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NEUTRALITY, PLURALISM, AND EDUCATION: CIVIC  
EDUCATION AS LEARNING ABOUT THE OTHER \*

**ABSTRACT.** The purpose of this article is to investigate appropriate methods for educating students into citizenship within a pluralistic state and to explain why civic education is itself important. In this discussion, I will offer suggestions as to how students might be best prepared for their future political roles as participants in a democracy, and how we, as theorists, ought to structure institutions and curricula in order to ensure that students are adequately trained for political decision making.

The paper is divided into six sections. In the first two sections, I argue that community is a learned understanding and that such education, even when it supports liberal commitments, cannot be neutral. I use the social contract tradition as an entrance into the perpetual nature of conflict within a pluralist society. In the third and fourth sections, I develop a pedagogy geared towards educating students into what I call “cognitive conflict,” and argue that the arts, widely understood, should be privileged over other disciplines. In the fifth section, I examine two difficulties inherent in my pedagogy – first that it seems to demand that all perspectives be taught, and second that it seems to promote anxiety among students. In the final section, I ask that political theory reexamine the role of harmony in justice. I conclude that a managed conflict is a more acceptable organizational description of liberal political structures.

**KEY WORDS:** arts-education, citizenship, cognitive-conflict, critical thinking, curriculum, democracy, liberalism, Nussbaum

DEFINING THE PROBLEM: COMMUNITY IS LEARNED

Pluralism is *the* modern political problem. Following the dismal failures of the Twentieth Century – the holocaust, the decimation of Europe in

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the two world wars, the repeated annihilation of any social order in the Baltic states, the manipulation of Asia and Central America by two warring superpowers, the post-colonial abandonment of the African Continent – one is forced to wonder whether diverse populations can ever hope to live together in any form of harmony. Yet, with the advent of mass communication and mass travel, and with the increasing speed of global economies, the question of whether or not diverse peoples will live together has already been answered. Humans are once again becoming migratory, and the diverse nature of the modern state is, whether we like it or not, a foregone conclusion. We must therefore ask, not whether such diversity can be avoided – I suggest it cannot – but instead, how this plurality of peoples is best to be arranged. We must also ask how we, as modern people, are to understand the idea of community without place.

The notion of community is problematic, at least in part, because it is learned. Community identification is the product of an educational process through which a person understands the history of the community that provides the primary cognitive and critical framework for rational thought, the semiotics of social interaction, and emotional design and direction.<sup>1</sup> Ways of thinking and understanding are culture-bound. Critical thinking is itself perspectival and, as such, the way in which we think depends upon how our community frames the “relevant examples” that are believed to coincide with patterns of logical thought (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 332).

The variations in standards of rationality make the possibility for universal political deliberation ever more difficult. Such divergent means of critical thinking make it even less likely that human moral and political dilemmas can be solved by appealing to a universal reason as depicted by, for example, a Kantian categorical imperative or a Rawlsian original position. True pluralism must account for a diversity that runs much deeper than the accidents of rituals or the variations of ignorance and prejudice.

In this context, pluralism is to be defined as the political situation in which peoples of different fundamental beliefs and histories share equally in a common governance and live within common borders.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> This description of national identity is meant neither to be all-inclusive nor definitive. It should not be regarded as a definition. Instead, this description is to be understood as providing only a starting point for the problematic that contextualizes the role of civic education in a modern pluralistic world.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Feinberg, in *Common Schools/Uncommon Identities* makes a distinction between pluralism and multiculturalism. Pluralism, he argues, is based on the notion of a multiplicity of different private spheres that revolve around a central but neutral public sphere. He suggests that pluralism regards with suspicion and regret any overlap in the public and private spheres. In contrast, Feinberg defines multiculturalism as being committed to the notion that there is no neutrality in the public sphere. He argues that

contemporary political philosophy, pluralism is most often the purview of contemporary liberal theory and its critics. Liberalism is most famously defined as the political structure under which the state is to remain neutral on questions of the good life (Dworkin, 1978). Under this system, it is to be the prerogative of the citizen to choose his or her social priorities, and, in turn, the citizen is thought to be an unfettered agent who can participate in governance.

For most post-Hobbesian political philosophy, political legitimation is based upon the consent of the governed. Contemporary liberalism qualifies such legitimation by suggesting that consent is authentic only when it is informed and when it is given through regular participation in fair and open legislative processes. Liberalism and pluralism presuppose democracy.

Pluralist democracy requires citizens who are, at minimum, capable of participating in a legislative process. It is therefore dependant on the nature and purpose of education. Even if we are to accept, in its most simplistic form, Aristotle's definition of humans as political animals, we cannot expect people to be participatory at birth. Nor can we expect children who reach the age of reason – or some arbitrary or ritualistic age of adulthood – to suddenly be capable of making adequate political decisions. Humans must be taught to be citizens. As John Dewey writes:

Since education is a social process, and there are many kinds of societies, a criterion for educational criticism and construction implies a *particular* social ideal. The two points selected by which to measure worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. . . . 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. (Dewey, 1997, p. 99)

We are trained in political deliberation and participation through formal and informal education. Since citizenship requires education, I think it is fair to suggest that some methods of education are to be regarded as being better than others, although a true pluralism must accept the likelihood of coexisting, equally adequate, systems of education. In this paper, I multiculturalists “suspect that this idealized common identity is just a disguise for the dominance of one cultural group over others, and they believe that such a dominance is inherently wrong” (Feinberg, 1988, p. 22). Although his discussion is, at times, helpful, Feinberg's description of the two theories is mistaken. There is nothing in pluralism that demands neutrality. The common political culture may be a *modus vivendi*, it may be an overlapping consensus, or it may be numerous other forms of organization. (For the definitive attempt at defining pluralism based on an overlapping consensus, see Rawls' *Political Liberalism* (Rawls, 1993). Multiculturalism is a *form* of pluralism, one that emphasizes community-defined identities and histories. Pluralism, if one wants to force a distinction, can allow for individual differences as well as group differences, and is, therefore, wider in scope.

will explore some of these methods and the theoretical foundation for my pedagogical suggestions.

### NON-NEUTRAL LIBERAL EDUCATION AND THE CAPACITY FOR CHOICE

As previously stated, liberalism is traditionally defined in terms of neutrality. However, this definition is inadequate. Absolute neutrality in political matters is impossible. Most obviously, the uncontroversial prohibition against murder is a violation of state neutrality. It assumes, for example, that the good life is that life which is not prematurely ended by others without due process. A truly neutral state, therefore, could not prohibit murder and this, of course, is unacceptable from virtually any point of view. Furthermore, liberalism is committed to the notion that the good life is the free life. Freedom is one of liberalism's central virtues. To choose freedom over restraint is a violation of neutrality, yet this non-neutral commitment lies irrevocably at the core of liberal theory. Finally, neutrality in its most radical form is non-action. However, to choose not to act is itself acting on a choice. Absolute neutrality is impossible, and recent work in liberal theory seeks to distance itself from liberalism's traditional claims to any such Archimedean perspective.<sup>3</sup>

In regards to education, liberalism is also non-neutral. First, it considers a life of political rational deliberation as superior to a life in which an agent cannot choose between competing options. Less abstractly, civic education cannot be neutral because it cannot refrain from teaching that racism and sexism, for example, are wrong. Teaching, or not discouraging, prejudice interferes with the core political process. It limits the participation of those groups who are targeted by the prejudice.<sup>4</sup> True democracy demands core political equality.

Civic education must teach equality because one of its central purposes is the propagation of the state structure and ideology. Education is a major

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<sup>3</sup> The charge that liberalism is itself committed to a non-neutral good is quite commonplace in recent political scholarship. See, for example, the foundational critique of Rawls' attempt to find neutrality in *A Theory of Justice*: Michael J. Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. However, what is more interesting, and more recent, is the acceptance of a non-neutral good by liberals who themselves wish to preserve the liberal perspective. For a well-thought out and sophisticated discussion, see Galston's *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of the nature of commitment to non-neutral, anti-prejudicial principles in liberal and democratic education, see Amy Gutmann's *Democratic Education*, especially pp. 34–43, 54–56.

force in the maintenance of political continuity and stability between generations. Without the self-cultivating role of the state, institutions would quickly wither, the state would destabilize, and political organization would cease to be. To reject the responsibility a state has towards self-propagation is to reject the notion of political order in itself.

However, at the same time, in a state whose legitimacy depends upon the consent of the governed, students must not be manipulated or treated dishonestly by removing their capacity to *choose* to protest or rebel against, or even to reject, the dominant political structure. Without the ability to choose not to consent, consent ceases to have meaning.<sup>5</sup> Students must therefore be initiated into political life without being indoctrinated into it. When faced with genuine alternatives, citizens must be able to reaffirm their political allegiance on their own in a context that allows them to refuse assent. This is only possible when rejection of the political order is a genuine cognitive possibility. Civic education must, first and foremost, create citizens who are educated into a system that allows for rejection. It should teach that the power of the state is neither primary nor absolute. Traditional descriptions of liberalism as that system in which the individual is prior to society are important not simply because they postulate an actual pre-political human experience. They are important because descriptions of persons as primary highlight the role of the possibility of rejection of any particular political order. The primacy of the individual represents the primacy of genuine choice.

The notion of pre-political persons is an outgrowth of the social contract tradition. Although other descriptions may also be adequate to describe the possibility of choice, the social contract is still a familiar and useful metaphor to help agents understand the process of political consent. The social contract describes agents, under a condition of informed consent, agreeing to the terms of society, in exchange for the benefits received by the agreement of other agents to equal terms. It forms the foundation of political legitimacy since, under a social contract, all those under political authority have agreed to be governed under the terms by which they are being governed. Society is, according to this tradition, a *quid pro quo*, but

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<sup>5</sup> Here we are faced with the legacy of Plato's *Crito*. In this dialogue, the Platonic Socrates, after having been condemned to death by an Athenian jury in *Apology*, claims that he will accept his punishment because he has tacitly assented to state authority by accepting the security and education the city had offered him throughout his life. If Socrates' adherence to his condemnation is to be understood as a pre-Kantian argument towards duty, one might make the claim that his argument holds some force. However, if his argument is to be understood that political authority, once agreed to, can never be denied, then his argument is inherently anti-liberal and has no place here. For a different but very helpful approach to liberalism's relationship to Plato's *Crito* see Feinberg (1998, pp. 110–113).

it is also to be understood as a conscious determination of the political will to adhere to rules because they are to be regarded as both appropriate and of continual and justifiable worth. In this regard, the social contract is real. It is representative of actual cognitive processes of actual persons in the actual world.

When the social contract is understood as such, the process of assent is not to be understood as some pre-political or hypothetical event that creates society. Instead, it can be understood as the process of particular agents choosing to declare their status as citizens by *perpetually* assenting to the rules of community or, in some sense, accepting the authority of the polity to punish the agent after the rules have been broken. It is the perpetual nature of assent that is important here. The social contract can be seen as a metaphor for the phenomenological experience of choosing to obey or disregard established rules or customs at any moment in an agent's life. A citizen is faced with the prospect of renewing the social contract any time, for example, he or she is deliberating whether to wait for the streetlight to change before crossing the street. When agents deliberate as to whether or not they have the patience to wait for the light to change, or when they engage in internal discourse regarding the fact that no cars are visible while they wait at the street corner, what the agents really do is ask themselves whether this particular political regulation should apply to them, in this particular situation, at this particular time. The very fact that there is a question as to whether or not an agent will obey the traffic signal, is an indication that the agent has the capacity to remove him or herself from the boundaries of political regulations.

The modern social contract cannot be understood as inherently continuous. In other words, breaking the social contract is not, as Hobbes presents it, the total destruction of political society. It is quite possible to step outside of, and then rejoin political society through renewed acceptance, even if it is not always possible to do so in every situation. Should a pedestrian ignore regulations and cross in the middle of the street, the same pedestrian is regarded as having an illegitimate claim against the car that might hit the pedestrian, unless the car is traveling at an unreasonable speed. When the rules that the traffic light signifies are ignored, the *quid pro quo* aspect of the social contract – the expectation that one might cross a street safely – has been negated. From the perspective of political theory, even a minor infraction such as crossing against the light does represent some deterioration of political order. It does not, however, represent total destruction of the state.

One important reason for understanding the social contract as fragmented and not continuous is the disappearance of the right to exit.

Traditionally, the theory of tacit consent is supported by a citizen's ability to leave political society at any time. However, in the modern world, there is no place left to go; all habitable lands are under the authority of some governmental structure. At most, agents may choose between similar or dissimilar regimes – that is, if relevant governments permit immigration and emigration – but humans may no longer choose to leave political society in itself. For the social contract to remain a viable metaphor for assent into political institution, it must take the obsolescence of the right to exit into account.

Instances of choice in which the agent is required to consent to or reject the political order are innumerable. This is not to mention, of course, the traditional modes of participation such as electoral participation. As a consequence, citizens who are to be educated into a liberal state must be initiated into a life of choice – a life of rejecting and assenting to different possibilities. Civic education ought to be based on teaching critical thinking. It should cultivate that which is traditionally termed practical rationality, and educate towards the possibilities that students can understand, perhaps, in some non-technical form, modal logic. Citizens need to be able to imagine possible worlds. They ought to be familiar with the possibilities inherent in the conditional and be able to ask themselves genuinely what the world would be like if they chose to reject or affirm any particular political ideology. In this regard, the liberal ideal is a form of existentialism. Students must be educated as if radical choice were a possibility even though radical choice is clearly beyond human capabilities.<sup>6</sup> This is why existentialism is a form of the liberal *ideal*. That radical choice is described as if it were possible even though it is not, is an important part of the dual nature of liberalism. Liberalism is a theory

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<sup>6</sup> Radical choice implies that all options are available to an agent. Such choice is, of course, impossible. First, a person cannot choose, for example, to turn him or herself into a duck. This is physically impossible. Second, agents can only choose from the options of which they are made aware. A tribal shaman who has had no contact with or knowledge of the Western world could not decide to convert and assume the role of Catholic priest, since, under this description, he is unaware that Catholicism exists. Third, a woman, at least for the time being, is also forbidden from becoming a Catholic priest, since currently, the priesthood is exclusively open to men (a woman is also prevented from becoming a bachelor). Fourth, in many instances, agents who are aware of certain choices, who are physically capable of making such choices, and who are permitted through regulation to make particular choices, may feel as if such a choice is not “real” because of the social constraints placed on them by others. For example, it is doubtful as to whether a forty-year old Amish woman, who is married, has three children and lives a traditionally Amish lifestyle, could genuinely choose to be a rock and roll musician as her profession. Such a choice – for her – would be “unfathomable” even though, rationally, she might understand that she is “free” to do so at any time.

whose design seeks an inherently unachievable consequent. Political ideals provide directionality, and legislation infuses them with practicalities.

### TEACHING COGNITIVE CONFLICT

In order to preserve the capacity for choice, I suggest that students be educated into what I call “cognitive conflict.” Cognitive conflict is to be defined as that mental state in which an agent is capable of choosing, recognizes that he or she is capable of choosing, and is aware that he or she must choose between competing options, with a simultaneous awareness that such choice does not guarantee an easing of an emotional state once a choice has been made, and that such choices necessarily lead to more conflict and not necessarily to any resolution.

Education towards cognitive conflict is a means of educating towards criteria-recognition. Students are to be educated as such because, as agents, they are responsible for searching for a rational order through which they can choose between competing options. This is a process, an ideal, imposed on the mind. As Richard Paul writes:

The mind spontaneously but uncritically invests itself with epistemological authority. The process of learning to think critically is therefore an extraordinary process that cultivates the capacities merely potential in human thought, and develops them at the expense spontaneously activated from within and reinforced by normal socialization. It is not normal and inevitable, or even common, for a mind to discipline itself within a rational perspective and direct itself towards rational rather than egocentric beliefs, practices, and values. (Paul, 1989, p. 35)

Critical thinking, then, is the move away from the purely egoistic rational, but not universal, point of view, but one that relies on a wide range of elements. The search for a rational order may be emotional at base; it may include arbitrary elements, or passions, or preferences, but it must allow for some means by which a decision-making procedure can be gleamed and defended, even if the defense must be reconstructed after the fact with great effort (Weinstein, 2003, chapter 6). This is why, from the perspective of a political theorist, the contemporary emphasis on critical thinking is so important (Weinstein, 1998). If taught correctly, critical thinking is a major component of education towards cognitive conflict. It teaches students how to examine their own conclusions and how to deliberate effectively as individuals and as members of a group.<sup>7</sup> It also

<sup>7</sup> The journal *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* devoted two special issues to the role of the community of inquiry and critical thinking. Collectively, the twelve articles offer a good look at some of the major issues in the social aspect of critical thinking. See: Summer 1997 (Vol. XVI No. 4) and Autumn 1997 (Vol. XVII, No. 1).

teaches students how to recognize governing criteria within different disciplines or domains, even when the nature of such criteria differs as much as the disciplines or domains do (Paul, 1989, p. 26).

However, to be effective, critical thinking cannot be reduced to mere informal logic. It ought to be understood as something more than that. The ability to think critically is the ability to develop contextually dependent criteria in light of one's own experience, while taking into account the participation of the community of inquiry as well as the community of experts. Christopher Tindale's recent "rhetorical model" of argumentation can be understood as an account of critical thinking that restores the importance of the arguer (or author) and the audience (Tindale, 1999). This is a very important shift for our purposes; it recognizes the loss of neutrality in argumentation. The audience necessarily shares a different perspective than the arguer, and neither can be privileged since joint communication – articulation and comprehension – are the goals of the process. It also acknowledges motive, craft, and community, forcing critical thinkers to understand their activity as bridging social divisions. Critical thinking has more than just logic at its core. It contains elements of caring thinking and creative thinking as well (Lipman, 1995, p. 6). It is social in nature, and is contextual and sensitive to perspective. It requires consideration of the audience, and the creation of communicative tools.

There are of course numerous debates as to how one is to teach critical thinking. The most relevant for our purposes is whether one is to teach it through the disciplines, or whether one is to teach it as a discipline in itself. (McPeck, 1990) There is a wide array of literature defending both sides, and, for the time being, I will claim simply that both perspectives hold strong positions. Students will not learn critical thinking if the only exposure they have is via isolated critical thinking classes. These classes tend to emphasize informal logic out of context and sacrifice the sophistication of CT for the sake of excessive argument analysis.<sup>8</sup> John McPeck convincingly articulates that argument analysis constitutes only the most minimal part of our everyday reasoning (McPeck, 1990, p. 5). Harvey Siegel adds that critical thinking is not about "pure skills" alone (Siegel, 1988, p. 8). Critical thinking cannot teach pluralism unless reasoning is

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<sup>8</sup> For an excellent example of a textbook that takes shifting context seriously, see Janik, Allan; Reike, Richard, and Toulmin, Stephen, *An Introduction to Reasoning* (2nd edn.). This is a more difficult textbook to teach, in part because there aren't enough examples, but mostly because it leaves much more up to the instructor than the average critical thinking textbook does. However, this is intended as a compliment. In my opinion, a good critical thinking textbook should not be a substitute for a good teacher. Critical thinking is too fluid to be a primarily textbook-based enterprise. The textbook is, of course, founded upon Toulmin's influential book *The Uses of Argument*.

itself understood as contextual. Consequently, disciplines must themselves emphasize the role of conflict in their methods and conclusions. Only in that way is critical thinking going to be a major influence in people's lives: "This aim of argumentation is not purely intellectual adherence, but includes the inciting of action or creating a disposition to act, which in turn involves attention not to the faculties . . . but to the whole person" (Tindale, 1999, p. 70). At the same time, critical thinking classes are necessary in that they tie together numerous types of reasoning in different disciplines. Students are well served when critical thinking classes can show them that they are doing *similar* operations in vastly different fields.

In civic education, we teach cognitive conflict by teaching controversies and by exposing students to varying perspectives, by having them choose between alternatives, or by having them see that two perspectives can both be true simultaneously. Critical thinking is a strong component towards teaching a "world-view" (Siegel, 1988, p. 12). Why, for example, can we not teach students to understand that nuclear energy provides both an important source of energy for nations with minimal access to fossil fuels *and* that relying on nuclear energy runs a tremendous risk to those same clients? Both are true. Or, more complexly, why not teach that Christopher Columbus' encounter with North America in 1492 is seen as both a great advance for Western Europeans *and* a great tragedy for indigenous peoples? Again, both are true. Of course, one might charge that any action that oppresses others can never be considered an "advance," but the term "advance" is itself contextual. There are economic advances, scientific advances, and moral advances. There are no advances *simpliciter*. To challenge the legitimacy of using Columbus' voyage as an advance is to challenge what counts as a legitimate perspective and not what counts as an advance.

To be educated into cognitive conflict is to be educated with an eye towards participating in this very debate. In this particular controversy, students will have to take their own moral stands. Students at very young ages are sophisticated enough to appreciate some of the consequences of their decisions. Some studies suggest that children are able to take the perspective of the other as early as six years old, and others suggest that children can empathize as early as three years old (Hoffman, 1977; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner and Chapman, 1992; Sulman and Meklet, 1994; Minnow, 1997).

The examples regarding Columbus and nuclear power lead the teacher to some possible assignments. The teacher might ask how the student would feel if he or she were a native North American, perhaps in an essay, and then contrast the answer with how he or she might feel as a

European in a parallel essay; essays likely will articulate empathy and expressions of sadness or regret. The inclusion of writing assignments is essential. I will return to this fact in a moment.<sup>9</sup> The more practice the student has in adopting the perspective of the other, the more the presence of the multiplicity of others will be felt in personal deliberation and in the search for the adequate criteria that are the prerequisite for rational choice. It is neither impossible nor uncommon for students, or anyone, to temporarily shift allegiances. Hannah Arendt called this process “visiting” (Biesta, 2001, pp. 396–398). Adam Smith, whose *Theory of Moral Sentiments* inspires much of my work, saw this practice – this *sympathy* – as the process that unifies communities and humanity (Weinstein, 2001).<sup>10</sup> Martha Minnow, citing a wide variety of sources, writes “for strategic purposes we may choose to affiliate along one or a few lines of group membership . . . the American achievement is not the multicultural society, it is the multicultural individual” (Minnow, 1997, p. 39).

Notice in the writing assignments mentioned above, that expressions of “sadness” and “regret” are regarded as rational consequences even though they are emotions. This is a very important point. Emotions are legitimate pieces of evidence, and they are perfectly appropriate consequences in themselves, especially since critical thinking is intertwined with creative and caring thinking. Emotions are themselves rational (Weinstein, forthcoming). It is not the case that critical thinking divides the world along axes that separate logical from emotive thought (Tindale, 1999, pp. 72–73). To do so would be to reduce people to computational machines and to destroy essential parts of their humanity.

The example of nuclear power introduces students to difficulties in public policy decision-making. Students are being trained to participate in such decisions, and they should know the complexities involved. Students can be made to understand that there is often more than one acceptable policy decision – even from only one given perspective. There is often more than one answer to any given problem – this is pluralism’s fundamental advance – and each answer represents one or many perspectives, but not all. Students can become sophisticated enough to understand that some choices are right for some communities while other choices are wrong for others, that sometimes, all available choices may be perfectly acceptable, and that some options may be equal with no clear way of

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* special issue on “Critical Thinking and Composition.” Summer 1998 (Vol. XVII, No. 4).

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that Martha Nussbaum cites *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as the “central inspiration” for *Poetic Justice* (Nussbaum, 1995, p. xvi). Our common foundation is one of many reasons why her work is pervasive throughout my own.

choosing between them. And, of course, in some scenarios, there may be no acceptable choices at all. Life is complicated. Our system of education should reflect this fact. Cognitive conflict recognizes the non-neutralist liberal structure of rationality.

### EDUCATING ABOUT THE OTHER

As a component of civic education, cognitive conflict is the process of educating individuals to both see the other and, as much as possible, to see as the other. It is an education in perspectival epistemology. With pluralism, then, comes a shift in the nature of civic education. Traditionally, civic education is taught through teaching history and government. Students are taught major events in the development of the state, as well as the process by which governmental decisions are made. These are important elements of any education, and must be part of any curriculum that teaches democracy. However, when history, as it is currently taught, is the center of civic education, civic education is used to teach the perspective of the state. National history tends to justify the actions of the state as a whole. The state becomes anthropomorphized and, in the process, becomes the most important person, overshadowing the citizens and those with whom the state interacts. There are counter examples to this, but they are not usually found in history curricula in the pre-college years. James Loewen offers a compelling and convincing account of the nationalism inherent in American high school history textbooks. He shows that history textbooks are not designed to actually teach history. They are, rather, designed to teach “American exceptionalism”: the perspective that the United States of America is the pinnacle of history, and that all of the nation’s actions have been good, noble, and graced by God (Loewen, 1994, p. 89).

There are, it seems, two different conceptions of History. First, there is the sophisticated, complex, perspectival historiography that presents nothing as certain. This is the discipline inhabited by professionals in the field. In contrast, though, there is history as the collection of two-dimensional morality plays that are foisted upon younger students, suggesting both certainty and moral righteousness. As Richard Paul remarks: “Students are more often exposed to the finished products of professional historians rather than to problems and data which will enable them to engage in historical thinking of their own. The result is that students all too often have virtually no sense of what it is to actually engage in historical thinking . . .” (Paul, 1989, p. 41).

It is too simplistic, however, to suggest that the latter is just *bad* history, since much of the nationalism in the American history curricula is both intentional and publicly defended. This History does its job well. It quite successfully convinces students that America *is* exceptional and that all other nations and peoples are somehow beneath the United States. For our purposes, this approach ought to be rejected – not because it is right or wrong – but simply because it does not support pluralism. This is yet another example of the rejection of neutralist liberalisms. Pluralism is a value and it trumps others.

In a modern pluralist democracy, civic education should not solely teach the perspective of the state; it should privilege the perspective of the other. It should teach students how they can understand their fellow human beings, and how to be sensitive to the conditions of the lives of others, the rituals that they participate in, and the decisions that they make. Civic education in a pluralist state should be primarily about people, not governments. It teaches understanding, and understanding leads to both tolerance and acceptance of others. Tolerance and acceptance of others leads to a healthy and stable pluralism, a more ethical governing population, and, as a consequence, a more fair, inclusive, and just state.

I suggest that the core of civic education ought to be a curriculum based primarily on literature, art, and other humanities based upon people's lived-experience. Novels, biographies, and autobiographies teach, not only people's lives, but their methods of reasoning as well. It is thus no accident that historically the rise of the novel "coincided with, and supported, the rise of modern democracy" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 94). Martha Nussbaum writes:

Reading [novels like these] makes us acknowledge the equal humanity of members of social classes other than our own, makes us acknowledge workers as deliberating subjects with complex loves and aspirations and a rich inner world. It makes us see their poverty and their oppressed labor conditions in relation to those emotions and aspirations. Its insistence on the complexity of the lives of individuals and the salience of individual differences discourages simple utopian political solutions and suggests an approach that both focuses on freedom and leaves room for diversity. But it is well aware that freedom has material conditions and can be strangled by material inequality. In its insistent focus on these facts, it inspires compassion and passion for justice. (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 34)

Through artistic work, students gain access into the minds of others and learn to understand people's actions by, in some sense, becoming those who the students read about. Good literature establishes a deep connection between the reader and the characters that, as much as is humanly possible, makes the boundary between the self and others permeable. Good music allows the transmission of intense emotion and layered sentiment. Good painting allows a community to see as an individual does. In painting,

for example, only cubism purports a universal point of view since it suggests the possibility of seeing all sides of a person at once, but even this is just physical universalism. The emotional narratives inherent in the expressionistic elements of cubism are all perspectival.

Art is intrinsically *about* otherness, including the otherness within ourselves. Arthur Danto emphasizes this in his re-articulation of the notion that art is the “mirror” of nature. He writes:

Hamlet and Socrates, though in praise and deprecation respectively, spoke of art as a mirror held up to nature. As with many disagreements in attitude, this one has a factual basis. Socrates saw mirrors as but reflecting what we can already see, as art, insofar as mirror-like, yields idle accurate duplications of the appearances of things, and is of no cognitive benefit whatever. Hamlet, more acutely, recognized a remarkable feature of reflecting surfaces, namely that they show us what we could not otherwise perceive – our own face and form – and so art, insofar as it is mirror-like, reveals us to ourselves, and is, even by Socratic criteria, of some cognitive utility after all. (Danto, 1964, p. 571)

Both art understood as a reproduction of the world as it really is, and art understood as a reproduction of the world as we cannot see it, allows us cognitive advantages. Perspectivalism is often the attempt to see from an Archimedean point of view, but as discussed above, this may be the *ideal* goal, not the achievable one. The tension between Danto’s Socratic and Shakespearean mirrors is the tension between the dominant and the marginalized, the traditional and the avant-garde, the aggressive and the invisible.

In discussing the role of the arts in civic education, there is a tendency to understand art too narrowly. In *Poetic Justice*, for example, Nussbaum is quite exclusionary in her account of how “literature” can be pedagogically useful. She criticizes the use of other “historical works,” including the biography, claiming that history – or biography, in this case – shows us what has actually happened, whereas works of literary art show us what *might have* happened. It is curious that Nussbaum neglects *autobiography* altogether. There is no mention of it at all, and one can only assume that it has been subsumed under the more general biographical genre. On this, Nussbaum and I disagree. First, it is far from certain that biographies (and autobiographies) do not invite the reader into the lives of the subject; an eloquent biography can be as engaging as an eloquent novel. Second, to exclude autobiography is to disallow the possibility of individuals to speak for themselves. Why should it be that marginalized or historical people are only assumed to influence the civic world by presenting experiences as not actually their own, or as altered from what actually happened? Why must marginalized peoples only be permitted to speak through an advocate? Wouldn’t this contribute to further marginalization and further distancing of historical attachment to the present?

For Nussbaum, it is the use of the imagination that makes the novel worthwhile (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 4). This is a noble goal, and the imagination is the right focal point for any discussion of otherness; I myself emphasize the importance of modalities above. However, prioritizing the possible over the actual by allowing *only* for the ‘might have been’ seems to delegitimize actual people in actual circumstances, and to limit the power of the arts. It privileges the ideal over the actual in everyday practice – a common fault in many liberal theories.

Three quite unexpected books illustrate the process of educating otherness well, particularly in regards to the juxtaposition of human and non-human otherness. I suggest that these books are unexpected since they fall into the traditional canon, and otherness is often regarded as the purview of newcomers. The three works in question are: Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Victor Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and the epic of *Gilgamesh*. For Melville, the curious process of alternating story with encyclopedic chapters about whales and the history of whaling helps one understand not only the psyche of Ahab, but also the patterns of the whale. Melville teaches his readers that to know someone, we must know *about* them. Hugo’s masterpiece shifts the reader’s sensibilities by making Notre Dame cathedral a major character. Ironically, it is the human characters that treat one another as objects – perhaps even more so than they objectify the cathedral. Eventually, Quasimodo becomes the most human and the most sympathetic character in Hugo’s novel, even though his most erotic experience is with the bells of Notre Dame and he regards being buried alive clutching *La Esmerelda*’s corpse as equivalent to having a relationship with her. In an environment of total objectification, it is no surprise that Pierre Grignoire’s most committed romantic relationship is with a goat. *Gilgamesh* continues these themes. What is noteworthy about this story, however, is that the epic hero manages to see from the perspective of others, only at the last moment when he is gazing at the city walls. He brutalizes his people through work and rape, and he ignores the pleading of his friend Enkidu who dies as a result of his arrogance. He never, for a moment, considers the death of his friend as a loss to that friend, only as a loss to himself.

Each of these works move characters from isolated individuals to people with *brief flirtations* with otherness. Each allows the students to enter into the perspective of all the relevant characters and then see how each character neglects to understand others. *Gilgamesh* ends:

He looked at the walls,  
 Awed at the heights,  
 His people had achieved  
 And for a moment – just a moment –

All that lay behind him  
Passed from view.  
(Mason, 1972, p. 92)

I emphasize the *brief flirtation* of access to otherness because theorists often neglect the ephemeral nature of social connection. There is truth in the liberal world-view that we are individuals and somehow fundamentally separate from others. But there is also truth in the critique of neutralist liberal theory that perspectives are, at least in some fundamental sense, communally constructed. Most art is the attempt, more often than not, of capturing that moment of brief flirtation in a temporally constant form (the notable exceptions are non-recorded performance arts). Art is a record of human experience, not human deed. Thus, the opera singer's voice allows an almost ecstatic emotional transference – a connection with otherness that is fleeting but one with lasting consequences. Or, the voyeuristic intrusion of Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* becomes participatory in the pull of each member's line of sight. Not one figure looks at the viewer in Van Gogh's painting, and the viewer is forced to follow the figures eyes wherever they lead. Each of these experiences is short lived, and necessarily so, since true connections with otherness must always be negotiated with our own physical and psychological integrity. We pretend to be the other, but this is, of course, only pretend.

Teaching the visual arts is also essential to developing an understanding of the other because it involves both the imagination and the suspension of disbelief. Martha Minnow observes:

Cultivating greater appreciation for the possibilities of the arts – and greater opportunities for public participation in the creation as well as the appreciation of art – may be one of the most significant ways to enhance people's abilities to be for others as well as themselves. It is through imaginative identification with others unlike oneself that art can transport; it is through the suspension of disbelief required to engage with the fiction of theater that people can discover their own deep sensibilities through temporary connections with others unlike themselves. (Minnow, 1997, p. 103)

To observe and understand a painting or a photograph is, in some important sense, to see through the eyes of someone else. When we look at a Picasso or a Rembrandt we become, for a brief moment, them in some important sense. To know the biography of Camille Claudel, and then to see, in person, her exquisite sculpture *L'age de Mur*, in which she depicts the feeling of loss and helplessness in Rodin's abandonment of her (at least as she perceives it), we learn something essential both about her and about the human condition. Few pieces of art are as honest and as informative about the pain that we cause others. History as presented in American high schools does not teach pain. At best, it only reports it. Noticing the pain

of others – especially the undeserved pain – is a major step towards identifying and, perhaps, rectifying, injustice. Loewen explains how history textbooks explicitly reject the use of certain Vietnam-war era photographs because they are violent and unsettling, despite the fact that such photographs are among the most well-known images in the world. He discusses, specifically, the famous photos of Quong Duc, the first monk to set himself on fire as a form of protest against the war, Kim Phuc, the young girl running naked after stripping off her burning clothes, and Nguyen Ngoc Loan, the police chief shooting an alleged Viet Cong sympathizer in the head. These photographs violate textbook taboos. No textbook, he argues “ever shows anyone naked and none shows such suffering even in times of war” (Loewen, 1995, p. 243). The textbook authors and publishers reject art – or powerfully compelling art, at least – on the grounds that visual imagery is as effective as any means to communicate the humanity of history and civil discourse, and thus the messages conveyed by art, and by extension, the art itself, must be controlled and managed. Loewen quotes a student asserting, “To show a photograph of one naked girl crying after she has been napalmed changes the *entire meaning* of that war to a high school student” (Loewen, 1995, p. 243, italics mine). Communicating such a message would certainly be a challenge to American exceptionalism, and a major victory for a pluralistic world-view in which each person’s pain is relevant.

Music is also essential in learning the perspective of the other. Nations and cultures develop their own musical styles, representing their histories and their inner conflicts. Wagner teaches his listeners a great deal about German self-identity and the role of *Kultur* in the German experience. Reggae communicates, in no uncertain terms, the struggles of the Jamaicans through their poverty, the culture of the shantytown, and the important role of Rastafarianism in personal liberation and the search for self-esteem.<sup>11</sup> The Blues, the truly American music style, is deeply informative as to the place of the feeling of alienation among Black Amer-

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<sup>11</sup> In movies, music, combined with the visual arts, has offered numerous opportunities for outsiders to get an even more vivid picture of the conditions in which different peoples live. The Jamaican movie *The Harder They Come*, the semi-autobiographical story of the rise of reggae musician Jimmy Cliff, provides many subtle clues as to the power of liberation music in the ordinary lives of Jamaicans. It also represents an important moment of unity between the viewer and the movie characters. The first half of the movie contains English subtitles, whereas the second half does not. The movie makers understood that Jamaican English was foreign enough to non-Jamaicans, that most native English speakers would have difficulties understanding the dialect, but after forty-five minutes of the film, it is expected that the audience has grown used to the language and can understand the dialect unaided.

icans. Few voices are as expressive as the voice of Jazz and Blues singer Billie Holiday. With a vocal range far smaller than her contemporary Ella Fitzgerald, Holiday manages to communicate her personal pain, her alienation, her hope, and her personal search for love despite the pain that she herself, and others, have put upon her. For example, the ballad *Strange Fruit*, generally regarded as Holiday's signature song, is a tragic account of the lynching of blacks by whites during the first half of the twentieth century, who, when swinging dead, become "strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees." The lyrics of the song are:

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,  
 Blood on the leaves and blood on the root,  
 Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,  
 Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,  
 The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,  
 Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,  
 And the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,  
 For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,  
 For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,  
 Here is a strange and bitter crop.

The power of the lyrics overshadows the fact that it is not the words, but Holiday's *voice* that infuses the song with power. Holiday would repeatedly assert that the song was written especially for her even though it was not. But her ownership over the song, and her command of the emotional strings the song pulled, were so powerful that many, in order to defuse the song's – and Holiday's – power, claimed that Holiday did not know the meaning of the lyrics. Critics suggested that her vocal skills obfuscated her ignorance. David Margolick supplies us with an in-depth examination of the controversy and convincingly argues that it is unreasonable to assume that Holiday did not understand what she was singing. Biographical evidence supports the view that she was quite aware of its meaning (Margolick, 2000). What this example shows is that music can communicate, quite expertly, the experience of otherness painfully enough that the emotion projected can itself be interpreted as a threat. Holiday, a black woman before the American civil rights movement, an ex-prostitute and a drug user, had too much power when she sang. Her critics sought to silence her effectiveness by attacking her intelligence, her agency, and her self-identity. They attempted to destroy the art by delegitimizing the artist.

Of course, not everyone has the physical capacities that Holiday had – discipline and persistence are not sufficient to create such a sound as hers.

A more democratic mode of communication must therefore be found. I remarked earlier that one should emphasize writing in educating towards cognitive conflict. Here we see one important reason why. Students are being educated to participate in the process of governance, and writing can be more powerful and can communicate better at a much lower level of expertise than singing requires (although I am sure that exceptions can be found). Writing also allows for more revision and self-conscious attention that spontaneous dialogue usually does. We want students to share their own perspectives and their own experiences, both as students and as adults. And we educate so that they can pass on these skills to their peers and to the next generations. Teaching writing is a way of placing priority on the ability of a person, to not only reflect upon the voices of others, but also to discover and express his or her own voice. It is not enough to make students passive voyeurs in the lives of others. Students must become contributors and they must tell their own stories. The rhetorical choices required by composition mirror the political choices people make throughout their lives. The ability to focus, reason, know one's audience, develop concepts and a vocabulary, and provide coherent narratives are skills that permeate all civic activities. The composition process is as much steeped in the tensions between individual and community as any form of political adjudication.

Composition theorists are engaged in a discourse regarding the role of heterogeneous voices within groups, and how such voices work together to form a kind of consensus in collaborative learning. Such a discussion is useful for our purposes because it highlights that homogeneity and consensus are not identical, and that both are to be distinguished from a 'productive dissensus'. Such theorists argue that students need group interaction in order to be introduced to the larger 'human conversation' and that the difficulties in writing do indeed parallel the difficulties in reading (Bruffee, 1984; Bruffee, 1995, chapter two). Finally, in his work on "dissensus", John Trimbur anticipates the conclusion that harmony must be rejected as a model for justice (Trimbur, 1989).

This tension between the individual and the community is found in all creative arts. Not just writing, but drawing, sculpting, dancing, and musicianship, are all training for competence in expression. Finally, since otherness is of the utmost importance in a pluralist civic education, the better able students are to portray their own standpoint, the closer others can come to grasping it. The creative arts contribute to the realization of individuals and the community they constitute and influence. Shirley Brice Heath, in a ten-year study, showed that arts-education programs have a greater impact on learning and civic participation than sports

and community service programs. Students engaged in the arts had more comfort with abstract ideas, hypotheses, investigating possibilities, and to freely expressing their own ideas (Heath, 1999).

Understanding the role of the arts in civic education adds more fuel to the debate regarding state funding for the arts. In America, conservative activists have put pressure on the government to reduce, if not abandon, public subsidies of artists. They claim that art is a purely private matter, and object to certain types of art that they claim to find offensive. The debate surrounding the “homoerotic” photography of Robert Mapplethorpe is a prime example. However, given this understanding of civic education, it becomes clear that the public has a compelling interest to continue (and, in fact, increase) public funding for the arts. Any art, even if deemed offensive, has a relevant purpose in that it represents how the world is seen by individual people and by groups. In this case, the charge of offensiveness stems primarily from homophobia, and, as will be discussed shortly, the state has no compelling interest to cater to those positions that violate the fundamental beliefs of the liberal commitment to equality.

Several points of qualification must be made clear. First, to teach the arts as a component of civic education is not to suggest that we should abandon teaching art for the sake of beauty, or, even, for its own sake. It is only to suggest that the experience-centered humanities are complex enough that they can serve political purposes as well. Nussbaum never makes this important point, but she does approach it in her observation that children’s stories and nursery school rhymes help children see that “not everything in human life has a use” and that a rhyme, for example, may serve “no end beyond itself” and is “good and delightful for itself alone” (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 42).

Second, teachers ought to be vigilant as to what art and literature we teach. Good curricula are inclusive. They represent the multiplicity of voices both within and outside a community. Included material must all be of equally high quality, and the teacher must be sensitive to the fluid nature of the criteria governing that which is to be regarded as quality in different contexts. To teach one set of voices with poorer material than the rest is to put forth the message that the people whose voices we hear are less important, or, perhaps, even inferior to the people whose voices are represented by better quality work.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Curriculum development is a complex issue and, as such, any curriculum may be loaded with hidden messages that, perhaps inadvertently, propagate oppressive institutions. For a detailed discussion of the nature of subtle oppression via methods and content of education, see Michael Apple’s *Ideology and Curriculum*.

Third, one common method of teaching literature is to ask students to see themselves in the story. This is a way of seeking commonality and of searching for the universal in a work of art. This is an important skill to be cultivated, but only initially so. In a truly pluralistic state, students ought to learn to respect and appreciate that which has nothing to do with them. They can be taught to understand and value incommensurable traditions in addition to the traditions that “speak” to them. In always teaching towards the universal, students are being taught to be solipsistic. Solipsism runs counter to pluralism and must be responded to whenever it is encountered in the classroom. Nussbaum, in *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, writes that literature is important because sympathetic readers might exclaim “That might have been me, and that is how I should want to be treated” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 91). She then widens her claim suggesting that readers might also realize that what has happened might happen to “someone one loves” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 95). Although this is a common pedagogical method, it is problematic. In a pluralist state, one cannot limit sympathy to oneself or those that one loves, and it is not enough to suggest that something is terrible because “it might have been me.” Tragedy, pain and oppression are bad because they happen to *someone* whatever our connections to them, or lack thereof. Happiness, luck, and justice are good because they happen to *someone* regardless of our connection. This is what it means to respect personhood, nothing less. The same failure can be found in Rawls’ original position. If pain is only bad – or rather, if we can only know that pain is bad – on the condition that we might be the recipients, then there is no room, by definition, for interaction with otherness.

Fourth, it may be argued that teaching the perspective of the other is to encourage factionalism and not political unity. However, such an objection suggests that one cannot teach otherness alongside unity. It represents a limited understanding of social interaction. As Martha Minnow writes, “Exposures of the plurality, even with seemingly homogeneous cultures, also dislodges the mistaken assumption that unity is necessary for stability. Associations, subgroups, can be defended as democratic bulwarks against centralized power” (Minnow, 1997, p. 142).

Finally, and this requires emphasis, arts education is not the sole form of education towards cognitive conflict. Other disciplines must be taught as well, even, for example, physical education or sports in general. Richard Paul makes an interesting argument that “the best critical thinking now goes on in team sports.” He writes: “After every football game the players look at the films, critically analyze the moves they made, and go back to fundamentals. Why? Because everyone on the team wants to be there,

wants to learn, wants to be critiqued, values the critique, recognizes that critique as essential to improvement” (Paul, 1989, p. 47).

## TWO PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEMS

Teaching pluralism means teaching about the other, and this necessitates teaching varying perspectives. Thus, the pluralist encounters two difficulties. The first is that of the possibility of teaching inexcusable options. Are teachers required to teach *every* perspective, even those that are regarded by some as offensive or just plain wrong? For example, is it necessary, in the name of pluralism, to teach the point of view that the holocaust did not happen whenever we teach that it did? Further, are teachers to suggest that two plus two is not equal to four while they simultaneously instruct students that it is? No. The holocaust did happen, regardless of the anti-Semitic revisionist arguments to the contrary. And, of course, two plus two *is* equal to four. Of this, we can be certain. But how are teachers to separate these particular situations from those – like the examples of Columbus and nuclear energy – which demand diverse explanations and instruction in varying points of view?

There is no easy solution to this difficulty. A clue, however, can be found in the different purposes of education, and in the distinction between civic education and what I will, at least tentatively, call scientific education.<sup>13</sup> We must teach that two plus two is equal to four because we must build things, create medicine, and perform surgery. When two plus two is not regarded as equal to four, our bridges will fall and our penicillin will cease to work. There is an element of “concrete” falsifiability in our immediate scientific truths.

Of course, Richard Paul reminds us that critical thinking and other well-reasoned forms of argument can be used to justify “prejudice, narrow-mindedness, intellectual arrogance and outright ignorance” (Paul, 1989, p. 24). So, what of the person who claims that it is a scientific fact that the holocaust did not take place? How are teachers to challenge this notion? Again, a clue lies in our earlier discussion regarding the anti-prejudicial commitment of liberalism. Were we to carefully investigate revisionist claims that the holocaust did not happen, we would discover that it is based on the premise that all Jews are liars, that Jews seek control of the world and that the Jewish voice should be dismissed. Such claims run counter

<sup>13</sup> My notion of scientific education should be understood differently from Harvey Siegel’s, who sees it as educating towards science in the disciplinary sense. However, our two senses share similar goals: the emphasis of pluralism, character traits, and the philosophy of science, for example, see Siegel’s *Educating Reason*, pp. 100–113.

to the non-neutral liberal commitment to the fundamental equality of all people. It dismisses the voice of the group *qua* ethnicity, and this is anti-liberal. The state cannot teach pluralism against its commitment to teach pluralism. In doing so, it would contradict its own purpose. Of course, should this happen, once the state is no longer committed to teaching pluralism, then it would no longer be obligated to consider teaching any opposing perspectives, and it would not be required to teach the view that the holocaust never occurred. In either case, revisionist theories need not be taught.<sup>14</sup>

The latter example, that of the holocaust, is clearly a political question. To return to the first example, claiming two plus two equals five does not violate principles of equality. It only violates functionality. What are the criteria for determining that which is scientific education, or education that admits of only one perspective, and that which is not? This question highlights a fundamental difference between civic and scientific education: their core notion of truths. That we can no longer build bridges or create medicine without accurate mathematics is indicative of the role of science in describing how the world actually is. Science is based on the search for objective empirical information and is committed to the notion that at least in some important way, there is a world independent of how we experience it. It is also based upon a commitment to the “best answer” so far. A community of experts can rule out the viability of certain answers. They cannot, however, rule out the challenges to that position in the proper context.

This is not to suggest that science is neutral. It is not. We have learned from Thomas Kuhn, among others, that scientific research is itself subsumed within paradigms and that there are numerous coexisting paradigms that may be incommensurable (Kuhn, 1996). Furthermore, Paul Feyerabend, in his article “How to Defend Society Against Science”, remarks that science too is an ideology, and that “science has now become as oppressive as the ideologies it had once to fight” (Feyerabend, 1975, pp. 4–8). He reminds us that the authority of science is chosen: “Human life is guided by many ideas. Truth is one of them. Freedom and mental independence are others. If Truth, as conceived by some ideologists, conflicts with freedom then we have a *choice*” (Feyerabend, 1975, pp. 4–8). Feyerabend emphasizes that freedom from oppressive science is found in exactly the same location as we have been discussing all along: education of the young. He writes: “[Freedom from science as an ideology] can be achieved by protecting the tremendous imagination which children

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<sup>14</sup> For an interesting parallel example in regards to teaching creationism in American schools, see Any Gutmann’s *Democratic Education*, pp. 102–103.

possess and by developing to the full the spirit of contradiction that exists in them” (Feyerabend, 1975, pp. 4–8).

Consequently, the pursuit of science is, in some important sense, contextual, perspectival, and pluralist, and this can be emphasized to students by including history and philosophy of science in the classroom, along with experimentation. This can also be used to emphasize that reason is always contextual. Nevertheless, science uses functionality and explainability as its standard for success – even if such success is never to be regarded as either final or objective, as Feyerabend would have us believe. If the scientific explanation does not convincingly account for the world as it is, the paradigm fails.

On the other hand, civic education is based upon the world as humans see it. It changes with perspective, available knowledge and wisdom-commitments, and it must therefore regard truth – not just commitment – as primarily perspectival. There is no Platonic form of Justice independent of perspective, but there is an objective world that science searches for, even if humans are doomed never to access it. In Justice, any search for “objectivity” is secondary in importance, whereas, in science, objectivity holds primary importance. Here we see the tension, once again, between the liberal ideal and the political reality. In a pluralistic state, civic education cannot be committed to an objective form of Justice independent of perspective, because in a pluralist state, justice must, by definition, take perspective and pluralism into account. In contrast to science, a justice of pluralism does not seek to describe the world as it is, it only seeks to describe the world as humans perceive it given who they are, as well as the histories and the traditions that frame their rationalities. It does seek an agreement as to what justice is “in the long run”, but, by definition, it must always contain a mechanism that allows for difference when it is encountered (Weinstein, 1998, chapter four). Pluralist justice understands that even if the state keeps an eye towards consensus, consensus can never be achieved. This pursuit of an ideal that can never be realized – the pursuit of the liberal ideal – is representative of the theory of truth that lies at liberalism’s foundation: the pragmatic theory of truth. The metaphysical and epistemological commitments of civic education are profoundly different from those of scientific education. The problem of mathematics is a product of science and not politics; the problem of holocaust revisionism is a product of an illiberal and exclusionary worldview that is itself the product of, I believe, a deeply flawed political theory.

The inability to achieve consensus is indicative of the liberal ideal in a further way. Pluralist states ought to acknowledge that true pluralism itself is never achievable. To be truly pluralist, a state must be tolerant

of all opinions and all actions. But as we have already seen, there are certain actions and opinions – racism, for example, and murder – that cannot be tolerated. Liberalism accepts the fact that tolerance only extends as far as those whom it tolerates are themselves tolerant. Liberalism is not tolerant of the intolerant and can never be. The irony of all pluralist political theories is that they all fail – and must fail – in their primary mission: to achieve the all-inclusive state. But it is this lack of success that reminds us that liberalism is based on pragmatic interpretations of ideals and not ideals in themselves. We saw this earlier when I discussed the role of radical choice in liberal theory.

A second difficulty in teaching cognitive conflict lies in the absence of “contentment” found within the students. Recall that cognitive conflict presupposes that the student understands that choices do not necessarily lead to resolution but only more conflict. Conflict causes anxieties among young children – as well as adults – and because we are caring creatures, our instinct is to protect our children from anxiety as long as possible. Parents want secure children, not confused ones, and they want schools to act as their agents and to make students happy. However, teachers are not parents and as agents of education, the parental role of the teacher should be kept to a minimum. The teacher/student relationship should not be modeled on the parent/child relationship. Although the teacher must act in a caring way towards the student, there are numerous other models of care that are not parental – spousal relationships, friendships, doctor/patient relationships, are all good examples – and a good and just state is also caring, in its own way. Although the youngest students must be parented by their teachers at times, the teacher is primarily a mentor and not a protector. The role of the teacher is of catalyst as well as muse. He or she must foster a community in which students can be proactive and engage in critical inquiry in a comfortable way, but not an environment where critical inquiry is absent because it is itself an uncomfortable process. In this regard, the teacher is the analogue of the state – a caring, respectful attentive state, but the state nonetheless. The classroom must mirror the participatory aspect of the pluralist democracy, and the students must be treated as responsible agents as much as their capacities allow. It is precisely because the teacher/student relationship should not be modeled on the parent/child relationship that home schooling should be frowned upon. Part of the role of schools is to initiate the student into a different type of caring relationship. Home schooling does not permit this. Additionally, in a pluralist society, one of the roles of school is to teach the student how to see others and to see as the other, by exposing the student to different perspectives and conflicting points of view. Martha Minnow

observes, “Schools where children do not encounter children unlike themselves could only arise due to artificial segregation, for ours is a world of difference” (Minnow, 1997, p. 126). Home schooling, the ultimate artificial segregation, prevents students from adequately seeing the other by removing peer-based social interaction from the education process. Furthermore, home schooling supports familial prejudices and does not counter them. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly permitted home schooling on constitutional grounds. However, the justification for allowing home schooling in the case of the Amish, for example, is that they ultimately teach that which governmental schools also teach, to become “productive and law-abiding individuals” (Minnow, 1997, p. 111). In such instances where parents do not teach requisite citizenship, permission to home school is denied.

We must be reminded that classrooms are temporary locations. They are inherently transitional and designed to be outgrown. It is therefore helpful if they are modeled after the larger community that houses them. This prepares students for their upcoming participatory role as citizens. Students will not remain in school forever. If there is no continuity between life during education and life after education, then students are required to be educated a second time once they leave school in order to function in the adult world. This would defeat the very purpose of education.

In order to provide continuity, and to support civic education, classrooms ought to represent the conflicts inherent in pluralism. Students may then see the complexities of their decisions and thus be educated to understand that their participation in the community of inquiry that is the classroom is also their initiation into the political community at large. Classrooms teach conflict because pluralism is conflict, albeit a managed one.

### CONCLUSION: REJECTING HARMONY

I remarked in my introduction that we should take note of the fear that different peoples might never be able to live in harmony. I would like to return to this topic now. In focusing on the role of conflict in schools and in politics, we see that the liberal state runs counter to many of the great political traditions. The image of Justice as harmony is rooted in Plato’s *Republic*, a civic model that is hierarchical by definition and, to a large extent, oppressive. *Republic* lacked equality of opportunity, and prohibited any citizen except the rulers from choosing his or her own good – although even the rulers didn’t choose the Good *per se*, they only discovered it through *noesis*.

Liberalism wishes to allow its citizens to choose their own Good. This means that liberalism must provide an arena in which its citizens can challenge each other and call people's deepest commitments into question. The advancement made by liberalism as a political theory is that it seeks not to avoid conflict, but to manage it, as much as possible, in the political sphere. The benefit of teaching cognitive conflict is that it moves liberalism one step further and integrates this conflict into our social and educational lives, and allows for all debates to take place within the political sphere. Yet, it still "manages" conflict in a way that promotes stability and national unity. In a liberal state whose citizens are educated into cognitive conflict, religious debate is always permitted, as is debate over lifestyle or intimate choices. Those debates excluded by many liberals are included in a society educated under cognitive conflict because the educated citizen is capable of critically analyzing coexisting and competing positions while still remaining authentically attached to his or her own beliefs, if such attachment is defensible.

The image of Justice as harmony has no place in a liberal state. It implies that the political order is static, and that all people remain permanently in whatever role they hold at the time harmony is established. It implies that knowledge is complete, and that citizens and rulers are infallible. None of these facts is true. From the point of view of pluralism, harmony is both impossible and undesirable. This point regarding the perpetual nature of conflict and its contrast with Platonic harmony, is made eloquently by Stuart Hampshire in *Justice is Conflict*. Unfortunately, Hampshire laces his account of perpetual conflict with negativity. Often equating conflict with evil, he twice asserts: "the work of practical reason is the balancing of the different evils to be avoided" (Hampshire, 2000, pp. 68, 88). Hampshire and I disagree in that I see conflict as inherently positive, and I would stress that even a multiplicity of Goods would result in controversy and discord. Liberals should not begrudgingly accept conflict. We should revel in it.

Conflict is part of the human condition, and intellectual and political debate make life better, not worse. Difference enhances the human experience, and makes life more interesting and more fulfilling. Sometime difference is frightening or alienating, but most of life's Goods are as well. Is there much that is more frightening than giving birth to and raising a child? Yet, for many, there is little, if anything, that promises more rewards and more happiness. The human experience is complex, and it offers little that is absolutely secure. A political theory should be no different.

In the modern world, liberal political institutions strive to manage conflict while minimizing violence. It is participatory conflict without

violence that it is the ultimate sign of justice – a justice that is progressive and authentically representative of the human condition and our search for a better world. Such justice is impossible without a successful civic education. It provides continuity between generations. It is also a form of care.

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