had been discovered. Her teachers wondered what to do with this child, whose schoolwork was so poor, who scored poorly on IQ tests but who was clearly musically talented, and encouraged her to concentrate on her strength. She was taught by top teachers in Australia, in England and in Europe, she came second in the Sydney Sun Aria contest, was given a starring role at Covent Garden, but lost it when she fell pregnant. Her inability to read a score and libretto quickly prevented her from accepting subsequent invitations to step in when singers fell ill, and her career accordingly languished. She is now a singing teacher, frustrated in the career which she was encouraged to pursue, forced to confront her failure every day, with no developed talents to build a satisfying life elsewhere. These days, dyslexia is recognised readily. But who knows what other conditions will be diagnosed in the future? You cannot guarantee to judge a student's potential correctly. It is a mistake to concentrate on a student's talents and not to work at improving what she is bad at.

The notion that students are entitled to the maximisation of the realisation of their potential, interpreted strictly, is thus disproven. There is, accordingly, no claim of disadvantage or unfairness on the ground that this has not been done.

It might be thought, however, that two lesser claims still could be made. We might seek to optimise rather than maximise the realisation of potential. Optimisation would involve judging which of the potentials were good, and which were the best to realise, and deciding how far they should be realised without undue damage to the rest of the person's life. We might then hold that a student of high potential was entitled to that optimal realisation, and that that would be a higher entitlement than that of someone with lesser potential.

The second claim would be that students who lack a particular potential have no cause for complaint on the grounds of inequality or inequity if a teacher worked with students who possessed the potential. Thus a one-armed student, having no potential to be a concert pianist, should not object to two-armed students being taught to play well.

Scheffler however has a third myth to attack. This he calls 'the myth of fixed potentials'. According to him, potentials are relative to the social circumstances of the time, and our willingness and ability to change the student. In the case of physical handicap, the options are to change the social requirements, to cure the defect, or to develop prosthetic devices to get around the problem. (1986 p. 11) Thus, my one armed student might become a pianist if enough composers wrote music for one-handed pianists or for duets for three hands. The pianist Paul Wittgenstein, brother of the famous philosopher, lost his arm during the First World War. A number of composers wrote music for him so that he could continue his career. Cures were impossible then; but if a mouse can grow a human ear for transplant, we may soon be able to find a way to grow an arm.

A prosthetic device for playing half the notes with one's toes, head and shoulder is only a matter of ingenuity and expense. After all, we already have flutes that have complicated levers to enable people whose hands are too small to reach all the holes to play them—that is, everybody. Is there nothing wrong, nothing inequitable, with failure to realise the potential of a one-armed student to play the piano? In education, what counts a potential depends more on the policies in place and than on the students' genes.

Further, Scheffler notes that potentials can be created, and may disappear. It is asserted that to have the potential to play the violin at concert standard, children must begin lessons before they turn five. Similar remarks are made about ballet, speech and chess. If these beliefs are true, the potentials may be present early in life, and disappear later. Of course we might find a way of reviving any of these potentials, if we thought it worth while.

Maximising realisation and maximising potential both appear to be unsatisfactory as a basis for claims of inequity. The notion of superior potential is in similar trouble. There is little left for the notion of giftedness to do, except to mark a difference in starting points

### III

Scheffler leaves this part of the argument here. I believe however that there is more work to be done. For while what he says may be true of many potentials, it has not been proven that it is true of all of them. We **may** some day discover how to create any potential we happen to think important. However, we do not know that. Moreover there is one potential (or perhaps group of potentials) which is of central importance in education, and which, it is strongly argued, has an innate component. This is the potential to develop superior intellectual.

The claim that this potential is innate might be disputed. We may some time find a way to produce the same potentials in everybody. The slow discoveries about the extent of neuronal plasticity—the capacity of the parts of the brain to take over functions normally carried out elsewhere after a stroke—give us some cause to hope. However, I propose to assume for the sake of my argument that we have here a closely related group of potentials, which exist in virtue of one's genes, for which the three myths are true. The abilities in question are obviously of considerable importance; hence, we can ignore the question of whether they are good. I propose to ignore also the question of whether there are many features of the brain that are responsible for these potentials, or whether there is only one. I want to examine the question of whether the existence in the brain of a genetically determined feature that is responsible for these potentials gives rise to any entitlements.

The assumption is not one to make casually. For the point is not merely that some students have a feature that might enable them to be given a rich education and an active intellectual life. It is that other students do not. The attribution of **lack** of potential, of unalterable maxima, can be a basis for discrimination, as in the belief that girls do not have the potential to do well in science or mathematics. Alternatively, the maxima may not concern what may ultimately be learned, but the speed of learning. Then we would be saying that some students could learn faster, while other students could not.

The assumption has consequences in the practice of schools. It leads to denial of access to advanced subjects and closes off career options. The earlier the identification of the less talented is made, the more serious the consequences.

In these circumstances, the burden of proof lies on those who claim insuperable impediments to learning, or to faster learning, for the non-superior students. The emphasis in empirical research should be not only on what gifted students can do, but also on what ungifted students can be enabled to do. We are only in a position to say that girls do not

have the same potential as boys when we have tried our damndest to help them to catch up. Only then could we say that boys who were not progressing faster than girls were underachieving.

Nevertheless I make the assumption for the purposes of this paper, in order to examine what moral consequences it has. If there are such differences between students, permanent differences that limit the future of some more than others or limit the pace that their education can proceed, does anything follow about entitlement?

The notion that the potential for intellectual life provides an entitlement has been discussed in the debate on abortion. Dame Mary Warnock notes that though an acorn has the potential to be an oak tree, we are not obliged to grow it. Warnock also argues that the fact that if we find a boy who has the potential to be president of the United States or to be a scholar, we do not say that he has missed out on his entitlements if he does not become either. (1987 p.12) But then, being president is a positional good. There can only be one at a time. Thus the failure of this entitlement is not an indication of a fallacy in the argument. Being a scholar is a positional good too; society chooses not to afford to have very many. The acorn is a better analogy. Its moral is that the move from

A has a potential P and P is good

to

A should realise P

is invalid.

The premise must be not merely that intellectual promise is a good potential, but that there is something special about this potential. But what could that be, that would carry the argument through? I will return to this question below.

Scheffler makes a further analogy with acorns: the acorn is not merely a potential oak, but also potentially part of a squirrel's lunch. Both are good outcomes. We might argue about what is the best use. However, we do not feel in the least guilty about feeding our potential oak to a squirrel. Intellectual development similarly may be of different kinds. We might try for divergent thinkers, or convergent, or for that combination of the two which has been thought to be required for creativity. (Westland 1970) Or more prosaically, we might seek to develop mathematical creativity, or artistry, or good historical judgment, or ethical insight. Or all of these to a lesser degree. Confining matters to the potential for intellectual development has not delivered us from the myth of harmonious potentials.

The debate could now be complicated further by introducing the principle of the holism of the mental, the varieties of goodness and all the other complications which muddy up discussion of intelligence. I propose to ignore these tempting by-roads. It is already clear that we do not yet have a valid argument.

We can next rule out any question of desert. As John Rawls argued, people are no more responsible for their natural differences than they are for the differences in wealth or status of their parents. They are no more entitled to benefits on the grounds of natural differences than they are on the grounds of social differences. Indeed, he argues that natural differences bring with them other goods, namely wealth, power, social position and self-respect. Accordingly, those who are less favored by nature have a claim to compensation. The difference principle applies: inequalities in the provision of goods are only justified if the worst off under the inequality benefit more by the existence of the inequality than they would

by its removal. (1971 pp.73-74, 100, 102) Those who lack natural advantages may of course be expected to benefit by an education system which produces good doctors and teachers and engineers by encouraging those who do not lack them—though only if the latter do not think themselves a cut above everybody else. But that takes us back to consequences.

One of the most common responses to Rawls is an argument I shall call the education moral equivalence argument. This asserts that the failure to help students in the interests of achieving justice is morally equivalent to deliberately handicapping them, which, it is asserted, is obviously immoral. The conclusion is that it is not inequality that we intuitively condemn when we become concerned about unfairness in society, but poverty.

This idea has been developed by Betty Weitz. If the interests of justice are to be achieved by making students intellectually equal, then why should we not produce a cheap brain operation that will remove the advantages? We instinctively recoil. In addition, she asks, if it is wrong to do this surgically is it not also wrong to do it educationally? But, she asserts, there is no moral difference between harming and failing to help.

However, she does not think that the reason we are led to absurdity is that concerns about equality are mistaken. It is rather that they are subordinate to another value, the integrity of individuality. She asserts that 'inherent qualities are essential predicates of, and not merely appendages to, subjectivity, as are material holdings'. In other words, where differences of wealth lead to educational advantage, that is unjust—unjust for reasons stated in the nineteenth century, that differences in wealth produce differences in people's freedom to develop themselves. But differences in natural intellectual qualities are different. They are part of the essence of the individual; they give a person his or her identity. The brain operation would be an attack on the integrity of the person. (1993)

We might ask why the genetically determined properties are part of the individual's essence while moral properties, which are plainly not genetically determined, are not. Even if some potentials are innate, it does not follow that these should be realised rather than other ones. We may also ask, if these intellectual properties are inviolate, what we are doing in education in changing them. We might ask whether we should cure Alzheimer's disease in well-advanced patients if we could find a way of doing so. (Incidentally, what is their potential?) We could ask why the realisation of potential is not itself an attack on the integrity of the individual. But let us put those difficulties aside also.

Scheffler is not impressed by arguments about essences. It may be said to be the essence of an egg to become a chicken, but there is no objection to it becoming part of an omelette. 'No magic bridge connects alleged facts concerning essences with the supposed values of the realisations'. Moreover, how do we decide, other than arbitrarily, what is part of an essence at what is not? And further, potentials are 'in no case to be thought of as essences intrinsic to the person or as fixed and durable' (1996 p.52)

I think there is a reply possible. We start with the value of a person; with what it is that distinguishes us from the animals, what makes each person of importance, what makes it wrong to kill an identical twin. We call the essence of being human or of having an identity whatever is essential to that value. This notion of essence is already value laden; and that provides Scheffler's magic bridge. Thus we remove the concept from its metaphysical home, and make it a normal part of moral argument. The outcome of this approach is that the essence of a person is part of what every human is entitled to. It does not have to be what is already there; it may be something that we should create. Every person is entitled to have a life fit for persons. But that entitlement depends on what is already present. The child is entitled to become an adult, but not because it is good to be an adult. Rather, the child's

already existing partial rationality gives it an interest in being an adult, and a right to pursue its interests.

The notion of what makes a person of varies with cultures. Buddhism rejects it, and Confucianism modifies it. Still, cultural variation does not imply cultural relativity. Let us put these problems aside also.

We have then the idea that intellectual qualities are of great worth, because they are part of what is really important about being a person. The reason why Weitz's operation to equalise natural abilities is wrong may then be as she says: because they interfere with being a person.

The argument that not helping is morally equivalent to harming has a massive literature of its own, dealing with the issue of whether killing is morally equivalent to letting die. (Foot 1980; Tooley 1984; Rachels 1980; Dinello 1971; Brock 1985) To accept Weitz and Cooper's logic commits us to denying a moral difference between active and passive euthanasia, to say I'm a villain for not saving more lives in Bangladesh, or a hero for not killing my students. (Haslett 1984) The education version has a further problem, that it cuts both ways. If it is wrong not to take money from students in the middle groups of school and spend it on gifted students because they will not develop as they might, it is also wrong to fail to take money from gifted students and spend it on students in the middle. Nearly every student could learn faster, become rational sooner, become more adept at the mixing of convergent and divergent thinking that appears to be a condition of creativity, become better able and more likely to transfer ideas from one sphere of thought to another. If Weitz is right, for a government to fail to spend enough to enable the realisation of potential for intellectual life in all children is the equivalent of it performing an operation to reduce it—in all children whose potential is not realised. The education moral equivalence argument implies inconsistent conclusions.

It might be argued that the question of comparative funding is a red herring. There is, it might be said, an optimal development of each student determined by their differing potentials, and the government should provide funds for every student to attain it. But this supposes that there is some clear apotheosis, the ideal educational end for each student. However the idea of a maximal education does not make sense. (Dewey 1944 pp. 1-100) I have also argued above that there can be no maximum because of the problem of disharmonious potentials. We would need instead some idea of a sufficient education. We could follow Williams (1977) and White (1984) in arguing that there is a level of education required for people to function as persons, and to live a life appropriate to persons. In our society, that that will be quite a high minimum, not obtained by the bulk of students. White argues that it does not then matter if some people go beyond the minimum. There is no obligation on governments to fund the extra education, but no objection to their doing so or to parents' doing so either. As Harris notes, the argument is only good if every one is first brought up to the decent minimum, and if the excess can be produced without preventing others from achieving the decent minimum. (1995) In any case, this argument would only show that there is a level that every one is entitled to attain. It would not show that anyone was entitled to progress any further, nor that there was ground for complaint if those with less potential progressed further than those with more.

#### IV

A different argument starts from the fact that gifted students are bored and frustrated in school, being required to do tasks that provide no challenge or interest. The boredom can be alleviated by enabling them to develop potentials and exercise them, these activities being delightful in themselves. People find excellence rewarding. The point is a reasonable one.

We should not unnecessarily subject people to frustration and boredom—though if schooldays are the only time of their lives that they suffer this problem, they are more fortunate than the rest of the class, who will suffer boredom and frustration in their jobs.

The problems are not limited to the top ten per cent of students. School, especially secondary school, is hateful to most students, in spite of the best efforts of teachers. The case for gifted students is not that they should be given priority, but that they should not be forced to attend an institution where they are wasting their time. Not should we allow students to fail to be educated because they are so bored their attention wanders from their work. Gifted students, though, are not the top priority—once we know who they are, they tend to have a better life. And in any case, only some of them do badly. The rest manage to find some interest in schoolwork—though not necessarily in the matters their teachers expect them to find interest in. This is not an argument about potential, but an argument that children should not to be subjected to cruel treatment. We should ask what the aims of education are, and whether there is something other than realising their potential that gifted students are entitled to.

Are gifted students entitled to progress faster than other students? Ignaciao L. Götz writes 'a senior at high school would be underachieving if he/she had an IQ of 125 but was graduating at the bottom half of his class'. (1987 p. 336) Are brighter students universally entitled to achieve faster results at school than less bright ones? If we could put students on a scale (as IQ scores attempt to), would we judge it a satisfactory outcome if there were a perfect correlation between a student's place on a table of IQ's and his/her place in class? What else can underachievement mean? If underachievement is a comparative matter, then the long discredited notion of overachievement may be welcomed back to the debate. Plainly though it would be wrong to say to a student, 'You are learning too fast, you are getting ahead of students who are more gifted than you are'.

Perhaps, though, the comparison between students is an indicator of something else. The objection to high IQ students performing more poorly than those of lower IQ may be not that there is something special about the order, but that it indicates some other, non-comparative, wrong. If, then, underachievement is not a matter of comparison between students, it must relate some fixed standard: an ideal rate of learning for each student or a minimum rate that every student should reach.

Is there an ideal rate of learning for each student? If there were, that would be judged in relation to their own circumstances—their family obligations and opportunities to enjoy activities with their parents, their entitlement to some time to play and make friends, the economic circumstances of the country, the requirements of health. Since ought implies can, a limit on the rate a student can learn would imply a limit on ideal rates. But that we would have moral objection to pushing any student anywhere near that limit. What else might we appeal to, to determine what the ideal rate is, that could have a connection with their innate differences?

It is much more plausible to suppose that there is a minimum acceptable rate of education, and that it does not matter much if some students achieve at a much faster rate and others do not. To determine this rate, we would need to look at the aims of education, at the amount of time we can afford to keep students in school, and so determine a curriculum. There would be no claim to privilege.

Are gifted students entitled some higher outcome than others are? To deal with this proposal, we need to consider the aims of education. There is a mammoth literature devoted to this topic. There are three main varieties of aims—those that relate to students' future

jobs, those that concern their roles as citizens and members of a community, and those that have to do with individual qualities.

An argument that brighter students are entitled to better jobs than others in view of their natural superiority and independently of their likely performance would be hard to maintain. One that said they are better fitted for such jobs would be a better candidate. But that would take us back to consequentialist arguments, and would require us to ask questions about what other desiderata there are. There would be no question of entitlement. Similar points apply to entry to universities and colleges.

To make use of the second kind of aim, we would have to argue for political inequality. To do this on the grounds of genetic superiority per se would be to try to derive a moral superiority from a genetic one. The argument presupposes that autocracy is the best form of government. It would deny the foundations of democracy in the equal worth of all rational beings. One can of course argue for elitism on the grounds that everyone would benefit from it. History does not encourage such an approach. In any case, an argument that starts from the notion that the significance of the person lies in their capacity for rational autonomous choice is a standard argument for democracy.

Aims that relate to the benefit of the individual include such things as the development of rational autonomy, enabling students to choose between good lives by helping them to understand the varieties of human good, introduction to the major varieties of knowledge, and enfranchisement in the universal moral community. Each of these is standardly held to be the entitlement of all human beings. With none of these is there an endpoint where education can be said to be complete. No one can be perfectly rational, nor know all there is to know. There is no totality of knowledge, no complete understanding. With each of these, there is a minimum which all children should achieve. How high that is is a matter of current public debate. The point for my purposes is that the aims do not support the idea that gifted children are entitled to higher outcomes.

An argument that has some currency here is that there is an entitlement to achieve excellence, or an entitlement to try to achieve excellence. (Cooper 1980) Now either excellence is a comparative matter, or it is an absolute standard. If it is a comparative matter, the argument is circular. Gifted students are said to be entitled to do better because in doing so they would be doing better. However, if excellence is an absolute standard, then we can ask whether it is achieved at all at school. In the main school disciplines, only a few PhD students reach such a standard. Moreover, if there were such a standard, it would be a mere question of technique as to how many students could be helped to reach it.

Is it just more efficient to concentrate on the gifted? Haller and Strike (1986) assert that it is—while preferring a view of justice that is derived from Rawls. It is not clear how efficiency is to be measured here. Haller and Strike write that on a utilitarian view we should concentrate in the first instance on the most able. For doing this will give us more education for the dollar. But how is the total quantity of education to be measured? Even if we ignore that problem, it is clear that efficiency is not the test of educational equity. As Brighouse demonstrates, if we have a trumpet and a trombone, and two students, the first of whom can learn to play both well in a given period of time, and the second who can only learn to play one, and not quite as well as the first, we would not consider it right to give both to the better student. (1995 p. 418) It is plain that efficiency is not a source of entitlement.

What emerges from all this is that there are only two reasons for concern about the pace at which gifted students learn. One is that they need to learn fairly quickly or they are unhappy

and bored. The second is that they may fall behind a rate for learning that every child should reach. The notion that gifted children have different entitlements from other children, entitlements arising from their different potential, plays no role in either consideration.

Unhappiness at school is not limited to the gifted. Nor is failing to learn at a satisfactory rate, given the aims of education. Both failings are avoidable evils. In neither case is there a legitimate claim that gifted students are being treated unfairly; that they have distinct entitlements that are being ignored.

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