NURTURING DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental beliefs and practices of democracy are now challenged as they never have been before. In some nations they are more than challenged. They are ruthlessly and systematically destroyed. Everywhere there are waves of criticism and doubt as to whether democracy can meet pressing problems of order and security. The causes for the destruction of political democracy in countries where it was nominally established are complex. Of one thing I think we may be sure. Wherever it has fallen it was too exclusively political in nature. It had not become part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life. Democratic forms were limited to Parliament, elections, and combats between parties. What is happening proves conclusively, I think, that unless democratic habits of thought and action are part of the fiber of a people, political democracy is insecure. It cannot stand in isolation. It must be buttressed by the presence of democratic methods in all social relationships.
(John Dewey, "Democracy," 1937)

Although John Dewey made the above remarks eight decades ago, they have as much or more importance and urgency for present educational concerns as they did then. Keeping in mind the idea that democracy is not merely political, my purpose in this thesis is twofold. First, I will identify the conceptual framework as well as the basic assumptions and values that underlie democratic education. Secondly, I will show how pedagogical strategies and curricular revision can be applied in the classroom to nurture democratic values.

In regard to the conceptual framework, I intend to expand and modify some of the analysis developed by Dewey in his seminal work *Democracy and Education*. After discussing Dewey's emphasis on shared interests and pluralistic interaction, I will draw from Amy Gutmann's analysis in *Democratic Education* to broaden the democratic viewpoint to include the principles of non-discrimination and non-repression. Israel Scheffler's notion of reasonableness explained in *Reason and Teaching* will be used to develop further the conceptual framework necessary for democratic education. In addition, I will argue that caring, as discussed by feminist philosophers such as Nel Noddings, is a necessary ingredient for any democratic community. Finally, having examined the conceptual links between democracy and education, I will then be able to

show how these links presuppose the democratic values of freedom, equality, and community.

In regard to Dewey's rather abstract account of educational aims, I will explore how these aims can be applied to particular classrooms at different developmental stages to address the needs and interests of every unique student within the *ethos* of the classroom as a community. The model of education I will argue for emphasizes interaction, active engagement, communication, and participation while also emphasizing creativity, social development, and critical thinking.

My thesis further differs and expands upon Dewey's ideas by making a connection between the conception of community that he develops in *The Public and Its Problems* and the educational climate of schools, especially public schools. As Walter Feinberg argues in *What Is a Public Education and Why We Need It*, while features of democratic education may be present in private and religious schools, public schools have the additional responsibility of reproducing a civic public for a diverse pluralistic society.

At the outset, it is imperative to clarify the meaning of both democracy and education as well as the connections between them. In Chapter One I will argue that a democracy is not merely a political system, but rather a mode of associated living. According to Dewey, democracy is built on the foundation of social interaction of individuals within a society and their mutual interests. Although the members of a democratic community may have different goals and interests, through dialogue and the interaction of many and varied sub-groups, some interests will naturally emerge that will be shared by the group as a whole.

The social interaction emphasized by Dewey requires education that exposes students to alternative perspectives and encourages them to appreciate and respect different viewpoints, but also allows them to question and critically assess these perspectives. Thus, education is not merely a transmission of ideas or an existing cultural tradition from one generation to another or from teacher to student, but rather transmission of a process of critical reflection that is necessary for maintaining the adaptability and viability of a democratic society.

In short, learning how to learn and solve problems is the main focus of what Dewey regarded as "progressive" as contrasted with "traditional" education. Traditional education has also been severely criticized as a "banking" model of education by critical theorists such as Paulo Freire. However, I will argue that Dewey's mature philosophy of education, as developed in *Experience and Education* (1938), can be used to show that certain aspects of traditional and progressive education can be reconciled.

Although Dewey's insights about democracy and education are foundational for this thesis, I will use the work of thinkers like Amy Gutmann, Israel Scheffler, and Nel Noddings to argue that they are not sufficient to ensure an adequate form of democratic education, but need to be supplemented by principles involving non-repression, non-discrimination, reasonableness, and care. Although these principles may be implied in Dewey's account, they need further development in order to safeguard the ideals underlying Dewey's account of both democracy and education.

In Chapter Two I will focus on interpreting three democratic ideals—freedom, equality, and community—in the educational realm. Although the classroom as a community requires mutual interests, I will argue for a balance in which the classroom

progresses toward common goals while students retain important aspects of freedom and individuality. How this balance can be achieved will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Using the ideals of freedom, equality, and community to guide curricular choice and pedagogical practices in the classroom allows for a democratic mode or learning space to emerge and gives students opportunities to express their thoughts or to learn on their own while respecting the equality and moral autonomy of other students.

The type of freedom important to a community of learners is what John Dewey calls "purposeful" freedom. He writes: "The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worthwhile."[1] Thus, it is a mistake to identify freedom with physical activity or mere freedom from constraint. Dewey's discussion of the nature of freedom in *Democracy and Education* prefigures Isaiah Berlin's well know distinction between negative and positive freedom developed in his 1969 essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." As we will see, a similar interpretation of freedom is also the basis for Frithjof Bergmann's critique in *On Being Free* of A.S. Neill's "go as you please" Summerhill School.

It is also important to clarify the notion of equality that is relevant to democratic education. Rather than argue for equality of result or equality of natural capacities, I will argue that the moral equality or intrinsic worth of every individual requires equality of opportunity. As Dewey points out, each person "is equally an individual and entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range.

[1] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* [1938] (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 61.

… The very fact of natural psychological inequality is all the more reason for establishment by law of equality of opportunity, since otherwise the former becomes a means of oppression.[2] In contrast, measuring students by and requiring equality of outcome has the consequence of undermining individual uniqueness and increasing standardization and cultural homogenization.

An important goal of this chapter is to develop the notion of community and connect it with Dewey's account of the public in *The Public and Its Problems*. There Dewey describes a great community as "a society in which the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulate Public comes into being."[3] Thus, the public is not merely a collection or aggregate of self-interested individuals, but rather a collective entity that emerges from the varied interaction of individuals and groups. It is "more than the sum of its parts." I will argue that democratic classrooms can serve as a microcosm for generating the kind of structures and dynamic processes necessary for the kind of public Dewey had in mind. Clearly, such structures and processes require a balance between the individual and the community. Emphasizing one or the other is a false dichotomy, because in reality they work best when used together, as I will argue throughout this thesis.

In the remainder of this thesis we will turn to more specific applications of the conceptual framework for democratic education laid down in the first two chapters. Chapter Three will focus on educational approaches that emphasize self-development of

[2] John Dewey, "Democracy" in *Exploring Philosophy*, 4th Edition, ed. Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 483.
[3] John Dewey, "The Search for the Great Community" [1927] in *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1954), 184.

individuals. First, a brief explanation of individualism as an ideal will be discussed, using Rousseau's *Emile*, the classic source for individualistic education, to show both negative and positive aspects of individualism. Some of the negative aspects, involving the lack of social interaction and the denial of reasoning capacities to young children, will be discussed in Chapter Four.

However, the emphasis in this chapter will be Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as an important contemporary source for emphasizing differences among individuals and their unique abilities. After discussing Gardner's claims about multiple intelligences as contrasted with one "general" intelligence, I will discuss how it has been implemented in many schools and also consider some criticism of it. Finally, I will connect Gardner's theory to Dewey's early attempts at progressive experimentation with curriculum and pedagogy in his Chicago Laboratory School in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although both Dewey and Gardner place great value on the development of individual potential, when one looks at their similar educational practices involving group learning and collaborative problem solving, it becomes clear that individual development is optimal when combined with opportunities for cooperation within a classroom community. Dewey's educational philosophy makes this connection abundantly clear.

Accordingly, Chapter Four will shift the emphasis to the classroom community. Here we will explore how communication, collaboration, and cooperation can be integrated into the classroom across a wide range of ages and stages of development. To set the stage I will draw from Anthony Simon Laden's *Reasoning: A Social Picture* to argue against the standard view of reasoning as a mental capacity or set of abstract

principles used primarily to win arguments. Laden proposes an alternative view: reasoning is a dynamic and ongoing social activity engaged in by human beings in their communicative relations.

Once the social view of reasoning is recognized, it is easy to see that, contra Rousseau, reasoning is not only possible for, but is naturally engaged in by young children, both in and out of the classroom. To support this view, I will use the work of philosophers Gareth Matthews (*Philosophy and the Young Child*) and David Kennedy (*Philosophical Dialogues with Children*), child language researcher Margaret Donaldson (*Children's Minds*) and early childhood educator Vivian Paley (*Wally's Stories*, *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*).

As children mature into adolescents, teenagers, and then adults, other more complex forms of group interaction involving reasoning, dialogue, investigation, and problem solving become appropriate. I will draw from thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum, Nel Noddings, and Maxine Greene to illustrate how individual development can be enhanced through group participation for the benefit of both individuals and society as a whole. These thinkers advocate for pedagogical perspectives and activities that enable students to broaden consciousness by taking the perspective of "the other" and to form a view of the world that is both compassionate and real. Such a view rests on seeing all involved in the educational experience as possessing a shared humanity.

In *Cultivating Humanity* and her essay "Patriots or Cosmopolitans?" Nussbaum makes the case for educational activities that encourage an attitude of global citizenship. Noddings, in *The Challenge to Care in Schools* and *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*, stresses the important of encouraging students to take the entire world

seriously while being simultaneously aware of their own citizenship and duties to their home country. Maxine Greene's *Releasing the Imagination* is valuable for suggesting ways in which music and art can be used to enlarge and enrich the perspectives of students. The work of these thinkers focuses on equality among humans, social justice issues concerning developing human capabilities around the world, empathy and compassion toward all human beings, and expanding students' knowledge and experience of the world beyond familiar environs or comfort zones.

In the last section of this chapter we will circle back to Dewey's notion of the "Public" discussed in Chapter Two and how it can be nurtured in a contemporary classroom setting. Especially relevant will be the work of thinkers who focus on constructive political discourse and communication such as Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (*Democracy and Disagreement*), James Fishkin (*Democracy and Deliberation*), and Benjamin Barber (*Strong Democracy*). Although the primary concern of these thinkers is to suggest ways to increase participation and deliberation within the "adult" society at large, a primary claim of my thesis is that the necessary skills for such a participatory form of democracy must be forged during the formative years of future citizens.

Finally, Chapter Five has two goals. The first is to connect the dots and show how "nurturing democratic values in the classroom" is a complex but realizable goal involving similar types of curricular and pedagogical strategies that must be appropriately adjusted and balanced in both hypothetical and real classrooms to fit the ages and stages of development of students. For example, storytelling, narratives, and literature are useful at all ages to teach students to listen and to help them see different perspectives, but

obviously will take different forms because of developmental differences. Dialogue can also be extremely important at any age because the exchange of unique individual ideas within a collaborative communicative setting not only helps students see other perspectives but helps them develop their abilities to articulate their own within an environment that fosters respect for persons and alternative views.

The school that best fits this thesis would be one that not only teaches traditional subjects, but also a range of other less common subjects such as philosophy in high school, music, theater, dance or community project work among many others. Project work, such as creating a musical or play, or solving a practical problem involving math, physics, or engineering, is multi-disciplinary and nurtures both individual talents as well as group cohesion and purpose.

The second goal of the concluding chapter is to raise and address some objections, some of which have been touched on in previous chapters. First, we will discuss the objection that the pedagogical approach I argue for will result in a reduction of academic quality and rigor. This is a common objection that historically has been levied against "progressive" forms of education. In response I will argue that, when properly implemented, the kind of progressive education I envision would actually increase both academic quality and student performance, not to mention student engagement.

Second, we will consider the potential danger of indoctrination implied by the notion of transmitting a "democratic way of life." Again, this is a legitimate concern, since there is plenty of evidence from history as well as the current "culture wars" that ideologues from both the right and left would like nothing better than to use schools as the delivery system for inculcating their preferred interpretation of "democracy" into

future generations. In response, it is important to clarify that fostering civic engagement and participatory democracy does not equate to indoctrinating students into a particular ideology. Such indoctrination violates the ideals of both freedom and equality. Schools must be designed in ways that accord with democratic values. Purposeful and critical freedom of thought implies a future that is open ended and not predetermined by either educators or politicians.

A third objection with ancient roots as far back as Plato points to the widespread ignorance in society and vulnerability of "the public" to demagoguery and manipulation. On this skeptical, even cynical, view, which has particular saliency in the contemporary political climate, Dewey's vision of democracy, as developed and applied in this thesis, is a mere fantasy or utopian dream that could never be realized. Such was the charge by Walter Lippmann in *The Phantom Public* in the 1920s, but the problem seems to be exacerbated today because of a variety of factors, such as social media. My response to this objection will be to return to the overall purpose of this thesis developed throughout the previous chapters, which is to show how classrooms, particularly classrooms in public schools, are the natural and appropriate environment in which students can develop the skills they will need as adults for full participation in a deliberative democracy. Developing these skills not only has the positive benefit of making democratic participation and deliberation possible, but also provides a defense against the kind of negative influences to which citizens of today are vulnerable.

As we attempt to keep this "big picture" in mind, let us now begin to explore the conceptual links between democracy and education.

II: EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.
(John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916)

Democracy is usually thought of primarily or solely in political terms. However, John Dewey sees it as more than just a form of government. In this chapter, it will be our goal to explore what Dewey means by his claim that "Democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers. It is that of course, but it is something broader and deeper than that."[1] In a later work, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) Dewey makes the even stronger claim that "Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself."[2] For Dewey, this is the fundamental non-political type of democracy that has relevance for education, although, as we will see in the next chapter, it has important implications for the formation of a viable and sustainable political public.

1. Dewey's Vision of Democracy

What kind of relationships are necessary for the "conjoint communicated experience" envisioned by Dewey in the above epigraph? According to him, the criterion for the associated living that is democracy involves two elements: common interests among many and varied social groups as well as interaction with other diverse groups or communities. Regarding the idea of common interests, society is an arrangement of

[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916),101.
[2] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* [1927] (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1954), 148.

individuals who simultaneously belong to both distinct and overlapping associations or sub-groups. Such sub-groups might involve familial, religious, recreational, academic, or professional relationships, among others. Although every individual in a group is unique, the shared commitment to the group forges common bonds shared by all the members in the group, even if there may be significant areas of disagreement among the members. For example, sports fans may not agree as to what teams to support, but in spite of disagreement, struggle, opposition, and conflict, they are mutually supportive in their common allegiance to sports. Similar reasoning applies to families, religions, and many multifaceted human relationships. Indeed, the situation can become quite complex and involve "classes within society, circles within the classes and cliques within the circles."[3] Dewey says that this common interest brings about a kind of unity among the members of the group or society in which qualities such as community of purpose and welfare, loyalty to public ends, mutuality of sympathy, are emphasized. Dewey recognizes that even destructive groups such as gangs may have loyalty and sympathy for their members, have mutual ideas and goals, and be concerned with the welfare of the group. He writes: "There is honor among thieves, and a band of robbers has a common interest as respects its members. Gangs are marked by fraternal feeling, and narrow cliques by intense loyalty to their own codes."[4] However, according to Dewey such a mode of association is not democratic.

Why such a gang is not a democratic association brings up the second element in Dewey's criterion: interaction. As Nel Noddings points out in her discussion of Dewey:

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[3] John Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy" [1888], *Early Works* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 1: 232.

[4]Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 95.

> A typical street gang…is not a democracy. Its members may indeed share interests, and those interests may even be consciously communicated, but the gang does not have free interaction with other gangs or groups in the society. For Dewey the second part of the criterion provides a crucial test. Do people communicate freely across the lines of class, religion, race, and region? Whenever groups withdraw from connection, isolate themselves, and become exclusive, democracy is endangered…An isolationist society has by its very isolation risked its status as a democracy because it has lost "free points of contact" and opportunities to inquire beyond its own borders.[5]

Thus, although the gang members may share feelings of loyalty along with shared goals and other common interests, they do not fit Dewey's criterion for a democratic group because they lack one of the necessary elements and therefore do not pass the test of interaction.

The reason for this failure is that in a democracy there must be free interaction among multiple groups and subgroups, because groups learn from each other by interacting with groups different than their own. It is a social process and the interaction must be free; Dewey says that "such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder."[6] Dewey believes that this idea of democracy can be transmitted into the educational realm because in that context, as in society as a whole, "the essential point is that isolation makes for rigidity and formal institutionalizing of life, for static and selfish ideals within the group."[7] Without this interaction a group would stagnate and not be open to change, making progress more difficult.

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[5] Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012), 37.
[6] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 115.
[7] Ibid., 99.

To summarize the criterion:

> The two elements in our criterion both point to democracy. The first signifies not only more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest, but greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control. The second means not only freer interaction between social groups (once isolated so far as intention could keep up a separation) but change in social habits and continuous readjustment through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse. And these two traits are precisely what characterizes the democratically constituted society.[8]

2. Dewey's Notion of Transmission as Critical Reflection

John Dewey's idea of transmission in the educational realm is unique and much different from what many people think of as passing on a set of beliefs and traditions from one generation to the next. Dewey argues for transmission of ideas and modes of learning that are intrinsic to the experiences of those becoming educated. He writes, "Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may be fairly said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication."[9] A community requires communication in addition to common interests. Dewey even goes so far as to say that social life is the same as communication and all communication is educative.[10] Most people think that the transmission being done is the transmission of bodies of knowledge from the teacher to student. However, in *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey writes that traditional education involves

> [A]cquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction…as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past…Teachers are the agents through

[8] Ibid., 100.
[9] Ibid., 5.
[10] Ibid., 11.

> which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced.[11]

In contrast, in progressive education "there is an intimate and necessary relationship between the processes of actual experience and education."[12] Further, the place and meaning of subject matter should be relevant to and take place *within* experience.[13]

Two more recent thinkers who have similar ideas concerning transmission in education are Amy Gutmann and Walter Feinberg. In *Democratic Education* (1987), Gutmann discusses the ideal of "conscious self-reproduction." According to her, "A democratic state of education tries to teach…what might best be called *democratic* virtue: the ability to deliberate, and hence to participate in conscious social reproduction."[14] Since Dewey claims that his idea of transmission will enable the educated to be part of the society they live in and to learn the ideals of democracy, it is clear that Dewey and Gutmann have a conception of transmission that involves both social reproduction and participation.

In a recent work, *What is a Public Education and Why We Need It* (2016), Walter Feinberg further elaborates on Dewey's notion of transmission. He points out that "Dewey's educational subject is not just the child. Rather, it is also the social order itself and the opportunities it might create for democratic self-reproduction."[15] Feinberg's ideas are similar to Dewey's idea of renewal of life by transmission. Dewey says we shouldn't think of life in its "lowest terms," but as the "whole range of experience" and the continual re-adaptation of the environment to living organisms.[16] As the renewal of physical human

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[11] John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 18.
[12] Ibid., 20.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 46.
[15] Walter Feinberg, *What is a Public Education and Why We Need It* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 7.
[16] Dewey, *Democracy and* Education, 2.

beings occurs, there is also a re-creation of "beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, misery, and practices."[17] Therefore, education is the means to the end of the continuity of life in its larger sense. Feinberg concurs with Dewey that how we educate greatly influences what is learned, because, "by sharing ideas and interests, by taking the ideas and interests of others into account, by developing habits of inquiry, and by learning how to solve problems collaboratively and experimentally, students [are] not only learning the content of the subject, they [are] also learning to inquire, plan, cooperate, engage, and experiment."[18] To sum up Dewey's idea of transmission, education consists primarily in transmission through communication and is a self-renewing process.

One way to understand the difference between traditional and progressive notions of transmission is to examine what Paulo Freire calls the "banking model" of education. The banking model is the style of teaching in which education "becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor."[19] This is a passive form of learning lacking the communication between student and teacher needed to transmit the tools of learning and processes of critical reflection. The banking model treats the students not as active living beings to be educated, but merely as objects that receive information from the teacher. Freire wants to reject the banking concept of education and replace it with what he calls "problem-posing" education. This type of education embodies communication and therefore harmonizes with Dewey's, Feinberg's, and Gutmann's ideas of transmission. In explaining problem-posing education, Freire says, "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-

[17] Ibid.
[18] Feinberg, 9.
[19] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [1970] ([New York: Continuum Books, 2000), 83-84.

the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers."[20] Therefore, the teacher is not regarded as holding all the knowledge; rather, all those in the classroom, both students and teachers, are educated and can educate. Freire writes:

> Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the *intentionality* of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation.[21]

The ideas contained within Freire's problem-posing method of education can easily be seen to harmonize with Dewey's transmission model of education.

However, even though Dewey believes that the banking model is a flawed way to educate, he diverges somewhat from Freire in his view about the use and organization of subject matter. Freire tends to be suspicious of traditional subject matter because he sees it as oppressive and hegemonic. Dewey, on the other hand, does not fully reject the notion of subject matter. Although on his view subject matter has no value in and of itself, it is needed to "enable the learner to cope with the problems of the present and future."[22] Education can never be about pure process alone, since the learning process needs grist for the mill, content upon which to work. Thus, in Dewey's view, democratic education involves "a merger of process and product, method and subject matter, of

[20] Ibid., 70.
[21] Ibid., 83-84.
[22] Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 77.

knowing and the known."[23] Subject matter fits into Dewey's ideas about transmission as long as there are common interests within the group and freedom to question and interact. As the philosopher Nel Noddings says, "Dewey did not recommend abandoning the traditional subjects of the curriculum, but he wanted them to be taught in a way that makes them genuine subject matter."[24] Thus, even though curriculum should still be taught, it must be taught using a critical pedagogy in order for it to be educative.

3. Democracy, Education, and Ethics

As discussed in the previous sections, Dewey sees an intrinsic connection between democracy and education. It is important to note that he also sees an intrinsic connection between morality and education. As Dewey's biographer Robert E. Westbrook points out, "The real importance of democracy [for Dewey] lay in its larger ethical meaning."[25] In one of his very early works, "Ethics and Democracy (1888)," Dewey refers to democracy as "a form of moral and spiritual association."[26] Although Dewey developed and modified his ideas about democracy throughout his life, this core idea was always a central part of his work. To flesh out the connections between ethics and democracy, it is helpful to examine three concepts: openness, consent, and reasonableness.

The idea of openness important to Dewey has two tiers, openness to revision and open-mindedness. The idea of being open to revision means that a democratic group should be open to change so that the group never stagnates. In his essay "Moral

[23] Feinberg, *What is a Public Education and Why We Need It*, 9.
[24] Noddings, *Philosophy and Education*, 39.
[25] Robert. B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 41.
[26] Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy, EW 1:240.

Education and the Democratic Ideal," Israel Scheffler elaborates further on the need for open-endedness, writing that to be committed to the moral point of view a group "must allow the possibility that further consideration or new information or emergent human conditions may require revision."[27] This revision is made possible through the other side of openness: open-mindedness. For one, open mindedness is needed to respect other groups in the interaction in order to learn and to revise. In fact, as Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*, "the qualities of mind… [involved in] learning are all of them intrinsically moral qualities. Open-mindedness, single-mindedness, sincerity, breadth of outlook, thoroughness, assumption of responsibility for developing the consequences of ideas which are accepted, are moral traits."[28] Not only is open-mindedness critical for this harmony with others, but it is also needed for an effective democratic group, because within the group the diverse ideas of the members should all be considered and respected. Scheffler writes:

> The democratic ideal is that of an open and dynamic society: open, in that there is no antecedent social blueprint which is itself to be taken as a dogma immune to critical evaluation in the public forum; dynamic, in that its fundamental institutions are not designed to arrest change but to order and channel it by exposing it to public scrutiny and resting it ultimately upon the choices of its members.[29]

Thus, both forms of openness are essential for a democratic society.

Embodied in the above quotation is another important aspect of democracy: choice and consent. Very early in his writings Dewey pointed out that although aristocratic and democratic social forms may share a goal of social harmony by ensuring

[27] Israel Scheffler, "Moral Education and the Democratic Ideal," in *Reason and Teaching* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 141.
[28] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 414.
[29] Scheffler, "Moral Education and the Democratic Ideal,"137.

that individuals find their "proper function" in society, the method through which such harmony is achieved is significantly different in a democracy, writing that "it is true…that when an individual has found that place in society where he is best fitted and is exercising the function proper to the place, he has obtained his completest development, but it is also true…that he must find this place and assume this work in the main for himself."[30] This idea that one can choose a future path is very important and can be tied into the democratic ideal of freedom, as will be seen in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to recognize that both Dewey and Scheffler claim that the democratic ethical ideal rests upon the freely given consent of its members.[31]

In summary, for Dewey education is "a widening and deepening of conscious life—a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings. …To maintain capacity for such education is the essence of morals."[32] In the next chapter we will examine further the values underlying the moral conception of democratic education. But before moving into that area, we need to consider the possible limitations of Dewey's democratic vision and explore some of the ways it might be made more adequate and complete.

4. Expanding Dewey's Vision

Although John Dewey's analysis of the social and moral aspects of democratic education is foundational, several more recent thinkers have shown that it may be incomplete or flawed. In this section I will draw from the work of Israel Scheffler, Amy Gutmann, and Nel Noddings to expand upon Dewey's ideas of democratic education and

[30] Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," 243 (cited by Westbrook, 42).
[31] Scheffler, "Moral Education and the Democratic Ideal," 137.
[32] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 417.

to build upon the ideas of common interest and interaction. Although both common interests and interaction are necessary, they are not sufficient for a sound democratic education.

The first idea that should be included is that of reasonableness, a quality emphasized by Scheffler. He writes: "The democratic faith consists not in a dogma, but in a reasonable trust that unfettered inquiry and free choice themselves will be chosen, and chosen again, by free and informed men."[33] According to him, reasonableness is the fundamental trait that should be encouraged in democratic education, because "to cultivate this trait is to liberate the mind from dogmatic adherence to prevalent ideological fashions, as well as from the dictates of authority."[34] Only when students have been liberated in this way can they learn to search for evidence, be critical of ideas, and to ask questions.

Two more features necessary for an adequate democratic education are identified by Amy Gutmann: non-repression and non-discrimination. When these features are not ensured, education can develop oppressive and restrictive tendencies that would hamper the development of the reasonableness advocated by Scheffler. In regard to the principle of non-repression, she writes that it "prevents the state, and any group within it, from using education to restrict rational deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life and good society."[35] In the educational realm, non-repression leads to more deliberation and dialogue; in addition, it helps to create open classrooms in which all are free to articulate their own ideas, thereby creating a space in which openness can be practiced.

[33] Scheffler, "Moral Education and the Democratic Ideal," 137.
[34] Ibid., 142.
[35] Guttman, *Democratic Education*, 44.

Gutmann also stresses that without the guarantee of non-repression in education parents or educators could repress or limit students' freedom, stunting their development as autonomous agents able to choose for themselves the kind of life they wish to lead. Nevertheless, she writes that the principle of non-repression is "compatible with the use of education to inculcate those character traits, such as honesty, religious toleration, and mutual respect for persons, that serve as foundations for rational deliberation of differing ways of life."[36] Thus, education should be designed to create a better, less judgmental, democratic community and to encourage the kind of rational deliberation discussed by Scheffler.

The second principle discussed by Gutmann is that of non-discrimination. This principle is needed to ensure that all people, no matter who they are, have access to education. According to Gutmann,"it extends the logic of non-repression, since states and families can be selectively repressive by excluding entire groups of children from schooling or by denying them an education conducive to deliberation among conceptions of the good life and the good society."[37] The non-discrimination principle applied in education becomes a principle of non-exclusion, requiring that "*all* educable children be educated adequately to participate as citizens in shaping the future structure of their society."[38] These concerns bring us back to the notion of transmission discussed earlier. Non-repression and non-discrimination need to be part of "conscious social reproduction" if freedom and equality for all are ensured and the idea of democracy as a process of social renewal is preserved.

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 45.
[38] Ibid., 46.

A final principle needed to complete Dewey's vision of democratic education is one discussed by feminist philosophers such as Nel Noddings: the principle of caring. Noddings describes a caring teacher as one who "nurtures a student's ethical ideal" by practicing a kind of "motivational displacement." This principle requires a teacher (and by extension democratic educational institutions) to see a student as a whole person with her/his own motivations rather than as objects upon which preconceived goals or outcomes can or should be imposed. Describing a teacher as "one-caring" and students as "cared for" she writes:

> She places her motive power in his service. Now, of course, she does not abandon her own ethical ideal in doing this, but she starts from a position of respect or regard for the projects of the other. In the language of Martin Buber, the cared-for is encountered as "Thou," a subject, and not as "It," an object of analysis.[39]

Furthermore, the caring is not only from teacher to student, but "the student also contributes to the caring."[40] Students respond to a caring environment by becoming more engaged in the educational process, as well as with other students. Noddings emphasizes that "this view is not romantic, but practical"[41] and that the teacher and student work together to discuss issues, solve problems, and build a student-teacher relationship. As we will see in future chapters, this kind of care is important for balancing the needs and interests of the individual and the classroom community.

By adding these principles, democratic education must now involve not only common interests and interaction, but reasonableness, non-repression, non-discrimination, and an attitude of caring as well. Dewey's ideas are completed and

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[39] Nel Noddings, *Caring* [1984] (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 176.
[40] Ibid., 180.
[41] Ibid., 177.

secured by these ideas as basic concepts that can be applied in classrooms to achieve an authentic educational environment consistent with democratic values and ideals. The next chapter will deepen our discussion of democratic education by exploring three underlying ideals—freedom, equality, and community—presupposed by the principles discussed in this chapter. Because these terms are notoriously broad and ambiguous, it will be important to identify the type of freedom and equality that are essential to education in a democracy, as well as to discuss how Dewey's notion of "a democratic Public" emerges from the more general concept of community. Then, in the final three chapters we will explore how these concepts can be realized in actual and hypothetical classrooms.

III: DEMOCRATIC IDEALS IN EDUCATION

Democracy and the one, the ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity are to my mind synonyms. The idea of democracy, the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, represent a society in which the distinction between the spiritual and the secular has ceased.
(John Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," 1888)

When discussing the democratic ideal with his class in political ethics, Dewey often compared it to the tripartite slogan of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity (or, more broadly, community). Liberty and community taken together make possible a positive conception of freedom that synthesizes the needs of both the individual and the community. Equality is a necessary condition for the exercise of such freedom. This equality does not require an absolute leveling of social resources. Rather:

> Each individual would of necessity be provided with whatever is necessary for his realization, for his development, whatever is necessary to develop him to enable him to function adequately…[and] get for himself and to give to society the full benefit of what is in him.[1]

In a just society, liberty and fraternity are combined; individuality operates in and for the common interest.[2] In this chapter, we will explore the democratic ideals of freedom, equality, and community as they manifest themselves within an educational environment.

1. The Nature of Democratic Freedom

Freedom is an important aspect of democracy; however, the term freedom can be quite ambiguous. As Isaiah Berlin says, freedom, or liberty, "is a term whose meaning is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist."[3] My purpose in this section will be to clarify the type of freedom that is important for democratic education. I will use Dewey's discussion of freedom and purpose in *Experience and Education* along

[1] John Dewey, *Lectures on Psychological and Political Ethics*: 1898 (New York: Hafener Press, 1976), 441-444.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (Oxford University Press, 1969), 168.

with Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty" to distinguish between negative and positive conceptions of freedom, arguing that it is the latter type of freedom which should be nurtured in educational institutions. Following these clarifications, I will then draw from Frithjof Bergmann's *On Being Free* to critique A. S. Neill's purported model of "democratic education" in his famous Summerhill School. This "go as you please" school is an example of an educational environment that misconceives the notion of freedom relevant in the educational realm.

What type of freedom is relevant in education? According to Dewey, the essential freedom involved in democratic education is not mere physical freedom or freedom from constraint or coercion, but "freedom of intelligence."[4] He writes:

> [A]n increased measure of freedom of outer movement is a means, not an end. The educational problem is not solved when this aspect of freedom is obtained. Everything then depends, so far as education is concerned, upon what is done with this added liberty. What end does it serve? What consequences flow from it? …There can be no greater mistake…than to treat such freedom as an end in itself. It then tends to be destructive of the shared cooperative activities which are the normal source of order. But, on the other hand, it turns freedom which should be positive into something negative. For freedom from restriction, the negative side, is to be prized only as a means to a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desire by the consequences which will result from acting upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation.[5]

Of course, Dewey realizes educators must be careful about overly limiting students' physical freedoms, since "freedom of intelligence" is tied to physical freedom; the physical limitations in a "traditional classroom" often put a "great restriction upon

[4] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 61.
[5] Ibid., 61-62.

intellectual and moral freedom."[6] The freedom needed in an educational setting encourages students to develop their intellectual potential and has important implications for teacher-student relationships. Teachers must understand that the process of learning involves shared cooperative activities that nurture students' growth both morally and cognitively. Such reciprocal interaction leads to a less passive classroom in which teachers can come to know students as unique individuals with their own goals and purposes.

To achieve this freedom, one must have what Dewey calls a purpose. A purpose starts from a desire or an impulse, but also "involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting."[7] This means it also requires observation and knowledge and judgment of the past. Dewey says that "traditional education tended to ignore the importance of personal impulse and desire as moving springs."[8] However, the fact that a purpose must originate with each student does not mean that the teacher is not needed to help with the development of the student's purpose. In *Experience and Education* Dewey chided some purported progressive educators for interpreting freedom in a way that negatively affected the development of students. The basic question for the progressive teacher is: What are the students' goals? What does the student want to do? Does the student want to write a novel, become a professional basketball player, compose music, perform in a theater, become a surgeon, or become a psychiatrist? The teacher's role is to help the student mobilize the resources and develop "a plan and method of activity" to achieve these goals. In short, "Since freedom resides in the operations of intelligent

[6] Ibid., 61.
[7] Ibid., 67.
[8] Ibid., 70.

observation and judgment by which a purpose is developed, guidance given by the teacher to the exercise of the pupil's intelligence is an aid to freedom, not a restriction upon it."[9] As we saw in the previous chapter, Noddings' discussion of nurturing students' ethical ideal involves teachers who treat them as ethical agents capable of selecting from a range of possibilities and who put their own motive energies into the purposes and projects of their students.[10]

Dewey's analysis of the nature of freedom is a precursor to Isaiah Berlin's well-known distinction between positive and negative freedom. Negative freedom relates to the freedom that is, according to Dewey, not sufficient for democracy while positive freedom is close to Dewey's concept of purposeful freedom or liberty. Berlin points out that individuals are normally considered free when nobody interferes with their activity and says that "you lack political liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining a goal by human beings."[11] The type of freedom that is essential is not the notion of negative freedom, because positive freedom requires obstacles, problems, and challenges as a catalyst. Berlin also aligns with Dewey because it is not merely physical freedom, but intellectual freedom that is essential for democracy to work correctly. In contrast to negative freedom, Berlin's positive freedom "derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master."[12] Individuals are autonomous beings capable of making their own choices; the individual is a "subject not an object."[13]

[9] Ibid., 71.
[10] Nel Noddings, *Caring* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003), 176-177.
[11] Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty,* 169.
[12] Ibid., 178.
[13] Ibid.

In *On Being Free* Frithjof Bergmann uses Dewey's and Berlin's distinction between negative and positive freedom to critique Neill's Summerhill School. Throughout his book he argues for an intrinsic connection between freedom and the self. However, he maintains that from "kindergartens all the way to universities" the schools use a "misconceived idea of freedom."[14] In the West, he says, there is "an axiomatic postulate that the freedom of one person should be restricted only to protect others against possible infringements."[15] This tradition is usually attributed to J. S. Mill, whose view on liberty is often regarded as a negative notion of freedom contrasting with the positive or purposeful freedom championed by Dewey and Berlin. Although it should be acknowledged that Mill's view of non-interference in *Utilitarianism* (1862) and *On Liberty* (1859) is nuanced rather than absolutistic, Bergmann's point is that the highly individualistic interpretation is pervasive and has found its way into some forms of "progressive" education, adversely affecting teacher-student relationships. Bergmann, like Dewey, believes that problem situations (he calls them "obstacles") are essential for learning and self-development, and that the teacher's role in guiding the student to overcome them is essential.[16]

Bergmann actually agrees with many of the practices A. S. Neill employs at Summerhill and believes that he has good intuitions about education. Neill's intuitions tell him that self-development is the most important goal of education. At this school, it is easy to see that the students are free to express themselves and develop self-identity. One example of something the school does to help students assert their autonomy is to make

[14] Frithjof Bergmann, *On Being Free,* 11.
[15] Ibid., 108
[16] Ibid., 134.

lessons optional.[17] Another Summerhill goal is to eradicate the culture of fear that often accompanies teacher-student relationships. Instead of intimidation, Neill advocates for mutual respect. Bergmann says that Neill is always on the child's side. In fact, when he explains what he thinks is best about Neill's Summerhill education, he ranks most highly that students have "complete self-confidence," that they are "not afraid to be themselves," that they are "natural," "spontaneous" and above all "sincere."[18]

Neill emphatically does not believe students should be coddled. For example, in one case Neill does not hesitate to tell a student to "shut up."[19] He interacts with students as equals rather than as they are treated in a typical or "traditional" school. Students are regarded not as malleable objects but, rather, as autonomous individuals. Respect for the student is not all that this type of freedom involves; it also provides some tension and obstacles for the student and therefore helps develop the self. Each student is treated as a unique individual and dealt with on a case by case basis. Another example involves Neill's treatment of a formerly repressed student named Robert for throwing mud; since this was "his first act of rebellion and was of vast significance to him" Neill joins the student in throwing mud as an act of liberation.[20] These instances, and more, show that Neill cares about the development of each student's unique self. In the next chapter we will explore how Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences relates to the uniqueness of each individual student and how this theory can be applied in the classroom.

[17] A. S. Neill, "Summerhill," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 296.
[18] Bergmann, *On Being Free,* 132.
[19] Ibid., 126
[20] Ibid., 129.

Although Bergmann likes Neill's philosophy and calls him a "marvelous practitioner," Bergmann thinks that Neill has a hard time phrasing his philosophy adequately. When explaining the "Summerhill philosophy," he tends to rely on the traditional negative notion of freedom prevalent in the West and characterized by Bergmann as misconceived.[21] Not only this, but even though he agrees that the Summerhill school is heading in the right direction in some ways, he says the school is "surprisingly traditional."[22] Although at Summerhill students can do many things that most schools do not allow, such as vote on school policies and choose whether or not they want to attend class, inside the actual classrooms the lessons remain the same; the students sit and listen to the teacher lecture just as in "conventional classes."[23] To allow for more growth and self-development, however, the students should be interacting, creating projects, discussing things with the teacher and amongst themselves, and learning through their experiences. Instead, at Summerhill, the children have a choice between "'lessons' on the one side and something close to nothing on the other."[24]

According to Bergmann, "Summerhill patterns itself too much into a single Either/Or, with the additional problem that each of the two alternatives is seriously defective."[25] Even though Neill's school agrees in many ways with Bergmann's idea of the self and its development, Bergmann recommends a radical reconstruction of the pedagogy of freedom and its application in the classroom.[26] Although Bergmann agrees

[21] Ibid., 125.
[22] Ibid., 154.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 146.
[25] Ibid., 154.
[26] Ibid., 145-147.

with Neill that "the child's wish…has no less weight than those of an adult,"[27] there are many considerations to work out if an authentically democratic school is to be realized.

In summary, there are two main areas of disagreement between Bergmann and Neill. First of all, even though Summerhill differs from a "traditional" school in many ways, the classrooms are not "progressive" and are basically the same as any typical school. They do not include the type of projects and experimental learning needed for the most educative environment. Secondly, the type of freedom given in Summerhill gives only two bad options; either the student chooses to go to traditional classes or is left unmoored without guidance in overcoming the obstacles necessary for education and growth.

In the next section, we will explore how the ideal of positive freedom is related to equality and in what ways equality is a fundamental ethical ideal for democracy as conceived by Dewey.

2. The Nature of Democratic Equality

Just as freedom is ambiguous, so too is equality. Therefore, it is important to consider the equality important for education. In his short essay "Democracy" Dewey makes the case for equality of opportunity as opposed to equality of result. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, equality does not require that everyone have the same talents or even the same resources. "Belief in equality is an element of the democratic credo. It is not, however, belief in equality of natural endowments."[28] However, equality of opportunity does require that each student have sufficient resources to grow cognitively and morally and to develop his or her own natural potentials. Results will

[27] Ibid., 154.
[28] John Dewey, "Democracy," 483.

necessarily differ because of individual uniqueness. Nevertheless, "each [student] is equally an individual and entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range."[29] Further, equality of opportunity should be protected by law; otherwise, inequalities in either "natural endowments" or disparities in social status can lead to oppression of the less gifted or socially disadvantaged.[30]

Equality of opportunity is closely tied to another key idea in Dewey's philosophy of education: growth. Positive forms of education enable students to have experiences of a certain qualitative type that contribute to cognitive and moral growth. This notion allows Dewey to distinguish between experiences that are educative and those that are not. "Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience."[31] Since there can be both educative and mis-educative experiences, it is not the quantity of experiences that is important, for there could be a large quantity of mis-educative experiences. Consider, for example, the large number of standardized tests currently being administered in schools that impede rather than contribute to qualitative growth. Intellectual and moral growth come not from external measures but from the continuous string of educative experiences that extend the range of future positive experiences.

Another philosopher who has more recently challenged purely quantitative measures of growth as determinative of quality of life experience is Harry Frankfurt. In his short book *On Inequality* Frankfurt provocatively argues that economic equality, "the doctrine that it is desirable for everyone to have the same amounts of income and of

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] John Dewey. *Experience and Education,* 25.

wealth," is not a significant moral issue.[32] As an alternative with legitimate moral salience, he proposes the doctrine of sufficiency. He writes:

> Economic equality is not, as such, of any particular moral importance; and by the same token, economic inequality is not in itself morally objectionable. From the point of view of morality, it is not important that everyone should have *the same*. What is morally important is that each should have *enough*.[33]

Further, a negative consequence of the pursuit of what he calls "economic egalitarianism" is that, "to the extent that people are preoccupied with economic equality, under the mistaken assumption that it is a morally important good, their readiness to be satisfied with some particular level of income or wealth is—to that extent—not guided by their own most distinctive interests and ambitions. …[and] distracts people from calculating their monetary requirements in the light of their own personal circumstances and needs."[34] On the other hand, poverty is a genuine moral problem because it hinders or impedes a person's ability to access basic necessities as well as opportunities for self-development and for contributing in positive ways to society.[35] In education, as Dewey would say, what is important is equality of opportunity, having sufficient resources to have the same education opportunities as everyone else.[36]

3. The Search for the Great Community

Along with freedom and equality, community is needed for an authentic democratic society and is closely related to Dewey's concept of the public. According to Dewey a public emerges out of a democratic community with common interests and

[32] Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Equality* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 6.
[33] Ibid., 7.
[34] Ibid., 10.
[35] Ibid., 47.
[36] Ibid., 48.

pluralistic interactions as explained in Chapter One. A community can even have more than one public. A public comes into being when individuals in a community come together to organize around a common problem. Here the notion of the community takes on a political focus involving collective action that goes beyond the individuals themselves. In *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), Dewey says:

> In a search for the conditions under which the inchoate public now extant may function democratically, we may proceed from a statement of the nature of the democratic idea in its generic social sense. From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to the need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common. Since every individual is a member of many groups, this specification cannot be fulfilled except when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups.[37]

In this way, Dewey explains how multiple groups in a community create the public through common interest and interaction with other diverse groups. It is important to realize that Dewey's notion of the general public does not require agreement, because this larger public has the common interest of attempting to resolve disagreements and issues through deliberation and dialogue. The Public then becomes a changing organic idea out of groups (publics) that are part of a community. This idea of the Public shows the strength of a community and what it can create through the combination of individuals who have common interests, but are willing to interact with other groups and individuals who have alternative viewpoints. Thus, the political sphere of the Public emerges from

[37] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), 147.

the community sphere and presupposes the ideals of positive freedom and moral equality previously discussed.

Dewey's notion of the Public is difficult and differs somewhat from standard usage. Perhaps the best place to start in trying to understand it is to say what it is not. The Public (sometime referred to by Dewey as "The Great Community") is not merely an aggregation of self-interested individuals, even though each individual making it up undeniably has self-interests. It is not even an aggregation of groups who have coalesced around a common problem situation. Recent examples of such groups would be the Black Lives Matter movement responding to police violence or Tea Party conservatives responding to what they perceive as government overreach or coal miners and auto workers responding to loss of jobs. These groups are "publics" with a small 'p'. Rather, the Public in Dewey's sense emerges only when these groups discover and become aware that, in spite of extreme and sometimes irreconcilable differences and disagreement, they do have common interests and must interact in a civil manner in order to maintain a sustainable democracy. Whether or not the vision of such a Public is realizable is open to question and continues to be challenged by so-called "democratic realists." Walter Lippmann ridiculed it in *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925), his damning indictment of participatory democracy. *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) is Dewey's attempt to answer these challenges.[38] We will examine these issues more fully in Chapter Four in our discussion of deliberative democracy and how the skills needed for participation in such a democracy can be nurtured in the classroom.

[38] Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy,* 293-300.

In this chapter we have examined the fundamental values intrinsic to democracy. The problem is that, as Berlin has pointed out, these values are sometimes incompatible or "incommensurate," to use his terminology. Although all three are fundamental, none of them are absolute. As he says:

> …[I]t seems to me that the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all the diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realised is demonstrably false. If, as I believe, the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other… The necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition.[39]

The inescapable tension between these values is what makes democracy a dynamic system requiring perpetual adaptability and readjustment in order to achieve balance. Just as this challenge applies to society as a whole, it also applies to the classroom, especially in regard to finding a balance between the interests of the individual and the community.

[39] Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty,* 239.

IV. A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM: EDUCATING THE INDIVIDUAL

Forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time.
(Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, 1762)

As noted in the previous chapter, in a democracy there is an ongoing tension between ideas and values. Not surprisingly, a similar tension carries over into the classroom. A central challenge for educators is to balance the needs and interests of individual students with the classroom community as a whole. This chapter will focus on the education of the individual.

1. Rousseau's Negative Education

A classic example of a highly individualistic style of education can be found in *Emile* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau advocates for negative or *laissez faire* education, and develops his ideas about students, individualism and nature. It is interesting to note that the same year (1762) Rousseau was penning *Emile,* his famous treatise on education, he was simultaneously writing his political work *The Social Contract.* Although it may seem odd that he is developing concepts such as the general will and citizenship at the same time that he is championing individualism, it is not inconsistent because, as the above epigraph implies, in his view, developing individuals should be prior to, and necessary for, a viable society.

This *laissez faire* style is an outgrowth of Rousseau's romantic view that humans are naturally good. He begins Book I of *Emile* with this declaration: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of

man.[1] Rousseau wants children to have a natural education; by this he means not only that their education should be in accord with their innate potentials, but also that it should be grounded in interaction with the natural environment in order for them to learn self-confidence and self-reliance. According to him, there are three types of education:

> …education comes to us from nature or from men or from things. The internal development of our faculties and our organs is the education of nature. The use that we are taught to make of this development is the education of men. And what we acquire from our own experience about the objects which affect us is the education of things.[2]

Because Rousseau regards the education coming from men (society) as corrupting, he believes a student can achieve optimal development only by being isolated from this corruption in order to interact with nature (things) rather than other people.

The alert reader has probably already noted that Rousseau's educational philosophy has much in common with the principles and practices of A. S. Neill's Summerhill School discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, it is usually considered the prototype for Neill's educational approach. Both Neill and Rousseau advocate for self-development and self-reliance without external and artificial imposition by educators. In addition, they both believe that people are born with innate tendencies that develop best without interference.

Another historical connection with Rousseau's individualistic views can be found in the work of John Locke. Unlike Rousseau, Locke never wrote a treatise on education; however, he articulated his views on the subject in the essay "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" (1690). Although both are empiricists who stress direct interaction with the

[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or, On Education* [1762] trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 37.
[2] Ibid., 38.

environment in contrast with lectures, rules, and books, there are also major differences between the two. In spite of his empirical leanings, Rousseau is adamant in his belief that children have innate capacities, as noted above, while Locke maintains that, "of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."[3] The idea that children are largely formed by their environment stems from Locke's epistemological view that the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa* or blank slate imprinted upon by impressions and sensations. Thus, to refer to the contemporary nature/nurture controversy, Locke leans more towards nurture, while Rousseau tends to lean towards nature in the upbringing and education of people. Further, Locke believes that human nature is neutral yet malleable in contrast to Rousseau's belief that people are born good. For Locke, people become "good" or "evil" because of their surroundings, influences, and experiences.

Another major difference between Locke and Rousseau involves their view concerning the capacity of children for reasoning. In *Emile,* Rousseau explicitly challenges Locke's view on reasoning with children. He writes:

> To reason with children was Locke's great maxim. …As for me, I see nothing more stupid than these children who have been reasoned with so much. Of all the faculties of man, reason, which is, so to speak, only a composite of all the others, is the one that develops with the most difficulty and latest. …If children understood reason, they would not need to be raised.[4]

[3] John Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" [1690], in *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, 2nd ed., Steven Cahn, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 106.
[4] Rousseau, *Emile,* 89. It is noteworthy that in *Emile* Rousseau sets forth a primitive version of a "stage theory" of cognitive and moral development, one that in the twentieth century was expanded and given empirical support by developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kolhberg. Indeed, Piaget's famous laboratory in Geneva was called the Rousseau Institute.

As we will see, Rousseau's view of reasoning may be exceedingly narrow and even inconsistent with the experiential learning that he advocates for his hypothetical student.

The work *Emile* is a thought experiment about an imaginary student named Emile educated by a single teacher (Rousseau himself) to illustrate Rousseau's experimental and experiential view on individual education. Rousseau's goal is to contrast "two contrary forms of instruction—the one, public and common; the other, individual and domestic."[5] Toward this end, he takes Emile into the countryside so that he can grow and develop naturally without the artificial constraints, conventions, and impediments of "cities." He writes:

> Cities are the abyss of the human species. At the end of a few generations the races perish or degenerate. They must be renewed, and it is always the country which provides for this renewal. Send your children, then, to renew themselves, as it were, and to regain in the midst of the fields the vigor that is lost in the unhealthy air of overpopulated places. [6]

In this rustic environment Emile will gain "some idea of the word *useful*" through experiencing the natural consequences of things, because the "irrepressible law of necessity always teaches man early to do what does not please him in order to prevent an evil which would displease him more."[7] For example, instead of lecturing Emile on navigation and geography he takes him into a forest north of Montemorency, lets him get lost and hungry, at which point the young student figures out from "necessity" that he can use the direction of the shadows to find his way back to town and lunch. Thus, Emile

[5] Ibid., 40. Rousseau adds: "Do you want to get an idea of public education? Read Plato's *Republic*." It is not, he says, a "political work," as most people think, but rather a treatise on education.
[6] Ibid., 59. No doubt Rousseau is thinking here of Paris. The French Revolution of 1789 is waiting in the wings.
[7] Ibid., 178-179.

learns survival and self-sufficiency not through books, but through experience and nature. Indeed, the sole book that Rousseau provides to Emile is none other than Daniel Defoe's *Robison Crusoe,* in which the main character must be self-reliant and learn from nature to survive.

Rousseau's ideas within the thought experiment shed light on many positive aspects of this style of individualistic education. First of all, he recognizes individual uniqueness, believing that we are born with natural tendencies and aptitudes. Rousseau advises:

> One must know well the particular genius of the child. …Each mind has its own form, according to which it needs to be governed; the success of one's care depends on governing it by this form and not by another. Prudent man, spy out nature for a long time; observe your pupil well before saying the first word to him. To start with, let the germ of his character reveal itself freely; constrain it in no way whatsoever in order better to see the whole of it.[8]

Many contemporary educators, including Dewey and many of the thinkers discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, have taken Rousseau's advice to heart. Recognizing individual differences helps a teacher to know, understand, appreciate, and guide each student. In her discussion of various types of classroom communities in *Philosophy Applied to Education* Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon points out that "In individualistic classroom communities, teachers must be primarily concerned that each child be able to reach his or her full potential."[9] In nurturing the democratic value of individual freedom in the educational realm, Rousseau's insights are essential.

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[8] Ibid., 94.

[9] Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 9.

Even though there are many benefits to individualistic education, the education of Emile in Rousseau's work is not all positive. A major problem is Rousseau's failure to recognize that humans are naturally social; to put nature in opposition to society creates a false dichotomy. Since humans are social by nature and need communication and interaction, isolating Emile is far from natural and is likely to impede his growth and development, as many empirical studies have shown. Emile's isolation turns the strength of individualism into a weakness. For true educative activity to occur, even though individualistic ideas are important in creating the most ideal environment for education, a community is needed. Only community can provide the natural and positive types of growth discussed by Dewey in *Democracy and Education* and *Experience and Education.* These types of educational experiences will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four using examples of particular kinds of classroom activities.

Another weakness with Rousseau's view is his narrow view of reason. Although Rousseau claims that reasoning with children makes them stupid and reasoning emerges only at the end of the process of education ("The masterpiece of a good education is to make a reasonable man,")[10] it is abundantly obvious that Emile himself is reasoning constantly through evaluating cause and effect and making many other basic inferences. As we will see in the next chapter, reasoning is also natural for humans, including children. Only when one accepts a narrow and rigid view of reason limited to, for example, formal and abstract logical patterns, do such negative conclusions about the reasoning abilities of children emerge.

[10] Rousseau, Emile, 89.

Before exploring these issues in the next chapter, at this juncture the question arises as to how some of the positive aspects of an individualistic education could be implemented in an institutional educational setting. In this regard, the work of contemporary educational theorist/developmental psychologist Howard Gardner becomes relevant. His theory of multiple intelligences, developed in *Frames of Mind* (1983), is, in many ways, a synthesis between the classic individualistic ideas of Rousseau and Locke. Like Rousseau, Gardner emphasizes experiential learning as well as innate tendencies or capacities. However, his theory differs from Rousseau's in two important ways that bring him closer to Locke, and, one might add, Dewey. First, his theory of cognitive development is not dismissive of the rational capacities of children. Second, he does not subscribe to the naïve laissez faire view held by Rousseau and Neill that these capacities will naturally develop if left alone. Rather, one important educational goal of his theory is to search for and experiment with learning environments that will help natural capacities to flourish. Thus, a strength of his theory is that it is not purely speculative, but is grounded in empirical research that has been used in many experimental classroom settings.

2. Intelligence: One or Many?

Gardner begins with a critique of our overly simplified and one-dimensional view of what 'intelligence' means. According to him, the ways we measure human intelligence leave out many of its legitimate forms and have privileged linguistic and logical/mathematical abilities. This standard view of intelligence, known as the g-factor, is the idea that there is a "general" (thus 'g') intelligence linking all of its many manifestations. Gardner challenges this "standard view," especially as it has been used in

IQ and other types of standardized testing, and further remarks: "An intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings—a definition that says nothing about either the sources of these abilities or the proper means of 'testing' them."[11] Gardner uses this critique as a springboard for his theory. He writes:

> There is an alternative vision that I would like to present—one based on a radically different view of the mind and one that yields a very different view of school. It is a pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition, acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles. I would also like to introduce the concept of an individual-centered school that takes this multi-faceted view of intelligence seriously. [12]

This alternative view maintains that, since intelligence comes in many forms, standard IQ testing cannot account for all the different ways an individual can be intelligent.

Instead of intelligence testing, Gardner argues that we should "look instead at more naturalistic sources of information about how peoples around the world develop skills important to their way of life."[13] Many skills that certainly require some type of intelligence are completely left out of intelligence tests, but Gardner believes that these types of innate abilities or intelligences are too important to disregard. To show what types of intelligences he is discussing, Gardner asks us to

> Think, for example, of sailors in the South Seas, who find their way around hundreds, or even thousands, of islands by looking at the constellations of stars in the sky, feeling the way a boat passes over the water, and noticing a few scattered landmarks. A word for intelligence in a society of these sailors would probably refer to that kind of

[11] Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 2011[1983]), xxviii.
[12] Howard Gardner, Multiple *Intelligences, The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 6.
[13] Ibid., 7.

> navigational ability. Think of surgeons and engineers, hunters and fishermen, dancers and choreographers, athletes and athletic coaches, tribal chiefs and sorcerers. All of these different roles need to be taken into account if we accept the way I define intelligence—that is, as the ability to solve problems, or to fashion products, that are valued in one or more cultural or community settings.[14]

These examples highlight some forms of intelligence that are, according to Gardner, left out of standard intelligence testing. They also show that what counts as intelligence is related to culture. Not only that, but it also shows how intelligences can work together in complex ways.

What, then, is an intelligence and what are the criteria for identifying it? Gardner identifies eight factors that must be present for a full-fledged intelligence. The first two factors—(1) potential isolation by brain damage and (2) the existence of savants, prodigies and other exceptional individuals—provide evidence for intelligences as relatively autonomous brain systems. Brain damage, for example, might impair one's ability to read or speak while leaving math or musical abilities intact. Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man* played a mathematical savant with low functioning social and communicative skills. The next two criteria —(3) developmental and (4) evolutionary history—are connected to both the biological and cultural evolution of humans (and other species as well). This means that an individual's growth in activities follows a pattern of development; each of the intelligences has its roots in humanity's evolution. The famous cave paintings at Lascaux show a developing type of spatial intelligence. Musical intelligence can be traced to rhythmic patterns present in nature (e.g. beating hearts) and

[14] Ibid.

even to bird song. What types of intelligence are highly valued is closely related to culture, as the "sailor" quote on the previous page illustrates.

Support for multiple intelligences also comes from both (5) psychometric findings and (6) experimental psychological tasks. Although Gardner is no fan of standardized testing, he points out that instruments of formal assessment presuppose multiple types of intelligence (e.g. vocabulary, arithmetic, picture arrangement, analogic comparisons). Results from psychological experiments also provide evidence for selective abilities, for example superior verbal skills but an inability to draw. Finally, an intelligence requires (7) a set of operations indigenous to that intelligence and (8) a susceptibility of encoding in a symbol system. Regarding operations, just as a computer requires a set of operations (e.g. DOS) in order to function, a musical intelligence, for example, requires a sensitivity to pitch, rhythmic patterns, etc. Regarding symbol systems, language and math have symbolic representation as do music, social cues (e.g. facial expressions), and symbols (dreams, etc.).[15]

Although the types and number of intelligences may be disagreed upon, Gardner initially came up with seven intelligences meeting the criteria discussed above: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. It is important to note that every person has not just one intelligence, but some portion of each, yielding his/her own unique cognitive profile. He writes:

> … [T]hat we each have a unique blend of intelligences—leads to the most important implication of the theory for the next millennium. We can choose to ignore this uniqueness, strive to minimize it, or revel in it. …I suggest that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources is how

[15] Gardner, *Frames of* Mind, 66-73.

> best to take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences.[16]

Other MI practitioners have emphasized that, not only does Gardner's theory not limit persons to a single modality, but deficiencies can be overcome through a combination of environmental influences (e.g. exposure to music and books) and guidance (e.g. practice, active learning) so that most people can develop an adequate level of competency in all the intelligences.[17]

The vagueness of the number of intelligences and their descriptions is apparent and has been acknowledged by Gardner. He himself started with seven intelligences but later made some additions. He says that "there is not, and there can never be, a single irrefutable and universally accepted list of human intelligences. There will never be a master list of three, seven, or three hundred intelligences that can be endorsed by investigators."[18] This shows that the intelligences that Gardner defined are tentative and open-ended.

Although it is beyond the scope of our concerns to examine each in detail, a brief survey of the types of intelligences originally identified by Gardner is warranted.[19]The first category or intelligence that Gardner discusses is linguistic intelligence. This type of intelligence deals with the meanings of words (morphemes) as well as their structure and organization (syntax) within a symbol system such as English or Sanskrit and also involves a sensitivity to sound (phonetics). Logical-mathematical intelligence depends

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[16] Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 45.
[17] Thomas Armstrong, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* (Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD,2009), 15-16. Armstrong's book also has an excellent summary of the eight criteria discussed above along with a helpful chart summarizing MI theory.
[18] Gardner, *Frames of Mind,* 64.
[19] Gardner, *Frames of Mind* and *Multiple Intelligences*, 17-26.

on powers of deduction and scientific thinking as well as the ability to understand logical and numerical patterns and deal with long chains of reasoning. According to Gardner, these types of intelligences have been privileged in Western culture. IQ tests are supposed to reveal them and dominant theories of cognitive development, such as that developed by Jean Piaget, are based on them. But there are other intelligences.

Spatial intelligence, historically required for navigation and in the use of the notational system of maps, involves the ability to see objects from different angles and is found in architects, artists, and engineers as well as sailors. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence involves control of the physical body and is strong in those who are naturally prone to being good athletes as well as dancers and sculptors. Musical intelligence involves sensitivity to rhythm, pitch, and timbre as well as an ability to produce forms of musical expression. It is interesting that many artists, composers, and performers seem to have a cognitive profile that combines spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and musical intelligence. Musical intelligence is probably related to mathematical intelligence as well; the Pre-Socratic philosopher/mathematician Pythagoras certainly thought so.[20]

The last two forms of intelligence originally identified by Gardner involve the self and its relation to society. Interpersonal intelligence "builds on a core capacity to notice distinctions among others; in particular, contrasts in their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions."[21] In contrast to this other-directed intelligence is intrapersonal intelligence, which involves a heightened awareness of the phenomenology of consciousness or "inner life." Although this type of intelligence is internal and relates

[20] Norman Melchert, "Philosophy before Socrates," in *The Great Conversation,* (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999), 16.
[21] Ibid., 23.

to one's own emotions, behavior, and self-knowledge, it is noteworthy that many great writers and artists have been able to project this type of intelligence into other realms through music, art, and literary works.

After identifying these seven intelligences, Gardner later added naturalistic intelligence to the list. This intelligence involves expertise in understanding both the differences and connections among different species. Important during the "hunter-gatherer" and agrarian periods, it may be coming back into prominence (in a new form informed by science) with the need to preserve endangered ecosystems. Existential intelligence is another possible candidate for the list. This type of intelligence involves the capability to philosophize about the deep ideas of human existence such as the meaning of life or mortality. [22]

Whether or not these seven to nine intelligences exhaust all the possibilities is not the main question, as is it easy to imagine the list being expanded and it is best to see it as tentative and adaptable. What is important is that Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences gives us a less simplified version of human intelligence than the standard "g-factor" view. Since it is complex and variable, it may not be fully testable by the positivistic methods used by psychometricians; nevertheless, it is a view of cognition that is empirically grounded and has important practical implications for education. It can (and has been) applied and evaluated in classroom settings with real students, yielding results that are much more significant than those gleaned from de-contextualized and de-personalized standardized tests. If, as Gardner says, "the purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are

[22] Armstrong, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom,* 16-17.

appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligences,"[23] the theory of multiple intelligences can point us in the right direction for educating unique individuals. With the intelligences identified by Gardner in mind, an educator can assess a student's cognitive profile in order both to encourage existing strengths and to identify and shore up areas of weakness. The next section deals with applications of Gardner's theory in the real world.

3. Application: Into the Woods[24]

If Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is to have practical significance, we must know how to apply it in the classroom. Gardner's general advice for how this should be done is:

> An educator convinced of the relevance of MI theory should *individualize* and *pluralize*. By individualizing, I mean that the educator should know as much as possible about the intelligences profile of each student for whom he has a responsibility; and, to the extent possible, the educator should teach and assess in ways that bring out the child's capacities. By pluralizing, I mean that the educator should decide on which topics, concepts, or ideas are of greater importance, and should then present them in a variety of ways.[25]

There are many examples of schools that have experimented with the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). One early project that grew out of the theory was called Practical Intelligences for School; Gardner and his colleagues from the Educational Testing Service "developed a set of curriculum-and-assessment instruments designed to document learning in three art forms—graphic arts, music, and literary expression."[26]

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[23] Ibid., 9.

[24] 'Woods' makes a subtle reference to the naturalistic types of learning advocated by Rousseau, but also serves as a metaphor for the unknown territory that this type of application takes us into within the classroom.

[25] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, xvi.

[26] Ibid., xiv.

From this, applications of the theory have increased and influenced curriculum and pedagogy in many different schools. Gardner and his colleagues developed Harvard Project Zero to work with schools to develop and implement MI practices and other educational programs.[27]

Because there was a need for an accurate and empirical way for educators to discover their students' individual cognitive profiles, Project Spectrum was created. These researchers designed different tasks to reveal various intelligences and developed a set of measures to map the intellectual profile of young children—preschoolers and those in primary grades. According to the Project Spectrum website, the project "provides a theoretical framework that can help to bring about important changes in the understanding of children's growth, application of children's strengths, and the creation of an optimal educational atmosphere for children's learning."[28] Although these methods are ongoing and need further refinement, reliable forms of assessment are essential if multiple intelligence theory is to be applied in actual classrooms.

To get a more concrete idea of classroom applications of MI we will look at two of the schools that base their curriculum and pedagogy primarily on Gardner's theory. One of the first "MI" schools was the Key Learning Community in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Kindergarten through 12th grade school focuses on exploration and deep understanding over rote memorization. Students are highly engaged and present portfolios of their work every year. In addition, the school works on ways to assess the

[27] See Mindy Kornhaber, Edward Fierros, and Shirley Veenema, *Multiple Intelligences: Best Ideas from Research and Practice* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2004) for detailed case studies from over 40 schools that have attempted to integrate MI theory into real-life classrooms.
[28] Ibid., xiii. Also see the website: "Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education," *Harvard.edu*, 2016, http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/project-spectrum.

cognitive profiles of students. Although the school is required to conduct some state-mandated testing, the educators at Key are opposed to the overuse of standardized tests and resist basing their curriculum on them. Rather, they are concerned about creating opportunities for learning that cover the full range of possible intelligences. With a student-teacher ratio of 5:1 in grades 9-12, teachers are able to interact directly with individual students. At the high school level, the Key school has been recognized as one of the best schools in the country.[29]

The educators who organized the Key Learning Community had to break new ground in several areas. As a starting principle, the school decided to treat each of the intelligences defined by Gardner as equally important for all children. Also, although the school was designed with an emphasis on individual and performance arts education, students actually spend an equal amount of time on subjects such as science, athletics, language arts, and music. Organizers also had to determine how to assess student's cognitive profiles in ways that could be communicated to students and parents. They developed a simple system that could be used to identify student's strengths and weaknesses, based largely on how engaged students were with particular subjects and/or activities. Although Gardner was the main theorist relied on by Key educators, they also drew from the work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who developed the concept of "flow," a highly involved cognitive state in which persons become totally immersed in the activity in which they are engaged. [30]

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[29] "Cultivating Multiple Intelligences at the Key Learning Community," *edutopia.org,* April 11, 2002, https://www.edutopia.org/key-learning-community-multiple-intelligences-video.

[30] Ibid. For Csikszentmihalyi's work, see *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,* New York:Harper & Row, 1990.

Projects are a major part of the curriculum and pedagogy at the Key Learning Center and students are expected to complete two projects each year that are captured on video. These activities not only help students develop their cognitive profile; they also help them develop the communication skills necessary for articulating their ideas and interacting with others.[31]

Another school that uses MI theory is the New City School in St. Louis, Missouri. Even though this school was founded in the 1960s, it later adopted the idea of multiple intelligences. Like the Key Learning Center, the school also develops unique profiles for each student and places a strong emphasis on projects, problem solving, and cross-disciplinary learning. According to its website,

> At any time, an individual walking into any of our classrooms may see groups working together to solve a complex problem; students acting out a historical event; students sharing a book or story by using one or more of their intelligences; students giving and/or receiving thoughtful and constructive feedback; students using different percussion instruments to represent each component of the digestive system; students building models of a new insect species; students creating bar graphs to illustrate the many similarities and differences in skin color; students making Venn diagrams comparing themselves to a story character; or, students planting Native American crops in the garden.[32]

New City is also known for featuring the first MI library, which provides resources for researching and developing multiple intelligences. It includes a small amphitheater that is used for small performances, storytelling, and role-playing. There is an area devoted to hands on activities such as puzzles and games. A larger area accommodates groups of

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[31] Ibid.

[32] "Multiple Intelligences," *New City School,* 2017, http://www.newcityschool.org/academics/multiple-intelligences.

students who gather to hear guest speakers, give student presentations and performances, and engage in dialogues on controversial topics. The overall goal is for educators to "work together to create an environment where students can relax, explore, create, read, write, problem-solve, role-play, and think" in order to develop their strengths and improve in areas of weakness.[33]

MI theory has also been applied on the international scale. Denmark and Norway have taken the "into the woods" metaphor literally, and have developed "forest schools" (Denmark) and *utskole* or "outdoor schools" (Norway). These schools stress the connection between education and nature to a much greater extent than in the United States (Rousseau would no doubt approve). Forest schools are incubators for developing areas of intelligence typically left out of traditional classrooms, such as navigational skills, spatial learning, interpersonal skills, and connection to the natural world.[34] In this kind of environment students can develop an Emile-like confidence and self-reliance by exploring nature and discovering how to learn on their own as well as how to use their individual skills in cooperation with others. Forest schools have now spread to other countries in Europe such as Sweden and the U.K.[35]

Gardner's work on multiple intelligences has been translated into many languages and has been influential in Latin America, Scandinavia, Southern Europe, Australia, the Philippines, Korea, and China. In his discussion of "MI Theory Around the Globe," Thomas Armstrong gives examples of how thousands of schools around the world have

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[33] "The Multiple Intelligences Library," *New City School,* 2017, http://www.newcityschool.org/academics/the-mi-library.

[34] Peter Bentsen, "UDESKOLE IN SCANDINAVIA: Teaching and Learning in Natural Places," *Children & Nature Network,* 2013, https://www.childrenandnature.org/2013/02/12/udeskole-in-scandinavia-teaching-learning-in-natural-places/

[35] Armstrong, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, 203.

used MI theory. Although our focus is on educational settings, MI theory has also been incorporated into libraries, parks, museums, and some workplaces. In Denmark, for example, industrial manufacturer Danfoss has created a theme park that has over fifty activities designed to both test and play with "the many different ways of being smart."[36] One might also note that in the U.S. the interactive workplace created by Google seems to reflect many MI ideas.[37]

Armstrong suggests that the wide-ranging variations in application of the theory are important because they show that MI theory lends itself well to the notion of cultural diversity while also preserving the universality of Gardner's central claim about the multiplicity of intelligences. These intelligences, though found throughout the world, manifest themselves in different ways and are valued to different extents according to the cultural/social context.[38]

4. Some Criticisms and Connections

There has been much discussion, questioning, and criticism of MI theory over the past three decades. Gardner himself has welcomed these interchanges, both with psychologists and educators, participating in symposia and responding to much written criticism.[39] Although space does not allow for an extensive review of these critiques, two are especially relevant for our concerns: challenges to the notion of a plurality of

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[36] Ibid., 202.
[37] James B. Stewart, "Looking for a Lesson in Google's Perks," *The New York Times,* 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/business/at-google-a-place-to-work-and-play.html.
[38] Armstrong, 203-205.
[39] See Branton Shearer, *MI at 25: Assessing the Impact and Future of Multiple Intelligences for Teaching and Learning,* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009) and Jeffrey A. Schaler, *Howard Gardner Under Fire: The Rebel Psychologist Faces His Critics,* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006).

intelligences and criticisms about the kind of research methodology employed by Gardner and other supporters of MI theory.

Many questions remain about intelligence, how it should be defined, and the relations among various intellectual aptitudes and capacities. Gardner readily admits that "in the end, the decision about what counts as an intelligence is a judgment call—not an unambiguous determination following the rigorous application of an algorithm."[40] He also acknowledges that deciding to use the expression 'multiple intelligences' was intended to be somewhat provocative, because a book entitled *Seven Talents* would not capture his essential disagreement with the prevailing psychological establishment that cherished IQ testing. However, he disagrees with the charges that his sole purpose was to "slay IQ," a form or measurement valued by many researchers. Rather, Gardner's theory accepts that the g-factor exists. The important difference is in his denial that the g-factor, usually associated with linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, is superior to all other forms of cognition. Further, it is unlikely that a test focusing on linguistic/logical abilities would be strong enough to identify, say, musical or interpersonal intelligence.[41] Is there an overarching intelligence? This question, as well as questions about the intersectionality among different forms of intelligence, are open and remain central to future MI investigation.

A second criticism is related to the first. Although it is clear that MI theory has involved much experimentation and practical application, some critics have claimed that it is not empirical enough because it lacks the kind of data that would provide sufficient support for the theory. However, as Armstrong points out, the problem with this criticism

[40] Gardner, Frames of Mind, xxi.
[41] Ibid., xi-xii.

"is that it is founded upon a very narrow conception of what constitutes authentic research."[42] Psychometricians who favor technical and quantitative forms of measurement often look down upon investigators who use qualitative forms of research and who stress the importance of contextualization. MI theory uses a "wide range of techniques, programs, attitudes, tools, strategies, and methods, and each teacher is encouraged to develop his or her own unique approach to implementing them," making comparison of individual classrooms to a "control classroom" impractical. However, "to reduce the success or failure of a study to mere numbers is to reject other valid sources of a program's effectiveness, including individual case studies of children's learning improvement, parent reports of improved attitudes towards school, and documentation of learning progress through projects, problem solving, and portfolios."[43] In short, to insist on purely quantitative forms of measurement in education is to commit the fallacy of false precision: not everything in education (or life) can be quantified.

In this chapter we have given a lot of attention to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, largely because it is a research program designed to discover curricula and pedagogy that aid development of individual potentials. However, it would be remiss not to credit the thinker and educator who pioneered many of the practices implemented by MI advocates: John Dewey. While chair of the department of philosophy at the University of Chicago, he established the Chicago Laboratory School (still in existence), where from 1896-1904 he and his wife Alice experimented with multi-aged, interdisciplinary projects that involved students in creative problem solving. In 1902, before leaving Chicago for Columbia University, he wrote "The Child and the

[42] Armstrong, Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, 193.
[43] Ibid., 194.

Curriculum," a monograph in which he sketched out an early version of the educational philosophy later developed more fully in *Democracy and Education* and *Experience and Education.*[44]

Even though Chapter Three is about the individual, I have already pointed out that a democratic classroom requires finding a balance between the community and the individual to make for the most educative classroom environment. The individuals in the class make up the community of the classroom. As Dewey says in *The School and Society* (1899):

> [E]ach one of our schools [is] an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society, and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.[45]

While it is important to reach students on an individual basis, this must also be balanced with the goals and progress of the classroom community. Even Gardner, who seems so focused on the individual, realizes the importance of the community as well. He says that "in the end we must also learn how to yoke those intelligence together and mobilize them for constructive ends."[46] Using students' individual intelligences as tools to make a productive classroom is important, because even though everyone lies on a different part

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[44] Laurel N. Tanner. *Dewey's Laboratory School: Lessons for Today,* (New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1997). For more information about the Chicago Lab School see: Michael Knoll, "Laboratory School, University of Chicago," *mi-knoll.de,* http://www.mi-knoll.de/122501.html.

[45] Dewey, *The School and Society,* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007). New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007) 43-44.

[46] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, xliii.

of the spectrum of intelligences, each student has something to contribute to the micro-society of the classroom.

Therefore, let us now shift our emphasis to the classroom community.

V: NURTURING COMMUNITY VALUES IN THE CLASSROOM

Because the school system in a democracy appropriately aims to prepare children to become free and equal citizens, it constitutes one of the most important sites of rehearsals for deliberations. It is therefore properly subject to political mandate. Publicly supported and publicly accredited schools should teach future citizens the knowledge and skills needed for democratic deliberation.
(Amy Gutmann, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* 2004)

In order to address the importance of community in the classroom, we will begin by broadening the notion of reasoning. Just as Howard Gardner argues against the standard view of intelligence, Anthony Laden argues against the standard view of reasoning. Neither one denies that logic and formal reasoning processes are important; however, they believe that the standard view is only a part of something larger. After challenging the restrictive and overly narrow view of reasoning, we will then have the basis for challenging another "standard view": the claim that young children are incapable of reasoning. On the contrary, children can be observed reasoning in naturalistic settings. This type of reasoning is a necessary stage of development for the more sophisticated forms of reasoning needed for participation in a deliberative democracy.

1. A Social View of Reasoning

Our standard view of reasoning, according to Anthony Simon Laden, is the "activity of reflectively arriving at judgments through the alignment of the progress of our thoughts with certain formal structures in order to better navigate the world."[1] The standard view is how we usually see reasoning, that is, as a logical thinking process used by an individual to solve problems or reach conclusions. According to Laden, it is much more than that. In his book *Reasoning: A Social Picture*, Laden gives an account of reasoning rooted in social relationships and involving the responsiveness and engagement

[1] Anthony Simon Laden, *Reasoning: A Social Picture,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

of more than one individual. He writes about the distinction between "*reasoning* (the activity)" and "*reason* (the faculty or set of principles.)"[2] In contrast to the conventional view, when interacting with other people "reasoning is a (perhaps the) central activity of living together because in reasoning we are relating to one another in ways that are reciprocal and responsive to each other."[3] This type of reciprocal interaction has an ethical dimension, because social reasoning should not involve manipulating or controlling behavior, even though it often does. According to Laden, the activity of reasoning is a kind of invitation to communicate and "reasons can be defined as what we offer and exchange when reasoning."[4] Interactions with others may not initially seem like reasoning, since we have been influenced by the standard view, but they do have "rational significance insofar as they help to shape the spaces of reasons in which we live."[5]

These reasoning spaces in a community can range from small to large, from trivial to important, but in the educational realm social reasoning (or learning) spaces are necessary for nurturing democratic values in the classroom. Social reasoning is an ongoing, continuous activity. There may be "episodes" of reasoning, such as a single discussion; yet in a democratic classroom, these episodes are connective tissue that resonate with other experiences, past, present, and future. A classroom community may have a specific end or goal that the community intends to reach; this end or goal may involve solving a problem or just achieving greater understanding of an issue. However, reaching the goal is a cooperative endeavor. Although there are episodes, or specific

[2] Ibid., 11.
[3] Ibid., 12.
[4] Ibid., 13.
[5] Ibid., 31.

classes, that play a part in reaching the goal, these episodes constitute a chain of reasoning that continues even after the class is over. Thus, reasoning is the ongoing background activity of our lives. He writes:

> Understanding reasoning as a species of conversation pictures reasoning as an activity that is not episodic but rather forms part of the background of our shared lives. Reasoning, so described, is how we occupy a social space of reasons, just as swimming is how fish occupy water. That is to say that the space of reasons is something we inhabit, not merely invoke or deploy, more like our home than our office, and that reasoning is just an ongoing activity of inhabiting that space…Inhabiting a space of reasons goes beyond merely moving around it…As with inhabiting a home, inhabiting a space of reasons involves interacting with it, occasionally changing or remodeling it, and in turn being changed by it.[6]

Although he does not mention John Dewey, Laden's view of reasoning reflects his analysis of community life in *Democracy and Education* later developed by political theorists such as Amy Gutmann as deliberative democracy.

One explicit philosophical influence on Laden's social theory of reasoning is the critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, who in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984) develops a discourse model of reasoning. According to Habermas, because reciprocal communication is the basis for reasoning, we need to broaden our concepts of reason and rationality. He says:

> Well-grounded assertions and efficient actions are certainly signs of rationality; we do characterize as rational speaking and acting subjects (those) who, as far as it lies within their power, avoid errors in regard to the facts and means-ends relations. But there are obviously *other* types of expressions for which we can have good reasons, even though they are not tied to truth or success claims. In

[6] Ibid., 29.

> contexts of communicative action, we call someone rational not only if he is able to put forward an assertion and, when criticized, to provide grounds for it by pointing to appropriate evidence, but also if he is following an established norm and is able, when criticized, to provide grounds for it by pointing to appropriate evidence, but also if he is following an established norm and is able, when criticized, to justify his action by explicating the given situation in the light of legitimate expectations. We even call someone rational if he makes known a desire or intention, expresses a feeling or mood, shares a secret, confesses a deed, *etc.*, and is then able to reassure critics in regard to the revealed experience by drawing practical consequences from it and behaving consequently thereafter.[7]

It is important to note that the theory of deliberative democracy discussed at the end of this chapter also draws heavily from Habermas's theory of communicative action.

For now, however, this alternative picture of social reasoning allows us to re-visit the issue of child reasoning and to challenge the widely accepted conclusion drawn by Rousseau, and later by Piaget, that young children are severely limited in their capacity for reasoning. On the contrary, recent work by child language and cognitive development researchers, as well as advocates of philosophy for children, provide abundant evidence that reasoning, even in very young children, is a natural phenomenon. Further, there is good reason to see it as a necessary stage in developing the kind of reasoning needed to participate and deliberate as citizens in a strong democracy.

2. Children's Reasoning Capacities

In *Philosophical Dialogue with Children,* David Kennedy makes the case for the ability of children to reason within a social framework. According to Kennedy:

[7] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 15.

> [T]he nature of collective dialogue is such that, when children as young as four or five converse in groups, and when some structure is provided by an at least moderately skilled facilitator of dialogue, that critical, creative, and collaborative kinds of thinking happen more or less spontaneously, and that there is an emergent structure of argument, which forms the horizon of every critical discussion…The structure of language and of communal discourse leads us to classify and categorize, make generalizations, provide instances and illustrations, define terms, construct analogies, and formulate hypotheses.[8]

He analyzes many examples recorded by Vivian Paley in her kindergarten class involving conversations such topics as magic and science, language and politics, and the supernatural, tracing inferential elements throughout the discussion. To give just one example, in puzzling about the distinction between fairies and witches, one of the young students in effect formulates a syllogism:

> All fairies are invisible beings
> No witches are invisible beings
> Therefore, no witches are fairies[9]

These examples show that children may not reason in the same way as adults, but they certainly reason all the time and are actively engaged in trying to make sense of the world.

Gareth B. Matthews in *Philosophy and the Young Child* (1980) argues that students naturally philosophize both inside and outside of the classroom. Like Kennedy, Matthews also shows, through examples, that puzzling about philosophical issues in everyday life is natural for children. He discusses how children's literature is replete with

[8] David Kennedy, *Philosophical Dialogue with Children,* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 111.
[9] Ibid., 125. For even more examples see Vivian Gussin Paley, *Wally's Stories* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981) and *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

stories involving epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical issues. In addition, the "pretend" play of children shows their ability to reason both hypothetically and counterfactually. His examples include the case of a child of around six years named Tim who wonders if everything could be a dream. This is certainly philosophical thinking in the area of epistemology; however, he goes further to show that Tim actually uses logic in thinking about the dream problem. Matthews gives the logical structure of Tim's reasoning about the problem; he records Tim's reasoning as follows:

> (1) If everything were a dream, people wouldn't go around asking if it was a dream.
> (2) People do go around asking if it is a dream.
> Therefore:
> (3) Not everything is a dream.[10]

This example and many more cited by Matthews not only show that children are capable of philosophical thought, but also that they can think logically about philosophical questions.

The child language researcher Margaret Donaldson also theorizes on this the issue of child reasoning. Donaldson, who began her career at the Piaget institute in Geneva, began to question some of the negative conclusions reached by Piaget (and Rousseau) about children's reasoning abilities. She and some of her colleagues thought the methodology of the experiments purporting to show that children cannot reason in early childhood was highly flawed and reconstructed many of Piaget's experiments in order to better understand how children learn and reason. She and her colleagues accumulated abundant evidence that children understand and use the key notions are compatibility, possibility, and necessity. In *Children's Minds* (1978) she writes that "some of the skills

[10] Gareth B. Matthews, *Philosophy and the Young Child,* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 25.

which we value most highly in our educational system are thoroughly alien to the spontaneous modes of functioning of the human mind" and argues "that the real nature of the problem of developing these skills has not been understood well enough and widely enough."[11] According to Donaldson, the thinking of children is "embedded"; they are able to reason in contexts that make human sense to them. She gives many examples of situations in which children reason both inductively and deductively. Here are two:

> (1) An Arab woman has two children, a 7-year-old boy and a 13-month-old girl. They are with an English woman and they do not speak Arabic. The little girl walks toward the English woman who points to the little boy and says, "Walk to your brother this time." Understanding the situation, but not the words, the brother holds out his arms to his sister who immediately recognizes the intentions and runs to him. They both made inferences and understood the situation perfectly.
>
> (2) Laura, a child with whom Donaldson was working, was 2 years and 10 months old. Although they usually met downstairs in the nursery, one day the room was not available. As they stood outside the nursery door, Donaldson said, "'We're going upstairs today, Laura.' And Laura replied, 'not going down,'" deducing that if they were going up they could not be going down.[12]

The point of these examples is that, because reasoning begins at an early age, it should be nurtured even in early childhood classrooms. With this in mind, we should now turn to how reason develops in more mature students, in particular how certain types of classroom activities can help them learn to deliberate in ways that are connected to Dewey's notion of the Public.

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[11] Margaret Donaldson, *Children's Minds,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 7-8, 35.
[12] Ibid., 31-32; Margaret Donaldson, "The Origins of Inference," in *Making Sense: The Child's Construction of the World,* ed. Jerome Bruner and Helen Haste (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1987), 102.

3. From Stories to Deliberation, Dialogue, and Deeds

How can a classroom community create a microcosm of a public in the educational realm? In a recent work, *What is a Public Education and Why We Need It* (2016), educational philosopher Walter Feinberg argues that democracy is undermined when "parents protect their children by limiting their educational experiences to schools that replicate their own ideas and social class positions."[13] Feinberg claims that, even though many educational systems, both public and private, may socialize students and help them to achieve self-development and find a career path, public schools have an additional responsibility. That responsibility is to create a civic public, because only in this context can they connect a community of diverse students and their families who come to know each other and interact in ways that equip students with the skills and habits of mind that are necessary in a pluralistic, participatory democracy.[14] Thus, a deliberative democracy that preserves freedom and equality for all is not possible without public education.

Two contemporary thinkers who have developed theories emphasizing the participatory aspect of democracy are Amy Gutmann and Benjamin Barber. Gutmann and Dennis Thompson develop the theory of deliberative democracy in *Democracy and Disagreement* (1996) and *Why Deliberative Democracy* (2004). In a deliberative democracy the rule is not in the hands of an elite group of officials, but the concerns of the citizen as a public are heard and taken into account. Gutmann gives three requirements for a deliberative democracy: a deliberative democracy must treat citizens

[13] Walter Feinberg *What is Public Education and Why We Need It,* 2016, 1.
[14] Ibid., 16.

"as autonomous agents,"[15] must have the process of deliberation "*accessible* to all citizens to whom they are addressed,"[16] and "its process aims at producing a decision that is binding for some period of time."[17] Gutmann also says that the process should be dynamic. She gives a full definition based on this information for deliberative democracy saying that it is "a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future."[18] This type of government gives citizens an equal voice in decision making and encourages reasonable dialogue within the democratic community. It is important that people are able to share their individual differences in a community setting; both diversity and compromise are needed for progress to be made and to reach more balanced and effective decisions that take the common good into account.

Another thinker who has echoed and developed further the Deweyan themes of socially based democracy is Benjamin Barber. In his influential 1984 book *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for New Age* Barber mounted an extended criticism of political liberalism's over-emphasis of individualism, a hyper-individualism that, he argued, has resulted in a "thin" democracy that has eclipsed concerns for public goods, common interests, and communal decision making. As a remedy to this state of affairs he

[15] Amy Gutmann, *Why Deliberative Democracy,* (New Jersey: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.
[16] Ibid., 4.
[17] Ibid., 5.
[18] Ibid., 7.

prescribes new deliberative and participatory forms of civic engagement. He characterizes "strong" democracy as:

> … a distinctively modern form of participatory democracy. It rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature. Strong democracy is consonant with—indeed it depends upon—the politics of conflict, the sociology of pluralism, and the separation of private and public realm of action…The theory of strong democracy offers a different and more vigorous response: it envisions politics not as a way of life but as a way of living—as, namely, the way that human beings with variable but malleable natures and with competing but overlapping interests can contrive to live together communally not only to their mutual advantage but also to the advantage of their mutuality.[19]

Although Barber's vision of democracy is somewhat more realistic about the vicissitudes of human nature than Dewey's, both agree that authentic democracies create conditions in which a public "capable of reasonable public deliberation" emerges, as opposed to a public composed of atomistic individuals acting only in their own narrow self-interest.[20] Further, he subscribes to the type of "experimentalism" championed by Dewey, since this public deliberation is always experimental, provisional, and open-ended.[21]

Gutmann argues that deliberative democracy should be developed in the educational realm. As noted in the epigraph, she observes that there needs to be a place for these deliberations and their rehearsals. This is where schools are important, because

[19] Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age,* (Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1984), 118-119.
[20] Ibid., 133.
[21] Ibid., 53.

they create a space for the children who will become our future to practice and learn the skills necessary for deliberation. Gutmann says that "because the school system in a democracy appropriately aims to prepare children to become free and equal citizens, it constitutes one of the most important sites of rehearsals for deliberation."[22] Further, schools "should teach future citizens the knowledge and skills needed for democratic deliberation."[23] What would a classroom that nurtures this knowledge and skillset look like?

What type of curriculum and pedagogy is needed to realize the goal of deliberative democracy? The possibilities are limited only by the imagination, but in the remainder of this chapter we will consider suggestions made by different thinkers and look at some specific activities that embody these suggestions.

The philosopher Maxine Greene is concerned with developing curricula that existentially engages students. Toward this end, she recommends literature and dialogue as excellent ways to expand students' horizons and world views. In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) she writes:

> Of course, it is difficult to affirm the values of plurality and difference while working to build a community of persons who have a feeling of agency, who are ready to speak for themselves. Yet, once the distinctiveness of the many voices in a classroom is attended to, the importance of identifying shared beliefs will be heightened. Again, these beliefs can only emerge out of dialogue and regard for others in their freedom, in their possibility. Through proffering experiences of the arts and storytelling, teachers can keep seeking connection points among their personal histories and the histories of those they teach.[24]

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[22] Gutmann, *Why Deliberative Democracy,* 35
[23] Ibid.
[24] Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination,* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 42.

In her work and on her website, she advocates for aesthetic education and social imagination and makes abundant suggestions about how art and music can be used to engage students.[25]

Greene is also concerned about practical knowledge and service to the community. Projects and group learning not only provide students with a way to develop learning skills, but also with a way to interact and work together as a community. She writes, "To teach, in at least one dimension, is to provide persons with the knacks and know-how they need in order to teach themselves."[26] Service projects such as building a ramp for the school or planting or tending a garden to provide nutritious food for the school cafeteria (or even for the community at large) help students develop interpersonal skills, logic, creativity, empathy and more.

Another example of a program that teaches the creative process and empowers students to use their imagination to make positive changes in the world is Destination Imagination, "a hands-on system of learning that fosters students' creativity, courage and curiosity" in fields ranging from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to fine arts and service learning.[27] Destination Imagination organizes competitions involving students from three years of age to the university level that help develop such skills as creative and critical thinking, team building, problem solving, risk taking, perseverance, and self-confidence. Programs like Destination Imagination are often considered "add-on" enrichment to the core curriculum. For our purposes, it is

[25] "The Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic Education and Social Imagination," *maxinegreene.org,* 2014, https://maxinegreene.org/.
[26] Greene, *Releasing the Imagination,* 14.
[27] "Destination Imagination," *destinationimagintion.org,* 2016, https://www.destinationimagination.org/#.

important that such programs be incorporated into the regular curriculum of public schools so that all students have the opportunities they offer.

One thing that all attempts to nurture democratic community values in the classroom have in common is an emphasis on open dialogue. A good example of how dialogue can be used to encourage deliberative democracy is the Philosophy Dialogue Series at Texas State University. The Dialogue Series provides a forum for discussion of diverse, often controversial, topics in which lively interaction can occur within an environment of respect, civil engagement, and good will. Not only do these discussions involve students and faculty of the university; dialogues at the public library allow members of the community to participate as well, helping to bridge the "town-gown" gap. Although the philosophy department coordinates the series, the dialogues themselves are interdisciplinary. One of the sponsors of the Philosophy Dialogue Series is the American Democracy Project; this organization, comprised of over 250 state colleges and universities, is "focused on public higher education's role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy."[28] Open dialogue promotes democratic values and deliberative democracy and could be fruitfully used not only at the university level, but in public secondary schools as well.

Another good example of a program that promotes deliberative democracy through encouraging moral reasoning is the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB). This competition uses the "case study" approach for examining ethical dilemmas. Although it has some features similar to debate competitions, it differs in significant ways. To prepare for the Ethics Bowl competition, participating teams receive in advance a set of

[28] "About ADP," *AASCU.org,* http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/.

cases raising ethical questions on such wide-ranging topics as public policy, the classroom, personal relationships, professional ethics (such as business, engineering, law, and medicine), or social and political ethics. The team analyzes each case, identifying the core ethical issues and preparing a presentation arguing for what they believe to be the most ethical resolution of these issues, and then must be prepared to respond to questions and challenges by the opposing team as well as the judges. Sponsored by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE), IEB combines the energy and stimulation of a competitive tournament with an interactive approach to moral education for undergraduate students. There is a high school level of competition as well. Recognized widely by educators, the IEB has received special commendation for excellence and innovation from the American Philosophical Association.[29] Once again, it is important to emphasize that this type of synthesis between curriculum and pedagogy should be fully integrated into the curriculum, not used merely as an enrichment activity for a few select students.

We have been focusing on creating a sense of community in the classroom. However, one interesting and relevant question arises in regard to the very notion of community itself: what should the scope and range of "community" be? Both Martha Nussbaum and Nel Noddings have considered this issue in their works. Nussbaum's notion of community is very broad. In her much-discussed essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" she argues that students should learn to think of themselves as

[29] "Ethics Bowl: Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl," *Association for Practical and Professional Ethics,* 2017, http://appe-ethics.org/ethics-bowl/. For more on the case-study approach to ethical analysis see: Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009) and the website for his Harvard course: "Justice," *Harvard University: Online Learning,* http://online-learning.harvard.edu/course/justice.

"citizens of the world," writing that citizens who cultivate their humanity require "an ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern."[30] Nussbaum has also been a major proponent of what has come to be known as the "capabilities approach" to human development around the globe. This approach is in some ways similar to Gardner's multiple intelligence theory; however, instead of focusing mainly on cognitive development, it has a social justice orientation. In *Creating Capabilities* (2011) she says that this approach

> …can be provisionally defined as an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice. It holds that the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice is, "What is each person able to do and be?" In other words, the approach takes *each person as an end,* asking not just about the total or average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person.[31]

Nel Noddings, who, as we have seen, has applied the ethic of care in the educational realm, has many of the same concerns about global awareness as does Nussbaum; however, her emphasis is somewhat different. As an existentialist thinker, Noddings highly values place, concrete specificity, and immediacy. She describes her view as "ecological cosmopolitanism," writing that

> If we love a particular place, we know that its welfare is intimately connected to the health of the Earth on which it exists. …Because I love *this* place, I want a healthy Earth to sustain it. …If the well-being of my loved place depends on the well-being of Earth, I have a good reason for supporting the well-being of *your* loved place. I have

[30] Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" In *For Love of Country?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 3-17; *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10.
[31] Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2011), 18.

> selfish as well as cosmopolitan reasons for preserving the home-places of all human beings.[32]

From her care perspective, she draws a distinction between *caring for*, which requires direct proximity, and *caring about*, which, though important, is somewhat more distant and abstract.[33] The nuances between views like Nussbaum's and Noddings's are fertile fodder for discussion by students within a classroom on the issue of who and what constitutes a community. This open dialogue calls into play ideas central to democratic education such as freedom, equality, non-repression, and non-discrimination. Given the shared view that humans are in some sense part of a community, where the boundaries and responsibilities lie is an excellent example of a deliberative conversation in which students, as future citizens, should be included. When students deliberate regardless of their local groups, class, race, or ideas, even if their ideas are conflicting, they develop a broader perspective, allowing them to put themselves in other students' positions and move forward with greater understanding.

Having given some example of how activities, programs, and dialogue can be used to create community in the classroom, I want to end this chapter by reiterating that implementing this type of curriculum and pedagogy in public schools is a necessary condition for achieving the strong, participatory democracy argued for by Barber and Gutmann and the democratic Public envisioned by Dewey.

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[32] Nel Noddings, *Education and Democracy in the 21st Century*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), 98-99.

[33] Nel Noddings, "Global Citizenship: Promises and Problems" In *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 6-8.

VI. THE BIG PICTURE

Democracy is a way of personal life controlled not merely by faith in human nature in general but by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished. I have been accused more than once and from opposed quarters of an undue, a utopian, faith in the possibilities of intelligence and in education as a correlate of intelligence. … I am willing to leave to upholders of totalitarian states of the right and the left the view that faith in the capacities of intelligence is utopian. For the faith is... deeply embedded in the methods which are intrinsic to democracy.
(John Dewey, "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," 1939).

This thesis has focused on nurturing democratic values in the classroom, particularly in public school classrooms. I have tried to show why such values *should* be nurtured, i.e. that schools, educators, and policymakers (as well as parents and citizens) have a moral obligation to ensure that public schools in a democratic society embody the values of freedom, equality, and community. More practically, I have tried to provide concrete suggestions as to *how* these values can be nurtured through innovative, creative, and imaginative combinations of curricula and pedagogy. In democratic society at large, the challenge is often to achieve a balance between the needs and interests of individuals and communal goods. To quote a recent political commentator: "We must recover our respect for balance and remember its central role in our history. We are a nation of individualists who care passionately about community. We are also a nation of communitarians who care passionately about individual freedom."[1] A similar challenge confronts educators who strive to achieve this balance in their classrooms.

1. Connecting the Dots

Many themes have been explored in this thesis, but they are all interrelated. In the first two chapters I laid out the conceptual framework for my thesis, drawing largely on the philosophy of John Dewey, but supplementing it with the ideas of other thinkers in order to make it more adequate and complete. I devoted the first chapter to showing that

[1] E. J. Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 5.

democracy is much more than a form government; rather, it is a form of community life involving shared interests and interaction. To reflect this form of democracy in the educational realm the classroom must be viewed as a social microcosm. The next chapter deepened the discussion of democracy by identifying three values presupposed by a democratic way of life: freedom, equality, and community. It is difficult to determine just how these values should be implemented in a specific classroom environment, because these concepts are ambiguous and often in tension, creating a challenge for the educator who must attempt to balance them. To do so, educators must consider the context and goals of the class, and realize that creating the most educative classroom community is actually a continual process requiring constant monitoring and revision of methods and ideas.

The theme of balance between the individual and the community was explicitly addressed in the third and fourth chapters, focusing on concrete educational settings. Each individual is unique and has different strengths and interests; Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was used to show ways in which curricula and pedagogy can be designed to enhance individual self-development. However, without denying the importance of individual uniqueness, the focus shifted in the next chapter to the kinds of curricula and pedagogy that could be used to encourage cooperation, collaboration, and dialogue in the classroom. Only when both approaches are combined can optimal educative growth for both the individual and the community be achieved.

A second balance needed in a democratic classroom involves the relation between imagination and rational deliberation. Imagination and creativity open up possibilities for future growth and are important for cognitive and moral development; however, to

exercise imagination in ways that meet the test of reasonableness and respect the dignity of all persons is an essential requirement for democratic education.

A third balance involves curriculum and pedagogy. Rather than viewing them as separate issues, they should be considered in relation to each other. What is taught in the classroom, the content or curriculum, must be substantive, but the pedagogy, how it is taught, is equally important. It takes an active or engaging style of teaching, using curricular tools like projects, service, and dialogue, to engage students, even though the curriculum itself must retain its rigor. Further, to meet the requirements of democratic education, curriculum must not be taught in a dogmatic way, but one that encourages questioning and the development of critical thinking. In regard to teacher-student relations, the teacher must act as a caring guide to the students to help them grow regardless of what the curriculum involves.

In addition to the theme of balance another related theme of this thesis has been to challenge and broaden standard views of intelligence and reason. The standard view of intelligence is the idea that there is only one type of intelligence. As we saw in the discussion of MI theory, in order to fully support the development of unique individuals in the classroom, this idea needs to be expanded to recognize many different forms of intelligence often ignored by the standard view and which are needed in a democratic society.

Connected to the notion of intelligence is the notion of reason. The standard view of reason is that it is a capacity involving logical processes and structures that can be formally symbolized. However, this idea was challenged with the alternative view that reasoning is at root a social activity from which other more formal types of reasoning are

derived. This social view is more consonant with the communicative and reciprocal interactions that occur in a classroom as students engage in dialogue and develop the skills necessary for deliberative democracy. Further, once it is understood that reasoning is a social activity, it becomes easier to see that another standard view of reason must be challenged: the idea that children are unable to reason. After examining examples of children interacting and conversing in different scenarios, it becomes clear that children have reasoning abilities even at a young age. The important point to be drawn from this fact is that nurturing democratic values in the classroom is a continuous process that should begin even in early childhood.

It is clear that education is necessary for a democracy; however, in this thesis I am making a stronger claim: that public education is necessary for a viable democracy. It is important to have a public education system that equips future citizens to be full participants in democracy, citizens who are able to deliberate about substantive issues and not be limited to purely procedural exercises like voting the out-group in or the in-group out. Public schools should be supported by the democratic citizenry and their representatives, and should be designed to ensure equal educational opportunities and the same high quality of education for all students, the future active citizens necessary for the constant renewal of democracy.

2. Objections and Replies

It is important to address some of the main objections to the form of education that is argued for in this thesis. There are three objections that should be taken seriously; they are especially important because they have posed real threats for "progressive" education in the past. The first of these objections is the idea that the intellectual rigor of the

classroom will be lessened by the type of educational system proposed in this thesis. The second objection involves the potential indoctrination of both teachers and students into a particular ideology or worldview favored by those in charge of making decisions about curriculum and pedagogy. The third objection involves an even deeper challenge involving human nature. Skeptics and so-called democratic realists have raised doubts about whether humans (and students) in general are capable of the kind of rational deliberation that is the goal of the form of progressive education originally proposed by Dewey and further developed in this thesis. Let us look at and respond to each of these objections in turn.

Regarding the charge that progressive education undermines academic and intellectual standards and reduces rigorous expectations in the classroom, there is plenty of historical documentation that this "dumbing down" has been the consequence of certain misinterpretations of progressive educational principles. In the heyday of progressive education in the first decades of the twentieth century, some educators who regarded themselves as Deweyan progressives gradually shifted the focus of curriculum and pedagogy away from rigorous requirements in the humanities, math, and science toward vocational studies and "life adjustment." They claimed that there was too much emphasis "on the teaching of grammar and the classics and English" and "urged a reduction of the number studying advanced mathematics, advanced science, and foreign languages, and an emphasis instead on everyday applications of mathematics and science."[2] Instead of using real-life experiences and problems to engage students and make a rigorous curriculum relevant to them, they took the easy way out and made the

[2] Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980,* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 61.

curriculum fit the existing social conditions in which students found themselves. As Diane Ravitch points out in *The Troubled Crusade*, although these educators considered themselves social progressives, this step was actually a very conservative one; it served not only to reinforce and reproduce the existing social order, but also carried within it implicit racial and social bias about the capabilities of "certain kinds" of students.

The project method discussed in this thesis also came under fire, especially as it was implemented by child-centered progressives like William H. Kilpatrick, who boasted that his curriculum was built around activity and social projects and that "the purposes and plans guiding such projects would be those of children and not those of their teachers."[3] Although Dewey clearly believed that education should begin with students' interests, he pointed out that, devoid of subject matter, "the simple pursuit of these interests, which were often vague and chaotic, would produce only projects that 'were too trivial to be educative.'"[4] One need only give a careful reading to Dewey's *Experience and Education* to see how badly Kilpatrick misinterpreted Dewey's ideas; indeed, in this book Dewey calls to task what he considered to be "reactionary" interpreters of progressive education.

The response to this objection is rather straightforward. The misinterpretation of progressive principles must be corrected. Educators need to acknowledge that connecting the curriculum to the everyday experiences of students is an effective pedagogical practice. The project method certainly helps students work together, make connections between disciplines, and see applications for what they are learning in school. However, in using this method, educators must realize that "traditional" intellectual rigor and

[3] Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy,* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 503-504.
[4] Ibid. Westbrook cites a New Yorker cartoon in which a glum child ruefully asks: "Do we have to do what we want to do again today?"

"progressive" pedagogy should be used together to create an environment that is challenging to students, one that helps them grow while nurturing them as persons and embodying the values of freedom of opportunity, equality, and community.

The second objection that needs to be addressed is the argument that both students and teachers will be indoctrinated into a certain ideology by those who make the decisions about the curriculum and pedagogy used in the educational system. Again, there is historical precedent for this objection. In an influential 1932 pamphlet, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order?" the radical progressive George Counts boldly urged educators to be undeterred by "the bogies of *imposition* and *indoctrination*" and to seize the power they had to shape young minds."[5] He argued that students had already been indoctrinated into a capitalistic system and that a more human social order could not be reconstructed unless this indoctrination was challenged by radical counterindoctrination. Of course, such an initiative would also require that the educators cum indoctrinators for the reconstructed view "buy into" the program, which would require a further level of indoctrination.

Attitudes reflected in proposals like that of Counts were, and continue to be, a very real threat to the educational system and to the academic freedom of educators. It is an ongoing temptation for private citizens and government officials to covet control of schools as an effective ideological delivery system. What they fail to realize is that such efforts not only contradict and undermine democratic ideals themselves, they put the schools at the mercy of whatever faction currently wields the most power.

[5] Ibid., 506-507.

Indoctrination threatens freedom of intelligence and the development of unique ideas by individual students as well as the community of the classroom. In this thesis we have made clear that democratic education requires an environment in which freedom, non-repression, non-discrimination, and rational deliberation are preserved and fostered. Such an environment rules out indoctrination. Although students should be nurtured and guided, this guidance should occur with the goal of ultimate self-determination. Educators should not decide in advance what conclusions students should reach and manipulate them to reach these conclusions. Rather, students should be trusted to reach their own conclusions, as the process of rational deliberation requires.

Further, teachers should model democratic values by taking control of their work and not letting ideological pressures determine the way they teach. As democratic citizens teachers will, of course, have their own perspectives and points of view about many controversial issues. These views become problematic only when, as Counts urged, they are imposed on students through indoctrination. Educators who avoid indoctrination must "credit their students with the capability to reach the same conclusions" as they did and should be aware that their own conclusions should be subjected to scrutiny.[6] In short, authentically progressive democratic education means that teachers must nurture openness within the classroom and have faith in the process of rational deliberation.

The third and most serious objection involves human nature itself and involves the skeptical challenge that the average citizen in a democracy is not capable of the type of rational deliberation required either for the educational system proposed in this thesis or for democracy in general. In the last century Dewey grappled with this issue in *The*

[6] Ibid., 507.

Public and Its Problems, his response to Walter Lippmann, who after the first world war claimed that "democrats had never come to terms with the problem of the limited knowledge of the citizen."[7] On Lippmann's view the natural state of humanity is to be irrational and uninformed; thus, the kind of Public ("great community") envisioned by Dewey is an incoherent and utopian dream. Lippmann pointed to the psychological techniques such as propaganda being developed in his day to influence public opinion; the effectiveness of these techniques provided strong evidence for the susceptibility of the general populace to manipulation. Like Freud, Lippmann thought that human beings were for the most part irrational creatures governed primarily by primitive unconscious forces. As a result, only a small number of citizens were rational enough to make adequate decisions in a democracy. Accordingly, the participation of ordinary citizens in public affairs "should be held to an absolute minimum." Through voting, ordinary citizens could be allowed to "throw their support to one or another of the powerful interests contending for control."[8] Lippmann's "democratic elitism," while not quite rising quite to the level of Platonic distrust of majority rule, does comes close.

It is difficult to respond adequately to this objection because it contains a good measure of truth, as Dewey himself admitted. Furthermore, the problems pointed out by Lippmann have only increased during the last century, due to advertising (both political and commercial), an increasingly consumerist culture, the rise of the internet and social media, and the cult of celebrity. In academia, some social psychologists and neuroscientists have claimed that reasoning is largely impotent and otiose, and only

[7] Ibid., 297.
[8] Ibid., 299-300.

comes into play to rationalize decisions already made by the unconscious mind.[9] FN Haidt and Libet and Mele.

It will take more than educational philosophers to respond to this ongoing challenge, but a response is needed if the type of democratic education defended in this thesis is possible. Such education requires rationality among all participants. If deliberation and dialogue in the classroom are to be achieved, educators must have faith that students are capable of rational thought. How will we ever know if this faith is warranted if we do not try to achieve conditions under which rationality can be developed? Again, we must emphasize that intelligence and rationality should be broadly conceived, as discussed in this thesis. Only then will we be able to see how average, ordinary persons can develop the skills needed to become valuable citizens in a deliberative democracy. As stated several times, the public schools are the natural arena for this experiment.

Therefore, let us close this thesis with the Deweyan suggestion that such an experiment is "the task before us." At the outset, such an experiment will involve more questions than answers; nevertheless, it would be the start of a critical conversation about the role of the public schools in preserving democracy.

[9] See for example, Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

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