

postmodernism, multiculturalism, and other challenging new avenues of thinking about the philosophical dimensions of education.⁶ That tradition is open to—indeed strives for—growth, correction, and improvement; and advances may be prompted in all sorts of ways. The tradition stands always in need of challenging criticism and insightful guidance from all quarters. It needs the help of these “isms”. A panoply of outstanding philosophical questions central to Philosophy of Education—problems involving knowledge, justification, rationality, essentialism, domination, marginalization, universality, particularity, and many more—equally require that help. So I end by expressing my gratitude for the fact that Philosophy of Education can conduct the conversation, the dialogue across differences, that involves the many distinct voices that this volume brings together. To see how it turns out: stayed tuned to the conversation. Even better: join in!

NOTES

1. All citations to Stone are to her essay in this volume.
2. See here my “Gimme That Old-Time Enlightenment Meta-Narrative: Radical Pedagogy (and Politics) Requires Traditional Epistemology (and Moral Theory)”, *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* (May 1993) 7(4): 1, 17–22.
3. This point is developed at greater length in my essay “Radical Pedagogy Requires ‘Conservative’ Epistemology,” in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 1995, in press.
4. All citations to Arcilla are to his essay in this volume.
5. The relation between language and meaning, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other, is less clear than Arcilla acknowledges. Does “language and meaning are provisional” entail “knowledge is provisional and indefinite”? Not obviously. It is not even clear what the latter claim comes to—does it assert fallibilism, or scepticism? I regret that I can’t pursue this point systematically below, although it is addressed briefly in what follows.
6. See my “Gimme That Old-Time Enlightenment Meta-Narrative.”
7. I am grateful to Wendy Kohli for helpful suggestions and advice.

EDUCATING FOR PUBLIC LIFE

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Educating for Public Life

James M. Giarrelli

Although we both study educational theory for our livelihood, when our daughter came of school age, my wife and I began to take the real-world problems of schooling seriously for the first time. Students of the public system from grade through graduate school and strongly committed to ideals connecting democracy with public, universal schooling, we counted ourselves advocates for public education. However, as we examined the alternatives available for our daughter, a more complicated picture and set of choices emerged.¹

The public school system where we live in the suburban Northeast United States is widely considered to be a “good” school system. Cited as evidence are the high test scores students receive, graduation and college admission rates, special placement, honors, and individualized programs and curricula, and marketability of graduates. In brief, this system is considered “good” because it is thought to effectively prepare children with the skills, attitudes, and dispositions required for success in the workplace. This public school is considered effective because it prepares children for successful individual competition in the private economy. In substance and aims, it is *private* schooling.

We wondered, then, in what sense could this be counted as public education? As we looked further, we identified a school, The Friends School, a private school operating roughly on the Quaker philosophy, whose aims and programs were more in accord with our own vision of public education. In this school, a premium is placed on non-differentiation into age, gender, or

ability groups. Instead, teachers, students, parents and interested community members struggle to work across lines of difference and hierarchy. The curriculum is schoolwide, thematic, derived from discussion among those involved and linked as much as possible to interests and as little as possible to measured ability. This school measures its effectiveness in terms of its ability to form communities of learning, relations of cooperation, dialogue, and engagement. This school's effectiveness is assessed against an ideal of full, free, communal sharing of knowledge, interests, and materials in service of associated development. In aims and substance, it is *public* education.

The contradictions, or at least problematics, present themselves. The public school, supported by local and state tax monies, takes as its purpose and standard the ideals of private education, while at least this private school, supported by tuition and philanthropy, takes as its purpose and standard the ideals of public education. Put more pointedly, the best "choice" for parents like us who are interested in their children receiving a public education is the private school rather than the public, state-supported school.

One obvious implication is the economic. The Friends School, dependent upon tuition, is unavailable to the great majority of residents, including our family. And since the state, public school has little interest in public education, this means that a *public* education in any substantive, intentional sense is *unavailable* to most children.

While these economic questions are always important, what my wife and I drew from this real world lesson is the absolute necessity to problematize the language of public educational discourse, to look to consequences rather than causes and to assume that language, on its face, serves to cover more than it reveals.

In this spirit of scepticism, in the remainder of this essay I will try to put the very title of this chapter up at issue. What might we mean by educating for public life? Is the alternative educating for private life? What place does schooling play in either of these possibilities? What is the relationship between public and private, schooling and education? What is the role of the state? Does the very language of public and private education play off more basic, perhaps pernicious, distinctions between public and private spheres, and with that, gender-based hierarchies which valorize some lives while belittling others?

I will take up these questions, not through an analytical, linguistic clarification of terms, although at times this could be helpful, but rather through a critical examination of some recent literature in the Philosophy of Education. In the United States in the 1980s, a healthy debate has re-emerged around the aims of education, centrally concerning the relationship between schooling and education and the alleged requirements of public and private life, the national and international marketplace, and the community of citizens. These "views from the 1980s" will be the central concern of this essay. Finally, I will return to my opening story, our choices as parents, the choices

for our daughter, in the hope that this will open another, too long neglected, lens through which these issues can be discussed.

Education and Schooling, Public and Private: Voices from the Tradition

Of course, much of the classical literature in the Western intellectual tradition concerns the aims and forms of educating for public life. One quickly thinks of Plato's argument in *The Republic* for a differentiated education which would link innate differences in individual nature with the differentiated roles necessary for a just polis as an attempt to reconcile public and private.² In *Emile*, Rousseau also attempts to link public and private, the state and individual personality, through a particular form of education.³ Dewey's consequentialist treatment of the public and private provides a powerful analytical tool for conversations about educating for public life.⁴ For Dewey, since the distinction between public and private turns on an analysis of the sphere of perceived consequences of interaction, rather than on appeals to motives, human nature, or inherent qualities, the "public" or "private" qualities of any institution or interaction are always a subject of continuing inquiry. Thus, for Dewey, it is perfectly sensible to inquire into the ways in which institutions of private schooling may result in public education, while institutions of public education may result in private schooling.

Many more contributors to the classical literature on public and private, schooling and education, could be cited. However, this essay will focus on more contemporary variants, many echoing these classical positions.

Educating for Public Life: Voices from the 1980s

In the United States, the 1980s turned out to be a time of vigorous, broad-based, public, sometimes even philosophical debate about education and schooling, the public and the private. While centered on some common concerns about the relationships between democracy, schooling, and the education of citizens, this debate also produced distinct positions. I have discussed these views elsewhere as alternative public philosophies of education and suggested some thematic continuities and differences.⁵ (In this essay, I want to return to some of the main varieties of the 1980s' debates, with particular attention to alternate treatments of the relations between education and schooling for public and private life.)

Limit Positions: R. Freeman Butts

In 1980, the noted educational historian R. Freeman Butts argued that the civic purpose of schools, their role in educating for public life, is their "most

fundamental purpose." In several sources,⁶ Butts presents a conceptual foundation to ground this view and a set of detailed specific pedagogical practices by which it might be achieved.

In brief sketch, Butts believes that "the goal of civic education for American schools is to deal with all students in such a way as to motivate them and enable them to play their parts as informed, responsible, committed, and effective members of a modern democratic political system. This . . . should include the three basic aspects; political values, political knowledge, and the skills of political participation needed for making deliberate choices among real alternatives."⁷ At the core of all three basic aspects are consensually held civic values. Butts argues that "the fundamental ideas and values upon which our constitutional order is built should be the core of sustained and explicit study . . . from kindergarten through high school."⁸

Butts devotes a great deal of attention to an argument for ten specific political values of central importance to American society. Five of these values: justice, equality, authority, participation and personal obligation for the public good, concern the *unum*, the unitary tendencies; while five others, freedom, diversity, privacy, due process and international human rights, support pluralism, the goals of *pluribus*.

For Butts, these core values define the American ethos, while political knowledge defines the essential features of constitutional democracy. While Butts is certainly aware that his decalogue of core values is the beginning, rather than the end, of civic debate, he has no fundamental doubts about the aims of education. For Butts, there is a foundation of consensually held, communal beliefs and enabling institutions which bind American society into a community. The formation of an educated public requires that the community learn these beliefs and be initiated into these institutional practices. This is the fundamental purpose of public education and the fundamental role of public schools and teachers.

Limit Position: Alasdair MacIntyre

In a 1985 lecture, "The Idea of an Educated Public," later published in 1987, Alasdair MacIntyre rejects this foundationalist perspective and offers a radically different historicist account.⁹ "Teachers are the forlorn hope of the culture of Western modernity. . . . For the mission with which contemporary teachers are entrusted is both essential and impossible. It is impossible because the two major purposes which teachers are required to serve are, under the conditions of Western modernity, mutually incompatible."¹⁰

For MacIntyre, these incompatible purposes are, first, "to shape the young person so that he or she may fit into some social role and function," and second, to teach "young persons how to think for themselves, how to acquire independence of mind, how to be enlightened."¹¹ In MacIntyre's view, the

culture of modernity forecloses the possibility of achieving either of these purposes. First, thinking, at least in the Enlightenment tradition, requires some notion of rational justification or rational objectivity. No standards of rationality, no coherent notion of independent thought or enlightenment. And with no agreement on what standards for rationality are, no possibility of a culture whose initiation into or mastery of could be justified. For MacIntyre, "modernity excludes . . . the possibility of the existence of an educated public" and thus excludes the possibility of a justifiable system of public education in which the twin aims of socialization and individuation can be compatible.¹²

With the very idea of an educated public incoherent in modernist culture, what can public schooling be about? For MacIntyre, public education without an educated public becomes a mechanism to promote private consumption. "Take away such a public with shared standards of justification, with a shared view of what the point of the society of which it is a nucleus is, with a shared ability to participate in common public debate, and you reduce the function of the liberal arts and sciences . . . to the provision of a series of passively received consumer products."¹³ No amount of internal tinkering can "reform" such a system. MacIntyre continues: "The concept of an educated public has no way of taking a life in contemporary society. It is at most a ghost haunting our educational systems."¹⁴

These two views can serve as limit positions in our consideration of the questions surrounding educating for public life. Butts's view that there exists some identifiable set of beliefs, values, and institutions which provide a foundation from which educators can begin to develop curricula and methods for the educational initiation of the young into a public is directly countered by MacIntyre's historicist reading that these foundations have been irrevocably destroyed in a modernist culture and that, since there is no educated public, there is no possibility for a coherent, substantive sense of public education.

While Butts's view seems to make too little problematic, MacIntyre leaves us, as educators, with only forlorn hope. But even MacIntyre recognizes that the idea of an educated public, this ghost haunting our educational systems, is "none the less . . . a ghost that cannot be exorcised."¹⁵ To struggle on in the face of what we know, MacIntyre writes, would require teachers to seriously take up the requirements of inventing or reinventing a kind of community which does not or no longer exists. How can this kind of community be conceived? Where can we look for answers?

The next section considers three views from the 1980s which chart a course between the Scylla of Butts's sanguinity and the Charbydis of MacIntyre's forlornness. Robert Bellah, et al. in *Habits of the Heart*, E. D. Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy* and Henry Giroux in *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* all engage the problems attendant to educating for public life in cultures of modernity.¹⁶ In their views, echoes of the responses to both the classical literature and the contemporary limiting positions are found.

Educating for Public Life: Views from the 1980s

Robert Bellah, et al. in *Habits of the Heart* take up the central questions concerning the public and private and educating for public life: What are our "habits of the heart," our "character," and how do we define ourselves and our lives with others? What do our signs and symbols mean to us? Do they give our lives meaning or fail it? At the core of the problem Bellah, et al. find an ideology of individualism whose pernicious effects threaten democracy, freedom, and the very idea of a public community. In response, they offer not so much a philosophical analysis, as a kind of public knowledge, which they call social science as public philosophy. In their inquiry, social science is wedded to normative concerns with the aim, not of objective knowledge, but of telling a story of the characters, myths, and dramas that mark the sense contemporary Americans make of their own lives. And finally, they look not to the state or government, but to local associations and face-to-face institutions of relation—marriage, family, therapy, civic, and voluntary associations—as the sources of these meanings.

Bellah, et al. share some of MacIntyre's scepticism about modernity. While cognizant of the historical prejudices of earlier traditions, they wonder aloud if the only effective counterforce to a fragmented culture of possessive individualism is some version of a telic tradition, a tradition which could supply a vision of the meaning of life as a purposeful striving for some "Good," some higher, larger, more general, perhaps more objectifiable moral purpose.

What is important is the contribution *Habits of the Heart* makes to the problem of educating for public life. Bellah, et al. argue that educating for public life requires some notion of a shared, substantive, common good transcending private choices. Communication alone is not the answer; appeals to a received tradition are impossible. Some new form of integration, which they call a social ecology, and discuss in terms of a culture of coherence and communities of memory, must be achieved through a social and educational movement. For Bellah, et al. there is a *paideia*, a configuration of educational institutions that teaches an intellectually and morally intelligible way of life, but it persists too often apart from the "first language" interchanges of state institutions, such as schools, and the sphere of acceptable public discourse. It is in the "second language" discourse of wider associations that we encounter and employ traditions that begin with consensus, instead of free, isolated individuals and thus start with some shared assent to the possibility of a common good.

These second languages, traditions of shared memory and purpose, can then serve as the starting points for public education. It is not enough to have one's tradition re-told in the first language of public discourse and become another item for consumption, enjoyment, or disparagement. For Bellah, et al. it is essential that one's story be re-told in the language in which

it was lived and through the practices that define its community or tradition. In this way, we all may enter a tradition, enter a world in which it is sensible to talk of a coherent public and a meaningful purpose for public education, not by initiation or induction through a canonical past, but rather through dialogue and association. In this way, we can show serious concern for the idea of the public, provide access to a range of powerful public counter-spheres of meaning to resist the privatized anomie of modern culture, while still rejecting the efforts of those such as Butts to ground public life in the abstractions of constitutional language and those such as MacIntyre to rule out the very possibility of an educated public.

While deeply flawed in its design, *Habits of the Heart* poses a set of important questions. Does educating for public life require some shared sense of the aims of public life? Does this require an answer to what is arguably the oldest question in philosophy—Is there a "Good" and can it be taught? Is the idea of a "Good" required for a coherent, justifiable public education or inimical to it? The next view alleges that answers to these questions are unnecessary and that a justifiable system of public education can be based on the fragmented culture of modernity itself.

Just as Bellah, et al. fret the decline of a public and the loss of a civic community grounded in some sense of shared meanings, E. D. Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy* believes that a substantive sense of public education must be based on a view of literacy which is more than a technical facility at decoding symbols. For Hirsch, true literacy, the kind that enables communication, understanding, civic life, and the achievement of shared purposes, requires an initiation into knowledge of the background information, schemata, and taken-for-granted assumptions that give symbols their wider cultural and public meanings. Hirsch is worried about declining test scores, but even more he is worried that the loss of a tradition of cultural literacy threatens democracy, civic institutions, the economy, ideals of equality, equal opportunity, social mobility, and the nation-state itself.

Hirsch offers a critique of modern educational theorists, erroneously lumping Rousseau and Dewey together, who have provided a rationale for a content-free, abstracted curriculum which encourages psychological development at the expense of knowledge acquisition and mastery. In contrast, Hirsch argues that "only by piling up specific, communally-shared information can children learn to participate in complex cooperative activities with other members of the community" and that "the basic goal of education in a human community is acculturation, the transmission to children of the specific information shared by the adults of the group or polis."¹⁶ Where Bellah believes that the second languages of historical traditions and communities of memory might give normative grounding and substance to communication, Hirsch believes that there is a specifiable body of cultural knowledge which can be identified by the culturally educated which everyone must

know to be literate, and that it is the primary purpose of public schools, their civic aim, to transmit this information through direct instruction.

Hirsch offers a straight-forward agenda for accomplishing this. First, panels of experts, such as textbook publishers and educators will decide on the contents of the national vocabulary—that background information, specific fragments of national culture, into which the young need to be inducted by direct transmission. This specific cultural content, what Hirsch calls an extensive national curriculum, will be the stuff of public schooling. It will provide the schemata, what Hirsch calls in other places, stereotypes, forms of mental shorthand, organizing tools, for processing the intensive curriculum of everyday experience through contexts of accepted cultural meaning. These items of cultural literacy will provide the categories by which experience can be encoded into habitual meanings that have been useful in the past; they will conserve the traditions of the civic community as expressed in the symbols of the educated cultural elite. Finally, general knowledge tests will be developed to assess the efficacy of such learning.

For our purposes, the primary question concerns the tension in Hirsch's work between the descriptive and prescriptive. For example, some may find Hirsch an echo of Butts' position that there is a normative, political community and debate over its fundamental beliefs and values should ground the substance and aims of public education. However, Hirsch waffles on the normative status of his project. He writes that "cultural literacy is represented not by a *prescriptive* list of books, but rather by a *descriptive* list of the information actually possessed by literate Americans."¹⁹ In another place, he argues that the tension between diversity and community, the one and the many, can only be resolved by a cultural division of labor. At one level, there is a need for a kind of civic religion, a value-laden set of beliefs about the normative purposes and ends of the public community. At another level is culture itself, directed by civil religion but in constant development of content through debate and intellectual exchange. And finally, there is a civic vocabulary, that value-neutral set of symbols and consensually held meanings which allows debate in the other two realms. Hirsch holds that his list of cultural literacy, value-neutral and descriptive, falls into this domain. Yet, in other places Hirsch is deeply conflicted over this issue. He quotes Plato approvingly that there are "good reasons for being concerned with the specific contents of schooling, one of them ethical . . . whether a person is to be good or bad."²⁰ Hirsch writes of how cultural literacy places "higher value" on national than on local information and conceptual knowledge over practical knowledge. Unless Hirsch is committing some gross form of the naturalistic fallacy, deriving an "ought" from an "is", the claim that because there is shared cultural content, then we *ought* to induct the young into it, it is clear that Hirsch's cultural fragments are both descriptive and prescriptive. Hirsch's list of "what Americans know" can equally be labeled, for Hirsch, "what Americans ought to know." And while such prescriptivity may well be

necessary, Hirsch's reluctance to provide a normative grounding for his prescription is a serious failure. In fact, the normative power of Hirsch's prescriptions lies in appeals to authority—the authority of experts, book publishers, the cultural elite, and ultimately, the nation-state. In the name of educating for public life, Hirsch would compel children to be inducted through the piling up of information into a prescriptive vocabulary and stereotypical schemata whose justification is no more than the coercive authority of compulsory, state schooling. And far from acting as a unifying or integrating force, Hirsch's attempt to compile an itemized list of cultural literacy *mirrors* the fragmentation of cultures of modernist, possessive individualism. Culture is not a list of items any more than a public is a list of individuals.

While Hirsch's view of educating for public life turns out to be a distorted, commercialized mechanism for authoritarian state schooling, he does raise, without answering, serious questions about authority and the "good." As he writes, "The question 'who is to say what the content shall be?' must not be allowed to serve its traditional role as a debate stopper."²¹ Hirsch believes (and I agree) that his work "presents a broad challenge: to bring the hidden curriculum out in the open where it belongs and to make its contents the subject of democratic discussion."²²

The next, and final contemporary view on educating for public life we will consider, the work of Henry Giroux, takes up this challenge directly.

Henry Giroux is committed to seeing that the question, "Who is to say what the content shall be?" is not a debate stopper. Like Hirsch, Giroux is interested in bringing the hidden curriculum out in the open and making its contents the subject of democratic discussion. Unlike Hirsch, Giroux does not back away from or vacillate on the central ethical decision that taking these interests seriously would entail. For Giroux, if the links between schooling, literacy, justice, and political democracy are taken seriously, then debates about public education must be explicitly normative and centered on the pursuit of a specific form of political community.

For Giroux, schools serve not as vehicles of mechanical state solidarity or as training grounds for consumer culture and corporate capitalism, but rather as contested terrains where the meaning of public and private, schooling and education, are constructed in the nexus of power, history, identity, and interests. Central to Giroux's view is the inevitability and educative potential of struggle and conflict, an active reconstruction in which public spheres are created and democracy and political community are reinvented. Citizenship is an achievement grounded in a historically-informed agency situated both in discourses of critique and opposition and discourses of possibility and hope. Education for public life in a democracy must be distinguished both from state schooling and from functional preparation for competition in the private market economy. Thus, citizenship education

cannot consist of the piling up of elite cultural knowledge or the initiation into a prescribed list of foundational ideas. Rather, education for public life "becomes a process of dialogue and commitment rooted in a fundamental belief in the possibility of public life and the development of forms of solidarity that allow people to reflect and organize in order to criticize and constrain the power of the state and to 'overthrow relations which inhibit and prevent the realization of humanity.'" For Giroux, education for public democratic life requires the promotion of a kind of active agency which could critique and eliminate the "ideological and material conditions that promote various forms of subjugation, segregation, brutality, and marginalization, often expressed through social forms embodying racial, class, and sexist interests."²⁴

Public education, in this view, as the empowering of counterpublic spheres of resistance and public re-invention, focuses on strengthening the "horizontal ties between citizen and citizen," rather than the hierarchical relations between citizen and the state, market, and cultural elite.²⁵ In this view, public schools serve as alternative public spheres in which the borders that distinguish groups and individuals provide the educative occasions for the reconstruction and validation of authentic difference and enabling solidarity.

At the core of Giroux's work is the effort to address directly the imperative of prescriptivity while avoiding both relativism and authoritarianism. Is there a democratic form of authority, a way to talk of the common, public good without imposition, a way to advance a particular ethical and political view of democratic community and democratic public schools without indoctrination? Is there any way to avoid the imperative of prescriptivity?

For Giroux, if all educators have either an implicit or explicit vision of who people should be and how they should act within the context of a human community, the basis of authority through which they structure classroom life is ultimately rooted in questions of ethics and power. Theorists of public education express a continuum of views on authority. Cultural conservatives, such as Hirsch, locate educational authority in the unproblematic reproduction of dominant culture. Liberal theorists also locate authority in tradition, although tradition itself is characteristically seen as conflicted, as in Butts's decalogue of *pluribus* and *unum* political values and Bellah's appeal to the practices and memories of second languages which compete with public speech for legitimacy. MacIntyre's deep pessimism about the possibility of locating any source of public educational authority in modernist culture is strongly echoed by many leftist or critical educators who view all authority as authoritarianism and thus are unable to defend any notion of a public education.

In *Education and the Struggle for Public Life*, Giroux offers an explicit alternative view of educational authority. For Giroux, drawing directly from the work of Kenneth D. Benne,²⁶ authority can be grounded in rules, expert knowledge, or the ethics of a democratic community. These alternate sources ground competing models of teaching, schooling, and public education.

Rule-based authority depends ultimately on state power for enforcement and thus supplies the logic for state education. In this view, teachers are technicians of the state's ideological apparatus and educating for public life is, in practice, a functional preparation for the existing normative and political order. Authority based on expertise depends ultimately on epistemic claims, themselves deeply implicated in relations of power and interests. In this view, teachers are autonomous professionals, teaching is a service industry where knowledge is exchanged as a commodity to learner/consumers for a fee in markets called schools. Educating for public life in this view either falls away in favor of something called "choice," or is construed as effective preparation for national and international consumer culture.

For Giroux, neither of these positions can sustain justifiable practices of democratic public education. In contrast, educational authority based in the morality of a democratic community, what Giroux sometimes calls emancipatory authority, rests not on appeals to state power or epistemic privilege, but rather on the educational practices which encourage and allow "strong democracy," itself marked by a "citizenry educated by public thinking, political judgment and social action."²⁷

In this view, teaching is a form of public, intellectual practice, legitimated not by its endorsement by the state or claim to veridicality, but by bringing critical knowledge to bear in creating discussion of social freedom and public transformation. Teachers are not state technicians or autonomous professionals, but rather public educators; and educating for public life, while always grounded in the problematic contests and relations of real experience, is synonymous with schooling itself.

One central aim of this essay has been to problematize the question of educating for public life. As this brief review of views from the 1980s has shown, almost any agreement on a common vocabulary, set of starting points or ends-in-view for a broader alternative is unavailable. Indeed, the fundamental terms of the question seem forever trapped in the hermeneutical circle.

In the last section of this essay, I will return to the beginning story about our daughter's education as an opening into another, perhaps most central, problematic, the role of gender.

Overcoming the Tradition: Education, Gender, and Public Schooling

The last thirty years of research on, about, and for women has taught us that it is no longer acceptable in rigorous scholarship to talk of persons in the abstract, apart from their location. Thus, it is important to recall that the "child" in my opening story was a daughter, a young woman, a female. What does educating for public life mean for *her*?

Another central element in that same scholarship on women has been a fundamental questioning of the concepts and categories around which male-dominated, academic disciplines have been constructed. Jane Roland Martin writes: "Since the 1970s, research has documented the ways in which such intellectual disciplines as history and psychology, literature and the fine arts, sociology and biology are biased according to sex. This work has revealed that on at least three counts the disciplines fall short of the ideal of epistemological equality for women: they exclude women from their subject matter, distort the female image according to the male image of her, and deny value to characteristics the society considers feminine."²⁸ Political and educational theory have not escaped this scrutiny or indictment.

At the core of this feminist work within political and educational theory has been a reassessment of the ideas of the public and private, productive and reproductive, spheres. In Jean Bethke Elshtain's analysis of the classic statements of the Western political tradition, she finds the public and the private as basic "guides to our orientation in the world."²⁹

For some political theorists, "the public and private recedes into the background of analysis . . . because the existence of these spheres is simply assumed." Others believe "that the private should be integrated fully into an overarching public arena," while others call for the "privatization of the public realm with politics falling under its standards, ideals, and purposes," and still others call for a "rigid bifurcation between the two spheres with the private realm conceived instrumentally, treated as a necessary basis for public life but a less worthy form of human activity."³⁰ For Elshtain, these ways of distinguishing the public and private are "unacceptable as the basis of the reconstructive ideal,"³¹ as part of the effort to recast "public and private boundaries to preserve each yet reach towards an ideal of social reconstruction."³²

The suggestion that political theory, and for our particular purposes, educational theory, by focusing exclusively on received notions of the public is sexist, is addressed in others forms by feminist philosophers of science and social scientists. Sandra Harding writes that the focus on men and men's activities as universal subjects "leads us to ignore such crucial issues as how changes in the social practices of reproduction, sexuality, and mothering have shaped the state, the economy, and other public institutions."³³ Marcia Millman and Rosabeth Moss Kanter note how a focus on "public, official" role players and situations and neglect of the "private . . . informal, local structures in which women participate most frequently" results in a failure to understand "the interplay between informal, interpersonal networks and the formal, official social structures."³⁴ Heidi Hartmann views the family, the paradigmatic "private" sphere, as a "location where production and redistribution take place. As such, it is a location where people with different activities and interests often come into conflict with one another."³⁵

This and much other scholarship clearly demonstrates how traditional distinctions and valorizations of public and private, the productive and

reproductive, are enshrined in our political and social theory and how these distinctions reflect and support gender-biased descriptions of the world and the possibilities for action within it. It is precisely for these reasons that "educating for public life" must be made problematic and looked at anew.

After an illuminating analysis of the classics in Western educational theory with special focus on the public role afforded to women and women's education in these theories, Jane Roland Martin suggests a new theory of educational practices that moves toward a reconstructive ideal. For Martin, the fallacy of the false dilemma, education for public or private life, education for productive or reproductive functions, education based on gender or education having nothing to do with gender, "is a natural consequence of our ignorance of alternative ideals of the educated woman."³⁶ For Martin, the proper construction of educational theories, for men and women, requires that equal due be given to the historically-defined productive realm—preparation for citizenship and the workplace—and, the reproductive realm, which Martin describes to include "not simply conception and birth, but the rearing of children to more or less maturity and associated activities such as tending the sick, taking care of family needs, and running a household."³⁷

What would inquiry into educating for public life become if we seriously followed the idea that an educational theory was a theory or theories of the "doings" that prepare one for conduct as a member of community, that education itself is the paradigmatic mode of socially established, cooperative human activity through which we attempt to systematically extend all varieties of human powers and excellences, and that these doings and excellences do not come neatly packaged in gender-driven categories of public and private, productive and reproductive?

I think a good conversational beginning is to engage in dialogue about what excellence means in common sense terms, where we take common sense literally as the sense it takes to live in a commons. With this in mind, in conversation it quickly becomes clear that when we consider the people we respect, love, are glad to get to know, and have as neighbors, work with, and so forth, we do not think of these people solely, if at all, in school-based categories of cognition and symbolic literacy or in theoretically-driven categories which distinguish between public and private. We might know some people we would go to hear a speech or for heart surgery, but not go hiking with or invite to our birthday parties. That is, we build our publics over a spectrum of competencies and qualities that people display in their lives and bring to ours. In other terms, we operate publicly in terms of a system of multiple excellences as Maxine Greene says, about which we make sophisticated, finely-honed comparative judgments.³⁸ The ability to make these judgments, to bring the skill, know-how, know-that, empathy, and imagination to bear in recreating a world, is a large part of what it means to be educated. In this process, the walls between public and private, productive and reproductive, are collapsed. That is, we see quickly how so-called public

virtues and competencies such as efficiency and rationality are desiderata in some activities of the private world, while so-called private virtues and competencies such as nurturance and courage are requirements for an enabling and generous public life. If the aim of public education is educating for public life, forming and re-forming publics, then the purpose of schooling is to prepare people in the multiple excellences that give a public its quality, distinctiveness, and solidarity. And it is in large part the discourses of the private, reproductive practices that give public discourse its substance and its possibilities for education.

Conclusion

Every distinction, and perhaps especially that between private and public, productive and reproductive, masks power and claims of privilege. Feminist scholarship has shown both the distorting consequences this has had in theories of public education and opened a lens on a reconstructive ideal in whose light our daughters, and sons, may, in Dewey's terms, "learn to be human."³⁹

NOTES

1. While I was attending a seminar on the Psychology of Love led by Carol Gilligan in 1986, one of the participants (I'm sorry I forget her name) remarked in one discussion, "Men are such bastards, they refuse to use their own children in their arguments." This remark struck me deeply and I have struggled ever since to keep it in my mind and heart as I try to write philosophy. This opening story is an effort in that direction.
2. *The Republic of Plato*, trans. by Francis W. Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).
3. J.J. Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, introduction, trans., and notes by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
4. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Free Press, 1966) and *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt, 1927).
5. James M. Giarelli, "Public Philosophies and Education," *Educational Foundations*, 4 (Winter 1990): 7-18.
6. R. Freeman Butts, *The Revival of Civic Learning: A Rationale for Citizenship Education in American Schools* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1980) and *Teacher Education and the Revival of Civic Learning*, Seventh Annual DeGarmo Lecture (Society of Professors of Education, 1982).
7. Butts, *Revival of Civic Learning*, p. 123.
8. Butts, *Teacher Education*, p. 14.

9. Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of an Educated Public," in Graham Haydon, ed., *Education and Values* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 1987).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987); Henry Giroux, *Schooling the Struggle for Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
17. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, p. xv.
18. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
19. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
20. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
23. Henry Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life*, p. 6. Giroux's internal quotation is from Douglas Kellner and Harry O'Hara, "Utopian and Marxism in Ernst Bloch," *New German Critique*, 9 (Fall 1976): 22.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
26. Kenneth D. Benne, "Authority in Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, 40 (August 1970): 345-410.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 6.
29. Jean Bethke Elstain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 3.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 342.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
33. Sandra Harding, ed., *Feminism and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987): 4-5. Emphasis in original.
34. Marcia Millman and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Introduction to Another Voice: Feminist Perspectives in Social Life and Social Science," in Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*, p. 32.
35. Heidi I. Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework," in Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*, p. 111.