

Rousseau, Dewey, and Democracy

Patrick Riley and Jennifer Welchman

Editor's Prologue

In the twentieth century "democracy" came to be synonymous with political respectability, and the question of what would constitute "democratic education" became an important one for philosophy of education. Answers to this question have proliferated. Some focus on the *content* of education: that it should cultivate the virtues suitable to citizenship in a democracy; that it should promote or enable individual autonomy; that it should be tolerant or respectful of legitimate religious and cultural diversity and not homogenize a population in seeking to create a cohesive national political culture. The cultivation of virtues suitable to citizenship in a democracy, or democratic *civic education*, has at one time or another been thought to embrace the virtues of voluntary obedience to law (Kaestle, 1983, pp. 34–9, 97; Curren, 2002), economic productivity and self-sufficiency (economic independence being essential to political independence and full citizenship; see Shklar, 1991), social cohesion or integration (see Osler, 2000; Blum, 2002; Galston, 2002), loyalty to community and country (cultivated more or less intensively through symbols of national unity, "civic religion," and other means) or cosmopolitan attitudes that qualify or transcend such loyalty (see Nussbaum, 1996; Callan, 1997, pp. 100–31; Gutmann, 2002), and readiness to participate constructively in civic life and political processes (see Gutmann, 1987; Barber, 1992). Other answers focus on *equity* and *commonality*: that democratic education entails schooling all children *together* and in the same things (see Pangle and Pangle, 1993, p. 92); that it provides all children with the same curriculum or experiences (see Adler, 1982); that it provides children with educational resources of equal value or equal value *to them* (see Bastian, 1986). Still other answers focus on the *control* of education: that in a democracy it should be collectively controlled by democratically constituted governing bodies, such as local school boards (see Gutmann, 1987); that control should rest with individual families whose liberties must be respected by liberal democracies (McConnell, 2002); that classrooms should be constituted as democratic communities with significant control over their internal affairs, such as their curricula and rules of conduct (see Apple and Beane, 1995, p. 9).

Matters were quite different through most of recorded history, inasmuch as "democracy" was not an honorific term, but instead was generally understood to

signify one of the worst possible forms of social and political organization. The literal meaning of "democracy," in its Greek origins, was rule by the *demos*, the *poor* who were numerous, uneducated, and without the leisure to acquire much experience or knowledge of public affairs. Aristotle understood it to be a form of rule by force in which the poor dominate and exploit the rich, much as oligarchy was understood to be a form of rule by force in which the rich dominate and exploit the poor. Both involved economic and social polarization, an absence of power sharing, and rule in the interests of the rulers that was exercised beyond the restraint of law or constitutional limits (*Politics*, III.3, III.6).

So although we would call Aristotle's best possible constitution and best constitution that is practical for most city-states *democracies*, he did not. In his terms, the first was an ideal aristocracy, a form of shared rule by a citizen class whose virtue, excellent judgment, and mutual goodwill are the product of universally moderate wealth and advantage, good laws, and publicly operated common schools and other institutions that nurture civic friendship, good judgment, and the fulfillment of human rational potential. The best generally attainable system, which he calls a *polity*, is a *mixed* constitution in the sense that it provides institutional roles or offices for both rich and poor, and a *middle* constitution in the sense that it is dominated by a large middle class, rather than socially and politically polarized into rich and poor factions. What is educationally best in such a system is no different from what is essential to an ideal aristocracy. (See Curren, 2000, pp. 65–75, 100–1, 118–23, 131–9.) In modern terms a mixed regime of this sort is a *constitutional democracy*, designed to protect the interests of rich and poor alike, and it rests in arguments that eventually came to be regarded as potent arguments in favor of constitutional democracy. It rests, first of all, in the fundamental premise that the possession of normal deliberative capacities and a share of virtue or practical wisdom entitles a person to rule himself or herself and entitles a citizen to *participate* in collective self-rule, a premise reflecting an underlying ethic of respect for persons as rational agents (see Curren, 2000, pp. 20–65). It also rests in associated arguments from the collective wisdom of the many:

the many...when they meet together may be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively.... For each individual among the many has a share of virtue and practical wisdom, and when they meet together...some understand one part, and some another, and among them they understand the whole. (*Politics*, III.11, 1281a42–b9)

There are some arts whose products are not judged of solely, or best, by the artists themselves.... The master of the house will actually be a better judge [of it] than the builder, just as...the guest will judge better of a feast than the cook. (*Politics*, III.11, 1282a18–23)

Aristotle thus regards good judgment in public affairs as incremental and as requiring the perspective of those who must live with the consequences of a government's acts. The latter consideration would in time be adduced in support of democracy by John Dewey, one of the central protagonists in this chapter.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) and John Dewey (1859–1952) stand out among the great philosophers of education for their egalitarian and democratic

sympathies. They share a central concern with collective rationality, predicated on what would now be called participatory democracy. Rousseau described his preferred form of constitution as "republicanism," but he envisioned it as a system in which ordinary citizens retain direct legislative sovereignty and exercise it through a legislative assembly of the whole. The central problem in his political and educational thought, addressed by Patrick Riley in the section that follows, is how this legislative sovereignty and the freedom associated with it can be reconciled with the demands of citizenship: the demand that citizens will the common good, and not love themselves in a way that is socially stratifying and predicated on an "inversion" of the natural value of different kinds of work. Education must not only preserve freedom and preclude any form of dependency, including economic dependency, but must induce citizens to adopt the "general will" as their own. Dewey, whose educational thought is surveyed by Jennifer Welchman in the second section of this chapter, regarded democracy as the only social and political form of life in which human beings can continue to "grow" and fully flourish, and he envisioned a democratic public as properly engaged in collective problem solving, modeled on the activity of an open scientific community. On this account, the citizen virtues essential to a democratic community include the intellectual, social, and communicative virtues essential to collective, cooperative *inquiry*.

Rousseau and Dewey also shared the view that learning is a natural imperative of human beings associated with the demands of survival, and should be allowed to follow its natural course to the greatest extent possible. They also held the related view that the social patterns of youth must conform to the social patterns of adulthood. Rousseau held, *contra* Locke, that children once accustomed to obeying others will not grow into free adults. Dewey held, in opposition to traditional schooling, that children accustomed to competing against each other in completing the same tasks at school, rather than making distinctive and valued contributions to common projects, will not grow into a public able to cooperate in solving its problems.

Rousseau's Philosophy of Transformative, "Denaturing" Education

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is widely, and correctly, viewed as the greatest political philosopher of the French Enlightenment; he is also widely, and correctly, viewed as the most important philosopher of education in the *Siècle des Lumières*. For Rousseau politics and education are strongly connected: he gives education the task of transforming naturally self-loving egoists animated only by their own "particular wills" into polis-loving citizens with a civic "general will" ("the general will is the will one has as a citizen"). For Rousseau the "Great Legislator" (more accurately the great civic educator) must, over educative time, "change the nature of man" by turning self-lovers into "Spartan mothers" (who ask not whether their own sons have survived battles but whether the "general good" of the city still lives). Rousseau, then, gives an absolute primacy to radically *transformative* education (which makes people "what they ought to be") – a primacy accorded to education by only one earlier social philosopher of comparable stature, namely Plato. But Rousseau also insists that education, however

transformative, however "denaturing," must finally produce autonomous adults who can ultimately say to their teachers (with Émile), "I have decided to be what you made me" (Rousseau, 1910, p. 435). How far Rousseau succeeds in finding a stable equilibrium between denaturing education and final adult autonomy is the central difficulty of his social thought – as the following pages will try to show.

Had Rousseau not been centrally concerned with freedom – above all with the voluntariness of morally legitimate human actions – some of the structural features of his political thought would be (literally) unaccountable. Above all, the notion of the *volonté générale* or *general will* would not have become the core idea of his political philosophy: he would just have spoken, à la Plato, of achieving perfect *généralité* through civic education, as in *Republic* 462b ("do we know of any greater evil for a state than the thing that distracts it and makes it many instead of one, or a greater good than that which binds it together and makes it one?"), or would have settled for Montesquieu's republican *esprit général* (Montesquieu, 1949, pp. 1134, 1144); he would never have spoken of generalizing the *will* as something central but as difficult as squaring the circle – difficult because one must "denature" particularistic beings without destroying their (ultimate) autonomy. But one must (for Rousseau) have *volonté générale*, not a mere *esprit général*: for "to deprive your will of all freedom is to deprive your actions of all morality," and "civil association is the most voluntary act in the world" (Rousseau, 1962b, pp. 105, 28). That voluntarist side of Rousseau is brought out best by Judith Shklar, who has argued persuasively that the notion of general will "conveys everything he most wanted to say" precisely because it is "a transposition of the most essential individual moral faculty [volition] to the realm of public experience" (Shklar, 1969, p. 184; see also Shklar, 1973).

Moreover, were not generalized will – a will of a very particular kind – essential in Rousseau, the Great Legislator would not have to achieve his civic results (in *The Social Contract*, II, 7) by such tortured means – such as "compelling without violence" and "persuading without convincing." Plato didn't worry about this kind of difficulty because the philosopher-king simply knew the eternal verities, such as "absolute goodness" (*Phaedo*, 7d) which even the gods know and love (*Euthyphro*, 10d–e), and therefore deserved to educate and rule (*Republic*, IV). For Rousseau what is needed for perfect politics (*The Social Contract*, II, 6) is "a union of will and understanding," so that the Great Legislator's civic knowledge is finally, at the end of civic time, *absorbed* into an (originally ignorant) popular general will which is ultimately as "enlightened" as it was always "right."

Here the history of "the general will" before Rousseau is illuminating. In Rousseau, the general will is non-natural: it is artificially produced (over time) through the "denaturing," counter-egoistic educative ministrations of Lycurgus or Moses – though at the end of education informed, independent choice must finally be possible. But in the thought of the seventeenth-century inventors of *volonté générale* – Arnauld, Pascal, Malebranche, Fénelon, Bayle, Leibniz – the general will of God (to "save all men" after the Fall; see Riley, 1986, pp. 4ff) is *naturally* general: how could one "denature" or transform the will of a perfect being, make him "become" over time what he "naturally" was not? Rousseau – who knew intimately the entire seventeenth-century controversy over "general will" (see Riley, 1986, chapter 5) – knew too that a non-divinity must be (to revise a phrase) "forced to be general." But that

non-divinity's freedom must finally arrive, as a child (in *Émile*) finally becomes what it was not. Indeed, the central problem of all Rousseau's thought is to find a form of non-authoritarian educative authority which will "make men what they ought to be" (*Économie politique*; Rousseau, 1950b, p. 297), without (permanently) depriving them of the freedom without which "neither virtues, nor vices, nor merit, nor demerit, nor morality in human actions" is conceivable (*Lettre à M. de Franquières*, 1769; Rousseau, 1974a, pp. 180–1).

None the less, even if Rousseau's aim is to "generalize" will over time without destroying freedom – which makes it crucial that he find a non-authoritarian authority that can "compel without violence" – one can say that Rousseau has a more difficult time in *reconciling* freedom and "what men ought to be" than (most notably) Kant; and here a comparison with Hegel will also be helpful. Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel – separated by whole universes as they are – are all voluntarists who make "will" ethically weighty (in the shape of "general will," "good will," and [so-called] "real will"; see Riley, 1982). All three are in search of a non-willful will; all are in full flight from capricious *volonté particulière*, from what Shakespeare calls "hydra-headed willfulness" (*Henry V*, I, i). But for Rousseau the flight from egoism and *amour-propre* (self-love of a comparative, invidious kind) ends at the border of Sparta (with the "Spartan mother" on the opening page of *Émile*), while for Kant one "ought" to move on to a universal Kingdom of Ends or (failing that) at least to universal republicanism and eternal peace (Kant, 1922, pp. 161–2; see also Riley, 1983, pp. 167ff). But Kant more easily preserves freedom or autonomy than Rousseau – or Hegel, who wants our "real" will to be "recognition" of the state as rational freedom concretely *realized* (Hegel, 1942, p. 105; see also Kelly, 1978, pp. 113–14; Oakeshott, 1975, p. 160) – because what "generalizes" (or rather universalizes) will is reason-ordained "objective ends," *not* Lycurgus (or *Bildung*). Rousseau doubted that there could be a reason-ordained *morale universelle* (universal morality); for him the crucial line should be drawn *between* the "general" and the "universal," the *polis* and the *cosmopolis*. Doubting (in advance of Kant) that a "Kantian" kind of autonomy was possible, Rousseau set himself the daunting task of generalizing will without recourse to "objective ends" – but *with* recourse to educative authority whose highest ambition is to wither away after injecting its (civic, "politan") knowledge into beings who become free in the course of time.

What follows is an examination of the (particular) way in which Rousseau generalizes *volonté*, leaving it (he hopes) free but not willful.

Rousseau's reasons for using "general will" as his central political concept were essentially philosophical – however ready-made for his purposes the seventeenth-century theological notion may have been. (Does not the Spartan mother have a *volonté générale* to "save" the city, as God has a general will to save "all men"?) After all, the two terms of *volonté générale* – "will" and "generality" – represent two main strands in Rousseau's thought. "Generality" stands, *inter alia*, for the rule of law, for civic education that draws us out of ourselves and toward the general (or common) good, for the non-particularist citizen-virtues of Sparta and republican Rome (see especially Rousseau, 1962c, pp. 424ff). "Will" stands, again, for Rousseau's conviction that civil association is "the most voluntary act in the world," that "to deprive your will of all freedom is to deprive your actions of all morality" (Rousseau, 1962b,

pp. 105, 28). And if one could "generalize" the will, so that it "elects" only law, citizenship, and the common good, and avoids willful self-love, then one would have a general will in Rousseau's particular sense. The (originally divine) *volonté générale* of Pascal, Malebranche, Fénelon, and Leibniz corresponded closely to these moral aims: hence why not employ a term already rendered politically usable by Bayle in the *Pensées diverses sur la comète* (Bayle, 1704, pp. 452ff)?

It is scarcely open to doubt, indeed, that the notions of will and generality are equally essential in Rousseau's moral and political philosophy. Without will there is no freedom, no self-determination, no "moral causality" (*First Version of the Social Contract*; Rousseau, 1962e, p. 499), no obligation; without generality the will may be capricious, egoistic, self-obsessed, willful.

Rousseau shared with modern individualist thinkers (notably Hobbes and Locke) the conviction that all political life is conventional, that it can be made obligatory only through voluntary, individual consent. Despite the fact that he sometimes treats moral ideas as if they simply "arise" in a developmental process, in the course of socialization (*Lettre à M. de Beaumont*; Rousseau, 1971c), he often – particularly in his contractarian vein – falls back on the view that the wills of free men are the "causes" of duties and of legitimate authority. Thus, in an argument against slavery in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau urges that "to deprive your will of all freedom" is to deprive your actions of "all morality," that the reason one can derive no notion of right or morality from mere force is that "to yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will" (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 26). (This shows in advance how carefully one must interpret the *deliberately* paradoxical phrase "forced to be free.") In *The Origins of Inequality*, in a passage that almost prefigures Kant, he insists on the importance of free agency, arguing that while "physics" (natural science) might explain the "mechanism of the senses," it could never make intelligible "the power of willing or rather of choosing" – a power in which "nothing is to be found but acts which are purely spiritual and wholly inexplicable by the laws of mechanism" (Rousseau, 1950a, p. 208). It is this power of freely willing, rather than reason, that distinguishes men from beasts. In the (unpublished) *First Version of the Social Contract* he had even said that "every free action has two causes which concur to produce it: the first a moral cause, namely the will which determines the act; the other physical, namely the power which executes it" (Rousseau, 1962e, p. 499). Rousseau, then, not only requires the Kant-anticipating idea of will as "moral causality," he actually uses that term.

All of this is confirmed by what Rousseau says about will in *Émile*, in which he argues (through a speech put into the mouth of the Savoyard Vicar) that "the motive power of all action is in the will of a free creature," that "it is not the word freedom that is meaningless, but the word necessity." The will is "independent of my senses": "I consent or resist, I yield or I win the victory, and I know very well in myself when I have done what I wanted and when I have merely given way to my passions." Man, he concludes, is "free to act," and he "acts of his own accord" (Rousseau, 1910, pp. 243–4). Moreover, human free will does not derogate from Providence, but magnifies it, since God has "made man of so excellent a nature, that he has endowed his actions with that morality by which they are ennobled." Rousseau cannot agree with those theologians (for example, Hobbes) who argue that human freedom would diminish God by robbing him of his omnipotence:

Providence has made man free that he may choose the good and refuse the evil . . . what more could divine power itself have done on our behalf? Could it have made our nature a contradiction and have given the prize of well-doing to one who was incapable of evil? To prevent a man from wickedness, should Providence have restricted him to instinct and made him a fool? (Rousseau, 1910, pp. 243–4)

To be sure, the pre-Kantian voluntarism of *Émile* and of *The Origins of Inequality* is not the whole story; even in the *Lettres morales* (1757), which were used as a quarry in writing *Émile*, the relation of free will to morality is complicated and problematical. The opening of the fifth *Lettre* – “the whole morality of human life is in the intention of man” (Rousseau, 1958, pp. 1106ff; on the importance of the *Lettres* see Shklar, 1969, pp. 229–30) – seems at first to be a voluntarist claim, almost prefiguring Kant’s notion in the *Grundlegung* that a “good will” is the only “unqualifiedly” good thing on earth (Kant, 1949, p. 11). But this *intention* refers not to the “will” of *Émile*, but to “conscience” – which is a “divine instinct” and an “immortal and heavenly voice.” Rousseau, after a striking passage on moral feelings (“if one sees . . . some act of violence or injustice, a movement of anger and indignation arises at once in our heart”), goes on to speak of feelings of “remorse” that “punish hidden crimes in secret”; and this “importunate voice” he calls an involuntary feeling (*sentiment involontaire*) which “torments” us. That the phrase *sentiment involontaire* is not a mere slip of the pen (or of the mind) is proven by Rousseau’s deliberate repetition of “involuntary”:

Thus there is, at the bottom of all souls, an innate principle of justice and of moral truth [that is] prior to all national prejudices, to all maxims of education. This principle is the involuntary rule [*la règle involontaire*] by which, despite our own maxim, we judge our actions, and those of others, as good or bad; and it is to this principle that I give the name conscience.

Conscience, then, is an involuntary moral feeling – not surprisingly, given Rousseau’s view that “our feeling is incontestably prior to our reason itself” (Rousseau, 1971c, pp. 1111, 1107, 1108, 1109). And so, while the fifth *Lettre morale* opens with an apparent anticipation of *Émile*’s voluntarism, this is only an appearance that proves that it is not straightforwardly right to “find” in Rousseau a predecessor of Kant. Rousseau’s *morale sensitive* (one strand of his thought) is not easy to reconcile with rational self-determination (another, equally authentic, strand) – for if Rousseau says that “to deprive your will of all freedom is to deprive your actions of all morality,” he also says that conscience is a *sentiment* which is *involontaire*.

The fact remains, however, that while *Émile* was published, the *Lettres morales* were held back. And in *Émile* Rousseau insists on the moral centrality of free will. Hence he can understand “will” as an independent moral causality with the power to produce moral effects. He definitely thought that he had derived political obligation and rightful political authority from this “power” of willing: “Civil association is the most voluntary act in the world; since every individual is born free and his own master, no one is able, on any pretext whatsoever, to subject him without his consent” (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 105). Indeed, the first four chapters of *The Social Contract* are devoted to refutations of erroneous theories of obligation and right – paternal authority, the “right of the strongest,” and obligations derived from slavery.

"Since no man," Rousseau concludes, "has natural authority over his fellow men, and since might in no sense makes right, [voluntary] convention remains as the basis of legitimate authority among men" (Rousseau, 1962b, pp. 105, 27).

Even if "will" is plainly a central moral, political, and theological notion in Rousseau's thought, this does not mean that he was willing to settle for just any will – such as a particular will or a "willful" will. His constant aim, indeed, is to "generalize" will (Rousseau, 1962e, pp. 472–3) – either through civic education, as in the *Government of Poland*, or through private education, as in *Émile*. In his view, ancient societies such as Sparta and Rome had been particularly adept at generalizing human will. Through their simplicity, their morality of the common good, their civic religion, their moral use of fine and military arts, and their lack of extreme individualism and private interest, the city-states of antiquity had been political societies in the proper sense. In them man had been part of a greater whole from which he "in a sense receives his life and being" (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 52); on the other hand, modern "prejudices," "base philosophy," and "passions of petty self-interest" assure that "we moderns can no longer find in ourselves anything of that spiritual vigor which was inspired in the ancients by everything they did" (Rousseau, 1962c, p. 430). And that "spiritual vigor" may be taken to mean the avoidance – through identity with a greater whole – of self-love, "that dangerous disposition which gives rise to all our vices." Political education in an extremely unified ("generalized") state will "lead us out of ourselves" and provide us with a general will before the human ego "has acquired that contemptible activity which absorbs all virtue and constitutes the life and being of little minds" (Rousseau, 1950b, p. 308). It follows that the best social institutions "are those best able to denature man, to take away his absolute existence and to give him a relative one, and to carry the *moi* into the common unity" (*Émile*; Rousseau, 1962a, volume 2, p. 145).

If these reflections on the pernicious character of self-love and particularism are reminiscent of Malebranche – who had urged that "to act by *volontés particulières* shows a limited intelligence" (Malebranche, 1958, pp. 147–66), and whose love for divine *généralité* had led Rousseau to rank the great Oratorian Father with Plato and Locke (Rousseau, 1971b, p. 1111) – it is in contrasting Rousseau with Malebranche that an important difficulty arises. In Malebranche, God's will is essentially and naturally general; in Rousseau, men's will must be *made* general – a problem which he likens (in the correspondence with Malesherbes) to that of squaring the circle (Rousseau, 1974b). But one can reasonably ask: is will still "will" (*qua* independent "moral cause") if it must be denatured, transformed? Do Rousseau's notions of education – private and civic – leave will as the autonomous producer of moral "effects" that he seems to want? One is tempted to say that this is the question for one who wants *volonté* and *généralité* to fuse – so that (at the end of time) a perfect "union of will and understanding" will synthesize (Lockean) "voluntary agreement" and (Platonic) generalizing education, will blend antiquity ("Sparta") and modernity ("contract") in this "modern who has an ancient soul" (Rousseau, 1962d, p. 421).

To retain the moral attributes of free will while doing away with will's particularity and selfishness and "willfulness" – to generalize this moral "cause" without causing its destruction – is perhaps the central problem in Rousseau's political, moral, and educational thought, and one that reflects the difficulty Rousseau found in making free will and rational, educative authority coexist in his practical thought. Freedom of

the will is as important to the morality of actions for Rousseau as for any voluntarist coming after Augustine's insistence that *bona voluntas* (good will) alone is good (*On Free Choice of the Will*, Book I, chapter 12); but Rousseau was suspicious of the very "faculty" – the only faculty – that could moralize. Thus he urges in the *Discourse on Political Economy* that "the most absolute authority is that which penetrates into a man's inmost being, and concerns itself with his will no less than with his actions" (Rousseau, 1950b, p. 297). Can the will be both an autonomous "moral cause" and subject to the rationalizing, generalizing effect of educative authority? This is Rousseau's constant difficulty. Even Émile, the best educated of men, chooses to continue to accept the guidance of his teachers: "Advise and control us; we shall be easily led; as long as I live I shall need you" (Rousseau, 1910, p. 444). How much more, then, do ordinary men need the guidance of a "great legislator" – the Numa or Moses or Lycurgus of whom Rousseau speaks so often (Rousseau, 1962c, pp. 427–30; 1971a, pp. 118–20) – when they embark on the setting up of a system which will not only aid and defend but also moralize them. The general will is dependent on "a union of understanding and will within the social body" (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 51); but that understanding, which is provided (at least initially) by educative authority – rather than by a Kantian "fact of reason" giving (timeless) "objective ends" – is difficult to make perfectly congruent with "will" as an autonomous "moral cause."

This notion of the relation of educative authority to will appears not just in Rousseau's theories of public or civic education (particularly in the *Économie politique* and the *Gouvernement de Pologne*; Rousseau, 1962c, pp. 437–43), but also in his theory of private education in *Émile*. In educating a child, Rousseau advises the tutor, "let him think he is master while you are really master." And then: "there is no subjection so complete as that which preserves the forms of freedom; it is thus that the will itself is taken captive" (Rousseau, 1910, p. 84). One can hardly help asking what has become of "will" when it has been "taken captive," and whether it is enough to preserve the mere "forms" of freedom. On this point Rousseau appears to have been of two minds: the poor who "agree" to a social contract that merely legitimizes the holdings of the rich "preserve the forms of freedom," but Rousseau (in *Origins of Inequality*) dismisses this contract as a fraud (Rousseau, 1950a, pp. 180–2). Thus it cannot be straightforwardly the case – as John Charvet argues in his remarkable Rousseau study – that Rousseau, the *citoyen de Genève*, simply was not "worried by the gap which opens up between the appearance and the reality of freedom" (Charvet, 1974, p. 58). Yet Charvet has something of a point, since will is "taken captive" in *Émile* and "penetrated" by authority in the *Discourse on Political Economy*; and neither that captivity nor that penetration is criticized by Rousseau – despite his *dictum* about depriving one's actions "of all morality" if one deprives his will of "freedom." So one sees again why a *general* will would appeal to him: capricious willfulness would be "canceled," will rationalized by authority, "preserved" (Hegel, 1967, p. 234).

If will in Rousseau is generalized primarily through an educative authority, so that volition as "moral cause" is not quite as free as he would sometimes prefer, it is at least arguable that any tension between "will" and the authority that "generalizes" it is only a *provisional* problem. Rousseau seems to have hoped that at the end of political time (so to speak) men would finally be citizens and would will only the common good in virtue of what they had learned over time; at the end of civic time, they might actually be free,

and not just "forced to be free" (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 36). At the end of its political education – no more "denaturing" or transformative than any true education – political society would finally be in a position to say what Émile says at the end of his "domestic" education: "I have decided to be what you have made me." At this point (of "decision") there would be a "union of understanding and will" in politics, but one in which "understanding" is no longer the private possession of a Numa or a Lycurgus. At this point, too, "agreement" and "contract" would finally have real meanings: the "general will," which is "always right," would be enlightened as well, and contract would go beyond being the mere rich man's confidence trick (legalizing unequal property) that it is in *Origins of Inequality*. At the end of political time, the "general will one has as a citizen" would have become a kind of second nature, approaching the true naturalness of *volonté générale* in Malebranche's version of the divine *modus operandi*. "Approaching," however, is the strongest term one can use, and the relation of will to the educative authority that generalizes it remains a problem in Rousseau – the more so because he often denied (in his more Lockean moods) that there is any natural authority on earth (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 27).

One can still ask: how can one reconcile Rousseau's insistence on an all-shaping educative authority with his equal insistence on free choice and personal autonomy? A possible answer is: *through* his theory of education, which is the heart of his thought – the one thing that can make Rousseauism "work." At the end of civic time, when men have been denatured and transformed into citizens, they will finally have civic knowledge and general will – just as adults finally have the moral knowledge and the independence that they (necessarily) lacked as children. For Rousseau there are unavoidable stages in all education, whether private or public: the child, he says in *Émile*, must first learn necessity, then utility, and finally morality, in that inescapable order. If one says "ought" to an infant he simply reveals his own ignorance and folly. This notion of necessary educational time, of *becoming* what one was not, is revealed perfectly in Émile's utterance "I have decided to be what you made me." That is deliberately paradoxical (as many of Rousseau's central moral-political beliefs are cast in the form of paradoxes); but it shows that the capacity to "decide" is indeed "made." It is education that "forces one to be free" – by slowly "generalizing" the will. Similarly, Rousseau's "nations" are at first ignorant: "There is with nations, as with men, a time of youth, or, if you prefer, of maturity, for which we must wait before subjecting them to laws (Rousseau, 1962b, p. 56). Waiting, however, requires time; autonomy arrives at the end of a process, and the general will is *at last* as enlightened as it was (always) right. On the most favorable reasonable reading, then, Rousseau does not, as some critics allege, vibrate incoherently between "Platonic" education and "Lockean" voluntariness; if his notion of becoming-in-time works, then the *généralité* of antiquity and the *volonté* of modernity are truly fused by this "modern who has an ancient soul."

Dewey

As Rousseau stands apart from other Enlightenment thinkers in his treatment of education as a central issue for social philosophy, American philosopher John Dewey

stands apart from his contemporaries in treating education as a central issue for philosophy generally, both theoretical and social. Although Rousseau and Dewey differed profoundly in their conceptions of human nature and understanding, they agreed that social freedom is more than the absence of external or legal impediments to action. A society that guarantees its citizens freedom of choice and makes opportunities open to talents is not necessarily free or democratic. Dewey (1988, p. 41) writes, "Freedom from restriction . . . is to be prized only as a means to a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result [and] to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation."

Both men agreed that power over external resources and materials is meaningless unless the projects, values, and purposes for which we enlist those resources are truly our own. Likewise, social freedom is meaningless unless citizens are each their own persons in the relevant sense. So Dewey (1988, p. 43) argues, "It is a sound instinct which identifies freedom with the power to frame purposes and execute . . . purposes so formed. Such freedom is in turn identical with self-control." As it is through education that we develop self-control, i.e. critical and reflective skills and the habits of using them, education is the *sine qua non* of a free or democratic society. Dewey goes beyond Rousseau, however, in identifying education as the central problem not merely for social philosophy but for philosophy itself. To Dewey, philosophy is better understood as love of education than love of wisdom, i.e. love of inquiry for its own sake, not just its results.

Dewey's interest in education was lifelong. He worked briefly as a public school teacher before starting graduate work in philosophy. Thus his philosophical and professional interests in efforts to standardize curricula and professionalize education in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were supplemented by a certain practical appreciation of the challenges teachers faced. Because of his interest, he eagerly took a position as chair of the Departments of Philosophy and Pedagogy at the new University of Chicago, where he would found the University of Chicago's famous Laboratory School. During his ten years in Chicago (1894–1903), he developed the main lines of his theory of education. Dewey never considered his work on education to be mere "applied philosophy." On the contrary, he recommended *Democracy and Education* as the key to his philosophy (although a later work, *Experience and Education*, is perhaps an easier starting point).

Philosophical approach

Dewey's distinctive attitude arose in part from the pragmatic or "instrumentalist" view of human understanding he developed during the 1890s. Unlike contemporaneous philosophers (realist and idealist) for whom the problem of knowledge was deciding whether and how our ideas mirror the real world outside our individual minds, Dewey argued that the problem of knowledge is better conceived as the problem of determining why certain ideas work better in facilitating human activities and goals. If we insist upon treating ideas as mirrors of the world outside us, pragmatists argued, we make knowledge an insolvable problem. There simply is no way to step outside our minds to determine how well our ideas reflect external reality.

But if we recognize that what really matters to us about ideas is how they function as tools with which to model, predict, and interpret our experience, the problem of knowledge is no longer insolvable. We can check the instrumental value of our ideas by comparing the expected effects of adopting or acting upon particular models, theories, and interpretations with what we subsequently experience. The problem is how to determine the best methods of doing so. For Dewey, theoretical philosophy was in effect the study of new and better methods of *educating* ourselves about our ideas and their value.

As a pragmatist, Dewey saw ideas, interpretations, and theories as socially constructed instruments for managing human experience. But his constructivism was not limited to his understanding of our ideas. Because he came to pragmatism via neo-Hegelianism, he also saw personality as largely socially constructed. We are biological creatures born with physiological and psychological traits that are the basic stuff of our development as persons. But our development is given direction and purpose by social and cultural practices. Take everything from a person that her culture provides, Dewey argued – language, history, religion, art, politics – and she would no longer be a person, let alone the person she was. Development of a functional and well integrated personality out of the multiple and competing drives that constitute raw human nature is an achievement, not a given. If we are free, autonomous persons it is not because we were born so but because social life has taught us to reflect upon and to take control of ourselves and our actions.

Dewey's pragmatic view of ideas, theories, and explanations as more or less functional tools, and of education as the process by which we learn methods for constructing, testing, and applying them, meant that Dewey could not identify education, intellectual or moral, with "schooling" as it was conducted in American public schools. Most public schools devoted the elementary years (which were all many children received) to drilling in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics, supplemented in higher grades by further drilling in an expanded range of subjects (history, geography, physical science) and/or manual (job) training. Dewey (1977, p. 236) considered this sort of schooling the reverse of education in every sense. Intellectually, the problem is that "acquiring takes the place of inquiring." Schools treated students as vessels to be filled with correct ideas rather than as active inquirers needing apprenticeship in techniques of discovery and interpretation. Consistent with this approach, schooling was "complete" when students could reproduce the information or basic literary and mathematical forms in which they were drilled, whether or not they were able to think critically or inquire for themselves.

If schools offered little training in the critical and reflective skills citizens of a democracy must have, this was still better than the training provided for moral and social life. Dewey (1988, p. 40) remarked, "the non-social character of the traditional school is seen in the fact that it erected silence into one of its prime virtues." Schools were authoritarian institutions that inculcated conformity and passivity, motivating acceptance of their rules and requirements by threats of social censure, while discouraging cooperation, self-control, and what Dewey confusingly called "social control," meaning appeal to a participant's desire to engage in a social practice to motivate acceptance of the rules that make it possible (as the desire to play chess motivates acceptance of its rules).

In earlier days, inadequacy of schooling was less significant because education was so readily available elsewhere. Intellectual and social education took place informally through children's apprenticeships as members of families, trades, guilds, congregations, voluntary societies, and civic institutions. Pragmatic standards of inquiry were inculcated in a rough and ready way, since new ideas had to "work" to achieve acceptance and an ability to use one's knowledge to solve problems was a mark of intellectual competence. When the pace of technological and social change was slow and opportunities to observe and participate were relatively unimpeded, education of this sort could prepare citizens for participation in democratic social life. But as Dewey (1976a, p. 259) noted, "in the urban and suburban life of the child of today this is simply a memory." Children no longer grew up in or regularly visited their families' work places. The inner workings of the new technology around them were not directly visible. Social services were provided by distant and impersonal social agencies. Informal education could no longer compensate for poor schools. And simply mandating attendance in traditional schools was not enough to satisfy a democracy's requirement for educated citizens. Dewey worried that expanding literary skills without also expanding critical skills might actually undermine democracy. He recognized that the new mass media were creating an era of "information-overload." In such an environment democratic decision-making faces a new threat, tyranny through propaganda. Social freedom, the freedom to frame and make authentic choices and to participate in public projects that reflect one's genuine interests and goals, is unrealizable if the citizenry is unable to resist the influence of mass media or to judge matters for itself.

Education as growth

If we needed further proof that education cannot be mere schooling in the inherited ideas and skills of older generations, we have but to consider that, as Dewey remarked (1972a, p. 86), "it is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be twenty years from now. Hence it is impossible to prepare the child for any precise set of conditions." We must recognize that no subjects or technical skills we can hand down to our children are guaranteed to be necessary or sufficient to make them flourishing, independent people throughout their lives. If they are to become and remain functional autonomous persons, we must teach them to do by choice what in infancy they do by nature, which is to grow and adapt.

Dewey's identification of education with growth aligned him in the public view with progressive educators who argued for so-called "child-centered" curricula based upon the child's own "natural" development. These educators feared that schooling in opposition to the natural unfolding of the child's nature could permanently distort or stunt the child's ultimate development. Although Dewey welcomed the new focus on child development by progressive educators, he did not endorse their sometimes romantic notion of growth as the revelation of latent powers or dispositions. Like their traditionalist opponents, progressives of this ilk mistook "the fulfillment of growing [as] an accomplished growth: that is to say, an Ungrowth, something which is no longer growing" (Dewey, 1978a, p. 47). Thus education and growth are valuable solely as means to this end. Dewey's conception is, by contrast, one of continual adaptation. He writes, "translated into its education

equivalents, this means (i) that the educational process had no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that (ii) the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" (Dewey, 1978a, p. 54). Thus the value of education and growth are not *limited* to their instrumental value in helping us to achieve specific goals, for they are themselves intrinsically valuable. In keeping with his view, the University of Chicago's Laboratory School, during Dewey's tenure, adopted a "teacher-centered" approach to elementary education, leaving it to teachers to determine the curriculum best suited to help students develop the cooperative skills of inquiry that would enable them to take increasing responsibility for their own education in upper grades.

Dewey's conception of education as growth provided the basis for assessing educational schemes: a scheme is effective when or if students tend to increase their willingness and ability to educate themselves further. Educational schemes are ineffective or "miseducative" (Dewey, 1988, p. 11) if they discourage students from further education or fail to help them to increase their knowledge and skills. Traditional schools were often miseducative in the first sense since they persuaded students that learning was unpleasant in itself and largely irrelevant to the problems of their daily lives. Teachers resorted to "sugar-coating" lessons "with all manner of pretty devices and tricks in order that the child may absorb them unawares" (Dewey, 1972b, p. 257). But such tricks did not address the more fundamental problem of the irrelevance of schooling to life.

More than anything else, Dewey thought it was the separation of schooling from life that made contemporary schooling miseducative. To be genuinely educative, schooling must be continuous with living. It cannot be limited to a particular time or place or doled out at another's discretion. To be educative schooling must be available when and where it is wanted and in such a way as to make its further pursuit possible as well as desirable. One part of the solution is clearly to disperse schooling from its traditional institutional settings, so that it is accessible when and as it is required, during evenings and weekends, via correspondence as well as in classrooms, at educational centers and satellite locations, and so forth. To this extent, the remedy is within the scope of the administrative hierarchy. But the sort of education a person needs is largely determined by individual interests and circumstances. Thus, to be educative, schooling must also become more democratic.

Dewey remarks, "There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying" (Dewey, 1988, p. 43). It is, for example, not "sugar-coating" to reform the curriculum of elementary grades to accommodate the normal interests of young children in the world around them, the occupations people pursue, the tools they use, and the ways they travel. Nor is it a "pretty device" to delay introduction of grammar, spelling, or arithmetic until after inquiry into other more immediately absorbing topics has presented problems that make learning abstract verbal or mathematical skills desirable to the students. And when students are old enough to identify interests for themselves, it is not a motivational "trick" to involve them in

determining the course of their further studies. When education serves students' interests, they are motivated to follow instructions, try experiments, and solicit advice because these are integral to the realization of their own interests. Education is not then an imposition but a cooperative activity and the discipline students develop is genuinely *self-discipline*.

Democracy as education

Dewey's recognition of the importance of decentralizing and democratizing public education to make it effective led him to develop a new and powerful argument for liberal democracy. Dewey notes:

The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated... but there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint and communicated experience. (Dewey, 1978a, p. 93)

Enlightenment liberals had defended representative government as a means of protecting personal security and property against depredations of the governing elite. Dewey, by contrast, defended democracy as creating and sustaining personal autonomy against depredations of ignorance, prejudice, or hidebound custom.

If education is to enable us to flourish through the vicissitudes of personal and social fortune, Dewey argues, society must be arranged so that individuals can interact with whoever has expertise that they want and to work cooperatively with whoever is willing and able to develop expertise where none exists. Non-democratic societies, whether monarchies or theocracies, aristocracies, or dictatorships, all tend to divide society into classes whose interests become opposed. Association across class lines is curtailed and so also opportunities to engage in cooperative inquiry. The tendency to divide along class lines internally is replicated externally. It becomes a mark of loyalty to one's own class to deprecate the intelligence, civilization, judgment, or morals of those who live in societies differently organized, as well as those who live in different classes within one's own society. Minds become mistrustful of difference and closed to change, with the result that personal and social growth and adaptation are constrained. By contrast, democracy – by which Dewey understood mutual participation in the design of social institutions and the designation of public projects – enhances educational opportunities by encouraging interaction and shared interests across class lines. Intellectual and personal growth requires freedom to experiment, and liberal social democracy provides this to a greater degree than any other form of social life. Thus, if education is a life-long process of growth and adaptation, and if growth and adaptation have become essential to human flourishing, then liberal democracy is a form of education and as such essential to human flourishing.

Influence

Despite the considerable educational and social reforms that have occurred during and since Dewey's lifetime, Dewey's works still provide a critical perspective on

education whose value has by no means been exhausted. Dewey developed his philosophy of education at a time of widespread discontent with public schools. His writings on education, such as *The School and Society*, *The Child and the Curriculum*, *How We Think*, *Democracy and Education*, and *Experience and Education*, were widely read and admired by American educators. Many of these writings were also influential internationally. He was more often read than understood, however. His refusal to propose "universal" principles of curricular design was often misinterpreted as simple neglect. Others began making him gifts of their own. "As his reputation grew," Herbert M. Kliebard notes, "Dewey's name was invoked in connection with curriculum and general school reforms of all sorts whether they reflected his ideas or not. At the same time, the educational theory Dewey so painstakingly developed... was either converted into caricature, such as 'learning by doing,' or neglected altogether" (Kliebard, 1995, p. 27). Meanwhile, the educational and social problems to which Dewey called attention were often overlooked by reforms introduced during his lifetime. "It is our American habit," Dewey (1978b, p. 183) lamented, "that if we find the foundations of our educational structure unsatisfactory to add another story or a wing." It is not enough to reform schools if the surrounding society is itself undemocratic, destructively competitive, and divided along class or racial divisions, as American (and not only American) society has been.

Dewey's use of his educational theory to critique American social institutions was also influential during his lifetime but afterwards fell from favor as social debate became polarized around the relation of capitalism and democracy. To Marxist and socialist critics, Dewey's approach lacked the apparent rigor and depth of economic critiques, while their libertarian and capitalist interlocutors found Dewey's conception of liberal democracy too "communitarian" for their purposes. As this debate has cooled and openness to more moderate positions increased, Dewey's account of democracy is again commanding attention. Thus, Dewey's philosophy of education continues to repay interest from within and beyond educational circles.

See also 1 THE SOCRATIC MOVEMENT; 2 STOICISM; 6 ENLIGHTENMENT LIBERALISM; 8 KANT, HEGEL, AND THE RISE OF PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCE; 9 ROMANTICISM; 16 THEORIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING; 28 THE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO EDUCATE; 29 CHURCH, STATE, AND EDUCATION

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