

36. Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, p. 176.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
38. See Maxine Greene, "Excellence, Meanings, and Multiplicity," *Teachers College Record* 86 (1984): 283-97.
39. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1954): p. 154.

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Education for Citizenship

Kevin Harris

John Stuart Mill saw it as an "almost self-evident axiom . . . that the State should require and compel the education, up to a certain standard, of every human being who is born its citizen" (Mill 1964, p. 160). And while many might see such an axiom requiring some justification, rather than relying on its allegedly self-evident nature, few apart from extreme anarchists are likely to disagree with the fundamental substance of Mill's claim.

This claim, however, like so many which are largely unproblematic when considered in broad terms, tends not to reveal that it is both built upon and contains within it issues of extreme complexity and controversy, and that once unpacked it more closely approximates the proverbial can of worms. Immediate issues arise, such as what is meant by "education", what standard should be set, how is a citizen defined, and so on. These lead to further questions such as who should determine the content of education, how can compulsion be secured, how can standards be set and maintained; and from there on the worms keep wriggling and wriggling.

For my contribution to the conversation in this collection I shall warily open the can I have displayed, but I shall be neither ambitious nor foolish enough to expect to monitor or control all the wriggling that will result. Instead, I shall simply examine certain aspects surrounding one of the first issues to crawl out as soon as the lid is removed; namely the role of State-provided or State-sanctioned education in preparing people to become active citizens of the State.

Picking up on Mill I have deliberately continued to use the word "citizen". When human beings are first born we tend not to regard them as functioning citizens. We expect, however, that after a period (today commonly set at eighteen years) the original twenty-one inch alimentary-canal-on-legs, which seemed capable of little more than emitting disruptive noises at one end and unpleasant smells at the other, will now be able to function as an integral contributing member of a complex social organisation. It is expected that such a person will have learnt sufficiently to participate in and contribute to the society's economy, culture, and politics; in short to its overall development as a society or State.

Maturation alone will not bring this about. Rather a deliberate teaching/learning process is required. But this does not necessarily call for State involvement, or for systems of State-provided public schooling as we know them. Mill himself was not advocating universal compulsory State schooling. He regarded the obligation for educating children as a "sacred duty" of parents; and for Mill the State's requirement and compulsion regarding education was more the establishment of a point where the buck stopped. The State was to step in and school, as one model among many competing models, where parents either failed to do their duty or else could not afford to educate their children properly. Today, however, at least in the developed world, the State has taken its "requirement" and "compulsion" to educate in a different light. In times much changed from Mill's it is now usually the case that State-provided or State-sanctioned schooling is offered universally and on a compulsory basis, as the legitimated formal context in which education ostensibly takes place; and that parents who wish to carry out their children's education themselves have to make the case to the State to do so.

The Content and Purpose of Schooling/Education

Learning sufficiently in order to participate meaningfully in the economic, cultural and political life of the State can result from experience, both within and outside of schooling, with infinite permutations and combinations of content. Thus in any complex society there could be a vast variety of possible curricula that its future citizens might encounter. But two features could be expected to be constant; namely the attempt to instill the dominant value and belief systems of the society in question—values and beliefs which direct the society in pretty much the way in which it is going—along with, for each particular society, the transmission of specific content judged necessary for that society's survival and furtherance.

It is in this way that all socialisation, including the production of the future citizenry, is conservative, in the literal sense of seeking to conserve and

maintain the dominant value systems and the bodies of knowledge and belief deemed to have brought the status quo into being. It then follows that, in so far as schooling is concerned with socialisation, to that extent schooling is conservative. And schooling as required, provided or sanctioned by the State is even better placed to be conservative given that no State would consciously and deliberately foster a universal compulsory institution that openly challenged its dominant value, belief and knowledge systems; or set up and/or sanction an institution likely to produce the kind of future citizens who might overthrow the very State that formed or socialised them.

The idea, then, of schooling as a form of indoctrination for citizenship emerges as a real possibility, and examples of this are very easy to find. One thinks immediately of Nazi schooling, Stalinist schooling, schooling under China's cultural revolution, and some fundamentalist religious schooling. But all of these are instances of schooling and socialisation in societies that are variously monistic and which forbid criticism and even open debate of prevailing values and beliefs. Could it possibly be argued that schooling and socialisation in modern liberal democracies is similarly conservative and functions generally to produce citizens who will uncritically reproduce the social order?

Three matters immediately confront such a position. First; liberal democracies, in the very declaration of their liberal and democratic standpoints, indicate dissatisfaction with imposition and monism, and thus a consequent desire to promote plurality and freedom of belief. Secondly; the dominant discourse relating to schooling in liberal democratic societies proclaims that schooling is charged not just with socialisation but also with educating the future citizenry, and speaks of producing not compliant uncritical party and dogma-following citizens but rather autonomous citizens. Thirdly; modern complex societies are concerned with development and positioning for the future, rather than with strictly reproductive conservation in the way (say) the Boro Indians have conserved their lifeways for more generations than history can trace. It would appear, then, that modern, complex liberal democratic societies seeking to educate autonomous citizens are, at the most, minimally conservative; holding on to only those things that liberal experience and democratic debate have established to be worth retaining.

A delicate balance, however, must still be maintained. A liberal democratic State becoming too liberal and insufficiently conservative runs the risk of licensing either the extreme form of liberty advocated by Mill, or the extreme form of individualism promoted by Rousseau and often partially incorporated into forms of progressive schooling (Rousseau 1966). On the other hand, a State becoming too conservative and insufficiently democratic runs the risk of approximating Plato's ideal, where education was designed both to liberate the minds of the intellectually elite and to ensure that everyone happily stuck to their place, so that cobblers cobbled contentedly and left running the State to the wise (Plato 1986; Books 2-4).

Modern liberal theory avoids both extremes largely through the discourse of liberal rationalism which concentrates heavily on rationality, community, and justice. Individuality is still celebrated but is recontextualised in terms of autonomous citizenship; and freedom of individual action is proscribed within a social context in which autonomous agents rationally accept the need to live in a just, rule-governed society which operates in the interests of all while promoting maximum acceptable diversity. John White, a prominent proponent of liberal rationalism, suggests that "in a liberal-democratic society the proper task of government is to promote the well-being of all citizens by equipping them with the conditions of an autonomous life" (White 1988, p. 229), and the government is to do this through providing education which acquaints pupils impartially with a whole range of different ideals of the good life while not steering them towards any ideals in particular. Within such a frame of discourse government, liberalism, autonomy, choice, pluralism, tolerance, democracy, participatory citizenship, schooling, and education all lie together in apparent relative comfort.

This all sounds very different from the idea and practice of schooling seeking to conserve the status quo; and in a very real sense it is difficult to level the charges of conservation, indoctrination, and the promulgation of specifically selected values and knowledge at schooling in ostensibly liberal democratic pluralist societies. To make the charge even viable, let alone make it stick, we would have to establish how such a thing could be achieved, and also account for why it is being sought. Recalling that no State would consciously and deliberately institute a form of universal compulsory schooling that openly challenged the dominant value, belief and knowledge systems of that State, I am going to attempt to provide this account by applying a neo-Marxist analysis to both the role of schooling in society and the notion of conservation.

According to Marxism the State, although commonly identified in national and geographical terms, is properly recognisable as State Power (Marx 1971; Marx and Engels 1976; Engels 1975), and this power is exerted through offices or, as Althusser has termed them, apparatuses, which function to secure and serve the ruling interests in a society (Althusser 1984, pp. 15-22). Also according to Marxism, the central identifying feature of a social formation is not its political mode, whether it is democratic or totalitarian; but rather its dominant mode of production, whether it is feudal or capitalist or socialist. It then follows that what State Power seeks to legitimate, secure, and conserve in any society is basically the conditions or *relations of production* which will secure the dominant mode of production and continue to serve the ruling interests—the interests of the class which owns and/or controls the means of production. This, will, of course, have much to do with knowledge and values; but for "conservation" in Marxist terminology read "reproducing the relations of production that secure the dominant mode of production."

If this much is accepted, the question of "why" is easily settled. Universal compulsory schooling is established to transmit and legitimate the knowledge and values which are to preserve the ruling interests and to secure the reproduction of the dominant means of production. Thus, in a capitalist society State-provided and State-sanctioned schooling serve, conserve, and secure the interests of the capitalist class by legitimating and promoting that knowledge and those values perceived to be well placed to serve the interests of capital.

The more difficult and complex question is How is this achieved?; and Marxism answers: largely by ideology; by making things appear differently to the way they are (Marx and Engels; 1976).¹ In order to illustrate this I am going to consider six issues relating to education and citizenship in liberal democratic States, but more importantly I am going to consider them as *illusions*; and as illusions which do not readily appear as such because they also function clearly as *allusions*. As Althusser again has indicated (1984, p. 36), if such illusions didn't key into or allude to our experience of the world they would all too readily be recognised as illusions. The fact that they allude in some cases, or are presented in theoretic contexts in which they appear to naturally or logically allude to experience, helps create the illusion that they apply universally and accurately describe the world. (Before beginning, however, I must offer the important warning that the following account will be qualified after its completion. I therefore beg the patience of those who find what follows bordering too closely on crude reproduction theory or conspiracy theory.)

First, there is the illusion of education itself, or more exactly the illusion that schooling is primarily concerned with educating. The allusion works here both through the everyday linguistic nexus between schools and education, and in that schools *do* offer educative activities, and they certainly do educate large numbers of people to varying high levels. But schools also act as agents of social control, and in doing so instill into a large part of the future citizenry the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will make them more or less compliant people well placed to contribute to reproducing the means of production. Although the development of critical thought has constantly been on the overt agenda for school curricula, it less commonly happens in practice. In today's schools people are learning more than ever before, but in these recessionary times when schools are becoming more directed to providing employment skills rather than developing critical thought, students are hardly being introduced to those reflective practices that can free them from being bound by their ideological context. Sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and political economy are studies kept for those levels of higher education by which time the large majority of the population has dropped out or been ushered out, and even then the content of these subjects is controlled in ways

1. This is a most complex and contested issue. For useful introductory discussion see Larrain (1979).

likely to promote existing legitimated dominant values, rather than form a basis for becoming critical of them. It is easier to absorb what is offered at school and higher education than it is to become seriously critical of it. Students have enough on their plate trying to meet their basic requirements; and there is little if any time or space or opportunity both to master the orthodoxy and develop and expound a critical view of it. Also, when the aim of studying is to gain good grades in order to get a job, especially in times of high unemployment, schooling, or the period of formal education, might wisely be spent learning the ropes rather than devoting time to the risky and unprofitable task of trying to untie them and discover who is holding them.

The indication, above, that curricula content is controlled to promote certain knowledge and values, leads directly to the second illusion; namely the illusion of the neutrality of knowledge. This is supported by the allusion that some knowledge appears to be unquestionably neutral—two plus two equals four; Washington is the capital of the USA; ammonia consists of sodium, oxygen and hydrogen; the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066; and Mt Etna is an active volcano—regardless of whether one is a Republican, a Democrat, a Marxist, black, white, gay, straight, male or female. It is also supported by one of our dominant theoretic contexts, going back to Plato, that real knowledge (as distinct from belief or opinion) is apprehension of eternal unchanging truths which are untrammelled by our personal predilections and which are basically unaffected by limits or restrictions on the way we see things (Plato 1986, Book 7). This view legitimates school knowledge as a neutral revelation of the world; and it is often further claimed that, notwithstanding that knowledge is infinite and school curricula must be selective, selection of curricula content, or that knowledge which “is of most worth”, is also made on neutral epistemological and/or pragmatic grounds. Knowledge, however, is never theory-free or neutral; and that which is included in school curricula is a very specific selection. Not everybody’s knowledge, way of seeing the world or priorities of concern get on the agenda. If we think of human knowledge as the sum of the utterances the whole of humanity has come to make about the world, it is clear that only a few voices (even from our own society) are heard in school curricula, and even less of those are legitimated. This leaves pupils in an unequal relation to school knowledge; and points to the third illusion.

This is the illusion of equality of educational opportunity and mobility. The allusion here is that all children, regardless of gender, race, creed, colour, religion or class are offered a place in school, are offered more or less the same curricula (more so with the advent of national curricula), much the same access to teachers and other resources, and at certain points are all confronted with more or less the same testing and sieving devices. No set of opportunities could appear more equally offered. And yet the reality of it is that schooling within societies recognised as liberal democracies systematically discriminates against females, people of colour, certain ethnic groups,

certain minority groups, and children of the working class, and of the less wealthy. Part of the reason for this is that it is not their knowledge and their experience that schooling fosters, transmits, and legitimates. In fact it is often the case that schooling denigrates this, and in doing so reinforces a sense of inferior or marginal social location among such groups. But some of these children do, of course, succeed; many against the odds and many positively helped by understanding teachers and other school personnel. This then provides the allusion for the myth of mobility. While it is the case that schooling provides the means for some to rise quite dramatically through the social ranks (an achievement which tends to be disproportionately heralded) it has again been shown almost universally that, as the Coleman Report put it, “schools bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his [sic] background and general social context” (Coleman 1966, p. 325). It is more the case that schooling reinforces children’s social locations rather than promotes mobility; and once parents reproduce their own kind schooling reproduces the relations of production in society from the appropriate progeny. There are distinct advantages in being the white Anglo-Saxon heterosexual son of wealthy professional or business-connected parents.

Now, moving a little beyond schooling, there is the fourth illusion; of autonomy. This is secured in the undeniable allusion that within liberal democracies people do have real choices and options, along with certain rights and controls over their own lives. It is revealed as an illusion, however, when we recognise the lack of power that we have over the basic structural matters that shape our individual and social lives and the conditions within which we can make our choices. The freedom and autonomy we do have lies in being able to make limited adjustments to actions and decisions made by governments, banks, and huge business enterprises. Consider, for instance, the current situation in which all of us are presently exercising differing levels of freedom and choice in adjusting our lives to the effects of a global recession. This recession, however, is not the natural or inevitable cyclic thing it is often portrayed as being, and it is not the result of actions “ordinary citizens” are commonly blamed for, such as buying too many imported goods or seeking crippling wage rises. It is, in fact, the structural outcome of certain actions very few of us made, and hardly any of which most people were capable of preventing. A clear specific example in this regard can be seen in the actions of the German Bundesbank increasing interest rates in August 1992 to counter inflation brought on by problems in assimilating those who had come from the East to the new unified Germany. This action of a mere seventeen people in turn precipitated a massive outflow of funds invested at lower interest rates in other countries, and this, in conjunction with other factors associated with present moves towards developing a form of unified Europe (moves which few governments have given the people a voice in through referenda) brought about sharp decreases in the value of a

number of major currencies. The result of the German bank officials' actions, and of those chasing maximum capital gains, was to plunge entire countries deeper into the recessions they were struggling to emerge from, and to seriously affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people—people whose freedom and autonomy nevertheless rendered them powerless spectators to the process.

It might be argued, however, that we have the freedom and the mechanisms to force governments to alter policy, to put governments out of office and to call banks and businesses to account. This is the fifth illusion; the illusion of democracy and power, and it too has its allusion. In liberal democracies all citizens are entitled to vote for their representatives in governments every so often; all banks and businesses are accountable to their shareholders who meet regularly; and it is not uncommon for governments and boards of directors to be voted out of office. Clearly people do have power and access to decision making (although it could be argued that Republicans are the same as Democrats while capitalism remains). The point is citizens don't have it where and how it really counts. A vote for a representative every four years is hardly a voice in the government of the country, as Kozol (1985, p. 94) has so poignantly shown; and often a vote for a party is by no means support for policies that party either takes to the polls or later puts into operation. Not everybody who voted Republican in the 1960s and 1970s supported America's involvement in the Vietnam war; just as not everybody who voted for the Conservatives in the UK in 1992 supported Britain's acceptance of the Maastricht Treaty. Governments of the people in liberal democracies may be elected by the people; but they do not necessarily govern for the people in the sense of representing the people's wishes when they act.

None of the above, however, is to suggest that people have no power to effect change in society. Clearly standards of living and social values have changed such that the working class, along with people of colour, women and gays are generally better off than they were a hundred years ago. We must be careful not to belittle the enormous efforts that have gone into bringing about such changed conditions, or even the propensity to effect change itself. But we must also recognise that it has taken enormously disproportionate effort, not to mention blood, to secure even a modicum of rights for majority groups; and that even though some of these people may never have had it so good, they still suffer comparatively badly within their own liberal democratic societies. While the rich are getting richer and some of the poor are getting rich, the number of the poor are increasing, as is the extent of their poverty and their chances of ever gaining access to wealth and power. The underclass is growing and the struggle for racial and gender equality is by no means successfully completed.

This leads nicely to the last illusion: the illusion of liberalism. Here again the allusion holds. More alternatives are now offered and tolerated, restric-

tions almost everywhere are being relaxed, and speech seems freer than it has ever been. In fact, anti-establishment commentary is often not merely tolerated but even celebrated, as liberals boast of their penchant to fight to the death to protect the rights of others to say things they themselves disagree with. It will be pointed out yet again that I am free to write this stuff, whereas such a foray in a non-liberal society would quickly land me in a mental institution or the legendary salt mines. Two other things, however, are not so readily pointed out. The first is that, while in a liberal society radicals may not have to suffer to the lengths of a Sakharov or a Solzhenitsyn, they come by recognition the hard way, and all too often find jobs, audiences, promotions, and especially consultancies denied to them. The second is that even the most liberal of societies can have the stoppers put back on very quickly by those who actually hold power. Positions won after decades of bitter mass struggle can be swept aside in an instant by the few who have the power to do such simple things as make a single appointment to the Supreme Court. In practice liberal democracies tend to be not too tolerant, or liberal, about things which threaten the conditions for reproducing the relations of production and the dominant mode of production.

The discussion above might leave us with a pessimistic conclusion regarding education for citizenship; namely that education is primarily directed to conservation, in the sense of reproducing the relations of production, and thus its purpose is to provide differentially-skilled compliant citizens willing to reproduce the existing relations of production. That, however, smacks too much of the crude reproduction theory some of us promoted in the 1970s (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Harris 1979, pp. 140–4), and of the conspiracy theory many of us wanted to deny at the same time (Harris 1979, pp. 67–9). But even though there is now good reason to support a conspiracy theory, the reproductive aspect of the above case is too easy, too crude.

Can Schooling be Transformative/Revolutionary?

The preceding argument fails to take adequate notice of two major points; namely that schools can be sites of resistance, and that education is by its nature critical and transformative. It is the level of resistance, along with the presence of education, that distinguishes schooling in liberal democracies from that in totalitarian regimes.

Resistance is the lesser of the two issues; although it was the one the early critics of crude reproduction theory mainly called attention to. It is, of course, the case that things do not go along nicely and smoothly either in schools, or in society at large. Positions tend to be contested, and at times the contest can be severe and messy. Anyone who has ever taught in schools or fought a local issue or a more general cause would know of the contest and the mess. But in schooling children are younger, relatively powerless and

more compliant, and although they might not meekly accept all that is laid before them they are well placed to assimilate or just recognise as legitimate the values and knowledge passed on there. This would also be exacerbated in times of recession and high unemployment, where credentialling becomes more eagerly sought and highly prized, and where schooling thus functions even more powerfully as an agent of social control.

Transformative critical education is the larger issue, and not withstanding the conservative nature of schooling it is not a foregone and hopeless cause. Students and teachers do not come to school out of a vacuum, but rather carry the baggage of their beliefs and experience with them; and it is possible, even likely, that there would be a proportion within the school who would bring the weapons of criticism and the desire to transform to the educative exchange. There are, however, a number of difficulties associated with this; and three ought at least be mentioned.

First, engaging in critical transformative education requires recognition of how people (citizens) are constituted as ideological subjects, how naturalisation and illusions are created, and how critical perspectives can be established. It also requires the educator, himself or herself a product of schooling and wider socialisation, to have recognised and overcome the very process of constitution as an ideological subject. Neither recognition is impossible to achieve (Harris 1992).

Second; critical education entails the enormous difficulty of attempting to be critical of, and transform, the very system one is working within. This basically requires using the elements of that system against itself, which can be more difficult than might first appear. For instance, there are school structures, texts, curricula, and power relations that have to be followed and employed in the very act of attempting to transform both those things directly and what is instantiated in them. This can cause contradictions in practice, and failure to achieve both the legitimated goals (which for the current students' sake must still be pursued) and the critical goals. As Aronowitz and Giroux have noted (1985, pp. 23-45) transformative intellectuals (teachers) occupy contradictory, paradoxical and tension-filled roles in schools; and for their extra pains suffer de-legitimation within their own field as the more accommodating teachers gain praise, success, and promotion.

Third; the critically transformative teacher, like all teachers, is in a privileged position with regard to learners, but as a critically reflexive person may be loathe to exploit this privileged position (Bereiter 1972, p. 26; Lankshear, 1987, p. 240). Here the teacher might do well to take a leaf from the State's book, for exercise and exploitation of privilege is what the State, as State power does. However a critically educative teacher would need to avoid not only making children the "walking wounded" of a cause, but also merely replacing one form of indoctrination with another. Such a person would have a lot of listening to do in school, and a great deal of reflexive knowledge to acquire outside.

Conclusion

I want to conclude my part in this conversation by replying to things that have been said to me in other contexts and which could easily be said in reply here: namely that I am simply reacting to an imperfect system of liberal democracy. No liberal seriously believes that we have presently achieved truly representative government; that our schooling system is perfect; that we have fully succeeded in achieving the conditions for affording equality and full autonomy to all; and so on. They might even see these as historically evolving processes, and chide me for mistaking moments in a developing process as structural barriers. My last word on this, then, is to stress that the issue as I see it is not the relative perfection or state of evolution of liberalism and democracy; but rather socio-political requirements in States where capitalism is the dominant mode of production. Capitalism undoubtedly benefits many, and in its historical development there will be continuing changes in whom it benefits and to what degree. But it is also a mode of production which, throughout all forms of its historical development, exploits and structurally disadvantages others. While the propensity to benefit some entrepreneurs through structurally disadvantaging other people remains, capitalism can easily contain central tenets of liberalism, but it cannot function in conditions which allow for real equality, real autonomy, and real democracy. Thus, while the State is a capitalist State, manifested in the exercise of State power operating to secure and protect the interests of capital and the capitalist class, its apparatuses will simultaneously legitimate the discourse of liberalism, create the sorts of illusions illustrated above, and seek to deny to its citizens the critical faculty, level of autonomy and those elements of democracy which could seriously endanger the process of reproducing the relations of production through which the State defines itself, and in terms of which it seeks to conserve itself.

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