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Making Artists of Us All: The Evolution of an Educational Aesthetic

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

MAKING ARTISTS OF US ALL:
THE EVOLUTION OF AN EDUCATIONAL AESTHETIC

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to the simplest of people—the citizens of nature living in poverty throughout the world—who despite suffering great hardship, manage to teach the simplest of lessons in love and humility.

And to my brother Mario Jose, who lost his life by the hands of a few who never learned these lessons.

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ABSTRACT

Plato was correct in his criticism of democracy. A citizenry that lacks the requisite intelligence and self-discipline to make decisions for their own welfare and that of their society cannot be entrusted with the power to make such decisions. A democratic way of life hinges upon the ability of its citizenry to exercise enough self-control to at least consider the needs, concerns, and interests of others.

The history of philosophy is replete with attempts at invoking rationality as a means of directing and even subduing human desire and emotion. Understood as that which moves human beings to action, desire and emotion come to be associated with human freedom and, thus, rationality as a means of curbing that freedom. Metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological systems are proposed in efforts to explain the basis and proper end of desire, emotion, and freedom. Plato, for instance, takes for granted a separation between thought and action that drives a wedge between our rational ability to exercise self-discipline and the free expression of desire and emotion. Hobbes, on the other hand, replaces our internal ability for rational self-control with the external authority of the political State. So long as freedom and control are pitted against one another, human beings are incapable of attaining a symbiosis of these two elements of human action so essential to realizing true democracy.

Unlike Plato, John Dewey sees in democracy the greatest potential for individual and social life. The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the educational philosophy of Dewey, which culminates in an educational aesthetic, appeals to and makes the most of the symbiosis of freedom and self-control, emotion and reason. Dewey's educational aesthetic not only offers an alternative to traditional methods of education, but also demonstrates how the goal of a democratic way of life is made feasible by means of intelligently guided self-discipline—a form of self-control guided by intelligence that is not a constraint upon freedom but instead, embodies greater opportunity for freedom. I trace the basis for this synthesis, in the social-political and pedagogical principles of John

Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Both Locke and Rousseau offer educational theories that begin to turn our attention toward the essential partnership required of rationality and emotion. Dewey's educational aesthetic is then considered as a response to alienating forms of education that continue to pit control and freedom against one another, and which thwart the intellectual and emotional development necessary for autonomy and democratic forms of social organization.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to pinpoint what exactly it is that motivated this work. Generally, I would have to say a passion for the process of learning, and to see just where and how this process may be realized. I discovered this seemingly natural process leading to growth in the aesthetic dimensions of human experience which in Deweyan terms means it is found among the potential sensibilities of all human beings.

More specifically, there was the search for a thread I began to detect, the nature and purpose of which, upon first uncovering it, I was unaware. At first I recognized this thread to be most fundamentally the idea that learning is about attaining something—a disposition of self-direction, which, in turn, is only possible when we develop a disposition of self-discipline. Moving backward through the philosophical tradition as if retracing steps, I was able to discern the same line of self-directed and self-disciplined action that forms the essential elements to achieving not only personal, but also social wellbeing. In the end I pull this string taut and thereby reveal its course—a course that we may continue to trace, hopefully now with the aid of some of the clarifications I have proposed throughout these chapters.

Sentimentally, what has motivated this project is the desire to bridge the gap between possibility and wasted potential; whether politically, in terms of how we organize ourselves socially, in our attempts to educate our young, or in the ordinary occurrences of our daily lives—in every manner by which we choose to define for ourselves a life worth living.

In looking for the aesthetic sensibility so crucial to enriching our lives, I stumbled across the emotions and their underprivileged status in philosophical and educational discourses. This search also led me to the most fundamental sources of motivation of action—our desires and impulses, and their integral function in the human drama. Specifically, I address the importance of free expression and the place of emotion in

learning—elements, which, along with intellection together give vent to our aesthetic potentials.

At the same time, my research has made it quite apparent that there exists a significant incongruence and dislocation between educational philosophy and actual practice. Not only are there critical ideas and methods yet to be realized, but also, due to neglect or sheer misunderstanding on the part of educators, we continue to commit the same errors. In other words, in these pages I relearn the significant role, more so, the responsibility befitting philosophers to continue to stake their place in the conversations that matter most. Communication among disciplines, including especially philosophy, is essential if we want to combat the false presumptions and errors implemented as policy within our social institutions. It is my hope that this dissertation helps to keep this responsibility alive by way of clarification of important philosophical ideas of the past and their redirection towards positive and empowering possibilities.

Given this optimism, there is also the reality that we are heading into dangerous ground educationally, so long as we continue to standardize learning and tastes. This standardization, which seems to immerse individuals deeper within their self-perpetuating apathy, is taking over the role formerly held by oppressive traditional educational environments in which individuality and initiative were thwarted.

About each chapter specifically, I would say, briefly, the following. From chapter one, what stands out is the need to rethink Plato beyond the neat and comfortable packaging of traditionally held categories, so as to recognize within his thought the rudiments of the relationship among desire, emotion, and reason. From the second chapter I offer a simple hope that not even so-called democratic realists can monopolize what is the essence of democracy. By continuing to direct our attention to democracy as a way of life, Dewey continues to offer safe haven to a truly participatory and deliberative form of social organization that nonetheless retains what is basic to the autonomy and sense of freedom of individuals. From the third and fourth chapters, on Locke and Rousseau, respectively, my hope is that philosophers and educators alike will be able to

return to their works for a reassessment and reevaluation of contemporary proposals, policies, and practices that impact the ways we choose to educate our young. The fifth chapter simply reaffirms not only the continued threat of alienation, but on a more positive note, also denotes a practical application of some of Dewey's key educational principles, in efforts to overcome the stultifying exigencies we have come to accept as formalized learning. Lastly, I would have readers recognize that an aesthetic sensibility is nothing more, nor less, than an approach to living—a way, to borrow from Nietzsche, of giving style to one's life—of directing one's energies, emotions, and intelligence into integrated unities by which we may decipher and construct meaning, and meaningful lives.

CHAPTER 1

THE OPPOSITION OF THOUGHT AND ACTION

The domination of men by reverie and desire is as pertinent for
The philosophic theory of nature as is mathematical physics;
Imagination as much to be noted as refined observation.

—John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*

Desires, and the passions that drive them, may tear our hearts asunder or lead us to aspire to greatness. Because of them we may seek out happiness and fulfillment, and for them we may willingly destroy our lives. Various forms of social organization have been devised, tried, and forsaken in attempts either to guard against those potentially harmful impulses, as did Plato, or to harness their constructive energies toward greater associated living, as proposed by John Dewey. As both instrument and goal, human rationality has been invoked in hopes that we may come to grips with these, the very driving forces of human action. Charged with the responsibility of understanding, controlling, directing, and even at times denying these drives, it will be left to history to decide whether human rationality ultimately proves redeeming or a tragedy.

Ironically, that which gave birth to no less than Western philosophy, human reasoning has both raised us above the brutes, as they say, and severed humanity from itself and from nature. With it we have peered into the very *logos* of space and time, and within it we have discovered the means by which to escape from the spatial and temporal. We have accepted it as sole arbiter of moral rectitude, but have used it to calculate deliberate brutality. Yet, there is still time for this greatest of ironies to fully realize itself as either blessing or curse. Of course, this will be for the most part left to us rational beings—an irony unto itself.

But is this mandate conferred upon reason, fair? A review of the history of philosophy, in many respects itself the history of reason and its challengers, reveals that

on many occasions this obligation has been self-imposed. Such is the case with Plato who attributes to the mind (soul), so long as it is properly trained, an indubitable ability to direct our bodily-induced desires and passions toward their rational and moral ends. The rational and moral become one for Plato, as he admonishes us to seek knowledge so that we may live the good and morally virtuous life, both individually and socially. When we peruse that “series of footnotes to Plato”¹ or, perhaps more appropriately, when we examine those footprints left by Plato, we rarely find anyone who is opposed to this as an ideal individual and social goal. What we do discover are differences in the role assigned to reason and the mechanisms by which it is to be implemented in the pursuit of said goals.

Plato’s proposal for an ideal society, one characterized by justice, involves a strict separation of responsibilities within each individual’s soul and among the separate classes in society, corresponding to their respective capacities for achieving distinct virtues. In the end, it is rationality as wisdom that oversees and regulates the other elements (other virtues notwithstanding). Because of the deleterious potential of desires and emotions, along with the predominance assigned to reason above and beyond these, in essence reason itself becomes the reason for action. What I propose in this chapter is that as a result, this dissection of the self and that of society into classes promotes a separation of interests that diminishes the ability of individuals and the particular classes to recognize and act toward that which is most conducive to the good of each and all.

I will begin by exploring Plato’s *Phaedo* and what I refer to as the *simplistic* account of the relation between desire and rationality.² Marked by a pronounced disdain of bodily desires, emotions, and anything else physical, it is this simplistic account that leaves Plato open to extreme reactions, among existentialists in particular. After reviewing some representative existentialist reactions, we will briefly turn to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, where we find a more *sophisticated* description of the interplay among desire, emotion, and reason, similar to that found in the *Republic*, where the focus is on how this interplay manifests itself within the individual soul and in the ideal state. As we shall see, although more sophisticated, Plato’s continued valuing of wisdom as abstract truth above wisdom as a process of practical reasoning leaves him open to the instrumentalist criticism of Dewey.

1.1. The Simplistic Account: Thinking and Desiring

Plato's early dialogues typically involve interlocutors engaged, under the tutelage of Socrates, in the task of attempting to uncover the ultimate nature or meaning of a disputed term. The key elements within any particular dialogue are represented and explained, always with their relation to the overall intention of that particular dialogue in mind. His *Phaedo* is no different. Here, Plato provides an account of the soul and the body, and their concomitants, reasoning and desiring, tailored specifically to Socrates' defense of the immortality of the soul. In the hopes of appeasing his comrades, who seem more fearful of the fate of his soul after death than Socrates himself, the latter assumes a strict division between the soul and the body in order to combat Cebes and Simmias' worry that the soul, upon the death of the body, may disperse into the wind and disappear forever. Cebes presents the point of contention thus:

Socrates...but what you said about the soul leaves the average person with grave misgivings that when it is released from the body it may no longer exist anywhere, but may be dispersed and destroyed on the very day that the man himself dies, as soon as it is freed from the body, that as it emerges it may be dissipated like breath or smoke, and vanish away so that nothing is left of it anywhere.³

The striking feature of this dialogue is the derision Plato unleashes against the body and anything remotely associated with it, namely, the desires and appetites that emanate from it. Of course, who could blame Socrates for taking such a stand? After all, a man's immortality is at stake.

The division of body and soul corresponds to Plato's more general metaphysical bifurcation of reality into an ideal realm that is constant and immutable, and a physical realm characterized by impermanence and change. The body and soul each serve as the instruments, if you will, by which we achieve different levels of understanding corresponding to these distinct realms. The body, limited by its very nature and the nature

of that which it perceives, is resigned to its empirically rooted opinions, whereas the rational soul is able to peer into the realm of objective truth. In addition, there is to be found throughout the *Phaedo* a sustained moral message. The attainment of knowledge is the means by which we come to an understanding of the good, which, in turn, affords us the ability to achieve the kind of moral virtue necessary for living a good and happy life.

Thus, it is the philosopher as true seeker of wisdom who cares for the soul by turning its attention away from the bodily senses, in preparation for its *rendezvous* with ultimate truth and reality. Socrates describes this to Cebes:

Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over, his soul is a helpless prisoner, chained hand and foot in the body, compelled to view reality not directly but only through its prison bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance...[philosophy] points out that observation by means of the eyes and ears and all the other senses is entirely deceptive, and she urges the soul to refrain from using them unless it is necessary to do so.⁴

The real (ideal) being only imperfectly reflected in the apparent reality pervading the world of sentient beings, who by means of their fallible senses can attain only inadequate levels of knowledge, is simply inaccessible to us as mere physical beings. In the same passage, Plato continues his assault on the senses, “attributing no truth to anything which it views indirectly as being subject to variation, because such objects are sensible and visible but what the soul itself sees is intelligible and invisible.”⁵ Thus, it is the soul’s rational capability, alone and unto itself, that is able to “grasp” or comprehend the objective nature of reality represented in Ideas (Forms) that are so abstract they are accessible only to a mind free from the constraints and encumbrances of a needy body.

Accordingly, Plato disparages desires because they are correlates of the body and, therefore, also of the senses and the sensual pleasures they give rise to—these latter acting as “a sort of rivet with which [they] fasten the soul to the body and pin it down and make it corporeal.”⁶ Socrates, this time asks Simmias, “Now take the acquisition of knowledge. Is the body a hindrance or not, if one takes it into partnership to share an

investigation?”⁷ To which Simmias responds in the affirmative. The senses, along with pleasure in the fulfillment of our desires, make it virtually impossible for us to acquire the knowledge necessary to achieve moral excellence. Socrates gets Simmias to agree that the senses and pursuit of pleasure will only obscure the search for the kind of truth required of such excellence, and that it is through reason alone that we attain this. Socrates asks,

Then when is it that the soul attains truth? When it tries to investigate anything with the help of the body, it is obviously led astray...Is it not in the course of reflection, if at all, that the soul gets a clear view of facts? Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind—that is, when it *ignores* the body and becomes as far as possible *independent*, avoiding all physical contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality.⁸

Interestingly enough, Plato at times seems to hold a different opinion when it comes to displeasure—a negative pleasure—so long as it is experienced in the service of attaining a moral end. When describing the dominance of the soul over the body and its inclinations, he warns us of its harshness, “exercising every form of control—sometimes by *severe* and *unpleasant* methods like those of physical training and medicine....”⁹ Although pleasures are to be avoided because they distract us from virtue, he does not seem to mind the fact that displeasure, the “good for you” kind of unpleasantness, will result and even persist so long as the soul exercises its control.

Also of interest is the fact that Plato agrees it is through the body and its senses that the soul first gets a hold on the particulars it then abstracts from in order to recollect the universal Idea or Form instantiated by those very particulars. Although reason plays an integral part in the discernment of truth, as it “compiles” the sensed particulars into generalizations, perhaps it would be fairer to say that reason is not enough to account for the entire process. Of course, Plato sidesteps this issue by simply maintaining that these particulars only “point” to that which already exists independently of them—they are

mere reminders of what already is. Regardless, Plato continues to eagerly separate soul from body.

The man who pursues the truth by applying his pure and unadulterated thought to the pure and unadulterated object, cutting himself off as much as possible from his eyes and ears and virtually all the rest of his body, as an *impediment* which by its presence prevents the soul from attaining to truth and clear thinking? Is not this the person, Simmias, who will reach the goal of reality, if anybody can?¹⁰

Once again, not surprisingly, Simmias concurs. Metaphors abound in this dialogue, for the most part in the service of slandering the body and its desires. Socrates continues the barrage against these.

So long as we keep to the body and our soul is *contaminated* with its imperfection, there is no chance of our ever attaining satisfactorily to our object...In the first place, the body provides us with innumerable distractions in the pursuit of our necessary sustenance...the body fills us with loves and desires and fears and all sorts of fancies and a great deal of nonsense.¹¹

Leading us into wars and revolutions in order to appease them, our body's desires—hindrances and impediments to our moral development—distract our attention from the pursuit and attainment of immortality no less, keeping the soul from its eternal destiny.

The problem with such an oversimplification of the dimensions of our desires and passions is that Plato overlooks the fact that we are motivated by these same to seek out those very truths—that wisdom—held to be so distinctly beyond these. Associated with impulses to action, our personal desires come to be regarded as mere expressions of individual inclinations and base interests that together with our passions are considered antithetical to the rational control of action. In other words, the body, *realized* through desire-ridden action seeking and attaining fulfillment, undermines itself by interfering in

the very process that is to ensure the soul does not become enslaved to the body and its actions. We then have what amounts to an opposition between action and thought; the former, in the form of impulses, desires, and inclinations, and the latter, in the form of a disembodied and disengaged rationality seeking control over the former.¹² Socrates uses his very last breath to reinforce the notion that it is reason alone, whether in life or death that can provide a cure for the disease that is the body.

Yet, Plato does not identify all desires with the body. Interestingly enough, even in his *simplistic* account, Plato tries to show that not all loving, desiring, and fearing are to be avoided, lending a bit of complexity and sophistication to this account.¹³ Although he rails against the bodily desires, those “rational” desires associated with and representative of the pursuit of wisdom and the good are themselves desirable. Unfortunately, Plato makes only a fleeting allusion to this when he describes the appropriate disposition of “true philosophers,” especially at the time of their impending death, who “make dying their profession...and to [whom] death is least alarming.”¹⁴ Philosophy is a rehearsal or preparation for death, because by means of it we attain the kind of knowledge that is akin to the soul’s knowledge before its imprisonment in the body, and that knowledge it will once again attain upon its escape from the body at death.

Socrates explains to Simmias that one should never regret facing that which one prepares to face throughout one’s entire life. He continues, “Would they not naturally be glad to set out for the place where there is a prospect of attaining the object of their lifelong *desire*—which is wisdom—and of escaping from an unwelcome association...will a true *lover* of wisdom...be *grieved* at dying?”¹⁵ Plato admits here of a desire and an affection for wisdom. We are also to assume that since philosophers are not “grieved at dying” then certainly they must be happy, or even elated—an emotional state. It appears, then, that Plato finds some desires and emotions acceptable, but only those intimately associated with the pursuit of wisdom, which, in turn leads to the good. But even if desire and love manifest themselves in the pursuit of something noble, are they not still a desire and an emotion? From where do these arise if not from that very “toward-ness,” that pull or drive that characterizes our impulses to action? We will not find an adequate response to these questions in Plato’s *simplistic* account.

The problem, then, in making sense of Plato's account of desires, is not so much whether or not he admits the possibility of employing these in the service of goodness. This becomes obvious enough in a careful reading of Plato. The problem is the fact that Plato denies our desires and passions any significance of their own, except a deleterious one, apart from their service to reason. From this arises yet another related point of contention, which has to do with how Plato conceives of something being in the "service of reason"—his conception of reason as goal *versus* process. We now turn to a series of responses to these issues.

1.2. The Existentialist Backlash

Plato's metaphysical bifurcation sets the tone for some of the strongest criticisms leveled against him. The separation of reality into the "true" and "apparent" has left in its tracks a wholesale negation and devaluing of the latter in favor of the former, according to Nietzsche, along with a litany of confusing dualisms from which we have yet to recover, as we will see Dewey contend. Nietzsche sees Plato's pronouncement of reason as sole arbiter of "true" reality, and objective truth its self-proclaimed crowning achievement, as an excuse for giving up on our vicissitudinous human existence. According to Nietzsche, by placing all value and worth in an otherworldly and abstract realm, outside even space and time, Plato's vision of reality has served to denigrate all that is concretely human. Desire and passion as human instinct, according to Nietzsche, are deprived a voice when reason listens only to itself. For Dewey, as for existentialists, the dualism provoked by a distinction between an objective reality and its always-inadequate nemesis, pits an ideal goal of *reason* as "end" against a convoluted, imperfect, and essentially fallibilistic process that characterizes *reason(ing)* as "means to (not simply rational) ends."

Such is the tremendous responsibility Plato has bestowed upon reason. But, can reason do it alone, or should it even have to?¹⁶ After all, when we exclude human desires and passions from the stage upon which intelligent human action plays itself out, are we not in essence "throwing out the baby with the bath water?" One possible answer to this question may be as close as uncovering what motivates rationality itself. For, if

something besides rationality is necessary to dispose us to being rational, then we might find that reasoning, itself a form of action cannot be entirely divorced from the forces that move us to action. In other words, a description of the nature of reason, that is, how we define it cannot be too far removed from how we conceive of it as a process or what we discover as its purpose. The following is a sampling of reactions to what I will refer to as Plato's hyper-rationalism.

1.2.1. Reason and Becoming

Nietzsche's criticism of Plato has its basis in two related issues. The most fundamental of these is Plato's, and later Christianity's metaphysical bifurcation of reality into a "real" (ideal) world and its empirical facsimile. The second, following naturally from the first, has to do with the requirement of separate means by which to discern and evaluate these distinct realms. For Plato, that which is "true" is also the "good," both of which are accessible only through a form of reasoning that disavows all constraints set upon it by our bodily sensations, and their concomitant desires and pleasures. Meanwhile, our understanding of the physical world of appearance is resigned to the vicissitudes and inconstancy of our inclinations, desires, and passions. As a result, reason in its purity, never to associate with instinct, is severed from any instinctual purpose it might serve. After all, to say that our emotions may present a kind of distraction to reason is much different from saying that reflection and affection must be mutually exclusive.

Although Nietzsche is not predisposed to believe in an otherworldly existence, interestingly enough, in keeping with his epistemic perspectivism he is actually willing to accept Plato's as a perspective among others. What does bother Nietzsche is the idea that Plato's perspective, by its very nature rules out the possibility for any meaningful existential perspective. As within Christianity, built into Plato's distinction between a "real" world—"unattainable for now, but promised to those who are wise, pious, virtuous..."¹⁷—and an apparent one, is a necessary negation of all that is worthwhile in this life. Plato's spirituality simultaneously posits both an ideal beyond this life and a

negative judgment within it, forcing us into pessimism. In essence, we are forced to say “no” to this life in order to attain what is worthy in another.

An unavoidable experiential propinquity of body, along with its impulses, desires, and emotions springs forth as resentment, because we are constantly being told to negate our very instinctual drives. Instead, Nietzsche proposes an affirming optimism toward life. This is the idea guiding his notion of the “eternal recurrence of the same.” That is, only when we love life, with all of its desire, passion, pain, suffering, change, and decay, do we wish to return to it continually. We certainly do not want to leave it for another world. For Nietzsche, instead of worrying about how we become divine, we must concern ourselves first with becoming more fully human.

Plato’s otherworldly inclination is almost difficult to avoid. He illustrates this, as in many other places, when he contrasts inauthentic renditions of courage and temperance, with “true” courage and temperance. In essence, we often find people who behave courageously only to avoid a greater fear. Take for instance, the Greek army’s tradition whereby any soldier unwilling to go into battle would be executed by his own troops. We might well find instances of cowardliness disguised as courage, lest one risk certain death. In the same vein, there are those who exercise self-control only because they have an uncontrollable desire for something else. Who among us has not exhibited temperance when it came to a second serving, only to ensure the delight of dessert? Because courage and temperance in such cases are demonstrated only to avoid a greater fear or temptation, respectively, these are pseudo-virtues. Socrates elaborates on this inauthentic exchange of one fear or pleasure for another:

There is only one currency for which all these tokens of ours should be exchanged, and that is wisdom. In fact, it is wisdom that makes possible courage and self-control, and integrity or, in a word, true goodness, and the presence or absence of pleasures and fears, and other such feelings, makes no difference at all, whereas a system of morality which is based on relative emotional values is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing sound in it and nothing true. The true moral

ideal...is really a kind of purgation from all these emotions, and wisdom itself is a sort of purification.¹⁸

The difference between a pseudo and an authentic version of virtues is the latter's movement toward wisdom, and therefore, goodness, which has nothing to do with the baser elements found in human beings. Herein lies the persistent problem with Plato, according to Nietzsche. Ultimately all desires and emotions, in order to gain respectability, let alone carry any significance in guiding human action, must be predisposed to the attainment of an ideal. In turn, the attainment of the ideal necessitates a purging of what Nietzsche finds to be exemplary of and integral to our humanity. Add to this the imagery of "purification," which implies a cleansing of that which is assumed to be of an objectionable character, and again we find the early Plato denigrating the body, along with the very driving forces of its action.¹⁹

This led Nietzsche instead to revere Pre-Socratics such as Heraclitus, who was skeptical of the desire for "rationality at all costs." Nietzsche declares,

I set aside with great respect the name of Heraclitus. While the rest of the mass of philosophers were rejecting the testimony of their senses, because they displayed plurality and change, he rejected the testimony of the senses because they displayed things as if they had duration and unity... "Reason" is what causes us to falsify the testimony of the senses. Insofar as the senses display becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie...the "apparent" world is the only world; the "true world" is merely *added to it by a lie.*²⁰

This "lie" refers to the positing of an ideal world—a realm of being—that by nature of its very constitution is distanced from the everyday world of our sensations, passions, and desires—the world as becoming. Nietzsche describes the metaphysical implications for those who accept this lie, proclaiming that, "Death, change, age, as well as procreation and growth, are for them objections—refutations even. What is, does not *become*; what

becomes, *is not...*”²¹ These philosophers, who seek truth in being itself, upon failing to attain such truth look to the world itself for a scapegoat;

They look for reasons why it is being withheld from them. “It must be an illusion, a deception that prevents us from perceiving that which is: where is the deceiver to be found?” – “We’ve got it,” they cry in delight, “it is the senses! These senses, *which are so immoral as well*, it is they which deceive us about the *real* world...And away, above all, with the body...[which] is impudent enough to behave as if it actually existed!”²²

Among those philosophers to whom Nietzsche refers, besides Plato, are the Eleatics. In extending the traits of Plato’s Forms—changelessness and uniformity—to all of reality, “...they had to attribute to themselves, fictitiously, impersonality and changeless duration; they had to misapprehend the nature of the knower; they had to deny the role of the impulses in knowledge; and quite generally they had to conceive of reason as a completely free and spontaneous activity.”²³ Isolated and self-aggrandizing, reason serves only its own purpose. Intended to allow us to “see” with the mind’s eye, it can look only within itself, and is therefore blind to that which compels it into action, and to that for which it acts.²⁴

For Nietzsche, the Platonic and Christian perspectives, which like all perspectives are grounded in existence, seek an escape from this existence. Nietzsche proclaims:

Socrates was a misunderstanding; *the whole morality of betterment, that of Christianity included, was a misunderstanding.* The harshest daylight, rationality at all costs, a life bright, cold, circumspect, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to instincts, has itself been no more than a form of sickness, another form of sickness—and by no means a way back to “virtue,” to “health,” to happiness.²⁵

Plato places a great part of human worth, value, and significance in an ideal realm of absolute truth, certainty, and goodness, at the expense of our existence. Christianity

places all truth, certainty, and goodness in an afterlife of ultimate worth, value, and significance. According to Nietzsche, the need to postulate an apparent realm is only necessary to counterbalance the claim of an ideal realm. There would be no need for an apparent world to have to compete for acceptance, were there not an ideal world with which to compare it. Nietzsche writes, “Once you know there are no (final) purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purposes that the word ‘accident’ has meaning.”²⁶ In other words, what we call imperfections are only so because we assume some perfect ideal immune to all accidents. What we call “bad” is only so because we posit a “good.” According to Nietzsche, “The moralism of the Greek philosophers from Plato downwards is pathologically conditioned...Reason = virtue = happiness means merely: one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark desires by producing a permanent *daylight*—the daylight of reason.”²⁷ But, is reason in its pure form the answer to happiness? Might we not wander under “a permanent daylight” like insomniacs, stir-crazy, despondent and weary, looking for a place to rest? Perhaps reason, too, needs a place and time to rest, if only so that it may reason once again.

1.2.2. Reason and the Absurd

Just as extreme as Nietzsche’s criticism of Plato, is Albert Camus’ disparagement of reason, altogether. Camus sees reasoning in its purely abstract and theoretical form, which stakes all on objectivity, as neglectful of the intricacies of life. This is, of course, a criticism based on a narrow view of reason to which the early Plato exposes himself given his *simplistic* account. Plato’s extreme emphasis on rationality, which he goes so far as to equate with the morally virtuous, good, and therefore, happy life, is shunned by Camus, who offers, instead, a kind of anti-philosophy depicting rationality as a source and cause of human unhappiness.²⁸ According to Camus, and in the same vein as Nietzsche, if it were not for the ideals promulgated by reason we would not have to experience the absurdity of our misery, simply because we would not know any better. Life would be simple, Camus writes, “If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning, or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should *be* this world to which I am now opposed by my whole

consciousness and my whole insistence upon familiarity.”²⁹ Camus further illustrates this point in his reinterpretation of the ancient myth of Sisyphus.

Sisyphus is condemned by the gods to eternally roll a stone up an incline, only to have it roll down again—a life of pointless labor. Yet, it is not the futility of the task that is ultimately his problem, but whether or not, or how he chooses to engage the task. By throwing himself into his labor, as opposed to simply rejecting or ignoring it, the meaning in Sisyphus’ life lies within his reflective and deliberate attitude toward the gods—within the choice he makes to accept the lot of his life. In other words, the gods’ intended punishment serves its purpose only when the one being punished perceives it as such. For Camus, what causes the Absurd is not the repetition within life or the tasks life sets before us, but our consciousness of these in contradiction to the life we might simply live. It is only because we think of the repetition or the task as keeping us from something better, that life becomes Absurd to us. It is only when Sisyphus sees himself as doing something other than what he ought to be doing that he sees himself in opposition to himself and becomes miserable.

What Camus hints at here, is the idea that great frustration and unhappiness are experienced in life due to the incongruity we experience between what we believe will lead to the fulfillment of our personal interests and what we construe as obligations or duties, the latter which supposedly restrain us from the former.³⁰ The Absurd arises from a confrontation between our living, in itself, and that something we project in the world, a hyper-rationality for instance or a faith in objectivity, as an ideal for our lives—life as we live it versus how we ought to live it. This creates in us an expectation we then force upon ourselves, and which then leads us to an inevitable recognition of our inadequacies. Camus writes, “This very heart which is mine will forever remain indefinable to me. Between the certainty that I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. Forever I shall be a stranger to myself.”³¹ Seeking an ultimate justification or truth, an ultimate ordering and rationalization of the world in a religious or philosophical framework is, according to Camus, tantamount to “philosophical suicide.”

Rather Camus says, what gives life meaning is life itself. Rationality, epitomized in essentialist philosophies such as Plato’s or a scientific quest for objectivity, is not what

gives meaning to life but actually what causes us to doubt the meaning of life. Camus claims, "I realize that if through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world."³² In the face of an unreasonableness that pervades life, the quest for reason, truth, and certainty obfuscates the life of the individual. Besides saying simply that the more we learn the more we are made aware of our ignorance, Camus is implying that scientific investigations necessarily require abstraction from the uniqueness of ordinary experience. There is a danger, for Camus, when we dismiss the contingencies of our lives in the quest for objectivity. In essence, we lose our lives. Camus writes: "This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction."³³ Seeking the objective or the ideal through reason alone disconnects experience from passion and our subjectivity.

Even before Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, the "father" of existentialism addresses the problems that arise from such a hyper-rationality. In *The Present Age*, he criticizes the "leveling" he observes in nineteenth-century Europe that has left this culture in a quagmire of reasoning by stymieing any desire for action. The present age, Kierkegaard warns, lacks passion. It does not act because it is too busy thinking about *what* to do and *how* to do it. He writes, "Our age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly elapsing into repose."³⁴ This is not to say that Kierkegaard denies any value to being rational about one's choices. This is not an attack on what can be accomplished through reasoning, but instead more of an attack on the fact that people no longer seem to have anything significant or meaningful with which to engage their thinking, especially when it comes to taking action. In other words, at the root of inaction is lack of meaningful reflection. "Reflection is not the evil," Kierkegaard declares, "but a reflective condition and the deadlock which it involves, by transforming the capacity for action into a means of escape from action."³⁵ The danger is with an overly abstract and purely theoretical use of reason that negates the role of passion, by providing rationalizations that excuse action.

Life is meaningful, according to Camus, to the extent that we simply live it without imposing our rationalizations upon it. This is captured by the defiance of Sisyphus, who in not giving up accepts the Absurd by paying no attention to it and

simply going about his task. For Camus, the meaning of life is to be discovered in the living of life itself. On the other hand, once we ask philosophically, “What is the meaning of life?” we only set ourselves up for meaninglessness. But now, perhaps Camus is guilty of too simplistic an account of what it means to “simply live.”

1.2.3. Minerva’s Reprieve

If reason is problematic because it sets before us ideals and possibilities, then how can we ever be expected to advance beyond the current limitations to our living? The point to be made here, and where we go beyond what Camus is willing to say, is that our frustration and unhappiness come at the hands of an unwillingness to see our obligations as propitious to our self-interest. What is *absurd* then is not so much that we often fail to realize our self-interests or that this occurs because of our obligations—one cannot reasonably expect the world to conform to one’s self-interests. Instead, it is that we fail to see the possibilities for congruence between life as we would like to live it and how, upon reasonable reflection and deliberation, we decide we ought to live it. Now, although we may recognize these possibilities with the aid of reason—not a bad thing in and of itself—it takes more than this to bring these to fruition. What is required for *accepting* the congruence of these seeming opposites, self-interest and obligation, is no different than what is required for accepting the symbiosis of freedom and self-control, or of action and rational direction of action. What we need, beyond rationality, is an emotional investment in and a desire for such congruence.

Not to deny the shortcomings of Plato’s metaphysical and epistemic bifurcations, but there may be something positive to be salvaged from these, which is perhaps overlooked by the existentialist backlash. There is an optimistic aspect to the Platonic idea of purification as an ideal to be attained, as opposed to simply succumbing to the inevitable exigencies of life. Ironically, the idea of continuously improving one’s self or one’s situation happens to be an important, if not the most important element of existentialist thought. The goal of freedom, so crucial for all existentialists, carries significance precisely because it is a necessary condition for achieving authenticity. In this sense, even the Platonic ideal of perfecting oneself through the rational pursuit of the

Good and the good life, if we can excuse his overzealous disdain for the body, provokes us to go beyond our satisfactions with merely living. It allows us to keep moving toward something positive and constructive, as in creation of art, always moving toward greater meaning and significance, and providing a perpetual motivation for not succumbing to the inevitable decay of the mind and body.

Responses to Plato, such as those of Nietzsche and Camus, have themselves proven extreme due to *their* depreciation, and even denigration of the role assigned to reason by Plato, in favor of humans' instinctual passions and desires³⁶ In all fairness, what is at stake when we neglect rationality, according to Plato, is our very freedom, even if it is ultimately our soul's freedom. By advocating that thought be employed in helping us overcome our desires and guide our emotions, Plato is not attempting to limit our freedom, *per se*. When we mistakenly understand freedom in terms of simply doing what we desire—as license—we set ourselves up to be enslaved by that which we desire. Certainly, existentialists need to be careful not to err by doing to reason what they assume Plato has done to instinct and passion, and thereby also be guilty of “throwing out the baby with the bathwater”—albeit, this time a different baby.

1.3. The Sophisticated Accounts: Thinking, Feeling, and Desiring

In the *Phaedrus*, as in the *Republic*, Plato goes well beyond the *Phaedo* in explaining the relationships among desire, emotion, and rationality. One major difference between these is that whereas in the *Phaedo* there was a clear division between the soul and body that accounted for rationality and desire, respectively, in these other accounts we now find these three distinct elements of desire, passion, and rationality coexisting and together constituting the human soul. Cause for such sophistication may be found in the fact that the *Phaedrus* is an attempt to portray the nature of the pull that love (*eros*) and beauty seem to have on these three elements within the same soul. Meanwhile, in the *Republic* he is concerned with how these elements work together within the same soul to effect the realization of justice within the individual and ultimately within an ideal state. Sophistication notwithstanding, although these accounts enable him to skirt some of the criticisms leveled against his more *simplistic* accounts, he is still susceptible to Dewey's

criticism of the mutual exclusivity and static nature he assigns to these diverse, yet integrated and interdependent elements of human action. It is this criticism, along with Dewey's unwavering optimism toward the potential in human social intelligence that informs a Deweyan defense of democracy.

1.3.1. Horseplay in the *Phaedrus*

Plato's intention of demonstrating the divine-like status of reason that confers upon it the responsibility of directing our desires and passions is not lost in the *Phaedrus*. Plato here continues the line of reasoning we saw earlier in the *Phaedo*, whereby he is willing to speak well of only those desires we may associate with wisdom. In this case, his efforts remain centered upon demonstrating that the basis of love, as a kind of passion and desire for ideal beauty and goodness, must lie beyond mere physical attraction, as this would be too base for that which seeks truth. Unfortunately what remains true of this account, as in his others, is the fact that when viewed apart from reason, desires and passions continue to be categorically denied any positive or assertive role of their own in human action.

In the infamous chariot simile, Plato describes two winged steeds driven by a charioteer, one representing passion and the other desire, together under the command of reason. In us, Plato goes on to describe, "it is a pair of steeds that the charioteer controls; moreover one of them is noble and good, and from good stock, while the other has the opposite character, and his stock is opposite."³⁷ The charioteer represents the rational control that must be exercised in order to ensure the passions, now working as obedient liaisons between our desires and reason, properly direct desires in the service of reason. In this characterization, Plato foregoes important nuances only to establish that passions are good, while desires are bad—"The more honorable side (passion) is upright...a lover of glory, but with temperance and modesty...and needs no whip, being driven by the word of command alone...the other...a massive jumble of a creature...consorting with wantonness and vainglory...and hard to control with whip and goad."³⁸ Once again, our nefarious desires get in the way of truth and therefore, never stand a chance of possessing any inherent goodness.

Confused by the combative interests of their steeds, our souls have trouble fixing “on the things that are...and for all their toiling they are balked, everyone, of the full vision of being, and departing therefrom, they feed upon the food of semblance.”³⁹ For Plato, wisdom is to be understood as abstract and absolute knowledge of the Forms, the pure knowledge of being that properly nourishes the soul so that it is able to soar on the wings of *eros*—the passion that is love of wisdom. As is the case when the beauty of the beloved causes an emotion to arise within the soul of the lover, the latter must bid this emotion to look toward wisdom, lest it be led by the reckless and wanton steed (desire), and not the good. So powerful can be the negative influence from our desires that our obedient emotions and even our rationality are easily swayed. As Plato describes it, “The obedient steed, constrained now as always by modesty, refrains from leaping upon the beloved. But his fellow, heeding no more the driver’s goad or whip, leaps and dashes on...and forcing [passion and reason] to approach the loved one...finding no end to its evil plight, they yield and agree to do his bidding.”⁴⁰ Now, not only are our desires inherently bad, but passion, the presumed seat of volition, becomes nothing more than the passive lackey of reason.

Other important nuances that Plato does not elaborate now surface, especially as these steeds come to act in certain ways that require capabilities not accounted for in his previous descriptions. Plato tells us that reason “...is compelled to pull the reins so violently that he brings both steeds down on their haunches, the good one willing and unresistant, but the wanton sore against his will...” Interestingly enough, it appears as if desire now possesses a capability for willing, the attribute and responsibility of volition typically reserved by Plato for the passionate element of the soul. He continues to describe reason’s repeated attempts to subdue the revelry within the soul, “And so it happens time and again, until the evil steed casts off his wantonness; humbled in the end, he obeys the counsel of his driver.”⁴¹ Just how desire is capable of manifesting humility and, apparently, of obeying rational counsel, Plato does not make clear. From where do these decisions, now within the realm of desire, arise when supposedly it is reason alone that deliberates? Can it be that reason is not alone responsible for this seemingly “deliberate” choice on the part of desire to accept humility? Could there be something

reputable about desire itself, or emotion for that matter, something noble that perhaps Plato has overlooked, which may compel it to ally with reason?

Plato's rigid classification raises these and other important questions that ultimately prove problematic to his account of human action. As we shall see in the following section, because the structure of the individual soul is analogous to the class structure of the political state, Plato's account of the latter will present analogous obstacles to social action.

1.3.2. The Soul of the *Republic*

In the *Republic*, the division among the elements within the soul is established with the simple example of individuals who heed their reason in defiance of their bodily impulses to drink when thirsty. Socrates explains, "What then, said I, should one affirm about them? Is it not that there is a something in the soul that bids them drink and a something that forbids, a different something that masters that which bids?"⁴² Plato then goes on to distinguish a third element from rationality and desire, by introducing spiritedness (*thumos*), which manifests itself in such forms as anger or fear. Witness the comical example of Leontius, whose passionate element rebukes his eyes when they turn to see the slain corpses—what his desires would not allow his eyes to keep from seeing. Socrates continues, "And do we not...observe when his desires constrain a man contrary to his reason that he reviles himself and is angry with that within which masters him..." his anger here serving as a kind of conscience and ally of reason, bestowing a sense of guilt upon the individual.⁴³ In an interesting move, one necessary to demonstrate that spiritedness is also distinct from reason, Plato assumes that the rage in children in the absence of reasonableness—an "unreasoning anger"—demonstrates the uniqueness of this passionate element, and in one fell swoop renders both passions and desires irrational.

Following his analogy of the soul with the state, justice, according to Plato, is achieved when each of the three parts of the soul, like the three separate classes, does what it is rendered by nature best fit to do, which means that "a person must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of some other and interfere and meddle with

one another, but that he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own....”⁴⁴ Justice in the individual, therefore, is the very harmony and unity that exists among the distinct traits of the soul. What is problematic about the manner in which Plato segregates the characteristics and purposes of desire, passion, and intellect, is that unlike rationality, which contains within itself the capability of exercising its virtue of wisdom, a virtue like temperance, for instance, is never entirely desire’s, or passion’s to boast. These must always look beyond themselves, to reason, in order to realize any virtue.

As Plato would have it, if any basis for achieving temperance were to reside within the purview of either desire or emotion, that is, if it were within their nature to contribute to the fulfillment of intelligent human action, then what would be the use of reason? The problem is that holding reason to be solely responsible for achieving, say, temperance, leads to an internal inconsistency within Plato’s characterization. If it is the case that knowledge, truth, or wisdom, as defined by Plato is necessary to achieve temperance, then denying that class most susceptible to intemperance access to such knowledge would for all intents and purposes sabotage the kind of social harmony proposed by Plato. When it comes to the divisions among the classes and the segregation of their respective social and moral responsibilities, the attainment of a general welfare becomes virtually impossible.

There is, of course, the Deweyan alternative, which is to view reason practically and no longer as a segregated element of our selves or a trait monopolized by one group within our society. But instead, as intelligent action itself informed and moved by passionate appeals to discern the proper means toward the fulfillment of that which is desirable as opposed to simply what we might unreflectively desire. Of course, Dewey owes a great debt to Aristotle who, instead of dismissing desires and emotions, accepts these as natural and necessary elements of human action. The latter holding that, “the irrational passions are thought no less human than reason is, and therefore also the actions which proceed from anger or appetite are the man’s actions.”⁴⁵ Aristotle goes on to emphasize an important distinction beyond what Plato was advocating, between the purely theoretical intellect and the practical. According to Aristotle,

Since moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberative desire...this kind of intellect and of truth is practical. Of the intellect which is contemplative, not practical nor productive, the good and the bad state are truth and falsity respectively (for this is the work of everything intellectual); while of the part which is practical and intellectual the good state is truth in agreement with right desire. The origin of action—its efficient, not its final cause—is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end...Hence choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire, and such an origin of action is a man.⁴⁶

For Dewey, our desires and passions play the indispensable role of presenting opportunities for practical deliberation, the latter which then works as a means toward the realization of that which is desired and valued. Desires and passions are what capture our interest and, consequently, that which interests us into thinking. This thinking, in turn, leads us back to what is itself interesting about thinking—the realization or fulfillment of what we desire and value. This is a “practical” reason, intelligently guiding and guided by action, that is inviting of our humanity and not dismissive of it.

¹ I am, of course, referring to the well-known refrain by A. N. Whitehead, as he gauges the impact of Plato's philosophical contributions.

² Although sometimes difficult to discern, Plato does draw distinctions between desires and emotions. The former typically refer to bodily appetites, while the latter refer to passions, such as anger and fear. Whereas desires emanate from the appetitive part of the soul, emotions correspond to the spirited element of the soul. As I intend to show, although Plato's more simplistic accounts of these combine desires and emotions, there are sophisticated accounts that distinguish between these. Throughout my interpretation of at least three of Plato's accounts, I will use desire and appetite, and emotion and passion, interchangeably. For more on the distinctions between desires and emotions, see Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).

³ Plato, *Phaedo* (70a), trans. Hugh Tredennick, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.) [1961], (Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 52. From here on, all references to Plato will be from this collection.

⁴ *Ibid.*, (82e), p. 66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, (83a).

⁶ *Ibid.*, (83d).

⁷ *Ibid.*, (65a), p. 47.

⁸ *Ibid.*, (65b-c), p. 48, emphases mine.

⁹ *Ibid.*, (94d), p. 76, emphases mine.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, (66a-b), pp. 48-9, emphasis mine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (66b-c), p. 49, emphasis mine.

¹² Responses to this opposition (Locke and Rousseau) as well as alternatives to it (John Dewey, Alfie Kohn, Matthew Lipman, and others) are major themes to which this dissertation is dedicated.

¹³ As I intend to show in the following section, this is a point overlooked by some of Plato's most vehement critics, in particular, Nietzsche, who seems to be criticizing this simplistic account of the role of desires and emotions. This will also be an important point in my discussions of Dewey's views on the emotional aspect of deliberation, in the following chapter and throughout the dissertation.

¹⁴ Plato, *Op. cit.*, (67e), p. 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, (68a-b), emphases mine.

¹⁶ In the Modern era, the emphasis placed upon reason by Enlightenment thinkers is opposed by Romanticism's emphasis on the feelings and emotions. We will examine Locke's account of reason's primacy and Rousseau's response, specifically in relation to their educational thought, in chapters three and four, respectively.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gotzen-Dammerung* [1889], *Twilight of the Idols* in *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Penguin Classics, [1968] 1986), p. 40.

¹⁸ Plato, *Op. cit.*, (69b-c), pp. 51-2.

¹⁹ We see the Pythagorean influence on Plato, when discussing the pursuit of truth.

Although, for Pythagoras purification came from the study of mathematics, this is not far off from Plato's pursuit of purification through the study of the abstract Forms.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Op. cit.*, (1889/1968), p. 36, emphasis in original.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²² *Ibid.*, emphases in original.

²³ Nietzsche, *Die Froehliche Wissenschaft* [1882], *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), section 110, p. 170.

²⁴ As we will see shortly, a similar line of thinking informs Dewey's criticism of hyper-rationalism.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Op. cit.*, (1882/1974), section 109, p. 168.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁸ This happens to be the argument presented in Ray Bradbury's novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, whereby citizens are denied the right to read books due to the negative influence these may have on their lives. It is held that the introduction to alternative perspectives and idealistic visions of society, only serves to reveal to readers their own unhappiness. Ironically, Plato's *Republic* is one such book made an example of by the fire-chief in charge of book burning, just before he sets out to burn it.

²⁹ Albert Camus, "An Absurd Reasoning" [1955], in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, (New York: Vintage International, 1983), p. 51. Of course, Plato would reject

this position, by portraying in his “allegory of the cave” the freed prisoner who has a social obligation to return into the cave, even at the risk of death, to educate those who remain inside. For Plato, ignorance is simply not an option, at least not for a certain class of citizens.

³⁰ This is a crucial point that will be discussed in later chapters, especially in relation to how personal interest and obligation are pitted against one another in the realm of education. Self-interests, personal inclinations, and personal expressions of freedom are pitted against obligations, curricular exigencies, and rational self-control, respectively.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁴ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* [1846], trans. Alexander Dru, (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1962), p. 33.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³⁶ In all fairness, this is not to imply that either Nietzsche or Camus is opposed to the development of personal intelligence or the ability to reason. Their opposition (depreciation) is characteristically and almost strictly anti-Platonist. In fact, Nietzsche might agree with A. N. Whitehead’s assessment of the history of philosophy, in the sense that the former sees the predominance of reason propounded by other philosophers, such as Descartes and Kant, as merely disguised forms of Platonism. This includes, of course, Christianity, which he referred to as “Platonism for the masses.” In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes, “To divide the world into a ‘true’ and an ‘apparent’ world, whether in the style of Christianity or in the style of Kant (a *cunning* Christian to the end) is merely a

sign of decadence—a symptom of declining life” (*Twilight of the Idols, Op. cit.*, p. 39, emphasis in original).

³⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth, in *Op. Cit.*, (246b), p. 493.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, (253d-e), p. 499.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, (248b), p.495.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, (254a-b), p. 500.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, (254c-e).

⁴² *Ibid.*, (439c), p. 681.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, (440b), p. 682.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, (443d), p. 686.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1111b, 1-4), cf. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross, (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 967

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, (1139a, 22; 1139a, 31 – 1139b, 1 – 5), pp. 1023-24. Incidentally, this view is also consistent with Buddhist principles, according to which desires and emotional states are not denied, however much it is the role of reason to not allow these to overwhelm us and take control of our lives.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOCRACY AS SYMBIOSIS OF THOUGHT AND ACTION

In contrast to Plato's social vision Dewey proposes that democracy—a participatory and deliberative way of life—provides the best means of continuously working toward the good of each and all. Dewey, too, venerates reason, but views it as instrumental to this endeavor, and not as the ultimate goal to be sought. Dewey maintains that reason is instrumental to, but not the *reason* for which we act. Dewey's conception of democracy, as does his conception of deliberation and action, requires the utilization of various elements beyond mere rationality that constitute individuals and motivate them to exert a wholehearted effort in bringing about their good and the good of their society. Plato does not recognize these elements, which include, perhaps most significantly, our desires and emotions, as conducive toward the good of each and all. This is not to say that Plato opposes the realization of *all* desires and passions. The belief that he does is an oversimplification of his thoughts on the matter. Yet, he did hold that ultimately those that retain their usefulness do so only to the extent that they can be subsumed under the auspices of rationality.

Although Dewey agrees with Plato that it is harmony within the individual and the society to which we ought to tend, the latter submits that harmony is best achieved while maintaining a respect for the division of unique duties and virtues assigned by nature to each class and distinct part of the soul. Dewey, on the other hand, proposes that the kind of harmony to be sought involves a wholehearted effort—one that is characterized by the mutual effort among the emotionally motivated, autonomously generated, and intelligently guided interests employed for the good of each and all.

It is my contention that a division of labor or specialization akin to that proposed by Plato, inevitably leads to a compartmentalization within the individual and among societal groups that diminishes their potential for realizing their respective responsibilities toward their personal development and the good of all; leaving these

same open to domination and control by extrinsic authority. We readily find such a consequence manifested within our educational institutions, in the form of apathy on the part of students caused by a segregation of interests and purposes between student and teacher. We witness this in our political and social lives, as epitomized by our implicit acquiescence to absolutist presumptions and pessimistic intimations about human nature, which lead to personal and social apathy. And, perhaps most unfortunately, we accept this as part of the everyday lives of countless millions who resign themselves to neglect their intellectual and emotional development, as they are blindly led to throw moral responsibility and character to the wind.¹

After describing some of the Instrumentalist traits of Dewey's thought, we then turn to Plato's criticism of democracy, which he views as a corruption and disharmony within the individual and the state, as rationality comes to be dominated by licentious desires and irreverent passions. After describing Plato's criticism, I then assess his account, which in many respects is frighteningly prophetic, from the perspective of a Deweyan defense of democracy. This perspective will address some of the negative implications that result from resigning ourselves to Plato's pessimistic criticism of our potential for more effective forms of self-governance; a pessimism that systematically curtails the attainment of a more inclusive good for each and all.

2.1. Active Thought and Thoughtful Action

Plato's division of reality into separate realms of constancy and change carries over into his conception of reason, giving way to a separation of theory from practice. Whereas theory approaches the constant, necessary, universal, and uniform, human practical experience is relegated to the capricious, contingent, particular, and changing. Theoretical knowledge, conceived as the purified end result of a dialectical progression toward truth, lies well beyond the process itself by which that truth is reached, not to mention any of the empirical evidence that may serve as reminders (recollections) of it along the way. This separation of thought as end result, from thinking or deliberation as process is, in essence, a separation of thought from action.

Dewey, instead, proposes an empirical method that appeals to thought as itself an activity, as active intelligence. According to Dewey, “this empirical philosophy perceives that thinking is a continuous process of temporal re-organization within one and the same world of experienced things, not a jump from the latter world into one of objects constituted once for all by thought.”² In fact, much of Dewey’s philosophical enterprise is dedicated to putting back together what Plato has torn asunder, that is, “to reintegrate human knowledge and activity in the general framework of reality and natural processes.”³ In an almost apologetic tone, Dewey goes on to reassure us that he will do this, “without, at the same time, taking from humanity what distinguishes and exalts us among living creatures.” As if his proposing alone to unite thought and action would somehow tarnish the sacred bastion of human reason.

Dewey is proposing not only that thought ought to guide action, but also that action ought to inform thought, without either having to compromise its integrity. Instead of continuing to waste time on keeping these separate, we might better expend our energies in seeing how they mutually benefit one another. Of course, the early Plato also holds that thought ought to direct action, but his conception of thought is, once again, restricted to something otherworldly and purely abstract. For this same reason, the Forms would never have need of mere human action or experience to establish their truth. In this sense, for Plato, thought always remains distinct from action. On the other hand, for Dewey knowledge is instrumental—at the same time both end and means, or end-in-view:

Concerned with prudence...man naturally prizes knowledge only for the sake of its bearing upon success and failure in attaining goods and avoiding evils. This is a fact of our structure and nothing is gained by recommending it as an ideal truth, and equally nothing is gained by attributing to intellect an intrinsic relationship to pure truth for its own sake. For wisdom as to ends depends upon acquaintance with conditions and means, and unless the acquaintance is adequate and fair, wisdom becomes a sublimated folly of self-deception.⁴

In other words, in terms of the practical role of reason we gain nothing by failing to see the *process* of deliberation as itself the end. Reasoning and deliberation as ends-in-view are responsible for bringing about other processes for problem solving and the realization of what we value. When we understand reason(ing) as a process arising from and returning to what is situational and practical about our experiences, we can begin to recognize and legitimize other non-rational elements such as desire and emotion, and to some extent even involuntary processes occurring at the genetic, hormonal, and chemical levels, unknown to Plato, which come together to form thinking.⁵

2.2. The Instrumentalist Turn

Surely reasoning is essential to good decision-making and perception of possible alternatives. No one, not even an existentialist, is denying this. But just as important is the involvement of our desires and emotions in relation to the very processes by which we arrive at such alternatives, not to mention the commitments we make to those alternatives. The emotional element is what ultimately moves us to execute that alternative deemed by reason to be most suitable.⁶

The activity of thinking, arising from our desires, needs, and imagination is, for Dewey, contextual and itself promotes action. According to Dewey, “intelligence does not generate action except as it is enkindled by feeling.”⁷ Our desires and emotions, then, seem to be important in at least two respects. On the one hand, there is this inclination, this push, which takes us beyond the merely theoretical discernment of possibilities—we know what the good is, but we only do it because we choose to fulfill it *beyond* mere possibility. On the other hand, and equally important is consideration of the emotional motivation that initiates the pursuit of an alternative to begin with—what motivates us to think in the first place. Reason is important in discerning truths and compiling sensory particulars in order to arrive at generalizations, which in turn, do guide action. But this is not enough.

Humankind does not live by reason alone. The intellectual process itself consists of more than the intelligent and reflective organization of our inchoate impulses to action. As Dewey states, “ideas are effective not as bare ideas but as they have imaginative

content and emotional appeal.”⁸ In a sense, emotion provides the focus and selective filter for the propositions discerned through reason. As long as reason is understood as the seat of control and pitted against our affections and desires, individuals, most likely children, who are believed to lack the capability to exercise rational self-control, will require the imposition of control from some external source. Meanwhile creative impulses will continue to be construed as inherently irrational and inimical to control, and thereby suffer a “death by association” simply because they express our affections and desires.

At the same time, Dewey warns us against weighing the balance too heavily against intelligently ordered experience. Educators, who refer to themselves as progressives, have erred on the side of freedom and unbridled impulse at the expense of ordered, purposeful, and fruitful educational experiences. As Dewey puts it:

The reaction tended to go to an opposite extreme. In emphasizing the role of wants, impulse, habit, and emotion, [progressive educators] often denied any efficacy whatever to ideas, to intelligence. The problem is that of effecting the union of ideas and knowledge with the non-rational factors in the human make-up. Art is the name given to all the agencies by which this union is effected.⁹

The conflict arising from the separation of impulses and emotions, from intellect, whether according to traditional or progressive educators, inspires the opposition between freedom and control we find driving the dynamics of so many learning environments, whereby guidance is utterly ignored, or compliance to the teacher’s control over students’ presumed irrational impulses becomes the priority. By arguing against the separation of thinking from feeling—reflection from affection—Dewey hopes to show that this will also lead us away from having to oppose the freedom of the child with some form of externally imposed control. In this same vein, changing our conception of reason from end result to end-in-view promotes a symbiosis of thought and action realized in a democratic form of social organization that diminishes the need for extrinsically imposed control, but which instead empowers individuals to direct themselves intelligently.

Because our needs and emotions incite and even warrant our thinking, asking, “*Why* do we think?” becomes as important as asking, “*How* do we think?” Although reasoning, to insure some level of objectivity necessitates impartiality during contemplation, this is so only after our needs and interests have incited it. That which moves us to think is precisely that for which we think. According to Dewey, thinking arises from a partial and impassioned interest or need, but must then move to an impartial analysis and deliberation, only to come back to a partial application in the service of a particular interest or in the fulfillment of a specific need. He draws a helpful analogy between the fruits of thinking and the guidance we gain from the use of maps:

Without the more or less accidental and devious paths traced by the explorer there would be no facts that could be utilized in the making of the complete and related chart. The map *orders* individual experiences, connecting them with one another irrespective of the local and temporal circumstances and accidents of their original discovery...[it] is *not* a substitute for a personal experience. But the map is a summary, an arranged and orderly view of previous experiences, [it] serves as a guide to future experience; it gives direction; it facilitates control; it economizes effort, preventing useless wandering.¹⁰

As we saw in the previous chapter it is this move from impartial analysis, such as the kind we encounter in scientific investigations, back to partial interest that Camus is unwilling to accept. Rather, Camus maintains that once we leave the world of living for an abstract and generalized projection of it, as we find in science, we in essence lose that world. For Dewey, there is no loss, but instead a gain with respect to the ordering of future effort.

Dewey scholar, Jim Garrison, in a bold effort to link Plato’s thoughts on the role of passion and desire in human action, with Dewey’s ideas on what motivates the practice of teaching, agrees with the latter in holding that “The moral quest for the good life and right action lies beyond the quest for knowledge alone. It requires passionate action guided by intelligent thought. Everyone reasons for the good life they desire.”¹¹ Even on

a more sympathetic reading of Plato's account of the passions, such as Garrison's, the former fails to recognize the intricacies of the interplay existing among thinking, feeling, and desiring. Instead, offering us an experientially detached form of contemplation that portrays passions, desires, and needs as inimical to the object that is, for Plato, the goal of that contemplation. Even Plato's more sophisticated accounts, which include not only a more thorough dissection of the individual, but also his vision for an ideal society founded upon the segregation of classes and virtues, leave us at an impasse. As a matter of fact, it is within this vision that this impasse comes to a head. We are left with having to choose between an elitist aristocracy where rationality is king—a society of philosopher kings—and a failed democracy where irreverent passion and licentious desire rule the day.

A way out of this impasse is offered by Dewey who, following the evolution of the democratic ideal set forth by Locke and Rousseau, responds by placing his faith in individuals' potential for intelligent action and the realization of this potential within democratic, that is, participatory forms of social living. Instead of isolating desire, passion, and intellect from one another, as Plato does within the distinct classes, Dewey sees in the symbiosis of these, opportunities for wisdom. Of course, this implies not the narrow conception of wisdom as merely pure intellection, *theoria* or *episteme*, but instead the kind of wisdom that has as its purpose practical wisdom—'knowing' not as end, but as end-in-view. Ironically, we may arrive at Dewey's affirmation of individual and social intelligence, as realized within a democracy, by way of Plato's criticism of democracy—desire and passion run amuck; a criticism Dewey would in certain respects gladly accept.

2.3. Plato's Criticism of Democracy

In order to make clearer to his interlocutors the nature of justice, in Book IV of the *Republic* the character Socrates draws an analogy between the state and the soul; one that he invokes consistently throughout the remainder of the work. Since, as Socrates proposes, "if we found some larger thing [the state] that contained justice and viewed it there, we should more easily discover its nature in the individual man."¹² This is Plato's unique way of expressing what is perhaps the most significant problem facing any social-

political philosopher, that of reconciling the interests and needs of the individual with those of society at large. He attempts to resolve this issue by proposing an aristocracy as the ideal form of political and social organization—a rule by the best fit to carry out what they are best fit by nature to do. Given today’s sensibilities, people are appalled (even though realistically nothing much seems to be done to avoid this) to hear that Plato not only recommends a division of classes, but also bases the very idea of justice upon convincing those in their respective classes to remain there for the sake of the greater good to society.

What Plato sees in democracy is the result of the *devolution* of political associations, as evidenced by a social disharmony similar to that found in the individual soul now writ large within respective forms of government dominated by particular class types. Our trained, twentieth century American sentimentality toward democratic ideals simply will not allow us to accept Plato’s ranking of democracy as the form of government second worst only to tyranny. “After all,” some will ask, “wasn’t the role of the United States throughout the greater part of the twentieth century that of making the world safe for democracy?”

And so we find within Plato’s ideal society the rational, spirited, and appetitive classes, upon whose strict division of labor and virtues justice depends. As with the individual soul it is the rational element, “the naturally better part,” now with the assistance of an entire spirited and passionate class, that keeps the desirous and appetitive class, “the worse part,” in order.¹³ Plato does not mince words when it comes to the proper ordering of society, identifying the harmony among the classes with a kind of temperance achieved by means of “the concord of the naturally superior and inferior as to which ought to rule in both the state and the individual.”¹⁴ The presumption on the part of Plato here is that the appetitive class does not possess the requisite intelligence or moral fortitude to know the good, exercise self-control, and hence, govern itself. Ironically we see, once again, this “worse part” expected to at least be capable of making a seemingly rational decision as to which class ought to rule. This leads to a question we might just as easily ask of Thomas Hobbes, who is willing to concede that the inhabitants of the “state of nature,” that natural state of “brutish” consternation, are able to rationally calculate that voluntarily establishing an absolute sovereignty, whether in the number of a

monarchy, aristocracy, or parliament, serves their best interests. If these individuals are capable of discerning what is ultimately in their best interests, then why do they need to relinquish their executive right to personally guarantee their self-preservation and self-governance, by means of which they may instead govern themselves?¹⁵ Of course, Hobbes' intention is to preserve human life and guarantee commodious living, neither of which is guaranteed when we must fend for ourselves. So, we give up our executive right to the sovereignty in exchange for assurance and peace of mind. At the same time, to undermine the potential of individuals within any social group to achieve their own rational self-governance, by making a rational form of self-governance inherently unattainable, makes even the expectation of its actualization unreasonable.

2.4. The Intemperate State

Crucial to the preservation of Plato's ideal society is each class carrying out its role and never meddling in that of another. Plato writes, "Then any intermeddling in the three classes, or change from one to another, would inflict great damage on the state, and may with perfect propriety be described as in the strongest sense a doing of evil."¹⁶ But in a system of communal child rearing, guardian parents not wanting to give up their children will allow the characteristics and interests of other classes to infiltrate the governing tier. Those in the philosopher-ruler class begin exhibiting the traits of the spirited class, as well as those of the appetitive. More and more coming to lack wisdom, members of this class are no longer deemed worthy of the privilege of ruling. A competition for power ensues, at first most pronounced between the rulers and the auxiliaries, and aristocracy gives way to timocracy. The lovers of glory come to dominate the lovers of wisdom and, at this point, "the most conspicuous feature in [society] is one thing only, due to the predominance of the high-spirited [passionate] element, namely contentiousness and covetousness of honor."¹⁷ Once the aristocracy gives way to the ownership of private property, the ambitious youth of timocracy then give way to the avaricious youth, and an oligarchy is born.

Based on the valuation of property, an oligarchy (more so a plutocracy, as it is rule by a wealthy few) thrives on greed and an envy of one another's wealth, until all its

citizens become lovers of money, and all the while the virtue of temperance is being neglected. Furthermore, by making political positions contingent upon the possession of property and wealth, as opposed to skill, within an oligarchy citizens have responsibilities bestowed upon them that they are ill equipped to handle. Add to this a division of rich and poor, which exacerbates the separation of class interests, and the result is less harmony and unity, and therefore, less justice. We ought to keep in mind that Plato's ideal aristocracy itself relies on a presumed separation of class interests. The only difference is that distinct class interests under an aristocracy are, according to Plato, not intended for the benefit of any one class in particular above the others. Nonetheless, irrespective of the form of social organization, any restriction of the potential of each class to contribute to the attainment of the social good will necessarily result from too strict a separation of interests and purposes among the classes.

Given that an oligarchy is founded on the love of wealth, the state condones extravagance and sanctions a type of consumerism among its citizens, as the wealthy seek to appropriate their money. Greed, coupled with luxury, promotes physical and intellectual laziness, and diminishes all moral incentive for exercising rational self-control in the service of mutual social interests. This opens the door to extravagant desires which, "in the end, seize the citadel of the young man's soul, finding it empty and unoccupied by studies and honorable pursuits and true discourses, which are the best watchmen and guardians in the minds of men who are dear to the gods."¹⁸ Add to this the irresponsibility on the part of parents who neglect to educate their children in matters of virtue, and you have a recipe for the debacle that is democracy.¹⁹

Democracy is the great equalizer, as equal powers and freedoms are granted to all. Seen as an extreme form of relativism, where all desires and pleasures carry equal weight, moral chaos ensues. An ambiguity of values gives individuals the leeway they need to invert the values of traditional virtues. Plato warns of how "they euphemistically denominate insolence 'good breeding,' license 'liberty,' prodigality 'magnificence,' and shamelessness 'manly spirit'."²⁰ The democratic individual pursues pleasure for pleasure's sake and, therefore, does not discern between what is beneficial and potentially harmful. Such is Plato's democratic individual: selfish, greedy, irrational, and intemperate. Lacking the rational ability and, therefore, the temperance to make decisions

that benefit themselves, democratic individuals cannot exercise the self-control needed to consider the interests of others, let alone empathize with them.

Plato's criticism of democracy proves to be quite prophetic. A diminished capacity for rationality and self-control can have dire consequences within any system of social organization, let alone one that must rely so heavily on the deliberations of its citizenry. Add to the mix a radical individualism that renders people unwilling, if not outright incapable of respect and empathy toward others—both essential requirements for achieving a democratic way of life.²¹ A citizenry that lacks the requisite intelligence and self-discipline to make decisions for their own welfare and that of their society cannot be entrusted with the power to make such decisions. Of course, the real problem with Plato's criticism here is that this is not what constitutes a democracy in modern perspectives, especially on Dewey's ideal.

2.5. Ideal *versus* Nominal Democracy: A Deweyan Response

No social-political theory or program is ever put into practice identically in any two societies. Differences in history, culture, religion, and any number of other factors provide the nuances that make any society's implementation unique. When it comes to democracy, what then is Plato criticizing? His description of democracy actually bears a strong resemblance to that *nominal* form we seem to have accustomed ourselves to accept. Joseph Schumpeter, for instance, describes this all too commonly accepted permutation of democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."²² Although this characterization does indeed point to a political realism about existing elitist forms of so-called democracy, this is a far cry from any participatory and communally deliberative *ideal* form. As philosopher and political activist Noam Chomsky, brings to our attention, "A society that excludes large areas of crucial decision-making from public control, or a system of governance that merely grants the general public the opportunity to ratify decisions taken by the elite groups that dominate the private society and the state, hardly merits the term 'democracy'."²³ Left out of the democratic realist account are the negative repercussions for any society from

the fact that the benevolence of those empowered to make decisions cannot be guaranteed.²⁴ This elitist version makes Plato's account of degenerative democracy frighteningly prophetic. At the same time, his criticisms are not much different from those that advocates of a participatory form of democracy would agree with, since in relation to these accounts of *ideal* democracy Plato's object of derision also fails miserably.

According to Plato, the faults of democracy are due in great part to the lack of ability in citizens to make intelligent personal decisions and develop intelligent policies that will benefit their society as a whole. In a society of licentious and self-absorbed individuals, you may be assured of selfish discretion in decision-making, similar to what Plato describes, but there is no guarantee of much else. This is to say that democracy cannot do it alone. It cannot function as a system of political organization whereby we simply subscribe to the will of all, especially when all aspire predominantly to self-interest. It must have as a deliberate goal the kind of rational ordering of society that takes into account the necessities and concerns of all its citizens.

A democratic way of life hinges upon the ability of its citizenry to exercise enough self-control to at least consider the needs, concerns, and interests of others. A purely selfish, individualistic, intemperate, and irrational *demos* is neither willing nor capable of turning its attention to adequately meet the demands of its own best interests or those of its fellow citizens. What this means is that democracy is not an intrinsically rational form of association all on its own, that is, that "rule by the people" is no guarantee that liberty, equality of opportunity, and social welfare are safeguarded. What is required of democracy is a *demos* willing and capable of rationally guided self-control and empathy. Only then will the democratic individual turn his or her interest from the satisfaction of desire for desire's sake, to the richer fulfillment arising from the symbiosis of individual interest and societal welfare.

The *demos* must have some direction or goal toward which they are working. Democracy will not arise from thin air. It is socially constructed through the ideas, actions, emotional commitments, and the intelligent training of the desires of those comprising the society. At the same time, it requires being able to overcome the chasm between our desires and rational thinking about what ought to be desirable. Apart from

the knowledge required to realize social good, it is the process that legitimates this very congruence between personal interest and our awareness of a social obligation, made possible by means of rational self-control that needs to exist. Assuming this to be a desirable and viable goal, we find in Dewey's defense of democracy a means by which to reconcile thought and action in the service of individual interest and social welfare.²⁵

One of Dewey's greatest philosophical ambitions was to construct a view of social living that would lead us to an effective democratic way of life. For Dewey, democracy is to be understood as a community of individual and shared interests, "...more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience," a group life where all must be minimally capable of taking into account the interests and needs of others, while simultaneously extolling diversity and individuality. He goes on to say that this involves a "breaking down of those barriers of class...which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity." But most importantly, and in opposition to Plato's conception of direct democracy, a democracy that can "secure a liberation of powers which remain suppressed as long as the incitations to action are partial, as they must be in a group which in its exclusiveness shuts out many interests."²⁶ Plato's mistake is not simply proposing a division of labor or specialization. He is correct to assume that none of us individually, or within groups, can carry out every necessary social responsibility. The problem lies in his exclusion of certain sectors in society from sharing in those qualities—among these, intelligence, self-initiative, and self-discipline—that just about any form of social organization requires to realize a greater social good beyond the mere self-interest of its citizens. Harriet Cuffaro, seeing in Dewey's democratic theory the potential for building microcosms of democratic communities within classrooms consisting of diverse needs and interests, recommends that it is "when these different memberships, with their varied perspectives, can be interwoven into a fabric of shared meanings and aspirations that community is born—when each person making his or her unique contribution participates in an undertaking meaningful to each and inclusive of all."²⁷ Only then can such a form of social organization properly be called a democracy.

In the Deweyan sense, democracy is seen as a way of life that implicates all social institutions in the preparation of individuals to meet their personal and social

responsibilities. Democracy allows us to reconcile the interests and needs of citizens with those of their society by ensuring that these individuals become active participants in the continuous realization of social goals that, in turn, benefit these same individuals. Dewey writes,

From the standpoint of the individual, democracy consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and good which are common.²⁸

Upon examination, we can identify within this position certain distinct qualities or characteristics that are required of the democratic individual. Necessary is the ability to reason, which furnishes us with the ability to gauge the merits or liabilities of our individual desires—rationally guided self-control.

Also necessary is a capacity for emotional empathy toward others. This empathy is nothing more than an emotional involvement in the appreciation of others' perspectives, and need not be thought of as somehow radically distinct from reason. Instead, Dewey would have us view such empathetic engagements as part and parcel of a deliberative process, much like that found in the process of scientific inquiry whereby contributions in the form of ideas and perspectives from others lend themselves to more robust formulations of possibilities for further inquiry. In other words, democracy, much like forms of open inquiry, cannot be realized in an atmosphere of radical individualism or class separatism.

Further, rationally guided self-control is important for two reasons. First, the ability to be in control of one's desires means that one does not become a slave to them. Not all desires carry equal worth. Some are beneficial to pursue, while pursuit of others may at times lead to our demise. The democratic individual does not pursue desire for desire's sake, but instead must be discerning. Thus, rational self-control is intended to

lead us to greater opportunities for making decisions that benefit us individually. Secondly, the more we practice rational self-control, which implies some suspension of our immediate needs, impulses, and interests, the greater the chance that we are able to make the kinds of decisions that take into account the needs and interests of others. Consequently others can be lead to do the same, which ultimately benefits all of us. Such is at least partly the rationale for Plato's philosopher returning to the cave, at the risk of death, to educate others.

Both reasons represent important aspects of Dewey's instrumentalist conception of reason, whereby self-control is built into the very process of reasoning. Thinking is itself an exercise in self-control as we "stop and think"—they work hand-in-hand in such a manner as to make obsolete the need to import control by force or cunning, or have it be the unique responsibility of a separate sector of society. When we recognize the element of control inherent in intelligent action we concede the rudiments of the kind of self-discipline required to move beyond our self-interest. Conversely, it is when impulse goes unchecked that we are unable to move beyond personal desire and interest. The more individuals exercise intelligence in action the more our capacity for empathy, which itself consists in a kind of *abstraction* from mere personal experience, may become part of our *repertoire*.

Plato's conception of reason excludes many of the traits that Dewey would view as necessary for one who invests wholeheartedly, both emotionally and intellectually in the collective deliberative progression toward the general good. At the same time, Dewey would be the last to deny that reason ought to guide our deliberations, something often missed by his critics who get stuck on his concern for practical achievements as if these stood apart from their theoretical accompaniments. He is simply proposing that reason is not the end-all, nor can it do it alone.

Talisse, following Campbell, makes explicit this connection between Dewey's epistemology and a participatory-deliberative model of democracy, proclaiming that, "A democratic political order secures the conditions under which proper inquiry can commence, and is enriched by the participation of citizens in inquiry...democracy and inquiry are symbiotic."²⁹ What these Deweyans are basically saying about Deweyan democracy is that inquiry and the democratic forms of association that invite it, serve as

mutual conduits for each other, the one making the other possible and necessary. What is most crucial about this point, especially with regard to Plato's class society, is that once we reconcile the rational (inquiry) basis of action (democracy) with the active (democratic) basis of rationality (inquiry), we invite "the extension of practices of proper inquiry" well beyond the purview of a particular class, "to all areas of human association."³⁰

Of course, this practice can only take place in an environment that fosters its development. What we get when we separate society into distinct class interests is an impediment to the establishment of networks for mutual support, be they communal or formally educational. We get what we have today, ridicule of one class or political party by another, as if we are in competition, running from the possibility of a truly participatory and deliberative democracy.

The greatest threat now faced by the democratic individual, much like that faced by the freed prisoner who returns to the cave, is a lack of acceptance within a society so pervasively influenced by greed, selfishness, and irrationality. Once we relinquish the social responsibility of continuously providing opportunities for ourselves to develop the skills necessary for self-governance in thought and action, we nullify the very reason for why we ought to be motivated by something that extends beyond our self-interest. It ought to come as no surprise that inevitably the public refrains from taking on such responsibilities.

Is it the citizens' fault they cannot make intelligent decisions, or unselfish ones at least, when they not only lack the necessary education, but in its stead lust, desires, and immediate gratification are constantly fed to them? If this is what we refer to as freedom—the freedom to make decisions and choices when one lacks the ability to do so meaningfully or adequately—then perhaps we are not really free. In an environment that renders one incapable of adequately appreciating what is rationally in one's own best interest and recognizing the potential for empowerment that comes from rationally guided free action, the very idea that one has the option to do as one desires can very easily lead one to self-destruction. In other words, not only is freedom not free, but neither is it for the faint hearted.

This is the paradox for those who take individual liberty as a defining principle of democracy. Advocates of absolute liberty are appalled at the idea that we might, instead, elicit more freedom from our citizenry by leading them in the proper direction. That we may have to, as Rousseau succinctly stated in his *Social Contract*, “force people to be free.” They cannot grasp the notion that self-control, much like an obligation or duty, albeit an intrinsically motivated and inspired form, may actually co-exist with freedom. Instead, control and freedom, or obligation and self-fulfillment are seen as contrary and mutually exclusive.³¹ In an ironic twist to Plato’s producer class, in our current culture some individuals measure their liberty in terms of their freedom to consume. The same goes for equality, which is couched in terms of one’s inalienable, equal right to consume. Meanwhile, the rational implications as far as *what* and *how* we consume are rarely considered.

When individuals are systematically rendered incapable of determining the good for themselves and for all, due to a lack of consistency on the part of society’s efforts to educate them, can we continue to say they are truly free? Or are they simply having the semblance of freedom and the hopes for a better life dangled before them, when the only viable option is that of succumbing to a slavery circumscribed by the very limitations of their own desires? How valuable is freedom when people do not fully understand how to harness the possibilities it affords, that is, when they lack the knowledge of how to use it for greater personal and social benefit?

Freedom, much like democracy, is not a good in and of itself, because it requires a certain direction or purpose. This is why, sometimes, free action can be quite dangerous, and why people like Plato have all the reason to find ways of controlling it. The important question to ask is, “Freedom for what purpose?” But the same can be asked of control or that which imposes restrictions upon our actions. Those who use it unquestioningly to discipline or constrain, see in control a kind of intrinsic universality, as if any and all expressions of it lead to proper results. Unfortunately, its wanton and forceful exercise all too often has nothing to do with an intelligently devised purpose. Regrettably, when individuals no longer see themselves as the locus of responsibility and self-control they will easily relegate these to something outside themselves.

2.6. Individual and Social Intelligence

One of the most important contributions to educational theory that we can attribute to Plato is his bringing to light the fact that any social morality, along with any formal system of education used to promote its values, will necessarily exert a significant influence upon the formation of individuals. In Plato's case, the goal of a just and morally virtuous society calls for the implementation of an elaborate class-specific curriculum designed specifically with this goal in mind—a clear recognition that *what* we teach is a key determinant of the type of society we expect to realize.

At the same time, the focus on class type prevents him from seeing the ways in which his educational insight might just as well be turned against his ideal. Because he attributes the demise of harmony and justice to a particular class, in this case the licentious democratic type, Plato's vision of clearly delineated responsibilities has him place all his faith in “a domination there of the desires in the multitude and the rabble by the desires and the wisdom that dwell in the minority of the better sort.”³² The idea that a majority will follow the will of a minority does indeed hold true today. In terms of popular culture we find “celebrities” within various realms, including entertainment, sports, and even the political arena, dictating “the desires of the multitude.” The problem is that so many of the desires being marketed are not necessarily conducive to either personal or general welfare. Different sectors of society, weakened by a resolve to deliberately and unquestioningly remain morally disengaged, relinquish any responsibility toward the development of a social moral excellence. This abandonment by natural fiat, coupled with an inability to intelligently navigate the overwhelming proliferation by those interested in profiting from vice, sets the scenario for moral lackadaisicalness. This will continue to happen so long as entire sectors of society remain class and virtue exclusive.

What happens when we divide the state, and thus separate one class from another? Plato's distinction between a faculty that oversees control – reason – and another that is the cause of impulsive action – desire – begets an opposition between control and freedom. The problem is that reason is not alone the *reason* why one takes on personal

and social responsibilities. Also necessary is an emotional commitment to a desire for personal and social good. And most importantly, we must all of us do this for ourselves!³³

If entire sectors of a citizenry are never expected to be philosophical, and thereby engage in the contemplation of the good that leads to the good, then how can these same be expected to ever achieve the good? True, all citizens ought to strive toward moderation but, according to Plato, this is ultimately achieved through the use of reason. And if this is the case, then why ought we to expect those sectors of society barred from intellectual pursuits to ever exercise rational or moral restraint—temperance? Is it unreasonable to expect that a soldiering class be trained in the skills of deliberation and self-control, or ought we to continue to excuse their actions as somehow beyond their means?³⁴

In order to achieve a general welfare that reaches across any society in particular, there cannot exist a segregated ethos within that society, at least not when it comes to the goal itself of achieving the good of all. Although individuals fulfill distinct responsibilities, this is not inconsistent with everyone being held equally responsible with respect to the good of all. Soldiers and police, of all people, ought to demonstrate the ability to deliberate and exercise temperance. Producers, today's consumers, must be capable of deliberation and courage as they guide their appetites in the face of leveling forces that induce them to a mindless compliance that holds their thoughts, feelings, and desires hostage.

This does not mean, as Plato feared, that each individual must simultaneously possess the traits of all others. But it does mean that every individual must at least share in the emotional, intellectual, and moral sensibility that sanctions a congruence of personal fulfillment and social welfare. A society established upon the basis of separate, self-contained, rational and irrational elements could never share in the goal of social welfare. The society that intelligently, and for mutual benefit, blends its distinctive elements, as Deweyan democracy purports to do, would thereby grasp the personal satisfaction found in the fulfillment of the social welfare. Inevitably, Plato's strict adherence to a separation of traits leads to a separation of efforts. As a result, his approach will not only perpetuate divisions among classes, but also a segregation of personal from social interest.

Instead, Dewey advocates creating a culture of personal possibility that flourishes within its social responsibilities. This is possible only when individuals no longer segregate their sense of personal fulfillment from the fulfillment of obligations. This means mending the rift between our conceptions of what it means to be personally fulfilled, so commonly misunderstood as the narrow realization of purely personal interests, and adhering to personal or social obligations, which are typically misconstrued as that which keeps us from our personal interests. This is what happens in so-called democracies where governments do not directly represent the interests of their citizens. Instead, citizens are pitted against government, which takes on a life of its own, complete with its own interests. Political corruption is nothing more than a natural consequence of this phenomenon. This is what happens in schools, where apathy and cheating have taken the place of their political counterparts, and where students' interests, degraded to the level of mere inclinations—reckless and subjective impulses—are pitted against the interests of education. What results is an education that no longer takes into account the interests of students.

Unfortunately, when we no longer rehearse in our classrooms democratic forms of experience, students are prevented from seeing that what is in the interest of education is precisely what ought to be in their own interests. How terrible a thing, when we fail to recognize that what is good for our self-fulfillment might well be that very same thing to which we have an obligation. What a poor state of affairs when we fail to recognize that the necessity of our very own personal (moral, intellectual, and emotional) development is not something that has to stand in opposition to what is in our best personal interests. Until this changes, individual interests will continue to compete with social welfare, and our individual inclinations will continue to compete with the obligations we owe to ourselves.

According to Dewey, “The key-note of democracy as a way of life may be expressed as the necessity for the participation of every mature human being in the formation of the values that regulate the living of men together.”³⁵ The social role of education is to help foster the levels of intellectual and emotional maturity, and responsibility necessary for meeting democratic values head on. In a society of class-specific virtues, only some of us learn some of what all of us need to know in order to

bring about a harmonious society. In a democracy, different classes and personalities may share a desire and interest beyond the respective virtues of each class or personality without having to compromise autonomy—a desire for and interest in harmony itself. This includes an imaginative sharing in an emotionally invested thoughtfulness aimed at reaching this goal. After all, what good are temperance and justice if when called to account at any given time a particular group or individual is incapable of practicing these? What good is leaving the cave to discover the Good, if everyone else is not at least given the opportunity to do the same?

This is what Dewey has in mind when he describes democracy as “the direction, which comes from heightened *emotional* appreciation of common interests and from an understanding of social responsibilities.”³⁶ After all, even though at times we may know that an idea or plan of action is the best one, we will not always act upon or prevent ourselves from acting contrary to that idea or plan of action unless we have made the necessary emotional commitment. All of us have to share in the responsibility to ourselves, as well as in the delight that can only come from the shared responsibilities and attributes that ensure the most pervasive type of human and social flourishing. Simply making a rational assessment of this possibility will not be enough. It is ultimately an emotional commitment, along with the desire that initiates and maintains the emotion, that advances this possibility closer to its realization. This conception of democracy, along with its “emotional appreciation,” is something the evolution of which may be traced to the social-political and educational philosophies of Locke and Rousseau. Before reaching Dewey’s educational aesthetic, by means of which he proposes we realize the greatest potential for individual and social life, we will turn to Locke and Rousseau.

¹ In the legal brief presented to the criminal court in Santiago, Chile, as part of the defense of those accused in the homicide of Mario Jose Abaunza Hunter, my brother, the defense attorney argues that one of the accomplices, a peasant woman working as a maid, “lacked or was deficient in character, spirit, and intellect, and thus was easily swayed and manipulated into participating in and not preventing the heinous act.” Mauricio Salazar Thompson, Abogado, (*causa criminal rol. no. 76.663*, Agosto, 2004).

² John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* [1925] 1929, LW 1: 61. All references to Dewey are from *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1990). References are designated as Early, Middle, or Late Work, volume number, and page.

³ Dewey himself claims this is the problem that has most preoccupied him. In Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Hahn (eds.), *The Library of Living Philosophers*, Vol. 1, *The Philosophy of John Dewey* [1939], (Illinois: Open Court, 1989), p. 597. In the following chapters this “reintegration” is extended to emotion as an integral aspect of human action, and thus, a move to reconcile reason and emotion.

⁴ Dewey, *Op. cit.*, LW 1: 50.

⁵ In 1994, Dr. Jeffrey Friedman discovered a genetic defect in mice, and its human homologue that prevents fat cells from producing a hormone that signals the brain when there is enough fat. The hormone, Leptin, along with Ghrelin, which indicates hunger and fullness, and Peptide YY, which signals information about the capacity in the intestines, all send information that is received and processed in the hypothalamus. Something well beyond the capability of Plato ever knowing is that these signals somehow combine with higher cognitive thoughts, emotions, and sensory information to help determine whether or not we need to eat. This is a blow not only against Plato’s *simplistic* account, but may also lead us to rethink some of his, and Aristotle’s thoughts on the role of volition and the level of control reason can exert over such vices as gluttony. *Scientific American*

Frontiers, *Losing It*, PBS broadcast aired on January 20, 2004. See also, Jeffrey M. Friedman, M.D., Ph.D., “Leptin and the Regulation of Body Weight,” <http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/mstp/aspden99/html/speakers/friedman.html>, retrieved July 20, 2004.

⁶ This is, of course, what troubled Aristotle about Plato’s ethics and the latter’s belief that it was enough to know the good in order to do the good. Aristotle made not only the distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom, the latter representing the intellectual virtue necessary for moral action, but also distinguished between intellectual and moral virtue, the latter representing an ability to balance our desires and passions rationally. As Aristotle reminds us in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, “the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge...(for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no good)....” *Op. cit.*, (1103b, 26-29), p. 953. It is not enough to simply *know* the good in order to assure its realization in action. Often enough we know the good, yet act contrary to it (*akrasia*). Something else is necessary to inspire and drive us toward, as Aristotle would say, *willing* and *doing* the good. A man, for instance, may keep himself from cheating on his spouse not simply because he *thinks* or *knows* it is the wrong thing to do, but because he has an emotional stake in what results from not cheating. The relation between intellect and emotion, and its essential ramifications for education, will be elaborated in subsequent chapters.

⁷ Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), LW 11: 38.

⁸ Dewey, *Experience and Education* (1938), LW 13: 169.

⁹ *Ibid.* Although this is taken up in much more detail in my later discussion of Dewey’s educational aesthetic, it is important to note the connections Dewey makes here. The goal, for Dewey, and one of the pillars upon which this dissertation stands, is that of ultimately reconciling personal freedom with an intrinsically motivated form of self-

control; an attitude epitomized in an aesthetic sensibility that makes the most of a symbiosis between affection and reflection, and realized in the democratic ideal.

¹⁰ Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), MW 2: 228, emphases mine.

¹¹ Jim Garrison, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), p. 14. Although Garrison is sympathetic to a broader reading of Plato, one which points to the significance of desires and passions, he still sides with Dewey when it comes to his criticism of Plato's hyper-rationalism, which segregates *theoria* and *episteme* from *phronesis* and *techne*. See pp. 7-9 and 20-28.

¹² Plato, *Republic*, Book IV (434e), trans. Paul Shorey, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.) [1961], *Op. cit.*, p. 676. As in the previous chapter, all references to Plato will be from this collection.

¹³ *Ibid.*, (431b), p. 672.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (432b), p. 673-4.

¹⁵ This is not to suggest, as is sometimes assumed by critics of participatory democracy, such as Richard Posner, that all citizens must be burdened with the complete set of responsibilities associated with their governance. See Richard Posner, *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). Just as unreasonable as the commonly held conception of democracy as implying absolute equality, that is, that all of us are equal in our capabilities is Posner's suggestion that all of us ought to be held equally responsible for fulfilling each and every social task. On the contrary, there is no inconsistency in holding a social separation of labor and self-governance. A participatory democracy assumes the very fact that citizens will participate according to their various capabilities. See, Robert Talisse, "Deweyan Democracy Defended: A Deliberativist Response to Posner's Political Realism," forthcoming in *Res Publica* (2005).

¹⁶ Plato, *Op. Cit.*, Book IV (434c), p. 676.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Book VII (548c), p. 777.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Book VIII (560c), p. 788.

¹⁹ Plato is, in essence, drawing a connection between the development of self-discipline or self-control, and moral virtue or character. Here, too, Plato is frighteningly prophetic as he describes the phenomena of spoiling that continues to be a concern well beyond his time, into the Modern era, and reaching epidemic proportions in our day. In chapters three and four I discuss Locke's and Rousseau's ideas, respectively, on the negative impact from spoiling on self-discipline in education.

²⁰ Plato, Book VIII (561a), p. 789.

²¹ To get a sense of some contemporary issues that pose similar threats to democracy, as those foreseen by Plato, we might turn to cultural critic, Neil Postman. Postman has written several books in which he addresses the impact of media on our society, among these, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage Books, [1982] 1994); *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); and, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). According to Postman, television represents a unique problem in that its images are not constrained by such limitations we find in texts, offering an "irresistible alternative to the linear and sequential logic of the printed word and tends to make the rigors of a literate education irrelevant" (*Op. cit.*, 1994, p. 78-9). Television makes no complex demands on either the mind or behavior. This poses serious implications for democracy. According to Postman, "We do know that the capacity of the young to achieve 'grade level' competence in reading and writing is declining. And we also know that their ability to reason and to make valid inferences is declining as well" (*Ibid.*, p. 132). Another problem is that posed by television's undifferentiated

accessibility, which evaporates the threshold of shame, thus blurring the lines between what is considered appropriate, and what is not. This, in turn, negatively affects the development of individuals' sensitivities toward the needs and interests of others.

²² Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, (New York: Harper Torch Books, [1942] 1962), p. 269. Cf. Michael Margolis, *Viable Democracy*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 108.

²³ Noam Chomsky, *Language and the Problems of Knowledge: The Managua Lectures*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987), p. 135.

²⁴ Democratic realists are using existing forms of democracy for their definitions, in which sense they only validate the fact that such pitiable forms of democracy are merely nominal. Yet, among these we may distinguish between those who find in current forms only a nominal or pseudo-democracy (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Neil Postman, Ralph Nader, and just about anyone to the "left" of the Democratic party), and those who have resigned themselves to accepting these elitist heresies as true forms of democracy (e.g., C. Wright Mills, Walter Lippmann, Richard Posner, Reinhold Neihbur). See, James Campbell, *Understanding Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence*, (Chicago: Open Court, 1995).

²⁵ For a succinct taxonomy of Dewey's and other related types of deliberative and participatory forms of democracy, see Robert Talisse, *Op. Cit.* For a more elaborate and text-length analysis of Dewey's democratic theory, see James Campbell, *Op. Cit.*

²⁶ Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916), MW 9:93.

²⁷ Harriet Cuffaro, *Experimenting with the World: John Dewey and the Early Childhood Classroom*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995), p. 26.

²⁸ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), LW 2: 327-8.

²⁹ Talisse, *Op. cit.*, p. 6; and Campbell, *Op. cit.*, pp. 45-53, 82-87, 99-123 (especially in relation to science as inquiry), and 177-184.

³⁰ Dewey, *Op. cit.*, LW 2: 325.

³¹ This, a complex issue unto itself, will be discussed further in the later chapter on Rousseau, whose concept of “well-regulated liberty” is a preview to Dewey’s reconciliation of freedom and control by means of socially and intelligently organized activities.

³² Plato, *Republic*, Book IV (431d), *Op. cit.*, p. 673.

³³ As I intend to show in the following chapters, what we learn from education is that one’s intellectual and emotional commitments are most authentic and resilient when their locus of motivation is an intrinsic one, and not extrinsic.

³⁴ The current AIDS epidemic in Africa serves as a good example of this need. In some countries like Botswana, where the rate of infection is 40% of the entire population, soldiers transmit the virus at 2 to 4 times the rate of the general population. This represents a kind of moral default on the part of a particular class, which ought to be held to the same standards in relation to the goal of achieving the good of all. This is what happens when we assign too specific a role for specific classes—when soldiers are only expected to manifest courage. Soldiers, who routinely engage in extra-marital relations and have unprotected sex, go on to infect their unsuspecting partners.

³⁵ Dewey, LW 11: 217.

³⁶ Dewey, “Education and Social Direction” (1918), MW 11: 57, emphasis mine.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATING THE DEMOCRATIC ANIMAL

No person is free who cannot command himself.

—Pythagoras

Philosophical discourse and argumentation often focus on drawing out the conflicting elements among varying positions. Partners to this charge are the very categories or “ism’s” philosophers extensively rely upon to either stake their own claims or position their criticisms against those of others. Although these categories do serve a purpose by helping us draw generalizations that allow us to efficiently corral the myriad permutations of ideas tendered by philosophers, at times these may lead us to overlook the continuities running through these. An example of one such continuity is a view that manifests itself in various forms throughout the history of philosophical thinking on education. Careful perusal of characteristically disparate philosophical stances reveals an important continuity that ought not to be overlooked, if for no other reason than an exercise in intellectual integrity or simply giving credit where credit is due. Thus we find running through the rationalism of Plato, the empiricism of Locke, the romanticism of Rousseau, and the instrumentalism of Dewey, the idea that for human beings the premier goal of education is that of developing and employing our rational capabilities in the exercise of self-discipline; an exercise understood to be an essential and necessary conduit to both personal happiness and social well being.

One chord that strongly resonates through these disparate traditions is the connection found in each between a social-political vision and the rearing of an individual whose character and disposition most adequately convey said vision. Unbeknownst to Plato, the correlation he brought to bear between social-political and educational planification would establish an indelible model for future thinkers. This is not to imply that there are necessarily any similarities between the social or educational

visions of Plato and, say, Rousseau or Dewey. Rather, it is only to point to that recurring pattern by which it is demonstrated that an individual, through some sort of educational process, may be made to “fit” and ultimately realize some greater social vision. From the likes of Plato and Aristotle to Augustine and Aquinas, through Locke, Rousseau, and Dewey we can discern a deliberate parallel in their respective social and educational visions. This methodology of sorts is a testament to the belief that how we educate our young greatly determines the kind of society we achieve and, in turn, that the kind of society we accept for ourselves will have a significant influence upon the character of our young.

But how is one to gauge the success or failure of education in this endeavor? Historically, it is our ability to employ reason in the control of our impulses, desires, and emotions—viewed as conduits of freedom or sources of misery—that has served as the barometer by which individuals are measured against particularly desired educational and social ends. More specifically, we find particular barometers calibrated according to the degree of play between control and freedom permitted by the specifications of human nature as set forth in particular social visions.

It is the degree to which rationality assumes a regulatory role above and beyond emotion that defines the continuing philosophical and educational struggle between self-control and freedom. My aim is to demonstrate how this tension between reason and emotion evolves toward their reconciliation through an understanding of learning as an intrinsically motivated process that requires both rational and emotional maturation. Our journey continues with Locke, whose reflections on education entreat us to recognize the role of emotion in motivating learning, despite the rationalistic emphasis that corresponds to his Enlightenment *persona*.

Locke’s conception of autonomy represents an important contribution to our understanding of the democratic citizen—the autonomous individual who can “command himself” within the bounds of law. This is due in no small measure to a resounding faith in our ability to form such an individual through education. In particular Locke advances a pedagogic approach that counters our reliance upon extrinsic forms of motivation, such as physical rewards and punishments. Locke instead proposes that nurturing our autonomy requires appealing to an *intrinsic* source of motivation—our reason—and

inculcating a sense of self-discipline by maintaining a sensible balance between freedom and control.

In this chapter I explore whether this approach succeeds or falls short in fostering the kind of autonomy necessary for individuals to fulfill a democratic vision. One reason for holding the latter is due to the contention that Locke's alternatives to physical reward and punishment—praise and shame—are not themselves entirely intrinsic motivators; leading one to second-guess the pedigree of autonomy he puts forth. This concern is first raised within the context of his social contract theory, according to which rationality alone is unable to guarantee our autonomy outside the confines of a political order. Another reason is due to his failure to recognize the full extent to which even an appeal to reason is ultimately engendered by emotional dispositions, which, incidentally, this empiricist maintains are themselves innate. Despite the apparent limitations of Locke's conception of autonomy, his social-political and educational ideas reveal a necessary stage in the evolution of the democratic vision, and represent an important contribution to this ongoing process.

3.1. The Evolution of the Political Animal

Plato's all too appropriate misgivings about the intemperate *demos*, which led him to disparage democracy in *The Republic*, continue to resonate in modern political attempts to reconcile the needs and interests of the individual with those of the many. Locke meets these misgivings head-on in his articulation of a social contract theory that bases political authority on the presumed natural capability of individuals to exercise self-rule by means of rational and free consent. Locke writes, "The freedom then of man, and liberty of acting according to his own will, is grounded on his having reason which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will."¹ Locke actually shares the Platonic position that through the use of one's reason one may exert control over one's desires and inclinations, especially those detrimental to oneself.

Specifically for Locke, the exercise of self-control is essential to achieving moral virtue. It is, in turn, the virtuous life that is the happy life. The most important, if not the

most obvious reason for exercising such control comes from sheer necessity. It is an inevitable fact of our human condition that each of us must confront the challenges of life. We must then be as best prepared as possible to do what is within our power to bring about the highest quality of life possible. And, since ultimately all of us must do this for ourselves, our ability to reason must be properly formed. Therefore, the task of educating children to direct their own lives is not only necessary for their continued existence, but also indispensable to the goal of achieving personal happiness.

According to Locke, the individual most capable of exercising self-control, that is, of demonstrating self-discipline, is the one best suited to autonomously direct his or her life. Our innate ability to reason allows us to form complex ideas from simple ones, make inferences, and draw conclusions about how certain behaviors, and the consequences to which these give rise, affect us. Again, Locke identifies this ability with virtue itself, such that, “the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself of his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way.”² Although Plato’s social vision also calls for fostering virtue through education, there is a pronounced difference in Locke’s account, according to which it is the responsibility of *each* and *every* individual to realize said virtue. Locke writes, “for I think it every man’s indispensable duty, to do all the service he can to his country; and I see not what difference he puts between himself and his cattle, who lives without that thought.”³ Thus, unlike in Plato’s *kali-polis*, the onus is not upon one particular class or an exclusive set of rational individuals, but instead is placed equally and squarely upon all citizens. Locke understands the importance of this requirement, and in his social contract theory gives it explicit expression in the form of consent.

3.1.1. From Hobbes to Locke

Locke follows Thomas Hobbes’ lead in initiating his own justification for the political authority of civil government by invoking the concept of an imaginary state of nature. Similarly to Hobbes, Locke maintains that in the state of nature humans possess the right—the executive right of nature—to assure their self-preservation, which includes

the power to punish those who transgress the law of nature.⁴ But here the similarities stop. The law of nature is, according to Locke, an expression of God's will, which is made known to mankind through the use of reason. According to this law one wills one's self-preservation, freedom, independence, and equality among others. However, unlike Hobbes, who maintains that in the state of nature human beings are predisposed to selfishness and lawlessness because they are ruled primarily by their self-regarding passions and natural lack of sociability, Locke holds that in such a state human beings are naturally social and rational.

For Hobbes, human ends are defined in terms of fundamentally self-regarding interests, which include the desire for our self-preservation, peace, and commodious living. In the Hobbesian asocial or pre-social state of nature it is not rational to be moral. It is not in our best interest to keep our promises, be peaceful, just, or benevolent. In this state, humans are acquisitive, fearful, violent, and anti-social. Therefore, in such a state mankind lives constantly in fear and strife, as each individual seeks to satiate his or her natural desire toward that which serves his or her personal interests. Hobbes sums up the unforgiving quality of life in this natural state as one of, "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."⁵ Yet, despite the levels of egoism needed to survive in such a state, even for Hobbes it is necessary that human beings possess a modicum of rationality; at least enough to allow us to form a social contract by which we enter into a political and civil society.

It is through reason that individuals in the state of nature derive general rules or prescriptions Hobbes refers to as Natural Laws. Because we desire to preserve ourselves, to live in peace, and by our industry to procure the means for commodious living, it is also in our interest to put an end to the state of nature. Reason draws us to agree on certain "articles of peace" that define the terms for a peaceful, cooperative, moral, and social life. Compliance with these principles is a necessary condition for the very existence of society. However, despite what reason tells us, it is our egoism that rules the day, since it is only enforced agreements that ultimately motivate us into social conformity. Although it makes rational sense that we abide by these dictums, non-compliance might also turn out to be rational under certain circumstances, specifically in

those that test the resolve of our self-interest. Absent an absolute authority to enforce our agreement to the Laws of Nature, Hobbes proposes these are not truly binding upon us.

Given the possibility of punishment, which hardship is not in our interest to endure, it is always in our interest as members of a political society to behave morally, justly, and in conformity with law. According to the Hobbesian justification for political authority, we live peacefully by complying legally and morally with the laws of nature only because these are now commands backed by the threat of punishment. Although following the law in this strict sense provides the institutional framework for a peaceful and cooperative social life, compliance is nonetheless externally imposed. In essence we relinquish those traits characteristic of and necessary for self-governance. This is in stark contrast to the role assigned to law by Locke, who sees it as an extension and expression of our freedom.⁶

Even beyond rationality, self-rule requires a level of sociability among individuals—a humility of sorts—that invites the free consent of others and trusts that the onus of authority may well lie within each individual. The consent by which we agree upon the goals or ends we deem appropriate for ourselves individually provides the very basis by which we establish the rules or laws that circumscribe the realization of those goals or ends socially. Locke writes, “for law, in its true notion, is not so much the limitation as the direction of a free and intelligent agent to his proper interest, and prescribes no further than is for the general good of those under that law.”⁷ In other words, accepting self-rule means that the establishment of law and social order is not a matter of imposition from an authority emanating beyond our selves for, as Locke goes on to say in the same passage, “the end of law is not to abolish or restrain but to preserve and enlarge freedom.” Whereas Locke views freedom as co-terminus with rational self-control, Hobbes on the other hand views control as the necessary means by which to curtail the dangerous freedoms that threaten our peace. For Locke, self-rule is a matter of establishing adequate inroads to rational principles that govern our relationships among individuals.

This idea is not much different from that later developed in Immanuel Kant’s attempt to reconcile the readily held opposition between duty and personal fulfillment. In his formulation of the third practical principle of morality – the principle of autonomy

(the first refers to the universality of moral law, while the second relates to the recognition of all rational beings as ends in themselves) – Kant proposes it is our ability to rationally self-legislate or self-impose moral laws, which ultimately binds us to universal moral laws. Kant writes,

According to this principle all maxims are rejected which are not consistent with the will's own legislation of universal law. The will is thus not merely subject to the law but is subject to the law in such a way that it must be regarded also as legislating for itself and only on this account as being subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author).⁸

It is Kant's hope that we recognize the very basis of morality lies in our ability to unite that which reason informs us is in our best interest with that which we are obligated to do. Therefore, obligations need not be construed as burdens, limitations, or impediments to free activity, but rather as what we rationally will for our own fulfillment.

When authority is founded on rationality, disputes are settled on the basis of logical consistency, rather than the random imposition of arbitrary or absolute power. By shifting authority to individuals, Locke's social contract thus justifies changes in social institutions, introducing the possibility of altering government as opposed to assuming that inalterable institutions may be sustained by divine authorization or absolute rule. If government does not uphold its obligations under the social contract, people may legitimately overthrow the government. Only thus can a government formed of mutual and rational consent be instituted. According to Locke's understanding of sociability, whether existing naturally or founded by convention, there is the hope, if not the assurance that the self-imposed authority of those who choose to rule themselves is at once an expression of their freedom.⁹

3.1.2. Locke's "Missing Link"

As we can see there are fundamental and significant differences in Hobbes and Locke's characterizations of the state of nature, which are rooted in their distinct

conceptions of human nature. In the Lockean state of nature, as in the Hobbesian, individuals are equal in their powers to guarantee their self-interests, among which the most important is their self-preservation. However, according to Locke, in this state no person has an absolute right to harm himself or any other, since reason guided by a law of nature commands that no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions. On the contrary, in the Hobbesian state of nature, due to the threat of anticipatory attack, there is enough preemptive cause for anyone to destroy another at any given time and thereby assure one's self-preservation.

The important difference between Hobbes' rendition of this right to defend oneself in the state of nature and thereby assure one's self-preservation, and that propounded by Locke, is that according to the former the individual is concerned only with personal desire and self-interest. Because in the Hobbesian state of nature the attainment of wanton self-interest is immersed in emotion and passion, apart from the fact that one must be induced into sociability by the threat of harm, one is incapable of ever conceding one's interest to that of another. Locke, on the other hand, distinguishes between a state of nature enjoyed in liberty and one ruled by license. He writes:

But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of license; though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself...and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions...Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason...ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind.¹⁰

Thus, according to Locke, in addition to the obligation one has to oneself in the state of nature, one also has an obligation to refrain from harming another and even to assist in the preservation of others as much as one can. Hobbes makes no such provision for taking responsibility toward others. It is one's self-interest alone that rules the day, often enough at the expense of another.¹¹ This is precisely why such a state of nature, which he

equated with a state of war, summons from Hobbes the call for a transition into civil society; the sovereign power of which alone ultimately guarantees this social responsibility. Ironically, it is by means of our rational choice that we dispose of our right to autonomously exercise reason in our affairs.

So why would anyone want to leave the Lockean state of nature? According to Locke, there are certain inconveniences in this state, along with corrupt individuals, and no non-arbitrary power to enforce sentences on their transgressions. Also, there are neither agreed-upon laws nor impartial arbiters to adjudicate differences in disputes. Thus, we tacitly consent to transfer our executive right of nature—our natural right of self-preservation—to a sovereign, in return for a guarantee to safeguard the preservation of our life, health, liberty, and property. The nature of this compact itself marks another important difference between the two contract theorists. Locke's is a fiduciary agreement between a sovereign trustee and the beneficiary community of citizens whose interests are always to be represented by the sovereignty. Hobbes' contract is one of submission, whereby individuals consent among themselves to give up their rights absolutely to the sovereign authority in order to assure that the sovereign has all the power necessary to prevent a return to a state of nature.

Despite his intimations regarding our natural capability for self-rule, Locke's view of human nature at one point takes a decidedly Hobbesian turn. Locke demonstrates a lack of confidence in the abilities of his fellow human beings to avail themselves of a social and moral state of nature. Elaborating on the executive right of nature, Locke adds,

I doubt not but it will be objected that it is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves and their friends, and...that ill-nature, passion, and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others, and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow.¹²

Apparently, neither our innate sociability nor our ability to reason is enough to command our contentious, obtrusive, and selfish emotions. He adds, "Therefore God has certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men."¹³ Apparently

necessary even for Locke is the establishment of a civil authority that will guarantee what human reason and sentiment, infected by nefarious passion, cannot.

In essence, Locke balks on his own expectations for autonomy and self-rule. This problem persists even beyond the state of nature due to the fact that the source of this ubiquitous selfishness is not dissolved by the social contract, which in some respects is designed to avoid the disputes arising from self-interest. According to the legal philosopher, James Gordley,

Contract [theory] seemed to transmute self-interest into a limitation on the pursuit of self-interest. Each party to a contract gives up something in order to obtain an *advantage* for himself. Hobbes and Locke explained society as a contract in which each person limits the ways he pursues pleasure and avoids pain in order to *benefit* from the limitations assumed by others.¹⁴

Although contracts establish limitations on self-interest, these limitations nonetheless continue to benefit and promote self-interest, albeit now in a different form from that existing in the state of nature.

Self-interest now takes the form of an obligation to others and to oneself. This ends up looking a lot like Glaucon's conventionalist explanation of justice in Book II of Plato's *Republic*. Here Plato has Glaucon table the view that the possibility of harm to oneself from being unjustly treated by others outweighs the benefit to oneself that comes from treating others unjustly. In other words, people have a vested interest in preventing injustice and thus willingly concede to a social agreement guaranteeing such only because they gain more from forcing themselves to honor laws along with others, than they lose by no longer being able to break them. The danger, and the way this undermines the development of democracy under Locke's plan, is that this obligation is ultimately motivated by selfishness. So long as this obligation remains rooted in self-interestedness and, furthermore, is extrinsically imposed, it is the self-interest of avoiding the threat of force and punishment that impels a society, rather than the goal of achieving a purposefully self-directed and mutually benefiting social order.

This is not to say that the key issue for contract theorists has to be whether one's motivation to seek social harmony with others is entirely intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. The need to establish social harmony, along with the rights and obligations necessary to sustain such, sometimes trumps the privileges associated with a purely intrinsic locus of action. Even within democratic systems individuals may benefit from the occasional impulsion by their governing bodies and other pertinent social institutions. After all, to a great extent our educational institutions serve just such a purpose in the propagation of a social vision. Crucial to realizing a democratic sociability and what ultimately drives us to accept this as a goal, has to do with the democratic genuineness of the goal, whether this is ultimately extrinsically or intrinsically motivated.¹⁵

This issue arises often in discussions among my students regarding the important role Plato assigns to censorship in the education of the young within his ideal state. Some express their concern with the idea that Plato would have certain deleterious poetry and fables kept from the young, in efforts to purposely direct the development of specific virtues. Their unwillingness to accept Plato's social vision is clouded by their inability to see that it is the welfare of the society over that of any particular class or individual that is sought. Of course, so long as we understand society as merely a competition among individual interests, we fail to recognize how these interests may be superseded by the need to supervise the values that influence those who comprise that very society. In other words, unless one is willing to concede that individual interest may need to be subsumed under that of our social well being, we cannot see beyond censorship as a form of restriction. What is redeeming of the democratic example is that consent is integral to the realization of the social good and, therefore, individual interests are never separate from their social counterparts.

One thing seems clear. Self-preservation, whether rationally informed or not, cannot alone guarantee that one's motivations and intentions are not purely selfish. Since a democratic society requires of its citizens that they be both self and other-regarding, the question then arises as to whether or not an intrinsic form of motivation for realizing such an ideal can exist and flourish among individuals without imposition from extrinsic forces? In other words, can the democratic animal reach the heights of autonomy and self-discipline

necessary for achieving such an ideal? It is my contention that answers to even these questions are not enough, so long as they continue to be informed solely by an appeal to rationality. Missing from such an approach—one that seeks a rationale for democracy within the bounds of reason alone—is an appreciation for that which moves us to accept the ideal of democracy to begin with, and to hold fast to all that it demands of us, especially when these demands call upon us to concede our self-interest.¹⁶ It is in Locke’s educational theory that we find not only a reason-based *modus operandi* for achieving democracy, but in it we also discover at least a hint of its emotion-based *raison d’être*.

3.2. Democracy and the Art of Education

What then, according to Locke, constitutes the education of the democratic citizen? It includes, minimally, honing the individual’s capability to rationally direct his or her own life, and to do so with full autonomy—as a self-directing individual who is able to define and realize his or her own goals. At the same time, the liberty with which one directs one’s actions must in certain respects be kept in check, so as to render one’s liberty and autonomy amenable to concerns for the social welfare of one’s society. This requires from an early age a continuous and dynamic balance between control, which ideally manifests itself as rational self-control, and the autonomy and free expression of the individual. So much of Locke’s educational philosophy rests on striking this balance that he refers to its achievement as the “true secret” and “art” of education. He writes:

He that has not mastery over his inclinations...for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry...On the other side, if the mind be curbed, and humbled too much in children...by too strict a hand over them, they lose all their vigor and industry...To avoid the danger that is on either hand is the great art; and he that has found a way how to keep up a child’s spirit easy, active, and free, and yet at the same time to restrain him from many things he has a mind to, and to draw him to those

things that are uneasy to him; he, I say, that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions, has, in my opinion, got the true secret of education.¹⁷

Locke makes it a point to refer to this relationship between our freedom and self-control as only a “seeming” contradiction. For Locke, to exercise our reason for the purpose of guiding action means simply engaging in a process of thinking according to which we ascertain the possible ramifications of bringing our impulses and desires to fruition. In turn, this allows us to accomplish two important ends: one benefiting us individually, the other socially.

First, the ability to exercise control over one’s impulses and desires means that one does not become a slave to these. After all, not all desires are equally worthy. Though pursuit of some may be beneficial, the pursuit of others may oftentimes lead to our demise. A basic problem we seem to have in exercising self-control has much to do with our very conception of its supposed opposite, freedom. An age-old and still prevalent misconception identifies freedom with license—the ability to do as we please regardless of any other consideration, and doing all that we desire to do for the simple reason that we desire to do it. Contrary to what an individual holding such a view of freedom may believe, this does not make us free. Rather, it makes us less free. By unquestioningly following our desires we become slaves to those very desires, since we thereby allow these to dictate our lives. We think ourselves free, yet we are not in control of our lives because we lack *self*-control.

Secondly, the more we employ the use of reason in the exercise of self-control, which necessarily entails at least a provisional suspension of our immediate impulses, interests, or desires, the greater chance that we are able to make the kinds of decisions that take into account the needs and interests of others. Ideally, others may be led to carry out the same process, which ultimately is beneficial to us all. Dewey, writing on the role of schools in bringing about social progress, echoes Locke’s sentiments when he states “the art of thus giving shape to human powers and adapting them to social service, is the supreme art.”¹⁸ Douglas J. Simpson spells out the nuances of Dewey’s contention, which, along with certain “powers” also requires a penchant for selflessness. He writes:

Dewey's particular interpretation of education is that it is vitally related to adapting human abilities for social service...Students need to develop a view of life that helps them get beyond personal interests and consider the interests of others...Their developed abilities, perceptions, and sensitivities should be adapted to meet the needs of society, including promoting a culture that takes into consideration the importance of people living democratically.¹⁹

Thus, in accordance with the exigencies of a democratic social vision, limitations must be placed upon individuals' pursuit of desire for desire's sake. This is not to say that desires are in and of themselves detrimental to the achievement of democracy. Rather, democracy simply requires that individuals be discerning when it comes to that which is desired.

With an air of Aristotelianism, Locke reminds us that specifically with children "the having of desires accommodated to the apprehensions and relish of those several ages, is not the fault; but the not having them subject to the rules and restraints of reason: the difference lies not in having or not having appetites, but in the power to govern, and deny ourselves in them."²⁰ In other words, it is not desires that in and of themselves cause problems for human action; rather it is the unintelligent expression they are allowed that wreaks havoc on our affairs and makes us no different than the brutes. Exercising reason to contend with this effect provides us with greater opportunities for making the kinds of decisions that increase both our personal freedom and our chances for achieving an amicable and prosperous social existence. What is distinctive about Locke's approach is the abiding kinship evident between freedom and control; a kinship that Dewey elevates to the heights of aesthetic experience.

3.2.1. Balancing Freedom and Control

Locke's empirically based educational theory is not without its ambiguities. As a key figure of the European Enlightenment, Locke champions rationality. Meanwhile, as an empiricist he rejects one of the principal doctrines of rationalism, according to which ideas are held to be innate; arguing instead that knowledge is founded on impressions

“inscribed” upon the mind through sense experience.²¹ Despite the obvious epistemic difference, Locke asserts that each of us possesses certain innate characteristics or traits, including the ability to reason. Locke holds, “God has stamped certain characters upon men’s minds, which like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended, but can hardly be totally altered and transformed into the contrary. For in many cases, all that we can do, or should aim at, is to make the best of what nature has given.”²² This is not to say that educationally Locke favors the inclinations of “nature” over the influences of “nurture.” On the contrary, he writes, it seems “that of all men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. It is that which makes the great difference in mankind.”²³ At the same time he is not saying that we are entirely formed by our experience, since certain dispositions of character *are* innate.²⁴

Nonetheless, since it is by means of a rational ordering of experience that we guide our lives, Locke stresses the need for nurturing reason. The old adage, “Give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” holds just as true for education. After all, neither our parents nor our teachers will remain by our sides to hold our hands through life. Hence, if our learning is to amount to anything, it must amount to this—that we learn to make decisions, and act on these on our own. Locke writes:

Every [person] must some time or other be trusted to himself, and his own conduct; and he that is a good, a virtuous, and able person, must be made so within. And therefore, what he is to receive from education, what is to sway and influence his life, must be something put into him betimes: habits woven into the very principles of his nature, and not a counterfeit carriage, and dissembled outside, put on by fear.²⁵

In attempts to subvert the negative influences arising from inappropriate desires, Locke appeals here not only to our natural ability to reason, but also to a kind of learning that is authentic because it is not forced. Self-discipline, like political self-rule, is only genuine when its author directs its force. In other words, discipline cannot be imposed from

without as an interest entirely foreign to the individual. One's self-discipline, in order to be effective and fruitful, must be truly one's own.

Within formal educational settings, as so often is the case throughout the ordinary family life of a child, forms of control are synonymous with stern prohibitions or rigid proscriptions on his natural impulses. Lost, it seems, is the notion of discipline as simply the (re)direction of impulse; and this, made possible through one's own volition. Contrariwise, the forceful imposition upon the child's free action and the thwarting of his initiative, if not properly monitored for excesses, aside from leading to other dysfunctions fosters minimally an aversion towards learning. Taking into consideration children's interests, needs, and natural capabilities, Locke views the encouragement of their curiosities from an early age as a necessary component in their rational and personal development. Simply put, children learn to reason when they are allowed to do so for themselves.

This is in stark contrast to Plato's view that children ought not to be trained in dialectic, because their immaturity leads them to use this skill in a foolish manner – to harm others and stray from the search for truth. Plato warns,

And is it not one chief safeguard not to suffer them to taste of [dialectic] while young? For I fancy you have not failed to observe that lads, when they first get a taste of disputation, misuse it as a form of sport, always employing it contentiously...They delight like puppies in pulling about and tearing with words all who approach them...and when they have themselves confuted many and been confuted by many, they quickly fall into a violent distrust of all that they formerly held true.²⁶

There is, for Plato, the real danger that children simply lack the emotional poise with which to direct their reasonings toward worthwhile ends. Conversely, Locke holds that when we respectfully countenance children's curiosities, we simultaneously develop their reasoning capabilities and allow them freedom of expression. Locke proposes that we not only respect the child and his natural, God-given abilities, but that we do so by

supporting his enquiries; and never discount these or consider them under false pretenses. Locke writes:

Curiosity in children is but an appetite for knowledge; and therefore ought to be encouraged in them, not only as a good sign, but as the great instrument nature has provided to remove that ignorance they were born with...and when you have informed and satisfied them in that, you shall see how their thoughts will enlarge themselves...especially if they see that their inquiries are regarded, and that their desire of knowing is encouraged and commended.²⁷

There is, for Locke, no simpler way of helping children develop a sense of personal identity and form their character than by adequately attending to, respecting, and never trivializing their inquiries. In essence the child learns to appreciate the value of reason through the practice of inquiry. Further, when we respect the thinking of the child, respect for the child as a person naturally follows.

Satisfying children's curiosities provides them with greater depth and breadth of understanding—a greater repertory of knowledge. As the vital instrument by which we arrive at self-discipline, according to Locke, one's ability to reason must be trained and developed as early as possible.²⁸ Of course, children's curiosities must be kept in check, hence the need for a continuous balance between freedom and control. At first, owing to their sheer lack of experience, habits to be developed in children must be firmly guided by the reasoning and example of adults. Locke reminds us, "The younger they are...and the less reason they have of their own, the more are they to be under the absolute power and restraint of those in whose hands they are."²⁹ Unfortunately, being under the tutelage of adults is no guarantee against more harm being caused than good, as is the case with parents who either allow their children's curiosities to go unchecked or vigorously restrict these at every turn. It follows from Locke's empiricist pedagogy that parents must assume the greatest responsibility of instilling in children, beyond thoughts alone, the very desires they eventually seek or avoid.³⁰ Before addressing the harms caused by parental overindulgence of children's liberties, we take a brief look at how Locke's

proposed training of habits through repetition may restrict creativity and dull initiative in the child.

3.2.2. Habit and Repetition

According to Locke, education ought to establish in the individual a habit of self-discipline, “woven into the very principles of his nature” and expressed in the form of obedience to reason. The prominence and authority of reason ought to be engrained in the child’s character from early on through repetition. Yet, in order to remain consistent with liberty and autonomy, the child’s sense of independence, initiative, and creativity must be carefully buffered from excessive limits imposed on these by rigid obedience to any method or end. We must keep in mind that the goal Locke seeks by forming habits is the development of *self*-discipline for the purpose of propagating autonomy. Locke sees great potential in the use of repetition as a pedagogic tool for enhancing autonomy, as habits wrought in the service of reason and self-control become second nature. At the same time, repetition may deplete our autonomy the more we accustom ourselves to expect a mechanically achieved or static result. Either way, whether repetition results in autonomy cannot be taken for granted.

In describing the effects education ought to have on our character, Locke employs the metaphor of a container to describe the mind, and writes of “filling” those of children with ideas, rules, and habits. Locke declares, “It should therefore be the skill and art of the teacher, to *clear* their heads of all other thoughts, whilst they are learning of anything, the better to *make room* for what he would instill *into* them, that it may be *received* with attention and application, without which it leaves no impression.”³¹ Even in his criticism of the stern and “usual method of tutors” whose “passionate words or blows *fill* the child’s mind with terror and affrightment...and leaves no *room* for other impressions,”³² he makes indiscriminate use of the metaphor. Add to this Locke’s well-known allusions, in his *Essay*³³, to mind as “white paper, void of all characters” or an “empty cabinet,” and it is no surprise he leaves himself open to criticisms such as the one leveled by Paulo Freire, who associates such conceptions with an oppressive “banking” model of

education.³⁴ Of course, were this criticism well founded it would signal a death knell to Lockean autonomy and democracy.

But Freire's criticism proves too simplistic, since Locke does propose that the mind, beyond the passivity of sensation itself, plays an active role in the formation of knowledge. A more sophisticated criticism comes from Dewey, who, despite his worries about "spectator" theories of knowledge that render the knower passive, recognizes an active principle in the Lockean account of mind. Dewey instead proposes that Locke's emphasis on developing habits may result in a mechanistic form of learning, which places the learner in a rut. For Dewey, repetition is liable to narrow creativity and thwart initiative, and eventually lead the student to oppose instruction itself.³⁵

The problem, according to Dewey, is that for Locke mind is only active with respect to the function and perfection of fixed capacities. Limiting the indefinite number of ways we may respond to circumstances in our environments by categorizing these in terms of Locke's fixed faculties (*viz.*, retention, abstraction, compounding, etc.), also limits the potential diversity of our future responses. The more we fix future activity to the specifications of faculties, "the more specialized the reaction" has to be, and "the less is the skill acquired in practicing and perfecting [this reaction] transferable to other modes of behavior."³⁶ For Dewey, learning experiences are much more organic than such a view of mind allows. The danger, as he sees it, lies in growing accustomed "to ignore most of these modifications of the [organs of the body]" and not getting beyond "that [activity] which is most specifically adapted to the most urgent stimulus of the moment."³⁷ Simply put, we learn to do only what is necessary to realize a pre-determined goal or follow a pre-established method.³⁸

For Dewey, the key to maintaining a respect for autonomy is to temper the use of repetition in the development of habit with flexibility. He views routinized processes and goals as inimical to an intrinsically motivated and creative process of learning. He goes on to explain that "[an aim] must be capable of alteration to meet circumstances." Alternatively, "An end established externally to the process of action is always rigid...such an end can only be insisted upon,"³⁹ which means action becomes forced. Writing on the educational merits of the arts, Elliot Eisner refers to Dewey's notion of "flexibility" as acting "flexibly purposive," and describes the process as "the capacity to

improvise, to exploit unanticipated possibilities...a substantial cognitive achievement fundamentally different from the lockstep movement of prescribed steps toward a predefined goal.”⁴⁰ Unless distracted from the path of mere drill or rote, repetition and the formation of habit promote routinized action that saps one’s creativity and initiative—one’s agency. But, as Dewey admits, this is not a *necessary* result of repetition, since certainly lessons are learned and values engrained by such means.

If rationality is indeed developed through practice and habituation, as Locke proposes, to remain true to autonomy this process must be enabling; only thus does an individual retain the greater possibility of genuine choice. If autonomy means nothing less than the ability to act in accordance with one’s choices and commitments—the mark of an effectively democratic form of agency—then surely its development ought not to occur in such a manner that allows habit or repetition to sabotage this ability. According to Dewey, because freedom is realized in the movement from possibility to greater future possibility, so long as the processes that characterize habit formation—repetition—are conducive to continued growth, these may actually abet the realization of freedom. Dewey writes, “[It] is enough to ask whether freedom is to be thought of and adjudged on the basis of relatively momentary incidents or whether its meaning is found in the continuity of developing experience.”⁴¹ For Dewey, only in the latter do we discover genuine freedom. What is more, just as control when balanced with freedom allows for the compatibility of self-discipline and autonomy, so too can repetition when its purpose is tempered with flexibility lead to fruitful, creative, and intrinsically satisfying learning experiences.

We turn now to assess other limits to autonomy, this time engendered by parental overindulgence of children’s liberties.

3.2.3. Spoiling: The Nemesis of Self-Discipline

Why is it important that a child develop self-control and self-discipline? Consider a recent assessment of student behavior by Dr. Arthur Costa, President of the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, who writes:

Not all kids, of course, but one thing so many are worse at is that they think episodically, they don't draw on past knowledge. Another is the lack of perseverance—they give up; and their impulsivity: they take the first thing that comes to mind; make immediate judgments, snap-snap. They seem unable to listen to ideas and carry them forth and interact with each other; they're so busy with their own point of view that they can't get into anyone else's thinking. Many kids come to school lacking motivation and restraint of impulsivity, they're disorganized and out of tune with phenomena. Yet these thought processes will be so essential in the future.⁴²

Interestingly enough, the very traits Acosta observes in children are much like those we might find among State prison inmates. During graduate school I had the opportunity to visit several Florida State penitentiaries. A common trait I observed among the incarcerated with whom I spoke, no matter the nature or circumstances of their transgressions, was an apparent inability to draw proper lines of inference that would lead them to make better decisions—a skill or ability that we take for granted, and which unfortunately is not always developed in some. Like any other, this skill requires practice. Its exercise is crucial, for as Locke reminds us at some point in our lives we are called to make decisions for ourselves that significantly impact our lives; a truth these inmates recognize all too well. Ill-equipped to make our own decisions, handle frustrations and adversities or check our impulses, our chances of achieving happiness and possibly making the most of our lives are greatly diminished.

According to Locke, parents who believe they are providing love to their children by constantly doing for them, accommodating their every desire or whim, and clearing all frustrations from their paths, are in actuality creating greater difficulties for them in the future. Obviously when a parent or teacher acts always on our behalf we do not, nay, we cannot learn to do for ourselves. Locke warns, “Thus parents, by humoring and cockering them when little, corrupt the principles of nature in their children, and wonder afterwards to taste the bitter waters, when they themselves have poisoned the fountain.”⁴³ Locke

adds to these corruptions—“those ill humors which [parents] themselves infused and fomented in their [children]”—the emphasis placed on the clothing and outward appearance of their children, as well as an overindulgence in food and drink that becomes the wealthy and intemperate. Today we witness these corruptions manifested, respectively, in the exorbitant purchasing power bestowed upon adolescents, the high incidence of obesity in all ages, and binge drinking on college campuses.

Behind these self-destructive behaviors and dispositions are parents who take it upon themselves to exaggerate the thresholds of desires and appetites in their young. A problem even in Locke’s day, he counsels that “contrary to the ordinary way...the first thing [children] should learn to know, should be, that they were not to have anything because it pleased, but because it was thought fit for them.”⁴⁴ Ill-equipped to make appropriate decisions for themselves children inevitably follow the lead of their parents, who by overindulging their desires prevent children from developing self-discipline and a proper habit of rational deliberation.

Overindulgence and parental hyper-protectionism are at the forefront in current child rearing literature. Psychologists and educators alike, from television programs to periodicals and books, are grappling with the problems brought on by spoiling. Among these, child psychologist, Dan Kindlon points to several related conditions afflicting today’s overindulged children, including: self-centeredness, lack of motivation, obesity, and various other problems linked to insufficient self-control. These related problems are engendered by parenting that leaves children ill prepared for dealing with hardship or adversity, and renders them incapable of experiencing happiness.⁴⁵

It appears that many parents have lost touch with their children’s real needs; not an improbable result of living within a society tailored to accommodate a child’s every desire. Spoiling is bound to be especially pernicious within a culture permeated by mass-produced and marketed goods. Under these circumstances, artificial desires condition adult and young alike to rely on extrinsic or material forms of motivation. The sheer pervasiveness of potential rewards makes exercising self-control a daunting task even for parents, who through their example, for better or worse, shape the desires of their young. Ubiquitous rewards overwhelm parents, who then put into practice the ill-conceived presumption that children’s needs are best regarded by providing indiscriminately for

their desires. According to Locke, when parents give in to their children's every desire they end up reversing the order of authority in the home. Instead of parents taking the lead in the development of their children's habits and establishing reasonable thresholds of desire, they try to befriend their children early on, and only later try to discipline them when it is too late. Ironically, the child assumes control, although he cannot yet control even himself.

This is not to say that Locke is opposed to a kind of friendship that may develop later in the parent-child relationship, as this may itself be indicative of a respect for the child's autonomy; but this is the result of a carefully nurtured mutual respect. Although children ought to be respected, it is almost certainly true that due to sheer inexperience they simply lack the capabilities necessary to make adequate sense of their circumstances. For Locke, the parent who remains focused on the goal of discipline, even when required to deploy stern measures, in effect demonstrates a greater concern for the child's interest and welfare than the parent who spoils.⁴⁶ Instead of recognizing the importance of the end, parents focus on the means literally at hand, and give in to their children's whims and impulses. By this very concession parents themselves become poor examples of self-discipline and self-control. Of course, gratified self-indulgence is no way to achieve democracy according to the minimal criteria of autonomy and a spirit of social cooperation. But, according to Locke, neither is the use of physical rewards and punishments, which like spoiling, appeal generally to our desires. To properly educate the democratic animal, Locke proposes the use of intrinsic forms of motivation, which appeal to reason.

3.3. Motivating the Democratic Citizen

We are, each of us, separate human beings who stand alone within a world that simultaneously acts upon and demands action from us. This world, to the extent it is external to us, must be dealt with one way or another. The one thing we cannot accept is to do nothing. So, what should we do? Beyond mere survival, ideally we seek happiness; we initiate activity, create, and thus attempt to meaningfully forge our way through life. But seeking happiness, let alone finding it is no easy task, and perhaps the most difficult

of all. Yet, it is quite possibly the most rewarding of human endeavors. How we find this elusive happiness has a lot to do with our relationship to an environment permeated with things and forces, with which we as individuals must necessarily enter into relations.

Symbolism, an indispensable facet of most if not all religions, reveals an integral component of human life. Within certain religious contexts, objects imbued with meaning bridge the gap between the infinite and our finite selves. It ought to come as no surprise that the most powerful religious symbol is arguably that of another human being who is believed to literally embody the infinite in finite form (e.g., Jesus in the Christian faith or one of the many incarnations or *avatars* of Hindu deities). After all, what better way to understand and appreciate the significance of an ideal than by having it represented in something we presume to know so much about and can easily identify with; a fellow human being. Of course, to proponents of such religions the symbol's meaning and significance emanate from something supernatural. Nonetheless, the meaning of the ideal borne out by the symbol is something ultimately understood and appreciated by us.

People, I believe, understand this well enough. Where we go wrong is in assigning symbolic objects themselves some meaning or significance beyond the limits of their ostensibly physical/symbolic roles. Getting lost in these externalities – objects – not only confuses their symbolic purpose, but also confounds our proper relation to the very ideals they are intended to represent. And so it often happens among the religious (secular money-worshippers not withstanding) that the symbolic objects are lauded, while the ideals they represent are forgotten. Ironically enough, in some instances idolizing the symbolic object signifies a contradiction of the very ideals and founding principles of a particular belief system, which the object is intended to represent.

Now take happiness; something sages from time immemorial suggest is found within. For various reasons we continue to convince ourselves that externals bring us happiness; as might be expected in a democracy of consumption, that *things* make us happy. The pitiable proposition, that it is things that make our lives meaningful and therefore worth living, would have to follow from such an assumption. Reliance upon extrinsic sources for fulfillment also has us look to other false sources of happiness outside ourselves, which too often include the pursuit of power, the desire for fame, and solace in narcotics, pharmaceuticals, alcohol, and other self-destructive addictions.

Perhaps the greatest travesty connected to this conception of our relation to things external is that we seek these, or avoid them when they cause direct harm, pain, or frustration, in place of the happiness we originally set out to experience.

Such is the self who lives life in hopes that the world will conform to *it*, and brandish upon *it* ready-made gifts of happiness and fulfillment neatly packaged as objects. Meanwhile, this distraction with things keeps us from helping the young develop those difficult skills needed to realize their own happiness; and so we instill in them the desire for things, rather than a desire for their happiness. Through example we instill in our young the *want* of things, which we shamelessly pass off as the *need* for things. Thus we concede our happiness, fulfillment, and even our freedom, to the pursuit and valuing of external rewards.

This is no prudish self-effacement, according to which we deny ourselves entirely the pleasures of rewards. Rather, I am proposing that the conception—the very possibility—that happiness lies within does not stand a chance in a world so full of things, unless the individual who seeks this as a goal is capable of understanding that the *locus* of motivation for the realization of one’s happiness is found within. It is intrinsic motivation that rewards most meaningfully and effectively.⁴⁷

3.3.1. Punished by Rewards

We must bear in mind that Locke does not reject rewards and punishments entirely, but simply offers a distinction between these in their physical form, which appeal to our bodily desires, and the kind that alternatively appeal to our reason. He writes:

Rewards, I grant, and punishments must be proposed to children. The mistake I imagine is, that those that are generally made use of, are ill chosen. The pains and pleasures of the body are, I think, of ill consequence, when made the rewards and punishments whereby men would prevail on their children...they serve but to increase and strengthen those inclinations [desires and appetites] which ‘tis our business to subdue and master.⁴⁸

To the extent rationality remains the linchpin of his pedagogy and autonomy the foundation of his democratic social vision, for Locke, what motivates human behavior must ultimately appeal to our rational capabilities, and not our desires. In order to exercise rational control over my desires, I must understand *why* it is that what I do is right or wrong, appropriate to my needs or not. According to Locke, being rewarded or punished sways me only superficially and temporarily.

It is not things themselves; rather it is the relation we have to these things that may harm us. As in the idolatry of symbols on the part of adults, a child confuses the reason for the reward with the reward itself, and learns to value only the latter. The gold sticker, candy, money, or the newest computer game is desired, instead of the achievement of a particular task or the development of a certain moral disposition. In other words, the child only desires the object of reward and, therefore, does not understand the reason why a particular behavior or disposition is being encouraged, nor does he learn to value the achievement itself.

Punishments likewise appeal to the child's desire. This is not to say that a child desires a punishment, as he might desire a treat. Rather, in this case a child desires to avoid the pain and discomfort that come with the punishment, and cares not about understanding why what he did was wrong. For instance, the child may still lie so long as he is not caught in the lie. The child simply does whatever is necessary to avoid being punished. As seems true of rewards, the child develops the habit of disassociating his actions from their true consequences, which has deleterious effects on their ability to resolve future problems.

With the aid of rewards and punishments one is certainly able to re-direct or even halt a child's impulses. Give him something he desires, and he stops demanding. Strike him, and you stop him literally in his tracks. Because these immediately re-direct his desires and impulses, they are deployed as easy solutions to the problem at hand. But what appears easiest only leads to greater difficulties in the long run. In the case of corporal punishment, Locke warns, "The usual lazy and short way by chastisement and the rod...is the most unfit of any to be used in education."⁴⁹ What parents and educators alike fail to understand is that the "problem at hand" always involves the development of

the complete person. They often simply fail to ask the important pedagogic question: “For what educational purpose – to fulfill what educational goal – do I reward or punish?” Instead, parents simply resort to using whatever extrinsic motivator happens to be at hand. Alfie Kohn echoes Locke’s sentiments when he suggests that, “Rewards are not actually solutions at all; they are gimmicks, shortcuts, quick fixes that mask problems and ignore reasons. They never look below the surface.”⁵⁰ Rather, as Locke himself suggests, it is reasons that appeal to human reason. To the extent that rewards and punishments prevent the child from consulting his own reason, they do little to foster autonomy or self-discipline—virtue, in the Lockean sense.

3.3.2. Turning Inward

Ironically praise and shame, Locke’s alternatives to reward and punishment, are effective only when the individual is *emotionally* accepting of their force and influence—since a child cherishes being thought well of, and dreads being disliked. Locke admonishes, “If you can once get into children a *love* of credit, and an apprehension of shame and disgrace, you have put into them the true principle, which will constantly work and incline them to the right.”⁵¹ The emotional dispositions that make us susceptible to the influences from praise and shame are, according to Locke, innate. Otherwise it would be difficult for Locke to demonstrate how we teach a child to value the opinions and sentiments of others, since we apparently cannot teach the child to value or learn anything without already presupposing this emotional sensitivity to the opinions and sentiments of others.

Although Locke attributes the greater part of the responsibility for the development of self-discipline to rationality, it is emotion that ultimately propels us to accept reason as the instrument by which we guide our lives; for “if the *love* of you make them not obedient and dutiful, if the *love* of virtue and reputation keep them not in laudable courses, I ask, what hold will you have upon them to turn them to [obedience]?”⁵² Locke’s emphasis on rationality presumes that I must at some point in my life accept reason as my guide in action. But an individual is disposed to reason, as with anything else, only when he “feels” this is appropriate. In other words, I accept

reason as the means by which I direct my actions once I make an emotional commitment to or express my emotional satisfaction with the possibilities afforded me by reason.

Robert Solomon describes the emotional impetus behind the reasoning instinct, in proposing that, “An emotion is not so much an element or item in experience as it is the *ordering* of experience...together our emotions dictate the context, the character, the culture in which some values take priority, serve as ultimate ends, and provide the criteria for rationality and reasonable behavior.”⁵³ He goes on to add, what apparently Locke would not; that, “What is rational is what fits best into our emotional world...but one’s conception of the world is itself defined by the scope and objects of one’s emotional cares and concerns.”⁵⁴ This implies that although reason is the instrument by which I navigate the terrain of my life choices, when it comes to following those options suggested to me by my reasoning, I am motivated by something beyond rationality itself; reason is not sufficient. Locke identifies this motivation with a natural disposition, which though not itself an emotion, nonetheless manifests itself as an emotional desire to be loved, accepted, and cherished by others; in particular those who care for us in our formative years.

The challenge any rational individual faces is coming to terms or not with his willingness to accept the suggestions afforded him by reason. Dewey reminds us that, “Since learning is something the pupil has to do himself and for himself, the initiative lies with the learner. The teacher is a guide and director; he steers the boat but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning.”⁵⁵ Intrinsic motivation then, driven by an emotional appeal to reason, allows the individual to internalize a sense of personal commitment to her own thoughts, motives, plans, and actions. What is more, Eisner adds;

Intrinsic satisfaction in the process of some activity an individual is able to make a choice about, is the only reasonable predictor that the activity will be pursued by the individual voluntarily. The cultivation of conditions that promote intrinsic satisfactions is a way to increase the probability that such a disposition will be developed.⁵⁶

And so it stands to reason (pun intended) that emotion, serving as the conduit for our intrinsic satisfactions, expresses itself in choice, which connects emotion back to reason. Autonomy now invigorated by an emotional disposition to self-determination, in turn leads to a greater appreciation for personal choice and decision-making; the mainstay of democratic consent. Lastly, with this greater appreciation for what amounts to one's autonomy – self-determination – one assumes affably the responsibilities of self-discipline and self-rule that are necessary in a democracy.

3.4. Our First Lessons

Locke represents an important step in the evolution of the democratic vision, if for no other reason than because of his attempts to reconcile our need to devise forms of social control that make possible our social existence, with our personal freedom; the locus of which is vested in the rational authority of the individual. In his political and educational writings we find an incessant desire to promote the virtues of self-governance and self-discipline, both expressions of true autonomy. Nonetheless, Locke's devotion to autonomy seems to suffer from an inconsistency. In his political writings we find reliance upon the extrinsic authority of government, which alone safeguards us and specifically our estates, against the importunities of human desire and passion. In his educational writings there is the insistence on the use of praise and shame as intrinsic forms of motivation for learning, which, when all is said and done may actually be construed as variations on extrinsic rewards and punishments.

But is a purely intrinsic form of motivation possible, absolutely necessary, or even desirable? Perhaps not, since it seems we always need something outside ourselves that incites us to action, without this necessarily impinging upon our autonomy.⁵⁷ The key is, of course, not to get lost in the externals, as suggested by Aristotle, who locates goodness and virtue in the action and not in what one receives for the action.⁵⁸ Although external goods are necessary for helping us achieve happiness, because these may be just as easily taken as they are bestowed, they are always poor substitutes for the internal essence of true happiness. For Kohn, although praise and shame de-emphasize the physicality of rewards and punishments, these alternatives are nonetheless extrinsic in nature. When a

child is praised, he is motivated by the adulation that comes from another, which Kohn views as extrinsic.

To illustrate this point, Kohn uses as an example a child who forgets his lunch at home.⁵⁹ One schoolmate shares half his lunch with this child, only because he knows the teacher will commend him for doing so. Another schoolmate, given the same situation, shares his lunch with this child, but does so regardless of whether or not he will be commended for doing so. According to Kohn, it is in this latter purely intrinsic form of motivation that we find the genuine expression of autonomy. But Kohn's criticism of what turns out to be Locke's account of praise is perhaps too restrictive. One reason I hold fast against Kohn's view, and thus indirectly defend Locke's, comes from reflecting on my earliest learning experiences. Living in a world of things and forces, people, other living organisms, and given the mutual relations I share in with all of these, it seems inevitable that the world impinges upon me from all directions. Whether I can possibly find within myself some purely intrinsic motivation would in essence require me to deny the multitudinous relations borne of my existence in relation to a world outside me.

My initial reaction to this seeming impasse in Locke is to hold that his political and educational principles simply do not offer a robust enough version of autonomy, at least a kind that relies solely on self-initiative. But upon closer examination, I find that Locke's account may be salvaged due to the ubiquity of extrinsic forms of motivation. If we take Locke seriously when it comes to the significance he ascribes to early impressions in later learning, we find that these impressions, though extrinsic, need not compromise the autonomy of the agent. How else are we to be motivated—inspired, if you will—to heed our earliest impressions in order to arrive at our earliest formulations of their significance? How else is it that we set about the business of developing our self-control and self-discipline, or even our very selves, if reacting to the world impinging upon us somehow annihilates the very self that reacts?

The fact that, according to Locke, given our innate desire to be accepted by others we appeal to reason in directing our conduct ought not to diminish the fact that our initial acceptance of reason as our standard for self-motivated action does not arise entirely from within. Rather, the emotional acceptance of reason as our standard is derived from the influence upon us by forces extrinsic to us, say, another person from whom we seek

acceptance or simply some situation we wish to resolve comfortably. Even though reason and the desire to be accepted, loved, and respected by others are innate, forces must trigger and initiate these into action. Some experience, acting as a primary example or catalyst of sorts draws forth from us our initial understanding of the roles played by these innate tendencies in motivating our future actions. Simply put, although my desire to be accepted may be innate, it does not by itself lead me to recognize that this desire is precisely what is acceptable to others. Something else must tell me this; and this something else comes from my embeddedness in an external world and the relations I form within this world. In other words, though something within me drives me to be accepted by others, it is not until others validate this criterion for me that I acknowledge its significance and begin to put it into practice in guiding my conduct.

Interestingly enough, I find that this broader understanding of extrinsic motivation—one consistent with autonomy—has greater explanatory power. A theory of learning that maintains only an intrinsic source of autonomy cannot explain adequately why, while having the innate potential for directing one's own conduct, some are still incapable of doing so. If, on the other hand, we see that both intrinsic capabilities and extrinsic forces are necessary for realizing autonomy, we may attribute a lack of autonomy in some to the lack of extrinsic reinforcement of those innate potentialities, which are only intermittently nurtured within certain social and learning environments. At the same time, this model also accounts for the fact that individuals cling to the desire to maintain their self-respect no matter the extent to which this intrinsic source of motivation wants adequate reinforcement in their everyday experiences.

The more glaring limitation in Locke's account of autonomy and its source of motivation is that he continues to emphasize the role of reason at the expense of a more realistic rendering of emotion and desire, and their positive bearing on human action. Locke admonishes us to get about the business of developing the natural reason of children as early as possible, while continuing to view emotion, impulse, and desire as obstacles to reason and intelligent human action in general.

In the following chapter I explore Rousseau's direct reaction to Locke's rationalistic pedagogy. Rousseau, whose conception of autonomy lies at the heart of his social-political and educational theories, offers instead the view that before any type of

rational development may take root, a fertile ground of emotional maturation is necessary.⁶⁰ Reason, thus understood, is a natural outgrowth of human emotion—each an essential and necessary ally to the other—and emotion no longer reason’s foe.

¹ John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., [1690] 1952) section 63, p. 36. It is in his *First Treatise*, that Locke rejects the justification for political authority based on a divine right of kings, as defended by Robert Filmer.

² John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* [1693], in *John Locke on Politics and Education*, (Roslyn, NY: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1947), p. 229. In this particular work, Locke reiterates this aim of education several times. Perhaps the most elaborate of these is stated contrariwise to the version above cited. In section 45, *Ibid*, p. 237, Locke writes;

He that has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to resist the importunity of present pleasure or pain, for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry, and is in danger never to be good for anything...and this habit, as the true foundation of future ability and happiness, is to be wrought into the mind as early as may be, even from the first dawning of knowledge or apprehension in children, and so to be confirmed in them...by those who have the oversight of their education.

³ *Ibid.*, from the “Dedication to Edward Clarke,” pp. 208-9.

⁴ Both Hobbes and Locke, in their allusions to natural law, in turn follow Hugo Grotius, who in *The Law of War and Peace* (1625) advocates the establishment of a government that ensures peaceful living in accordance with the mandates of natural law.

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan: or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* [1651], (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 186. Although Hobbes admits that this account is intended to provide a philosophical, and not an historical basis for political authority, he does suggest that this chimera may be comparable to the lives of “those savage people in many places of America” (Part. I,

Chapter.13, p. 187). Such a comparison, even if only philosophical, carries implications that may not be divorced from history. If we allow Hobbes this conjecture, we would in essence concede that American Indians did indeed live in selfish savagery and that their alternative forms of social, political, economic, and cultural organization would have nothing to contribute to the rest of mankind.

⁶ Of course, we must temper this Lockean conception of freedom [1690] with his own, earlier position in *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* [1669] in which he helps codify the legal ownership of one human being by another. In the latter, Locke writes; “Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his Negro slaves, of what opinion or religion so ever.” In *John Locke on Politics and Education*, *Op. cit.*, p. 410 (paragraph 110). Locke rescinds in the *Second Treatise*, declaring, “The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of Nature for his rule.” *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁷ Locke, *Second Treatise*, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* [1785], (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), Section 431, p. 38.

⁹ In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard makes a similar point when describing the ethical stage of self-development. He proposes that when establishing our ethical commitments, or any commitments for that matter, we do so without isolating these from what we consider to be in our best interests. The idea is that as long as we are making truly free choices regarding those things to which we commit, we should not have to view these commitments as burdens, but rather as hastening our own freedom and self-development. If we accept that it is our choices that determine who we become, there is nothing contradictory to freedom or authenticity when we choose the obligations by which we realize our goals—an obligation I make to my self with a commitment to my self-

fulfillment in mind. Kierkegaard would suggest, for instance, that when choosing a partner for marriage, an individual see his or her choice as not simply involving the selection of another person to suit oneself, but also as a choice in the selection of the particular path of life one chooses for oneself. As we will see in the next chapter, Rousseau also stresses the importance of this combination. He suggests that when children learn self-fulfillment is impossible without some acceptance of the necessary obligations imposed upon them by the exigencies of nature, they will do what is necessary for their own development without thinking it a burden or an intrusion upon their freedom.

¹⁰ Locke, *Second Treatise*, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ Recall Aristotle's account of pity and its role in the tragic drama. In his *Poetics*, he maintains that we feel pity for another only because we identify with the very same misfortune befalling us, and so we are motivated by selfish fear. This view is essentially reiterated by Hobbes in his *Leviathan* (*Op. cit.*, Part I, Chapter 6, p. 126), where he describes pity as one's feeling of grief about "the calamity of another" which "ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself."

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ James Gordley, *The Philosophical Origins of Modern Contract Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 116, (*italics mine*).

¹⁵ Beyond pointing to an inadequacy in Locke's version of democratic autonomy in this section, later in the chapter I also point to a shortcoming in his pedagogic practice of rewarding through praise. The basis for these criticisms stems from the fact that, although Locke advocates self-governance in the political realm and self-discipline in the

educational, both approaches seem to ultimately rely upon some form of extrinsic compulsion. In other words, the individual is never purely autonomous, but rather is always in need of some “push” or incentive from without. Interestingly enough, I find that diverting attention away from the issue of whether or not the authority established by one’s chosen form of governance has a purely intrinsic source and, instead focusing on whether or not the goal of self-governance remains sympathetic to the machinations of free consent, in essence saves Locke from these criticisms. This amounts to no more than simply conceding that even an innate disposition—be it reason or the desire to be accepted and loved by others—may be to some degree incited or driven by extrinsic forces, without the risk of depreciating our autonomy.

¹⁶ Thomas Peardon, in his “Introduction” to Locke’s *Second Treatise*, p. xii, writes:

The truth was that Locke conceived of government in ways that were too static, too mechanical, and too rational. The state [he] pictured is an artificial structure made up of independent individuals joined together by rational agreement for limited purposes. But the state as it really exists is the product of many centuries of almost unconscious development. Its institutions emerge by nearly imperceptible steps in response to needs that are *felt* before they can be formulated clearly...*the emotions and loyalties that are its bonds of union* are woven slowly through long ages of living together (italics mine).

¹⁷ Locke, *Concerning Education*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 237-8.

¹⁸ John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, “Article Five: The School and Social Progress” (1897), EW 5: 94.

¹⁹ Douglas J. Simpson “John Dewey’s View of the Teacher as Artist,” 2001 Mary Anne Raywid Lecture sponsored by The Society of Professors of Education. Cf. *John Dewey and the Art of Teaching* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 21.

²⁰ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 231. Incidentally, Buddhists also share in the idea that it is not desires that cause selfishness; rather, it is our choosing to cling to these that leads to suffering.

²¹ See Locke's, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690], (Bergenfield, NJ: New American Library, 1974), especially Book I, in which he attacks the rationalist doctrine of innate propositions. Although it is Leibniz, who in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, responds to Locke's criticisms of innate ideas, the latter are directed at this and other Cartesian positions including the view that mathematics is the ideal form of human knowledge. Locke's several lines of attack include his rejection of the notion that ideas are innate simply because they may be characterized as necessary truths, by drawing a distinction between *a priori* necessity, such as that found in deductive reasoning, and *a posteriori* observations, such as those that comprise inductive reasoning. For a succinct comparative analysis of the appreciation for just such a distinction in the theories of scientific explanation of Aristotle and Carl G. Hempel, see C. David Gruender, "On Explanation: Aristotelian and Hempelian," paper presented at the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy – Philosophy of Science section, Boston, MA (August 10-15, 1998).

²² Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 247. In the same passage, Locke reveals a presumption of natural error in our character, stating that the role of education is essentially "to prevent the vices and faults to which such a constitution is most inclined." It is this presumption that prevents him from granting greater respect of place to the emotions.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴ In a bit of epistemic irony, although Plato holds the view that knowledge is innate, he recognizes the significant impact of the earliest impressions upon the development of children's character. In support of censorship in Book II of Plato's *Republic* [377b],

Socrates is explaining to Adeimantus why music ought to be taught to the young before gymnastics. Children, Socrates declares, are influenced by the fables told to them by their parents even before receiving any formal physical training. Socrates proposes to Adeimantus, “Do you not know, then, that the beginning in every task is the chief thing, especially for any creature that is young and tender? For it is then that it is best molded and takes the impression that one wishes to stamp upon it” (*Op. cit.*, p. 624).

²⁵ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 236.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Book VII [539b-c], p. 770-1. The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), founded approximately thirty years ago by Matthew Lipman, represents a movement in philosophy combating the presumption that children are somehow cognitively incapable or emotionally ill equipped to handle the rigors and subversion associated with philosophic study. Lipman goes on to point to this passage from Plato as ‘exhibit A’ in the adjudication of philosophy’s crime against children’s curiosities. Nonetheless, Lipman is willing to grant Plato a mistrial so long as the latter is willing to concede a distinction between dialectic as merely procedure and philosophy as generally the pursuit of wisdom – a *how* versus the *why* of philosophic investigation. According to Lipman, if we accept this distinction then it makes perfect sense to invite children to the ongoing philosophic conversation usually reserved for adults. In his, *Philosophy Goes to School* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1988), p. 14, Lipman writes:

What made classical rhetoric and dialectic dangerous, for young people at any rate, was their separation of technique from conviction. Children should be given practice in discussing the concepts they take seriously. To give them practice in discussing matters they are indifferent to deprives them of the intrinsic pleasures of becoming educated and provides society with future citizens who neither discuss what they care about nor care about what they discuss.

²⁷ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 308.

²⁸ Locke maintains that in principle acquiring and processing sense impressions may begin as early as the womb. In his, *Essay, Op. cit.*, Book II, Chapter ix, Section 5, p. 120, he writes:

Therefore, I doubt not but children, by the exercise of their senses about objects that affect them in the womb, receive some few ideas before they are born, as the unavoidable effects, either of the bodies that environ them, or else of those wants or diseases they suffer; amongst which I think the ideas of hunger and warmth are two; which probably are some of the first that children have, and which they scarce ever part with again.

²⁹ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 234.

³⁰ Empirical evidence points to the importance of adults in children's lives. Children who have a strong, supportive adult presence in their lives are shown to have more positive outcomes (e.g., success in schooling and employment, avoiding incarceration, avoiding premature parenting) than children without such a presence. This is just as true for children living in low socio-economic conditions and high crime environments. The quality of the parent-child relationship is an important determinant of the child's emotional and behavioral dispositions. Positive parent-child relationships provide the kind of protective mechanisms necessary for children who are exposed to stress, deprivation, neglect, and disadvantage. See, "Adults in Children's Lives," *Consortium Advocacy Group Literature—Children, Youth, and Family Consortium*, University of Minnesota, <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>, retrieved May, 2003.

³¹ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 344, emphases mine.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 345, emphases mine.

³³ Locke, *Essay*, Book II, Chapter i, Section 2, p. 89 and Book I, Chapter ii, Section 15, p. 72, respectively.

³⁴ See especially chapter two, Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, [1968] 1970). In chapter five I discuss Freire's criticism of a "banking" model of education and its negative effects on autonomy.

³⁵ Consternation over the permissiveness and lack of systematic instruction presumably expounded by "progressive" educators is rooted in this tenuous relation between freedom and control. I am not proposing that Dewey denies a place to memorization and rote learning in education. The point is simply that drill, repetition, and practice, in order to enhance autonomy and creativity, ought to be applied prudently. To de-emphasize drill and practice indiscriminately is to commit oneself to the position that these are inherently flawed methods. For a criticism of this latter view from the perspective of special education, see William L. Heward, "Ten Faulty Notions About Teaching and Learning That Hinder the Effectiveness of Special Education," *The Journal of Special Education*, 2003, 36, 186-205. As Heward points out:

Of course, drill and practice can be conducted in ways that render [lessons] pointless, a waste of time, and frustrating for children. Research has shown, however, that when properly conducted, drill and practice is a consistently effective teaching method. The current de-emphasis on drill and practice goes hand in hand with the arguments against structured curricula with clearly identified sequences of learning objectives, and the notion that teaching explicit skills results in fragmented, purposeless learning. To the extent that these three complementary and misguided notions influence classroom practice, they form a powerful front against systematic instruction.

³⁶ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916), MW 9: 69. In support of the role of imagination in Dewey's naturalist epistemology, John Holder adds, "if the conceptual schema applied to a problem is rigid and has no flexibility, then adjustment to new conditions becomes impossible and the range of possible action is reduced to a single, standard response" ("Epistemological Foundations for Thinking," in *The New Scholarship on Dewey*, 1985, p. 19).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68, n.1.

³⁸ Take, for instance, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which seems to be uncritically accepted within Teacher Education programs. See his *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* ([1983] 1993) and *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach* (1991), both by Basic Books, NY. At the risk of oversimplifying, the thrust of the theory is carried in the presumption that individuals are somehow "built" to learn in specifically determined ways. I believe Dewey would say this approach in essence precludes these same individuals from developing their abilities to learn in other distinct ways. So, for instance, someone who makes an error due to simply not paying close enough attention to what a teacher is saying may, and often will, attribute this to the belief that he is not an auditory, but rather a visual learner.

³⁹ Dewey attaches great significance to this idea throughout his discussion of aims in education. See his MW 9: 107-117.

⁴⁰ Elliot Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 206.

⁴¹ Dewey, *Experience and Education* (1938), LW 13: 25. D. H. Lawrence, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983, pp. 44-5), echoes Dewey's point in relation to the benefits of habits when he writes of the way a marital affair disrupts an

integral personality and living an integrated life, which he holds is slowly built up by habit. This is Clifford, the male character speaking with his wife, Connie, who has the affair:

It seems to me that it isn't these little acts and little connections we make in our lives that matter so very much. They pass away, and where are they? It's what endures through one's life that matters; my own life matters to me, in its long continuance and development. But what do the occasional connections matter? If people don't exaggerate them ridiculously, they pass like the mating of birds. And so they should. It's the life-long companionship that matters. It's the living together from day to day, not the sleeping together once or twice. You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit of each other. And habit, to my thinking, is more vital than any occasional excitement. The long, slow, enduring thing...that's what we live by...not the occasional spasm of any sort.

⁴² Cf. Jane M. Healy, *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Touchstone, [1990] 1999), p. 42.

⁴³ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 230.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234

⁴⁵ Among the myriad recent sources, see: Peter N. Stearns, *Anxious Parents: A Modern History of Childrearing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Robert Shaw, *The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children* (New York: Regan Books – Harper Collins, 2003); Dan Kindlon, *Too Much of a Good Thing: Raising Children of Character in an Indulgent Age* (New York: Hyperion, 2003); Diane Ehrensaft, *Spoiling Childhood: How Well-Meaning Parents Are Giving Their Children*

Too much – But Not What They Need (New York: Guilford Publications, 1997); Hara Estroff Marano, “A Nation of Wimps,” *Psychology Today* (November/December 2004), pp. 58-70, 103; Carol Lynn Mithers, “The Perils of the Pushover Parent,” *Ladies Home Journal* (January 2003), pp. 92-7.

⁴⁶ Although critical of regular and excessive corporal punishment (CP), Locke is not entirely opposed to its use; in particular when unruliness compromises the goal of discipline and the development of the child’s autonomy. The danger, much like when we shame a child in public, is that his threshold is exceeded, thus leaving parents no leverage with which to weigh against the child’s inclinations. At the same time, Locke holds firm to the belief that “great severity of punishment does but very little good, nay, great harm in education; and that those children who have been most chastised, seldom make the best men” (*Concerning Education*, pp. 236-7). Murray A. Straus & Denise A. Donnelly, echo Locke’s intuitions with the aid of empirical studies. The authors find that approximately ninety-percent of parents use some form of corporal punishment (CP) on toddlers. CP is defined as the use of physical force with the intention of inflicting or causing pain, but not injury, for the purposes of correction and control. More than fifty-percent of children continue to experience some form of CP into early adolescence. Although a common rationale for CP revolves around efforts to curb anti-social behavior, there is evidence that it actually *increases* the likelihood of anti-social behavior at a later age. Toddlers who are spanked are more likely to be aggressive with their kindergarten peers. CP experienced during adolescence is associated with an increased likelihood of approving violence against one’s spouse or siblings, experiencing depression as an adult, elevating levels of marital conflict, physical assault on other adults, physical abuse of children, masochistic sexual behavior, and alienation. See, Murray A. Straus & Denise A. Donnelly, *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment in American Families and Its Effects on Children* (Somerset, New Jersey: Transactions Pub., [1994] 2001).

⁴⁷ Contrary to common presumptions about the need to motivate individuals through the use of extrinsic rewards and punishments, Alfie Kohn shares countless studies dating as

far back as forty years, which demonstrate that extrinsic forms of motivation are inimical to creativity and initiative. Among these: Glucksberg, 1962; Spence, 1970, 1971; Viesti, 1971; Deci, 1971; Kruglanski et al., 1971; Lepper et al., 1973, Greene and Lepper, 1974; Ward et al., 1972; Condry, 1977; McGraw and McCullers, 1979; Fabes et al., 1981, 1986; Schwartz, 1982; Amabile, 1985; Lepper and Cordova, 1992. Cf., Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, [1993] 1999), pp. 42-7.

⁴⁸ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 241. From here on I refer to physical reward and punishment as simply 'reward' and 'punishment' and use 'praise' or 'esteem' and 'shame' or 'disgrace' to denote their alternatives, respectively.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁰ Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards*, *Op. cit.*, p. 60. Our nation's public schools, themselves now subject to standardized assessment and an enforcement system of extrinsic rewards and punishments due to the NCLB laws enacted in 2002, perpetuate this ideal. Eisner, in *The Arts*, *Op. cit.*, p. 202, writes: "Increasingly in American schools, there is a tendency to instrumentalize educational activities and to emphasize the importance of extrinsic rewards. Often students are habituated to reinforcement practices that take the intellectual heart out of learning," and, I would add, the emotional heart. Physical punishment also negatively impacts the intellectual and emotional aspects of learning. Historian of religion, Philip Greven, illustrates the impact that physical punishment has on a child's sense of autonomy, such that even "a seemingly benign and friendly form of control [is] unlikely to create a genuine sense of autonomy in the child, or a sense of choice and responsibility, [since] the child still [has] to accept the parent's will as the child's own." *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 88, cf. Kohn, *Punished by Rewards*, *Op. cit.*, p. 168. Also of significance is the pioneering work of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, who claim, "The most marked difference between the

disciplinary practices of delinquents' parents and those of non-delinquents is found in the considerably greater extent to which the former resorted to physical punishment and the lesser extent to which they reasoned with the boys about their misconduct." *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1950), p. 133.

⁵¹ Locke, *Concerning Education*, p. 241-2, emphasis mine.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 236, emphases mine.

⁵³ Robert C. Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 71 (italics in original).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72-3.

⁵⁵ John Dewey, *How We Think* (1933), LW 8: 140.

⁵⁶ Eisner, *Op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.

⁵⁷ It seems the debates over intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards and their effects on motivation continue without a definitive resolution. A recent study sifts through the last thirty years or so of evidence that shows contrary results as far as the effects from extrinsic motivators on learning. See, Judy Cameron, Katherine M. Banko, and W. David Pierce, "Pervasive Negative Effects of Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation: The Myth Continues," *The Behavior Analyst*, No. 1, Spring 2001, 24, 1–44. The authors conclude:

In our meta-analysis, the overall reward category lacked homogeneity, indicating the appropriateness of a moderator analysis. In other words, the overall reward category is too inclusive; rewards have different effects under different moderating conditions. The effects of tangible reward on measures of intrinsic motivation differ by reward expectancy. This suggests that it is not

tangible rewards per se that undermine motivation and interest; instead it depends on instruction and the statement of contingency [the condition for receiving the reward].

⁵⁸ Aristotle distinguishes between internal and external goods. True happiness (*eudaimonia*), according to Aristotle, being a psychological good, belongs to the former. See *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book I, Chapter 8, 1098^b12-1099^b9, pp. 944-5. In particular, Aristotle suggests there is an important difference between simply possessing something versus putting it to use. And, since happiness and virtue are achieved only through action, and action is characteristic of the soul, he believes his account to be correct, “in that we identify the end with certain actions and activities; for thus it falls among goods of the soul and not among external goods” (*Ibid*, 1098^b17-19, p. 944).

⁵⁹ Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996), pp. 69-70. See also his, *Punished by Rewards*, *Op. cit.*, especially chapter six "The Praise Problem," pp. 96-116.

⁶⁰ Evidence from neuroscience and cognitive psychology points to the need for proper emotional development before children begin to reason. Note the problems of children living under stress and other like conditions that inhibit their emotional development and, in turn, impede their cognitive development. For instance, the emotional unsettling that comes with being physically or psychologically abused, or from having to deal with the nuances of alcohol or drug addiction in the home, makes for a dubious foundation for other forms of development. Even seemingly less traumatic occurrences such as the overindulgence of children's desires, coupled with overprotectionism on the part of parents, together work to absolve the child of any need to think on his own and undermine the deliberative process.

CHAPTER 4

NATURE AND THE ART OF EDUCATION

I say that man is condemned to be free.
And from the moment he is thrown into this world
He is responsible for everything he does...
Man is responsible for his passion.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*

In this chapter we continue to trace the idea that, for human beings, accessing, honing, and developing those capabilities that make possible our self-discipline and allow us to direct our own lives—exercises understood to be necessary conduits for directing our lives toward personal happiness and social well being—together constitute the premier goal of education. The question remains: exactly what capabilities are available to us for engaging in these endeavors? According to Locke’s educational theory, it is rationality that assumes the regulatory role above and beyond emotion in striking a balance between self-control and freedom, which we may presume are at least compatible. The shortcoming in Locke’s account of learning is that by granting only an ancillary role to the emotions—as they provide the impetus to our desire for self-control—he fails to recognize the extent to which emotions, conjointly with our rational capabilities, share integrally in directing those cognitive operations by which we are able to act autonomously.

The evolution toward this broader understanding of our capabilities continues with Rousseau’s “romantic” reaction to Locke, which serves to weigh the balance back on the side of human feeling and emotion. Rousseau strikes a supple balance between self-control and freedom that is grounded in an emotional substrate from which simultaneously autonomous and social beings may emerge. This expansion of our cognitive capabilities to include our emotions, in turn, provides a necessary link to Dewey’s educational aesthetic, with which we pull taut the thread that unites personal freedom and control in self-directed

action. This is the same thread that runs incessantly through the tradition of Western philosophy, only now engendered by a symbiosis of reason and emotion as the highest expression of self-fulfillment and social obligation in the form of an empathetic democracy.

A particular aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the undue separation of reason and emotion may instead evolve toward their reconciliation through an understanding of learning as an intrinsically, yet socially, motivated process that requires both rational and emotional maturation. Toward this end we explore Rousseau's educational philosophy and his emphasis on freedom. An emphasis, I argue, that is not devoid of an ordering or regulative principle, the supposed lack of which has simultaneously made him the scapegoat for the libertarian excesses of so-called progressive educators and provided the perfect alibi for the authoritarian abuses on the part of reactionary pedagogues.

In his *Experience and Education*, Dewey sets out to clear the air of confusions caused by what he refers to as examples of 'either/or' thinking among educational theorists who mistakenly equate extreme progressive reactions to traditional methods of instruction with his own approach. Dewey distinguishes between the methods of such extreme progressives, who stoop to reckless permissiveness, and his experience-based approach, which posits that the goal of education is growth by means of a thorough and intelligent ordering of experience.

Rousseau's educational priority of assuring his imaginary Emile remains self-sufficient and autonomous in the face of society's corruptive influence and penchant for superficiality, shares with Dewey's goal of an educational process leading toward purposefully ordered and intelligently guided experience, a staunch respect for freedom. Beyond Rousseau's explicit declarations as to the pervasive role of natural necessity in directing the child's development, there are also his many allusions to the importance of deliberate interventions on the part of tutors in guiding and directing the learning experiences of their students. When we emphasize the similarities in their educational approaches, that is, when we see the way in which Rousseau's emphasis on freedom is amenable to Dewey's account of enriched experience, we may absolve Rousseau of what I consider to be exaggerated readings of his key educational principles, and thereby get about the business of focusing due attention on a more robust sense of freedom in our efforts to forge more authentically democratic educational practices.¹

Nascent in Rousseau's pedagogy is an amelioration of the long-standing rift in philosophical and educational discourse, between our rational and emotional capacities; a healing of sorts first proposed by Rousseau that only later comes to its fruition in Dewey's educational aesthetic. This amicable interdependence of reason and emotion is exhibited in the dynamic interplay of control and freedom. In particular, we find this expressed in Dewey's understanding of autonomy as a socially constructed experience and Rousseau's pedagogic formula of a well-regulated liberty. My understanding of Rousseau's educational objectives renders an interpretation of his concept of freedom that may appear to be "mitigated" only when contrasted to those misinterpretations that push his emphasis on freedom to the extremes of either sheer licentiousness or disguised totalitarianism. If we accept that freedom, for both Rousseau and Dewey, is essential to the learning process—that development of intelligent and purposeful experience—then we may absolve Rousseau of at least some of the exaggerated accusations leveled against him.²

4.1. Life in the Folds of Rousseauian Contrariness

During a break from classes while attending graduate school in Tallahassee, I was spending time with family in South Florida, specifically in the populous metropolitan area of Miami. I will never forget a close relative candidly asking me, "So, when are you planning on returning to civilization?" figuratively implying that I was somehow missing out on something as long as I remained in the barbarism of rural northern Florida. At first, I pictured Socrates being escorted to his jail cell, proclaiming to the majority who had sealed his fate, "I go to die, you to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except god."³ Then, taking into account the maladaptive normalcy we have come to accept as civilized behavior, my response was simply to ask in return, "What makes you think *you're* the one living in civilization?" I was, of course, assuming the Rousseauian critical stance according to which civil society—complete with those seductions that *en masse* intrigue the passions of the masses—is exposed as being corrosive and corruptive of all that could possibly further human happiness. Then again, determining to whom the better lot belongs may not be that simple a matter.

Despite the minimally dyadic denominators that underwrite our relations with nature and our social interactions, life is never as simple as being in ‘this’ or ‘that’ state of affairs, or occupying ‘this’ or ‘that’ place; rather, it is lived in the folds that are formed by the interfaces and immersions between ‘this’ and ‘that’—folds created by the continuous kneading and entwining of ‘this’ and ‘that’ into forms distinguishable from each. Even Heraclitean waters are continually in flux only because they exist in relation to the riverbanks that define them or the very foot with which we attempt to subdue them. To which do we assign the greater importance, the foot or the river? Which is of greater importance when wading, the foot that wades or the water it wades in, or is it perhaps the wading itself? Why not go a step further and ask instead why we are in the river to begin with—why are we trying to step into the same river twice?

There is an untoward price we pay in maintaining either ‘this’ or ‘that’ in isolation from the other. Regarding either with indifference means we not only miss what is of value in the other, but also what value they may render in their mutuality. From such negligence spring forth the mistaken convictions that blind us to the damages caused by the incompleteness of our understandings or, worse yet, that allow us to accept the harms done by these as inevitable. Once we move beyond thinking that life may be portrayed or understood as simply ‘this’ or ‘that’, we may discover the complex ways the kneading of ‘this’ and ‘that’ into folds constitutes our lives.

Testament to the tumultuous nature of his own life and works is the contradictory manner in which Rousseau is often depicted. He is at once the consummate “philosopher of freedom” and the “father of totalitarianism,” propounding simultaneously the merits of radical democracy⁴ and an aristocratic⁵ basis for such; himself a romantic, emotional, self-centered, mentally unbalanced, overly sensitive, suspicious, and intolerant.⁶ Pick your contradiction! Whether it is being guided by a regulated freedom; being born free, but having to exist everywhere in bondage; or advocating the beneficence of a natural education only to prepare one for the maleficence of civil society, the only way to absolve Rousseau of the various seeming contradictions he writes himself into—which is not to say he is entirely free from paradox—is by viewing these instead as contradistinctions. Contrary to contradictions, contradistinctions delineate points of contention drawn in relation to one another in efforts to

either compare or reconcile one with the other. We could say, rather, that there is throughout Rousseau's thought an "essential tension"⁷ between seemingly incompatible positions.

Prominent among such tensions is Rousseau's reverence for a natural and primitive state of human existence in contradistinction to that of a civil and political society. According to Rousseau, human beings in such a state of nature are born free and good, which translates into an emotionally balanced life, unconstrained by the myriad pressures and corruptions that plague so many who, like my relative, rather proudly deem themselves civilized. But having to live with other people and accommodate to each other's needs, begins a process of corruption in humans that reaches its pinnacle in civil society—in Rousseau's case, the type of extravagance and concomitant destitution found in the Paris of his day.

In his prize-winning *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, Rousseau maintains that the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, by creating unnecessary desires in mankind, immerse us in slavery and corruption.⁸ According to Rousseau, these "ornaments" of civilized society, like "spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains which weigh men down...make [mankind] love their slavery by turning them into what are called civilized people."⁹ Though it appears this view represents a challenge to common presumptions about the benefits of science's contributions to human progress, in actuality what is at issue, and of greater importance for understanding Rousseau's criticisms, is that under particular forms of repression, civilization and its forces of progress may become instruments of slavery. In other words, what Rousseau condemns are not art, literature, and science, but rather the inequalities he believes result from privileges legitimized by the same social conventions that authorize progress—in the service of which these are employed.¹⁰

Rousseau makes it clear at the beginning of his *First Discourse*: "I am not mistreating science...I am defending virtue in front of virtuous men."¹¹ Science is not at fault; rather, it is the use to which it may be put.¹² We need look no further than the manner in which knowledge gathered from the social sciences, besides being used to teach us a great deal about childhood—contributions for which Rousseau may regard himself a precursor—is also used to more efficiently infringe upon childhood.¹³ It is not progress *per se* that we need to be leery of, but rather, in the name of *what* that progress is achieved. The particular tension that may arise between, say, advances in technology and the possibility of these

having negative repercussions, is to be expected to some extent any time we venture into the unknown. The Frankenstein archetype certainly makes it clear how human beings, by overextending ourselves technologically, may forge the very instruments of our own destruction. What Rousseau proposes is that the tension between progress and its possibilities may play itself out once the members of a society clearly delineate the positive paths they choose to forge. In other words, conflict exists only as long as we concede, like the fool “simple enough” to believe his newfound neighbor, that things could not be otherwise.

4.1.1. A Different Sort of Contract

Rousseau recognizes that human beings are incapable of realizing fully their potential as mere noble savages.¹⁴ He is clear about our limitations within such a state, declaring:

I assume that men have reached a point at which the obstacles that endanger their preservation in the state of nature overcome by their resistance the forces that each individual can exert with a view to maintaining himself in that state. Then this primitive condition can no longer subsist, and the human race would perish unless it changed its mode of existence.¹⁵

It is for much the same reason that we require an education, without which we could not survive. Further, it is by means of an education, he is hopeful, that we may realize a civil-political order in accordance with which we may combine our obligation towards others with a respect for nature, while optimizing our self-reliance.¹⁶

With this hope, Rousseau captures what is the essence and principal concern within the study of social-political philosophy: the problem of finding “a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before.”¹⁷ This is his ambition—to balance the seemingly disparate needs of conjoint and social living with those of self-actualization.

In the previous chapter we addressed the manner in which the social contracts of both Locke and Hobbes ultimately rely upon self-interest, creating, as Bloom puts it, “hypocrites who feign concern for others out of concern for themselves.” The difference, Bloom points out, between this basis for political government and the one propounded by Rousseau, is that in the latter the citizen “understands his good to be identical with the common good.” Meanwhile, in the former the citizen “distinguishes his own good from the common.” But because this self-serving individual’s good “requires society...he exploits others while depending on them.”¹⁸ So long as individual interest is equated with selfishness, any social goal shall necessitate that this interest be compromised for the good of all. What results is a society of egoists and conformists; the former are those who take advantage of this system, while the latter acquiesce to its logic.

Like Locke and Hobbes before him, Rousseau argues that the goal of political government should be to secure freedom, equality, and justice for all, and to do so in a manner that protects individuals from the will or tyranny of the majority. But, for Rousseau, the Hobbesian promise of a commodious life is not reason enough for us to give up all we must to a political authority. For just as sure as we must give up something when we consent to any such political convention, we must remain cognizant of what we stand to gain. Rousseau asks, “Men live tranquilly also in dungeons; is that enough to make them contented there?”¹⁹ For Rousseau, relinquishing our liberty means no less than relinquishing our moral responsibility, since “to take all freedom from [one’s] will is to take all morality from [one’s] actions.”²⁰ A citizen, according to Rousseau, must never be satisfied with what he is entitled to by virtue of belonging to a political state; he must also ensure for himself the conditions that make possible his continued intellectual and moral development.

What is striking about Rousseau’s version of the social contract, and in keeping with the many seeming contradictions that placate his thought, is that although he proposes a direct and participatory democracy, he does so with what appears to be a Hobbesian flair for control. Yes, at times we may have to “force people to be free,” if for no other reason than the simple fact that—all pretensions to arrogance aside—people often enough do not know what is in their own best interest. This is the challenge that unites Rousseau’s social-political and educational philosophies in the task of realizing genuine self-governance: to foster in the individual a level of self-discipline that may subvert self-interest in the face of the interests

of others, while maintaining the strength of autonomy and steadfastness to keep from becoming subject to the will of others.

Whereas Hobbes' concern is with finding a solution to civil strife and a justification for rule²¹ on the basis of a government that guarantees security but not liberty, Rousseau wants to show that in civil society we may enjoy a higher form of liberty than in the state of nature. It is in the political state that our intellectual and moral life develops; where, as members of society we are able to flourish and become masters of ourselves, "for the impulse of mere appetite is slavery, while obedience to a self-prescribed law is liberty."²² Rousseau is referring to a form of control that we impose upon ourselves, which is no different from the kind of control we use to direct our actions toward intelligently designed purposes, that is, toward greater freedom.

Here it is important to note the similarity in Rousseau's formulation of the social contract and the manner in which Dewey explains the dynamic of educational discipline wrought by social control. Under the contract, according to Rousseau, "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will, and in our [corporate capacity] we receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole."²³ Again, this is not much different from Dewey's account; a position, as we explore later, which far from positing a form of external imposition, instead promotes, and even demands, the greater autonomy and freedom of the individual.²⁴ In proposing a social, and therefore, more expansive form of control, both Dewey's and Rousseau's accounts propel the individual toward greater freedom, not less. At the same time, in achieving greater freedom—the very kind that allows Emile to explore his own perspectives and that Dewey advocates as an impetus to intelligent growth—we are achieving greater control. It is the nuances of this fold, made of intelligent control and regulated freedom, which are missed by interpretations of Rousseau that systematically exclude the importance he assigns to intelligent direction whenever necessary on the part of the tutor or parent.

Certainly Rousseau is not solely to blame for the many times those entrusted with governing the State have misappropriated the citizenry's needs or interests. Especially since the general will, as he sees it, is not something that can ever belong to any State except in so far as that State *is* the general will—the average will of those citizens who together comprise a political union. State administrations that take on their own identities and whose

representatives exercise their own interests exist, as a Buddhist might suggest, much like egos that posit themselves as unique and in distinction from an all-encompassing Nirvana, forgetting all the while that despite appearances to the contrary they are never separate from the whole. Such a State usurps what belongs to a people as a people, their general will, and is able to do so only as long as individuals remain incapable of recognizing that which is of value in themselves; in particular, that value that bestows all other values—the very assertion of their will.

Lack of will translates to evermore complacency and awakening each new day only to continue tolerating all we detest about the previous day. The desire to conform to society's demands, transformed by the forces of culture into a marketable *need*, is overwhelming. We remain content with living and interacting by means of muffled emotions and limited understandings, as a kind of coping mechanism we allow others that they may, in turn, allow us.²⁵ Meanwhile, we fail to recognize the real potential for appreciably reshaping our lives. The State, as with any number of examples of other institutions to which we relinquish our personal agency, assumes control because we allow ourselves to forfeit such. First, by allowing this conglomeration of interests—though consecrated in our name—to stand as something foreign from our own. And second, by conceding our individual agency in a manner that makes perpetually dependent children of us all, apparently incapable of any longer directing our own lives.²⁶ The irony besetting our lives in such folds is made all too poignant by our very inability to realize for ourselves that it is we who permit these acts of treason against ourselves. Our greatest act of luxury is our last great act, that very one by which we relinquish our need to act.

4.1.2. Freedom Feigned

Even within a seemingly free society, where our choices may not appear to be openly coerced, we are constrained nonetheless. These are subtler and, therefore, more dangerous forms of social control, since we are not even aware that we are subject to the will of another. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault describes the evolution (genealogy) of punishment in European societies, beginning with torture and moving through the history of formal institutions of incarceration. With special attention to Jeremy Bentham's invention of

the Panopticon, Foucault suggests that in a not-so-distant future we may no longer need to enclose individuals behind walls and bars, since our prisons will be within our own minds. The effect of a panoptical surveillance is, Foucault writes,

To induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary...in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.²⁷

That is to say, we no longer need to lock people in because through self-imposed forms of control they limit the possibilities of their freedom. Simply put, no one is going anywhere. Rousseau, in his *Social Contract*, describes a similar condition that befalls slaves, who “lose everything in their bonds, even the desire to escape from them” and consequently come to “love their servitude.”²⁸

Michele Moses describes this stealth form of control, which is too subtle to be noticed because it is institutionally embedded and engrained in our collective cultural psyches. She writes:

Take, for example, the African American children whose psychological interviews were cited by the plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board of Education* from 1954. When they were given two dolls, a black one and a white one, and asked which doll they thought was the best, most intelligent doll, they invariably chose the white one. Official social policy was serving to truncate their sense of self-worth; their supposedly “separate, but equal” educations were internalizing their oppression and harming their cultural identities. When these limits in possibility are internalized, the oppressed become complicit in their own oppression.²⁹

Such forms of control are more effectively cloaked when they are self-inflicted. The way this is accomplished within a democracy is by offering the citizenry the semblance of political power, along with its presumed privileges. These then intoxicate the masses with the specious promise that leveling the social-political-economic playing fields necessitates a corresponding diffusion and expansion of their tastes, an ideal surpassed only by the demos' unsound expectations of unreasonable deserts.

Along with the sharing of rights and obligations, a consumer democracy introduces a shared *discomfort* and *disease* that no longer comes from the threat of scarcity, but instead now comes from the pressure to keep our desires in pace with the empty promise that all of us may equally attain the same things. Worldly-philosopher Alain de Botton chronicles this social malady, which he euphemistically labels 'status anxiety':

Insofar as advanced societies supply their members with historically elevated incomes, they appear to make us wealthier. But in truth, their net effect may be to impoverish us, because by fostering unlimited expectations, they keep open permanent gaps between what we want and what we can afford, between who we might be and who we really are...The price we have paid for expecting to be so much more than our ancestors is a perpetual anxiety that we are far from being all we might be.³⁰

Because we assign a saleable price to all things, everything is believed to be within our reach, even those things we cannot reach because we lack the real means by which to do so. Whereas the constraints delineated by our physical and environmental exigencies might normally be enough to check the limitations of our freedoms, thresholds of autonomy are now calibrated according to a free-market of incoherent desires and the superficialities of unsubstantiated capabilities.

Given that we are unable to realistically accomplish or acquire everything, the freedom to everything at our disposal is just as daunting as that giant boulder God is able to create yet, even He is unable to raise. This leveling of heightened tastes that makes for an effective democracy of mass consumption must needs effectively supplant the autonomy of the discriminating consumer and thereby—as if through the back door—steal from him any

remaining semblance of his individuality. A nominally democratic citizenry that merely eulogizes autonomy, by allowing the indifference of an exaggerated equality to upstage the need for informed consent, is as empty as the veritable Platonic cave in which we find ourselves thrilled, like children who know no better, by the illusory honors we bestow upon one another.

If it is genuine consent we portend, then autonomous choice is essential for moving from an externally imposed to an internally constituted form of control. Only the latter places the onus squarely on the individual. This is a point dear to existentialists, whose accounts of freedom posit choice as not only empowering, but also an expression of one's authenticity—a deliberate creation or construction of oneself. For the existentialist, the self-motivation driving our choices is coupled with self-evaluation, which, in turn, incites us to take responsibility for our actions and accept the standards by which we will to live our lives.

The choice as to which form of control shall win the day remains, surprisingly perhaps, ours to make. We may opt for the kind that is imposed upon us from without, that is, for which we make others responsible—an incentive in itself for many. But this requires us to put our trust in the benevolence of others, in the hopes that our freedom is not too severely limited or, what is just as bad, that we are not fooled into believing that we are freer than we really are simply because we are able to do what we please or purchase what we like. We may, on the other hand, still opt for the kind of control that is harvested within—a kind of *self*-control commensurate with a freedom so personal that, ironically, only the selfish fool would relinquish.

4.2. Render Unto Nature What is Nature's

We have certainly come a long way since our days as hunter-gatherers, not to mention the days when we valued cooking for ourselves or enjoying meals with family. *Zone Chefs*, a food service company in New York City, offers three fully cooked meals delivered each morning to your home. "All you have to do," their radio advertisement urges, "is open your door." Also gone are the days when children need to make a connection between their education and survival.³¹ This ought to come as no surprise given the level of affluence we enjoy today, which allows us the luxury of idleness that makes complacency with lowered

expectations easier to bear...“and for an additional 30¢,” the digitalized phone operator’s voice persuades, “that number can be automatically dialed *for* you.” No longer may we assume that children are resilient; rather, they are considered weak and deserving of pampering.³² Lost, alongside this vulnerability, are the virtues of ‘self’: perseverance, self-discipline, self-motivation, and self-reliance.

Conversely, Rousseau envisions our natural passion for survival as a necessary impetus for learning and, perhaps even more importantly, the desire to continue learning. Moreover, threats against our survival make present to us the need to exercise personal power. The need to secure our survival summons our first and most basic expressions of freedom and initiative. This need to learn, beyond linking us to the necessities of survival, is our first great teacher in the lessons about the process of learning itself—something we must ultimately be motivated to do for ourselves. It is this passion, which drives our efforts at doing and understanding for ourselves, that is at the heart of Rousseau’s pedagogy and, indeed, is at the heart of much confusion on the part of those who have sought to either model or criticize it.

We recognize in Emile’s fervor for personal sovereignty a kind of existential striving toward authenticity and self-actualization that counters those compelling forces of social organization that too often, even in the guise of democracy, stifle individuality and personal responsibility. To read *Emile* as a recipe for pedagogic decadence is to ignore completely the call to personal and social responsibility in *The Social Contract*. Likewise, to read *The Social Contract* as a totalitarian treatise is to completely ignore the spirit and vision of freedom in Rousseau’s *Emile*. Ironically it is Emile who, educated in the interstices of nature’s necessities and possibilities, shall come to the aid of modern civilization precisely because he possesses the moral fortitude and emotional poise that makes him immune to the demands of modern life.³³ It is he who, owing to his unique education, shall withstand the onslaught of extravagant consumption and bartering in unreasonable desires—the coin of the realm—so emblematic of modern life.

The need to educate our young in a manner that protects them from the spoils of civilization is testament to the fact that this way of life may well not be the surest path to happiness and fulfillment. This is Rousseau’s principal concern in his *Emile*, which is even more relevant today than it was in his day. Emile’s upbringing represents an *adaptation* of

the individual to a contrived political order, and equally implies a criticism of both its foundations and then current manifestation. Rousseau is doing more than simply trying to teach young Emile how to cope. It is, indeed, an attempt by Rousseau to go beyond what is the current social order of his day, as well as beyond nature, and set about establishing the dispositions—both emotional and intellectual—that make possible a different social order; perhaps even a different way of defining what we call civilization.

The tension between control and freedom is often brought to our attention by the menacing ways civilizations impact nature. Unfortunately, all too often the only noticeable result of our attention is our failure to recognize that guiding and directing are very different from relationships of domination, and so we misappropriate our freedom in such a way that under the appearance of being in control we find ourselves actually prisoners of our own making. When we make it our goal to subjugate nature's forces and redirect her patterns, under the anthropocentric pretense "for the betterment of mankind," we usually end up only further alienating ourselves from nature. Our separation in many respects not only sets us on the unfortunate path toward the destruction of nature, but also points to our inability to remain true to ourselves. The exigencies of modern life dehumanize us primarily because these tend to drive us toward the kinds of artificialities and conveniences that test the very mettle of what keeps us in tune with ourselves—our ability to construct a life *for* ourselves that is rich in meaning and purpose.³⁴

And just as easily as we are separated from nature, we are separated from perhaps the most significant truth, our own mortality. But our denial of death is just another symptom of our discontent with and disconnection from what it means to live.³⁵ We see this in our social relationships and, in particular, within our educational settings—among those transactions in the folds of learning—where the dual purposes of self-discovery and self-sufficiency are undermined by their very obsolescence in a culture for which domination and control remain the order of the day.³⁶ Rousseau's educational philosophy is an invaluable reminder of the importance of these purposes and how they are realized in conjunction with, not in opposition to, nature and freedom.

4.2.1. Signs of Our Times

It is in Rousseau's *Emile* that we find perhaps the earliest formulation of a developmental-stage theory of education.³⁷ Although Comenius hints at a rudimentary form of such, according to which stages of development are represented as seasons in a year, his rendition is at times more metaphorical than anything else.³⁸ In Locke we also find hints of the importance of age-appropriate instruction. For instance, in his description of what constitutes an appropriate introduction to reasoning, he confesses, "I do not intend any other but such as is suited to the child's capacity and apprehension." And later, when speaking of the benefits gained from heeding a child's curiosities, he warns, "But confound not his understanding with explications or notions that are above it."³⁹ Yet nowhere earlier than in Rousseau's *Emile* do we find a theory of developmental stages as fully elaborated.

There are at least two salient points that may be drawn from Rousseau's emphasis on age-appropriate learning.⁴⁰ The first has to do with the fact that more and more parents today are forcing their children's development by rushing it, resulting in what Rousseau would describe as a "barbarous education which sacrifices the present to an uncertain future that burdens a child with chains of every sort and begins by making him miserable in order to prepare him from afar for I know not what pretended happiness which it is to be believed he may never enjoy."⁴¹ Dewey further expands on Rousseau's sentiment, by connecting the need to respect children with the kind of careful attention that ought to be given to the *process* of their development. He writes, "Reverence for childhood is identical with reverence for the needs and opportunities of growth. Our tragic error is that we are so anxious for the results of growth that we neglect the process of growing."⁴²

During *Emile's* second stage of development—the age of nature—Rousseau admonishes the tutor to "love childhood." Despite Rousseau's reminder that, "Nature wants children to be children before being men" and that by "pervert[ing] this order, we shall produce precocious fruits which will be immature and insipid and will not be long in rotting,"⁴³ current titles by educators and psychologists alike,⁴⁴ such as *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, *Midlife Crisis Begins in Kindergarten*, and *Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society*, indicate an awareness of the increased pressure being placed on children in preparation for skills and knowledge that they may yet be too young to comprehend.⁴⁵ Recent newspaper articles also reveal disturbing trends. For instance, Rita Giordano reports that, "In this age of anxiety over

tougher college admissions and schools labeled as failing under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), more parents are seeking to raise the bar for children at ever-younger ages.”⁴⁶ It is difficult to imagine Rousseau would be very comfortable witnessing the transformation of Froebel’s kindergarten into the full day “kinder-grind” of today.⁴⁷

Once again we find ourselves in the midst of an interesting tension—a veritable contradiction—between the delicate pampering and overindulgence with which parents buffer their children’s errors and the unforgiving harshness and precision with which we extort their innocence. Children are simultaneously being incapacitated *socially*, while being hurried *academically*. Rather than equip our young with more effective means for survival, we abandon them to their instincts and leave them no resort than to survive with the aid of what they happen to know at any particular stage of development. And survive they shall, though by resorting to a kind of apathy that shelters them from an extra-subjective existence, or by means of the video games that facilitate their indifference—that train them in the art of not caring or in not having to understand why they might care.

Even more disheartening connections are being discovered between the effects of excessive pressure on children to keep pace with standardization and the exorbitant use of Ritalin.⁴⁸ Psychiatrist Leonard Sax addresses this concern on several fronts, including the effects from watching television, computer, and other video media, as well as pressure from drug companies.⁴⁹ Perhaps most alarming is the connection that implicates the educational system itself. Certainly there are children just as rambunctious in other parts of the world. The fact that US children presently account for eighty-five percent of the world’s consumption of Ritalin seems to make it fairly obvious that this problem is systematic.

Sax points to the scare propagated by the *Nation at Risk* report published in 1983, which decried a serious lag in US education, especially in mathematics, reading, and writing. According to Sax, federal interest in education, along with the move toward standardized forms of assessment, may be linked to the tremendous pressure placed upon teachers and administrators to secure the necessary test scores as a basis for their very livelihood or promotion. As if the pressures on administrators, teachers, and students alike were not enough, Sax further connects the intense demands of academic learning with the underdeveloped capabilities of boys age five to seven. When these children are not able to keep up with the rigors of the “kinder-grind” and first grade, they are diagnosed as having

Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and then summarily prescribed Ritalin. Already convinced—however erroneously—that standardized testing is an effective means to assess learning, teachers and administrators basically do whatever it takes to ensure the highest test scores possible. This includes toying with the brain chemistry of five-year olds and making sure other facets of a well-rounded education, including sufficient opportunities for play, are sacrificed for the sake of “high-stakes” tests.⁵⁰

The second point that may be drawn from Rousseau’s emphasis on age-appropriate learning, which follows from the first, is that especially during the earliest years of development, instruction ought not to be overwhelmingly academic. Play, as understood by Rousseau, is essential to the learning experience. While at play we are involved in a process by which we “intentionally” allow perfection to be superseded by the benefits that come from experimentation, exploration, and imagination in general; giving way to learning from the consequences of our successes and failures.⁵¹ Not only is play important in its capacity as a diversion from tedium and the routine we have unfortunately come to associate with work, but it also fulfills a purpose in learning itself; either by affording us opportunities to assimilate and process lessons outside the regimen of the lesson itself, or simply by providing the very opportunities for learning that arise while at play.⁵² The benefits of exploratory play are more frequently missing from the new arenas of childhood, where games are highly structured, supervised, and even professionalized to the point where personal gratification becomes irrelevant. Missing from these more technically sophisticated forms of play are opportunities for children to hone the skills needed for resolving their own conflicts and disputes; not to mention lost opportunities to earn a sense of personal achievement as more and more parents live vicariously through their children’s play.⁵³

Current thinking in response to NCLB legislation indicates the inadequacies of too narrow a focus on pure academics. Gene R. Carter, Executive Director of the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* (ASCD), places Rousseau’s ideas within a contemporary context by proposing that, “a comprehensive approach to learning must recognize that successful young people are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, motivated, civically inspired, prepared for work, self-sufficient, and ready for the world beyond their own borders.”⁵⁴ Carter goes on to cite a comprehensive report on the

positive effects of promoting ethics in the high school ranks, in which eight specific strengths of character are outlined in efforts to help alleviate the moral morass in our schools. Interestingly enough, we see many of the educational outcomes proposed by Rousseau, for Emile, reflected in this report. Included among these are: becoming “lifelong learners and critical thinkers; socially and emotionally adept; self-disciplined; personally responsible moral agents; and contributing members of a democratic community.”⁵⁵ Rousseau’s version includes: “laborious, temperate, patient, firm and full of courage...he counts on himself alone...a precise and unprejudiced mind, a heart that is free and without passion...satisfied, happy, and free.”⁵⁶ But how could the capricious, overindulgent, and licentious manner of instruction commonly associated with Rousseau ever produce such virtues in a child?

4.2.2. Rousseau’s Confounded Legacy

Rousseau is held directly responsible for the “romantic idealization of the child,” which allegedly “has made it inevitable that our public schools fail to do their part in civilizing young ‘barbarians’.”⁵⁷ He is the scapegoat *par excellence* for even those disciples he has presumably deceived into misleading our children, since how could “anyone in the 1970’s expect that applying Rousseau’s perspective to moral education would set children adrift, denying to them the essential guidance they need in life.”⁵⁸ Not to mention what his misguided approach—“with its high view of children’s abilities”—does to the teacher, who goes “from being a purveyor of knowledge and a representative of culture, [to being] transformed into a paper-shuffling eunuch,” thus rendering him “redundant.”⁵⁹ But is Rousseau deserving of these charges or is he simply advocating a form of education that sustains the greatest level of individual freedom possible?

Contrary to popular misgivings, Rousseau understands that although any child must in essence learn for himself, it is also necessary that for various reasons he receive guidance from those in whose care he is entrusted. Starting from the earliest stages of his development—those most explicitly requiring the freedom of the child, according to Rousseau—there is an appeal to mothers, who alone “are capable of keeping the nascent shrub away from the highway and securing it from the impact of human opinions; [to]

cultivate and water the young plant before it dies,” making sure to watch over him from his birth. He asks rhetorically, “Does the child have less need of a mother’s care than of her breast?” And, more deliberately, he declares, “From the moment that the child begins to distinguish objects, it is important that there be selectivity in those one shows him.” Rousseau goes so far as to confess that the reason he chooses to write about an *imaginary* child is because he feels “too impressed by the greatness of a [tutor’s] duties” and, thus, would rather spare any child from the hands of his own “incapacity.”⁶⁰

Even as they age, Rousseau never intends to leave children entirely to themselves; rather he admonishes the tutor to “*choose* with care their society, their occupations, and their pleasures.” For instance, to fend against the falsities around him, Rousseau recommends, “A *choice* must be made of the things that ought to be taught as well as the proper time for learning them.” As his tutor you must “*accustom* him little by little to paying continual attention to the same object,” with great vigilance, “care must be *taken* that it does not become a burden to him” and, maintaining a proper pace so as to ward off fatigue, “*keep* on the lookout and stop before he gets bored.” Further, to properly monitor your students’ rational development “*arrange* that all their experiments are connected with one another by some sort of deduction,” for “as the child develops in intelligence other important considerations requires us to be still more careful in *our choice* of his occupations.” Generally, Rousseau advises, put to use “the advantage *your* knowledge and experience give you for *showing him* the utility of everything *you* suggest to him.”⁶¹

It should be fairly obvious from these and countless other examples that Rousseau values a particular brand of deliberate guidance. What is peculiar about this brand is that the child is never to perceive it. Rousseau writes, “Let him always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are. Doubtless he ought to do only what he wants, but he ought to want only what you want him to do.”⁶² The purpose of this approach, which balances the semblance of freedom and actual control with the semblance of control and actual freedom on the part of both instructor and pupil, is to avoid the possible conflicts that may arise from the pitting of will against will. Contrary to what “progressives” who turn the reigns of their lessons over to the child’s whims may think, Rousseau is not suggesting we encourage his unabashed freedom, since the child’s lessons must be forecast to some degree by his tutor.

Dewey makes this point with the example of parents' ordinary responsibilities in the regulation of their infant's life, which reinforces the idea that considering the infant's needs does not entail relinquishing authority over her. As Dewey reminds us, "The wise mother takes account of the needs of the infant but not in a way which dispenses with her own responsibility for regulating the objective conditions under which the needs are satisfied."⁶³ This example suggests an important criterion by which to determine whether the tutor's contribution to the student's learning is a beneficial one, since, according to Dewey, it is within the teacher's power to regulate the objective conditions that will "influence directly the experience of others and thereby [places] upon him the duty of determining that environment which will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worth-while experience."⁶⁴ Rousseau does, indeed, structure lessons with an eye to their educational impact. Thus, it appears as though at least in this general sense, Rousseau fulfills the educational responsibility Dewey suggests belongs to all teachers.

Perhaps the most infamous example of this is Emile's first lesson in cosmography—one that teaches him not only the practical uses of astronomy, but also the more practical lesson of why he ought to value learning itself. Emile understands this value because he is compelled by his own needs, which on this occasion happen to include hunger and thirst, along with a hint of fear and a touch of homesickness. All the while, Rousseau is inconspicuously nudging him along, properly directing him to ask those questions he *needs* to answer in order to find his way home from the forest. In criticizing some of Rousseau's detractors, Allan Bloom captures the essence of this dynamic of freedom, power, control, and necessity:

What is forgotten is that Rousseau's full formula is that while the child must always do what he wants to do, he should want to do only what the tutor wants him to do. Since an uncorrupt will does not rebel against necessity, and the tutor can *manipulate* the appearance of necessity, he can *determine* the will without sowing the seeds of resentment. He *presents* natural necessity in palpable form to the child so that the child lives according to nature prior to understanding it.⁶⁵

In allowing Emile to *believe* he is master, he is able to learn, through practice and freedom, how to *become* his own master. Such guidance, if executed properly, fosters an intrinsic desire for learning. This intrinsic motivation to learn is an important element in Rousseau's educational theory—one that entails recognizing that individuals construct their own understanding through personal discovery.⁶⁶ Incidentally, Rousseau's account of the process of learning connects here to that of Dewey's formulation of the process of aesthetic creation and appreciation as the foundation for an educational aesthetic.

Avoiding the “butting of wills” then is necessary for at least two important reasons. First, because the earliest learning is grounded in the child's sensations, she must be given enough free latitude to *feel* for herself the direct impact of these lessons. In other words, direct experience ought to precede deliberate instruction, since it is the former that best suits the child's earliest capabilities. This also entails trusting the instincts and natural inclinations of the child. Having said all of this, Rousseau remains adamant about allowing children the freedom to *understand* the world for themselves, even beyond the stage of sensation.

For Rousseau, all learning involves some interplay, as if in a dance, whether we learn alone or alongside others. In such exchanges the one teaching or conveying an idea must allow the other to assimilate that idea in his or her individualized manner. One could say this is the only reason why we are ever warranted in asserting that an idea “belongs to” someone. For this same reason, the idea does not continue to belong to us once we share it. It is never passed along ready-made, nor is it ever received in this manner. To buy into an osmosis theory of learning is to barter in a false epistemic coin, since it is we who must make of those ideas presented to us what sense we are capable of making of them at the time. So important is the need for freedom to assimilate ideas that even the most direct forms of instruction must allow for enough play or room within which to maneuver one's own thinking about and feeling toward what is taught or conveyed.

In their dealings with the everyday obstacles, frustrations, and challenges before them, children must be allowed the freedom to learn from the consequences of both their successes and failures. Rousseau suggests we allow natural consequences to do their part, make their impact, and have their effect.⁶⁷ Incidentally, the freedom and playfulness that characterize Rousseau's oft-misunderstood pedagogy require a complementary habit of resilience with which to face life's more arduous and painful lessons.⁶⁸ Tough lessons to

learn and lessons that require toughness to teach are valuable lessons teachers today all-too-often run from, by doing everything they can to avoid even the slightest hint of conflict, frustration, or pain.⁶⁹

The second reason why we want to avoid a butting of wills is so that the tutor may establish a curriculum that is *perceived* by the child to be necessary for his own development—lessons that seem to flow from and lead naturally toward the satisfaction of his needs.⁷⁰ But to satisfy children's needs does not mean that their desires and supplications ought to be overindulged. Parents who spoil their children surreptitiously undermine their autonomy by overriding it, which is tantamount to imposing upon them the severest of restrictions on their freedom to do as they see fit for themselves. Rousseau does not intend the kind of freedom that allows students to develop their own interests in some vulgarly opportunistic sense. Rather, what is meant is simply that students are allowed to freely explore their impulses in order to discover their own needs and interests as a way of understanding their own need for an education. They must recognize and find within themselves their own interest in, need and desire for learning.

Most importantly, a harmony must be maintained between what the child expects to learn, given a perceived necessity, and what the teacher expects the child to learn. Our role as educators, administrators, policy-makers, and parents is to provide something of value to the development of our young. Rousseau's ideas suggest that the goals of those who instruct are never truly theirs; rather, they are always the goals of those whose needs as learners they are purported to satisfy. This point is so often missed by those in charge of education that Rousseau, too, finds it necessary to conceal the purpose of learning from students—to fool them into believing what ought to be unashamedly obvious to teachers. Unfortunately, it is we as educators who have fooled ourselves into believing that our goals and purposes somehow lay beyond the purview of those we serve and for whom we exist as teachers in the first place. *Our* lessons are never truly ours. Rather, they belong to those whose purposes they serve.

Further, it is a mistake to assume that teachers cannot instruct in a manner that is simultaneously student-centered and deliberate. After all, any act of instruction is an imposition, since all learning requires a certain degree of engagement that precludes, at least momentarily, engagement with anything else. I will never forget learning how to swim,

which, after being led by one of my brothers to the deep end of the pool only to be left to my own devices, I learned to do for myself. It was the threat of drowning at that point, which *imposed* upon me the need to begin stroking. Once we get past our apprehensions about the threat of imposition, the only concern of importance is whether we agree that our formal curriculum represents those lessons that most benefit our students. If so, then that education, whether formal or not, is by definition student-centered. There is no inconsistency here. The question is: how much attention and effort are we willing to expend in allowing and helping children to freely make sense of their own experiences?

The suspicion on the part of critics of “child-centered” education as to the degree of freedom Rousseau would permit Emile is likewise held of Dewey—a suspicion more often than not founded on misinterpretations of their ideas. As Sidney Hook suggests, among these “is the notion that Dewey was opposed to discipline in the way of method or subject-matter and that freedom in the classroom meant that the child was to be free to learn or not to learn anything at any time.” Quite the contrary, Hook goes on to state, “Dewey makes clear that without authority or discipline no learning is possible; but that it is the authority of method, the discipline of things, which the children must recognize if they are to achieve their best growth.”⁷¹ For some reason, those who blame “child-centered” methods for our educational woes miss this nuance; that authority and discipline may be vested in the process or outcome of learning, rather than in some external authority. Dewey captures this nuance in his account of the way a socially defined purpose not only helps to develop discipline in the individual, but also enhances his autonomy.

4.3. Movements Beyond Rousseau’s Pastoral Overture

Where Rousseau leaves himself open to criticism is in his raising Emile as a pastoral recluse. Dewey, for instance, worries that by placing all his faith in natural processes, Rousseau may actually limit Emile’s social development or simply keep him from certain valuable lessons learned only within the folds of our social exchanges. What is more, Rousseau’s pedagogic loyalty to natural processes and native inclinations is one with his staunch denunciation of what he takes to be the dulling repetitiveness of habits, which, he presumes, stifle our creativity, initiative, and freedom. For Rousseau, because our habits

restrict us, there is nothing else we can do but fall back on nature. Dewey inverts this relationship between habits and our creative impulses by revealing the active, constructive, and transformative features of habits, precisely so that we no longer must continue to rely on nature alone.

Dewey can follow Rousseau only so far until rejecting an approach to education that is both solitary and overly reliant on nature. The fact “that evil institutions and customs work almost automatically to give a wrong education which the most careful schooling cannot offset is true enough,” Dewey agrees with Rousseau. “But the conclusion is not to educate apart from the environment, but to provide an environment in which native powers will be put to better uses.”⁷² Dewey reiterates this point when describing Pestalozzi’s contributions in terms of having gone beyond Rousseau’s focus on solitary instruction, to a preferred emphasis on the social dimension of personal development.

Devotion to others took with [Pestalozzi] the place occupied by a sentimental egotism in Rousseau. For this very reason, perhaps, he had a firm grasp on a truth that Rousseau never perceived. [Pestalozzi] realized that natural development for a [person] means a social development, since the individual's vital connections are with others even more than with nature.”⁷³

The pedagogical moral to be drawn from Pestalozzi’s regard for the social, Dewey claims, is that any knowledge worth the name “is obtained only by participating intimately and actively in activities of social life.”⁷⁴ The level of trust and sense of freedom that make such intimacy possible are no small matter, since these also set the tone for our democratic engagements—commitments which Dewey submits are attributable to the deliberate and shared purpose which inheres in the very dynamic of social life when intelligently directed.

4.3.1. First Movement: Social Control

Dewey’s conception of social control helps us understand how a process or activity, rather than any particular individual, may establish the context for the discipline and purpose with which we conduct ourselves. This type of interaction is actually quite common; we find

it in the everyday games we play and among our familial transactions. According to Dewey, engaging in play assumes a level of freedom on our part, though this freedom is continuously tempered by the exigencies—be they rules, physical, or temporal constraints—of the activity itself. Accordingly, it is a mistake to assume that social engagements occur haphazardly. On the contrary, more careful planning is required, not less, since Dewey holds the educator “responsible for a knowledge of individuals and for a knowledge of subject matter that will enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to social organization.”⁷⁵ Free action that flies off in all directions is pure impulse, and though it may be executed playfully, it does not necessarily make for an interesting game. On the other hand, when individuals share in a goal, together they represent “an organization in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute something, and in which the activities in which all participate are the chief carrier of control.”⁷⁶ By identifying individually with a group’s interest, students collectively reinforce their mutual efforts and thereby take the focus away from the teacher as the source of control and center of attention.

In social activities the locus of responsibility lies with each individual as a contributing member within a community of shared interests. The actions of each are now controlled “by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are cooperative or interacting parts.”⁷⁷ Discipline arises from a committed interest and engagement on the part of students with the activity so long as they follow those rules established in line with the activity itself. Although a teacher is required to deliberately engage students in activities that are meaningful to them, it is the students’ unique interests that drive the process. Each recognizes his or her interest being accommodated as an aspect of the group’s interest. “The players,” Dewey offers, “do not feel that they are submitting to external imposition but that they are playing a game.”⁷⁸ The upshot of this is that there is no inherent contradiction within this dynamic between direction or guidance, and freedom of action. This is especially the case when each assumes a palpable responsibility in establishing the order, function, and purpose of the community and its activities.

But we must keep in mind that a genuine sense of responsibility and commitment to a goal grows out of an emotional stake—something Rousseau understands all too well, at least at the level of the individual learner. In other words, although maintaining order and fostering discipline through social control are important educational goals, beyond these

there is also a critical emotional component and advantage to creating a sense of community. As educator, Alfie Kohn explains, “In saying that a classroom or school is a ‘community,’ I mean that it is a place in which students feel cared about and are encouraged to care about each other. They experience a sense of being valued and respected; the children matter to one another and to the teacher.”⁷⁹ When classrooms are not set up in ways conducive to this democratic brand of social participation, teachers must impose and reinforce control by direct intervention. Dewey’s approach, on the other hand, relies on total social involvement giving way to self-control and self-discipline, as students and teachers work together to reach common goals. Student expectations no longer resonate from the teacher alone, but instead are diffused throughout the social dynamic of classroom activities—in the dispositions and attitudes of each participating member within the community. As such, community members lead each other without any one being subject to another.

Rousseau’s emphasis on the freedom of the child is always within a disguised context of control and direction.⁸⁰ He must literally trick Emile into believing that what his tutor requires is nothing more than what nature requires of him. This, in and of itself, is a valuable way of avoiding that pernicious butting of wills. But, by simply adding a social component to the idea of “well-regulated liberty,” Dewey has taken us beyond Rousseau. Dewey uncovers the “secret” that effective guidance involves a deliberate social cooperation between the will of the teacher and the autonomous wills of her students. Whereas for Rousseau it is necessary to conceal from his pupil the very dynamic that drives his interest in learning, Dewey instead, by making this source of motivation social, renders it public.

4.3.2. Second Movement: Habits Revisited

For Rousseau, nature—much like the social for Dewey—contains its own regulative and ordering principles. These are reflected in those parameters established by necessity, which circumscribe, among other things, our physical and biological possibilities. Nature sets limits on what we can desire or will, as well as upon our capabilities to realize for ourselves what we desire or will. That is, according to Rousseau, until we are introduced to those artificial needs born of our habituation. The real danger of accustoming a child to anything, Rousseau warns, is that “soon desire no longer comes from need but from habit, or,

rather, habit adds a new need to that of nature; that is what must be prevented.” And so, in order to avoid inculcating artificial needs in the child, Rousseau pleads, “The only habit that a child should be allowed is to contract none.”⁸¹

As one might imagine, Rousseau is unforgiving when it comes to any unnatural constraint inflicted upon our native tendencies. The unfortunate upshot of this negative attitude is his identification of habituation with the goals of formal and directed education, which leaves us with two related problems. First, if we concede that habits are mere impediments to our freedom, creativity, and initiative, then we fail to appreciate their transformative roles and, of course, educational potential. Second, our possibilities for personal development are severely restricted so long as these avenues are circumscribed by the scope of our native capacities alone.⁸²

Unlike Rousseau, Dewey invites us to also see the constructive side of habits—as resources for the creative expansion of possibilities for continued growth. According to Dewey, a Rousseauian rejection of habits is warranted only when referring to those learned through repetition. But repetition is not the sole source of habits, not to mention of that flexible kind that leads to growth. Alternatively, Dewey offers, “Success, not repetition, is the true principle in the formation of habits.” Specifically, Dewey adds, it is the success from our attempt to learn something new that “is worth a hundred humdrum routine repetitions in forming the habit.”⁸³ Dewey here suggests that it is by succeeding at certain tasks that we progressively hone in on, fine-tune, and reshape our dispositions—experience growth—and thereby give new meaning to our subsequent experience.

Even in their conservatory or “place-holder” capacity, Dewey recognizes the creative flexibility of habits. We can see this flexibility in his account of the relation between impulse and habit. Whereas an impulse indicates an instigation or initiation to action, habits represent the more stable elements in our behavior. Nonetheless, habits are not as static as Rousseau fears, but rather are dynamic in at least two ways. First, as just discussed, habits are reshaped in the processes by which we learn something new. This is what Dewey means when he equates the adaptation of habits with learning or growth. Second, even in their more stable capacity, habits offer us a sounding board—a standard—against which to interpret our impulses. Dewey scholar, Thomas Alexander describes this dynamic trait of habits:

Not only is the old habit immediately involved, relived as it were, but it provides an interpretive structure or context to the immediate moment, raising the experience to a level of complexity and integration which it otherwise would not possess. In this process, the habit itself expands and grows as it tries to adapt to the new circumstances so that the domain of organized responses develops; a premonition of the growth of meaning in experience.⁸⁴

In other words, our habits are what allow us to make sense of and give form to our impulses, since the latter always occur within an experiential context that is at least partly stable.

Together, impulse and habit form the active and passive elements of experience, respectively—an embrace most worthy of notice when it occurs in the service of learning or artistic expression. “In an ideal learning situation,” Alexander writes, “both the stable and the precarious are necessary preconditions for a consciousness which learns and grows.”⁸⁵ Our habits form the axis around which the dance of learning revolves. Habit centers our experiences, providing our impulses a harbor from which to venture in new directions and a place to return with new information to be used once again in the continuous reshaping of experience and future impulse. At the same time, whereas habits provide stability, our “[impulses] are the agencies of deviation, for giving new directions to old habits, changing their quality.”⁸⁶

Though Dewey is clearly supportive of the free expression of natural impulses, nevertheless they must be guided by intelligent purpose. Unguided impulse too easily turns to misguided energy, which may lead to negative, if not disastrous, results. The mistake of equating “freedom with immediate execution of impulses and desires,” Dewey attributes to a “confusion of impulse with purpose.”⁸⁷ For Dewey, purpose implies intelligent direction of our impulses and desires, which in turn requires thoughtful, that is, patient action. Just as one cannot hold both feet in the air while running, likewise one cannot continue to act impulsively and think at the same time. Thinking checks our impulses and desires, until further understanding directs their energies toward some more enabling purpose or aim. As a result, “the intellectual anticipation, the idea of consequences, [blends] with desire and impulse to acquire moving force. It then gives direction to what otherwise is blind, while

desire gives ideas impetus and momentum.”⁸⁸ Thinking, now in alliance with freedom and, as I shall argue next, emotion, commandeers active impulse in the direction of intelligent purpose and greater freedom.

Meanwhile, helping a child understand that self-control realized in the process of thinking is not an affront to freedom, but rather that invoking thought is what one ought to do precisely in those moments when thought is most necessary—when we face the risks from allowing our blind impulses and desires to direct our actions—is an important step towards a self-directed life. Dewey suggests we use the energy from the child’s impulses as the fuel that drives the engine of learning, as we steer these toward purpose, that is, toward intelligent action. Rather than expending his own energies in the continuous opposition of impulses, the teacher, in whose person the forces of control typically reside, instead allows the purpose of the lesson to piggyback on the energies of the student’s drives. Consequently, the child does not see her freedom opposed or thwarted, which then presents a further opportunity for her to view her own experience as appreciated and, therefore, meaningful. Also, it prevents the teacher from having to waste energy that could be well spent elsewhere in the service of educational purpose.

4.3.3. Third Movement: Nature’s Encore

If we cannot redeem the educational value and function of habits, then we are left with nothing but our natures. Certainly, even Rousseau must grant that some habits are beneficial for Emile’s development, such as those that establish in him a disposition toward creativity and self-sufficiency—not to mention the habits of resilience, single-mindedness and steadfastness—all of which require a habit of self-discipline. At the same time, Rousseau is not one to shy away from the idea that we may put our trust entirely in those inclinations that nature alone confers upon us. As a matter of fact, this is a defining theme of his philosophy in general, although, according to Dewey, also a limitation. Rousseau assumes that anything that comes from nature is good. Yet, though the forces with which the necessities of nature impress upon us their control are often allies to freedom, the question remains: can nature alone yield sufficient opportunities for our proper development and fulfillment?

Dewey proposes that although nature provides us with the “raw material and the starting-point of growth” which are disclosed in our “native capacities,”⁸⁹ these are simply not enough to allow us to un-tap our fullest potential. Of course, given the spontaneity of nature, if our native capacities and inclinations are allowed adequate freedom, they may very well flourish naturally. But, according to Dewey, this leaves our efforts to mere capriciousness, which is not enough to extend our ends to the heights of learning, not to mention artistic expression. Nature is simply not enough because it cannot alone provide the ends for our most important human endeavors.⁹⁰

If properly tended, the folds of experiential ambiguity give rise to order and solace, which together represent our rational and emotional efforts to navigate the dynamic interplay of learning—the give-and-take between freedom and control, impulse and habit, initiative and instruction, the playfulness with which lessons are made palatable and the toughness with which they must be endured. Key to absolving Rousseau of the charges leveled against him—charges that stem from the real errors of progressives—is to recognize that Emile’s freedom does not translate into absolute license. On the contrary, his freedom, to the extent that it serves an educational purpose in the Deweyan sense, rather than being antithetical to growth, implies a certain development toward such. The mistake of many progressive educators is found in the way in which they utilize outward freedom as license for the inchoate expressions of children’s desires and impulses, rather than as an impetus for self-reflection on the purposes of their actions. Genuine freedom has to mean more. It has to mean action that is both guided by intelligent purpose and meaningful to the individual acting.

By revealing a more positive rendering of habits, one that allows us to creatively reach beyond the limitations of our native capacities, Dewey also sheds light on how we might introduce our impulses, as well as our emotions, into the arenas of intelligence and purposeful action. For, unless we free up our habits from the realm of mere nature, we remain accomplices to an ongoing vulgarization of passion, impulse, and emotion.⁹¹ This means that although we may recognize these latter as forces that drive our actions, they are nonetheless still alienated from the intelligent, purposeful and, generally, the more meaningful aspects of our experience. Despite the long tradition of philosophic attempts to

subdue these forces, current findings in neurophysiology and cognitive psychology tell a different story—one that Rousseau, through sheer intuition, began to tell long ago.

4.4. Nurturing Nature's Passion

By annihilating desires, you annihilate the mind.

Anyone without passions has within him

No principle of action, or motive to act.

—Claude-Adrian Helvetius, *De l'Esprit*

Given the creature comforts of current civilization, many of our young may no longer find themselves confronted with the ruthlessness of a bygone primitive state. Nonetheless, they are faced with new challenges and threats to their survival. Among these are depression, anxiety, obesity, unwanted pregnancies, drug addiction, violence, emotional indifference and, ironically, the very nurturance that in attempts to shield them from peril only further threatens their well-being by extending their dependence. It is within this context that we may find the redeeming value of Rousseau's persistent attention to individual freedom and the nurturing of emotion, in his exhortation to never relinquish our personal responsibility in the pursuit of happiness. Reaching happiness, he recommends, is only possible when we cease to reach beyond our selves, that is, when we cease to define our selves in relation to unnecessary desires or simply learn to desire only what is necessary.⁹²

But this is easier said than done, especially within an economic culture that forges its very identity by inventing and propagating artificial needs, and then cleverly turning these needs into unnecessary wants.⁹³ The great mistake made in the pursuit of personal fulfillment is allowing one's desire to exceed one's power to realize what one desires. As Rousseau sees it, "A being endowed with senses whose faculties [powers] equaled his desires would be an absolutely happy being," as far as "it is in diminishing the excess of the desires over the faculties and putting power and will in perfect equality" that true happiness consists.⁹⁴ Since one day Emile shall take his place within civil society, he requires a disposition shaped by

necessity and capability, rather than innate whim or the opinions of others. Impulses, emotions, and passions alike, are to be checked by necessity early on and later by reason.

Embedded within Rousseau's pedagogy we find a smattering of Stoic principles. Not only is this evident in his criticism of modernity, which follows in line with the Stoic ideal of maintaining a "proper" relation to nature, but also in his appeal to a kind of Stoic *ataraxia* we may achieve by balancing our desires with our capabilities—our will with our power. This may seem ironic given his "romanticism," since this balance must be achieved through the rational coordination of our emotions, as we navigate the currents of passion within society's corruptive waters in pursuit of happiness.⁹⁵

It may be difficult to find a better example of Stoic virtue than in the person of Emile, as testified by just about any succinct account of Stoic ideals. Take, for instance, the life of Marcus Aurelius, who personifies the Stoic will "to find contentment, to avoid misery and unhappiness, to find freedom of action and avoid becoming a slave to the 'passions', to become self-reliant and independent."⁹⁶ Compare this to Emile, who is able to think for himself, is independent and self-sufficient, steadfast and singled-minded, and in possession of a disposition toward a self-regulating freedom. Having been made free first by being taught to yield to necessity, he never loses sight of what it means to be his own person—a freedom he carries in his heart and "takes with him everywhere."⁹⁷

But when it comes to achieving a Stoic-like excellence, the idea is not to annihilate human emotion and passion entirely; rather, it is to transform their negative manifestations into positive ones. Neither is it an attempt to anesthetize us of our emotions. Stoic *apathia* is different from the way we understand apathy today. Although a Stoic seeks release from the frustration, anxiety, and despair brought on by certain emotional states, they regard these as self-inflicted. The release then is not so much from emotion itself but rather from our unnecessary attachments to these, which we allow to consume our lives. As a matter of fact, one could argue that in contrast to today's emotional indifference, the Stoics care very much about their emotional states—so much so that they *live* to achieve emotional harmony. Emile's upbringing is one continuous lesson in the pursuit of emotional solace as a backdrop to his happiness.

Consequently, Stoic *ataraxia* is achieved by means of a rational ordering of our experience that lends itself to and actually fosters our emotional maturity, so that our

emotions are not destroyed *per se* but instead are redirected and reconstituted—much like our habits— toward beneficial ends. Rather than sequester them, we must commandeer our emotions in order to avoid becoming either lifeless and passionless automatons or victims of their erratic and sometimes violent upheavals. But taking possession of these is not something we can leave strictly to reason; rather it must be done in a manner that incorporates our emotional states as integral elements of intelligent, creative, and purposeful human action.⁹⁸

4.4.1. Striking a Balance

For Rousseau, the balance to be sought in pursuit of “true happiness” is not between freedom and control, but rather is found “in diminishing the excess of the desires over the faculties [capabilities] and putting power and will in perfect equality,” which further entails that “the truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases.”⁹⁹ What this means is that freedom is no longer opposed to control, but instead appears as an aspect of both our will and power. Freedom is an integral element of both what we desire and the capability or power by means of which we achieve or acquire what we desire. It is the balance of the two—always within a context of freedom—that determines the degree of self-control one possesses. Simply stated, Rousseau recommends that what is necessary for the exercise of self-control is that we balance free action with our ability to bring it to fruition.

The individual able to exercise self-control in this manner is happiest, since she is less prone to disappointment, so long as she does not desire or will more than is necessary, or more than she is capable of attaining. At the same time, she is also able to avoid the possible disappointment that comes from an inability to realize the full potential of her power due to a lack of desire. The result is a symbiosis between freedom and control—the latter now understood in Rousseauian terms as the self-control one exhibits as a result of a balanced yet free expression of one’s will and power.

Having a palpable sense of freedom is crucial to our development. Dewey stresses this point in his discussion of the benefits of “outward” freedom; one of which is to allow children enough leeway in expression to give their teachers a greater understanding of who they are. He goes so far as to link the free expression of impulses with the freedom to learn,

stating in Rousseauian language that, “Liberty for the child is the chance to test all impulses and tendencies on the world of things and people in which he finds himself,” so that “consequently he becomes acquainted with his world and also learns the use and limits of his own powers.”¹⁰⁰ Further, Dewey contends, there is no other way to discover the nature of an educational purpose unless we allow for the free expression of the child, since “every pupil must have a chance to show what he truly is, so that the teacher can find out what he needs to make him a complete human being.”¹⁰¹

Perhaps Rousseau’s most perceptive contribution to pedagogy is his understanding that freedom is not achieved as a purely intellectual exercise, since it requires an emotional predisposition on the student’s part to the possibilities of his own freedom. As Kohn proposes:

Students need to *feel* safe in order to take intellectual risks; they must be comfortable before they can venture into the realm of discomfort. Few things stifle creativity like the fear of being judged or humiliated. Thus, a supportive environment will allow people of any age to play with possibilities and challenge themselves to stretch their thinking. The moral: if you want academic excellence, you have to attend to how children *feel* about school and about each other.¹⁰²

For Rousseau, freedom is not felt—let alone enjoyed—through reason alone, since it is emotion that forms the very ground upon which any efforts to direct our conduct with full freedom of purpose may effectively take root.¹⁰³ Rousseau’s developmental-stage theory calls for first properly nourishing the soils of our sensations and emotions in order to make them receptive to their eventual tilling and cultivation by reason in the furtherance of freedom.

Rousseau brings to our attention the pervasive role of emotion and feeling in human action—albeit in a discerning and reflective capacity. Though he explicitly criticizes Locke, who is emphatic when it comes to developing reason in the child as early as possible, Rousseau does qualify his criticism. He admits:

I am very far from thinking that children have no kind of reasoning. On the contrary, I see that they reason very well in everything they know that relates to their immediate and palpable interest. But one is mistaken [in] ascribing to them knowledge they do not have and making them reason about what they could not understand... Let us transform our sensations into ideas but not leap all of a sudden from objects of sense to intellectual objects; since it is by way of the former that we ought to get to the latter.¹⁰⁴

Thus, we see the dawning of reason in the relations and connections of images drawn first from among our sensations, which only later give way to abstraction and concepts.¹⁰⁵ Reason, which begins to develop as self-awareness, gives rise to the need for children to foresee their ends, signaling the rudiments of intellectual development. “What is that good for?” becomes the “sacred”¹⁰⁶ question that bridges the earliest forms of thinking from the sensation-generated images to the more abstract forms of reasoning. What is accomplished at the level of sensation lays the foundation for reasoning, including the determination of memories. Utility serves to bridge this gap, by inviting and promoting foresight as to the purposes of those things we sense and perceive, making these purposes personally meaningful.

But it is our emotions and their development that give way to reason. Most important among these are those associated with our self-love (*amour de soi*), which serves not only as a natural impetus to our self-preservation, but is also the native passion that impels us to seek learning. Rousseau describes this natural passion and its progression toward rationality with the analogy of a young man who no longer needs the care of his family. He is in possession of a natural liberty which makes known to him that, “His first law is to attend to his own preservation; his first cares are those which he owes to himself, and as soon as he comes to years of discretion, being sole judge of the means adapted for his own preservation, he becomes his own master.”¹⁰⁷ When we respect this passion-driven desire for self-preservation, seeds of sensation are able to blossom into flowers of reason.¹⁰⁸

4.4.2. Reason and Emotion Reconciled

What is unique about Rousseau's epistemic contentions concerning the progression from sensation, feeling, and emotion to abstract reasoning is that learning does not involve processes that are set off from one another; rather, the latter simply grows and follows from the former. But until recently, garnering respect for the role of emotion in human action has meant facing an uphill battle. Robert Solomon describes its long-standing segregation from reasoning:

Among the many meanings that have been suggested for the concepts of reason and rationality, none has been more destructive than those that systematically oppose reason to emotion, that is, to oppose rationality as reasonableness to being emotional as being *unreasonable*. To be rational is to be dispassionate, "cool," unmoved by emotion. To be emotional, by contrast, is to be blind to reason. I think that this opposition needs to be reconsidered, and the priority of dispassionate (or passionless) reason deeply questioned.¹⁰⁹

Our emotions are typically construed as the parts of human behavior that are most subjective, erratic, uncontrollable, and whimsical. As Matthew Lipman describes it, "One's emotions are supposed to have a blurring, distorting effect upon one's thinking," making them unqualified causes of "error and falsehood."¹¹⁰ But emotions are more than this. They exist as responses—physical, chemical, electrical—to an environment that constantly impinges upon us. In turn, our emotional states arm us with an interpretation of sorts with which we are then able to respond to our surroundings. Dewey, who holds that "intelligence does not generate action except as it is enkindled by feeling," goes so far as to say that without emotion we would not be able to navigate the pathways of our choices.¹¹¹ Thinking has now simply been broadened to include, along with rationality itself, the complex of our emotional capabilities, feelings, and our conscious awareness of these states. These include our affective, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses.

According to Rousseau, our passion for self-preservation brings to the foreground the first manifestations of emotion. Be it the fears of possible threats or joys of satiating our appetites, our emotions continue to play a crucial role throughout our development. If this development occurs entirely within the realm of our natural capabilities and inclinations,

then surely we cannot expect to raise passion and emotion out of the mire of nature. Unless we stop associating passion and emotion with brute nature, these will never garner the respect necessary to be considered seriously as constitutive elements in the processes of deliberation or intelligent and creative human action in general. More importantly, by denying emotion its proper place in human decision-making, we miss two important results. First, we fail to incorporate the affective dispositions required of us to come to terms with the decisions necessary to realize an authentic democracy. These include, but are not restricted to dispositions to selflessness, empathy, and open-mindedness, not to mention a will for delayed gratification, all of which are avenues for considering the good of others. Second, we may miss entirely Rousseau's point that a sense of compassion is first born of a sense of self-love (*amour de soi*), from which alone arises the understanding of our mutual dependence on and ability to consider the needs and interests of others. In other words, as Rousseau tries to make clear, we learn to appreciate and have compassion toward others because we first feel this appreciation and compassion toward ourselves.

Echoing Helvetius, Rousseau writes, "I would find someone who wanted to prevent the birth of the passions almost as mad as someone who wanted to annihilate them. Our passions are the principal instruments of our preservation."¹¹² As such, they are what motivate us to attain the self-mastery necessary for our preservation, not to mention our intellectual, moral, and creative fulfillments. Certainly intellect may allow us to deliberate our way past our passions and emotions, or it may simply put us in the position to know more clearly what it is we desire—to be more imaginative about what is important to us. Just as there are those who with malicious intent employ reason to more creatively strategize evil, there are also those who employ it to procure an enduring sense of fulfillment. If it is indeed an emotional commitment that compels us to realize our ideals, then our commitments—whether educational, political, or familial—must be understood as genuinely personal investments. Unfortunately, when we are deprived the freedom of our personal convictions and sentiments—whether the deprivation is self-inflicted or externally imposed—our ideals do not stand a chance.

It is easy to admire Rodan's *Thinker*, sitting ever-so quietly in his pensive stance, immersed in utter thought, detached from all else. But why is it that no one ever bothers to ask how the poor devil is *feeling*? Surely he is thinking about something; but why so

intensely? What problem could possibly enthrall him into such a perpetual despondence? Surely it is a problem, a challenge, a choice to be made that has set him upon thinking. Whether they serve as impetus to or are the very driving forces of our cognitions, our emotions and feelings steer us in the directions they plot in response to the variegated folds of experience we encounter. Aristotle wrote, “All men by nature desire to know.”¹¹³ And since then, men have been trying to separate what it means to “know” from emotion, passion, and desire, rather than understanding that in seeking to know, reason must surrender itself to these. Otherwise there is no seeking.

Before moving on to pull taut the thread that brings together our rational and emotional capabilities—cognition and passion—into unified and heightened expressions Dewey refers to as ‘aesthetic,’ we turn first to an exploration and application of Dewey’s educational principles in the ongoing struggle against student alienation. Unfortunately, it is within our very educational institutions—those realms beyond our domestic existence and influence that we reserve for the deliberate inculcation of our humanity—that we find such alienating and dehumanizing practices entrenched. Several facets of alienation, along with some of its manifestations in the lives of students in particular, are shown to be inimical to an aesthetic and democratic vision of pedagogy according to which individuals learn for themselves what is of real significance, whether individually or socially, in the pursuit of richer, more fulfilling lives.

¹ The education of females, specifically that of Rousseau's imaginary Sophie, an education which Rousseau himself suggests is in certain respects naturally different from that of males, is deliberately passed over in what follows. This is mainly due to the fact that if we do not focus on the education of Emile, then we are left with an incomplete pedagogic theory. In other words, if we could not focus on Emile's education, there would not be much to say as far as an educational theory according to Rousseau. With that said, I will have to presume that Emile's education is general and significant enough to be of benefit to both sexes.

² I believe many of the problems people seem to have with Rousseau's championing of freedom are as much Rousseau's fault as they are of those who misconstrue the meaning of freedom itself. Those who are critical of Rousseau are often those who fear freedom and its empowering potential the most. Rather than focus on the red herring of Rousseau's presumed excessive and wanton pedagogic liberality, our energies might be better spent exploring ways in which we may more intelligently harness freedom in efforts to realize greater human potential in both thought and action.

³ Plato, *The Apology* (42a), translated by G. M. A. Grube in *Five Dialogues* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), p. 44.

⁴ In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau concedes the difficulty with trying to realize a democratic political order unless the State is relatively small. Citizens would have to be gods to be equal to the task; "so perfect a government is unsuited to men." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social ou Principes du Droit Politique* [1762], Lester G. Crocker (ed.), translated by Henry J. Tozer as *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), Book III, chapter 4, p. 71.

⁵ Rousseau proposes that aristocracy may be the best way to realize the democratic ideal, so long as it is truly a "rule by the best." The salient feature of any worthwhile aristocracy is "that the wisest should govern the multitude, when we are sure that they will govern it for its

advantage and not for their own” (*Ibid*, Book III, chapter 5, p. 73). The same reason that transforms the nature of aristocracies, from those that entail a rule by the best to those that are ruled by those who gain enough institutional or hereditary power to proclaim themselves the best, also sheds light on why Rousseau was leery of civil unions in general. It is artificial forms of power and criteria of false accomplishments that Rousseau sees as weakening opportunities for true democracy.

⁶ Notwithstanding the apparent contradictions in his personal life, which include an amorous relationship with Mme. de Warrens, a woman he also referred to as *Maman*, and the well noted fact that he abandoned all five children born to his wife, Therese Levasseur; acts, he writes in his *Confessions*, he came to regret.

⁷ I am borrowing from Thomas Kuhn’s account of the way in which a particular scientific paradigm subsists within the folds of “normal” science, between a previously held paradigm and an imminent revolutionary shift in such. Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁸ A similar thesis forms the backdrop of Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, which title refers to the temperature at which paper begins to burn. The novel depicts firemen who no longer put out fires, but instead ignite them as they set about burning books. In Bradbury’s futuristic society, one that is frighteningly similar to ours in its methods of social control, books are kept from the public because it is presumed the possibilities they present only bring about greater misery. In their stead, the populace is provided with enough television and pharmaceuticals to deaden the awareness of their ennui.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur la Sciences et les Arts* [1750], translated by Ian C. Johnston as *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, from here on, *First Discourse*, (<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/rousseau/firstdiscourse.htm>), released March 2005, p. 4.

¹⁰ Rousseau elaborates on this position in his *Second Discourse*, where he declares that social-economic inequalities are a direct result of private property relations legally sanctioned by none other than the political state. Strictly as a matter of convention, mankind has collectively “chosen” to accept their position, having been tricked, as it were, into believing these relations inevitable. Rousseau explains: "The first man, who after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, 'this is mine', and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'Origines et le Fondements de l'Inegalite Parmi les Hommes* [1755], Lester G. Crocker (ed.), translated by anonymous (1761) as *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men*, from here on, *Second Discourse* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), p. 211.

¹¹ Rousseau, *First Discourse*, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹² During a certain stage in Emile’s development (early adolescence) the study of sciences is introduced and deemed not only appropriate, but also necessary, since this will help expand the horizon of his senses and thereby curb any negative influence his imagination may have upon him. The line between the positive and negative is a fine one, as attested in Dewey’s echoes of Rousseau: “Man's increasing intellectual command over nature—in his science—seems to reveal mankind absolutely caught and helpless within a vast unrelenting mechanism which goes its way without reference to human value or care for human purpose; Man's command over the means of life, his industrial conquest, seems only to have sharpened prior existing social inequities.” Dewey, “Tolstoy’s Art” in *Unpublished Lectures*, LW 17:391.

¹³ Though I allude to other examples later in this chapter, the evidence amassed in connection to the possible detrimental impact from computer use, particularly in the lower grades, is especially telling. This is problematic in light of our current technological obsession to provide a computer for just about every child, despite evidence against the benefits of doing so. Sue Ferguson reports on a landmark study conducted in November

2004, by Thomas Fuchs and Ludger Woessmann, from the University of Munich, who claim that:

While computers clearly have a place in education, the evidence is mounting that our obsessive use of information technology is dumbing us down. While they can be engaging and resourceful tools for learning—if used in moderation—computers and the Internet can also distract kids from homework, encourage superficial and uncritical thinking, replace face-to-face interaction between students and teachers, and lead to compulsive behavior.

Furthermore, as reported by Ferguson, in a study by the US Alliance for Childhood, *Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood*, it is concluded: “We do not know what the consequences of such a machine-driven education will be. But we suspect a narrower and shallower range of intellectual insights, and a stunting of imagination. In short, a high-tech agenda seems likely to erode our most precious long-term intellectual reserves—our children’s minds.” Sue Ferguson, “How Computers Make Our Kids Stupid,” in *Macleans.CA*, (<http://www.macleans.ca/topstories/education/article>) June 6, 2005.

¹⁴ It is important to note this is not an attempt on Rousseau’s part to have these conditions coexist. He is explicit about not wanting to return to nature, suggesting instead that we move from it toward greater freedom, and from society as it exists, to the kind of society he is hopeful we may realize.

¹⁵ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 6, p. 17.

¹⁶ Allan Bloom, in his insightful introduction to *Emile*, writes of “Rousseau’s paradoxes” that they “are not expressions of a troubled soul but accurate reflections of an incoherence in the structure of the world we all face...and Emile is an experiment in restoring harmony to that world by reordering the emergence of man’s acquisitions in such a way as to avoid the imbalances created by them, while allowing the full actualization of man’s potential.” In

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou De l'Education* [1762], translated by Allan Bloom as *Emile or On Education* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1979), p. 3.

¹⁷ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 6, pp. 17-8.

¹⁸ Bloom, "Introduction," *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 4, p. 12. Rousseau's point here smacks of a similar criticism by Seneca of those "delicate creatures" who by having to rely on the comforts cultivated in luxury thereby unlearn to do and think for themselves. See Lucius Annaeus Seneca, "On the Shortness of Life" in *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca: Essays and Letters*, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958), section 12, pp. 60-3.

²⁰ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 4, pp. 12-3.

²¹ Rousseau comes down hard on monarchies:

One essential and inevitable defect, which will always render a monarchical government inferior to a republican one, is that...those who succeed in monarchies are most frequently only petty mischief-makers, petty knaves, petty intriguers, whose petty talents, which enable them to attain high posts in courts, only serve to the public their ineptitude as soon as they have attained them (*Ibid.*, Book III, chapter 6, pp. 76-7).

²² *Ibid.*, Book I, chapter 8, p. 23. Incidentally, those who accuse Rousseau of propounding an overindulgent pedagogy, pay heed!

²³ *Ibid.*, chapter 6, pp. 18-9.

²⁴ See Dewey's *Experience and Education* (LW 13) chapter four, for an explanation of the dynamics of social control. As we shall see later in connection with Rousseau's "well-regulated liberty," Dewey offers: "The general conclusion I would draw is that control of individual actions is affected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts" (Dewey, LW 13: 33).

²⁵ Rousseau adds: "[And] never daring to ask ourselves, in the midst of so much philosophy, humanity and politeness, and such sublime moral codes, we have nothing but a deceitful and frivolous exterior, honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness" (Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 245). Ken Kesey tells a similar tale of complacency among the mentally disturbed. In his novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* [1962] (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), Kesey portrays how society's instruments of institutional normalization and control are used to inflict their unrelenting pessimism about human possibility, individual initiative, freedom, and human strength; a prescription self-administered by those who voluntarily reside in the asylum.

²⁶ John Taylor Gatto, the New York State Teacher-of-the-Year for 1991 turned education theorist and activist, presents us with a harrowing example of minimized agency within formal institutions of learning, suggesting that "if children could be cloistered with other children, stripped of responsibility and independence, encouraged to develop only the trivializing emotions of greed, envy, jealousy, and fear, they would grow older but never truly grow up." And, consequently, he adds: "We have become a nation of children, happy to surrender our judgments and our wills to political exhortations and commercial blandishments that would insult actual adults." John Taylor Gatto, "Against School: How Public Education Cripples Our Kids, and Why" in *Harper's Magazine* (September 2001), pp. 7, 8.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975), translated by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House Inc., [1977] 1979), p. 201.

²⁸ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 2, p. 9. Neil Postman makes a similar point by suggesting that when our lives are proliferated by consumer goods and overwhelmed by visceral forms of entertainment, there is no need to mandate or proscribe what people are reading, because no one cares to read—amongst the proliferation of empty fulfillments we simply amuse ourselves to death. See Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

²⁹ Michele S. Moses, “The Relationship Between Self-Determination, the Social Context of Choice, and Authenticity” in *Philosophy of Education-Yearbook* (2000), p. 296.

³⁰ Alain De Botton, *Status Anxiety* (New York: Random House Inc., 2004), pp. 43-4. De Botton suggests that with the greater availability of commercial goods—appropriately dubbed ‘objects of desire’ within a culture driven by consumption—there is an expansion of desire. Keeping pace with what we are now at least in principle able to attain or what we convince ourselves is within our grasp, gives us something new to worry about—“A worry so pernicious as to be capable of ruining extended stretches of our lives; that we are in danger of failing to conform to the ideals of success laid down by our society” (pp. vii-viii). In the last section of this chapter, I address Rousseau’s idea of happiness, which he believes is found in the balance of desire and power. De Botton credits Rousseau for having brought this ‘status anxiety’ to our attention.

³¹ William Glasser, in his *Choice Theory in the Classroom* (New York: Harper Collins Pub. Inc., [1986] 1988), notices the shift after World War II, from an educational culture that connected learning with survival to one that replaced this with a concern for acceptance (p. 66-7).

³² Rousseau warns of how spoiling the child causes us to step “outside of nature...when, instead of neglecting a mother’s care [she] carries it to excess; when she makes an idol of her child; when she increases and nurses his weakness in order to prevent him from feeling it—a barbarous precaution” (*Emile*, Book I, p. 47).

³³ For an insightful and lucid assessment of the individual’s relation to the social in our current cultural climates, see Lisa Eaker, “The Social Sacrifices of Being Modern” (Ph.D. dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, 2003). Eaker echoes Rousseau when suggesting that, “our modern scripts are informed by an impoverished notion of individuality that confuses idiosyncratic individual preference with authentic self-creation.” And she further suggests that, “In order to enliven the role of individual we must also enliven the social realm from which this actor takes his cues” (p. xviii). Eaker takes her cues from, among others, Marshall Berman. But it is Morris Berman, who in *The Twilight of American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), argues that cultural preservation may depend not on collective efforts, but rather on the individual conscience in the form of a “new monastic individual” – one who is willing to reject the corporate consumerism that drives and shapes the values of our so-called advanced cultures. Interestingly enough, I do not think these accounts are mutually exclusive, since enlivening our social matrices, as Eaker recommends, may require the steadfastness of Berman’s “monastic individual.” Berman’s scathing criticism of scientific and technological advances is itself criticized by Jeffrey Shallit in his review at, <http://www.cs.waterloo.ca/~shallit/berman.html>, (retrieved May 2, 2005).

³⁴ Gatto opens our eyes further with his disturbing description of the New York City public-school students he taught for twenty-six years. In “The Seven-Lesson School Teacher: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Education” (live recording 1998), he confesses the following before an audience at a conference on home schooling:

The children I teach are indifferent to the adult world; they cannot concentrate; they have a poor sense of the future—the present is the

boundary of their consciousness; they are cruel to each other; they lack compassion for misfortune; they laugh at weakness; they have contempt for people who need help; they are uneasy with intimacy or candor; the outer personality they develop is borrowed from television shows—it was not earned by commitment or time spent alone in the wells of spirit from where human uniqueness is derived; they are strikingly materialistic and desperately dependent on others.

³⁵ So disconnected is the modern ‘careerist’ from nature that Tolstoy must remind us how easily he forgets the naturalness of his own mortality—believing it impossible that he should have to die, for, “that would be too terrible.” Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* [1886], translated by Lynn Solotaroff (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 94. Besides the “floating kidney” that leads directly to his demise, what ails Ivan Ilyich most is his having to live with the denial of death all around him, “this falseness in himself and in those around him” (p. 105). Living the dream of a modern careerist—wholeheartedly pursuing status, power, and wealth—causes poor Ivan to compromise his integrity by prostituting his identity and forsaking those loving relationships that would otherwise help form his humanity. In order to “succeed” he is compelled to abandon his humanity.

³⁶ Here, Buber’s contrast between I-It and I-Thou relationships is informative. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou* [1923], translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Simon & Schuster, [1971] 1976). According to Buber, our relationships with things and others, which represent the essential manner in which we experience the world, are reduced in our modern transactions to mere I-It encounters of unsympathetic opportunism. This is in stark contrast to the compassionate disposition that comes to inform Emile’s passions.

³⁷ As we can see from the following list, many of the most renowned philosophers and practitioners of education have either an intellectual or methodological heritage traceable to Rousseau. Itemizing the connections among these and their specific debts to Rousseau would require a separate dissertation. Among these are: Johann Pestalozzi; Johann Herbart;

Friedrich Froebel, inventor of the kindergarten; Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf Schools; John Dewey; Maria Montessori, pediatrician and founder of her own order of elementary schools; A. S. Neill, founder of Summerhill Schools; Jean Piaget, who developed a cognitive-stages theory of development; Paulo Freire; Sigmund Freud; Erik Erickson; Lawrence Kohlberg, who devised a moral-stages theory of development; and, Carol Gilligan, whose criticism of Kohlberg's male-oriented model has transformed the ways we conceive of female moral development. In most, if not all of these, it is either the emphasis on the child or a more explicit stage-theory of development that bears the distinct mark of Rousseau.

³⁸ Comenius writes: "The education of men should be commenced in the springtime of life; that is to say, in boyhood (for boyhood is the equivalent of spring, youth of summer, manhood of autumn, and old age winter)... All subjects that are to be learned should be arranged so as to suit the age of the students." John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, Cf. Frederick Mayer, *The Great Teachers* (New York: Citadel Press, 1967), p. 158.

³⁹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* [1693], in *John Locke on Politics and Education*, (Roslyn, NY: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1947), p. 267, 308.

⁴⁰ According to Rousseau's own admission, his "whole book is only a constant proof of this fundamental principle of education"—that Emile should not learn anything before that stage, which in due time, his capabilities may sustain such lessons. Rousseau, *Emile*, Book III, p.178.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Book II, p. 79. During the time in which he writes *Emile*, Rousseau claims that approximately half of all children do not live beyond the age of eight.

⁴² Dewey, *The Schools of Tomorrow* (1915), MW 8: 213. As I discuss in the concluding chapter, this emphasis on the final product at the expense of the process, whether in education or in the realm of art, is at the heart of the kind of fragmentation and compartmentalization of experience Dewey is attempting to overcome. Dewey explains:

“The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that its qualities as perceived have controlled the question of production” (LW 10: 55). In other words, not only are we aware of the process, but we are also constantly aware of the relation of that process to our proposed end. The process and result are to some extent inextricable. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, opposition to this view is further exacerbated by alienation and irrelevance since, as Philip Zeltner explains in relation to Dewey’s aesthetics, “if an individual in no way perceives the relationship between doing and undergoing, then no meaning comes into being” (*John Dewey’s Aesthetic Philosophy*, p.24).

⁴³ Rousseau, *Emile, Op. cit.*, Book II, p. 90.

⁴⁴ David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* 3rd ed., (Philadelphia: Perseus Publishing, 2001), William Crane, *Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003), and Mariaemma Pelullo-Willis, “Midlife Crisis Begins in Kindergarten” (http://www.homeschoolnewslink.com/articles/vol6iss5/vol6iss5_MidlifeCrisis.html), retrieved May 2005.

⁴⁵ Rousseau observes that like a mirror, a child’s brain “returns the objects presented to it. But nothing remains; nothing penetrates. The child retains the words; the ideas are reflected off of him; those who hear him understand them, but only he does not understand them” (Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, p. 107). Deb McNeish, principal of Rumford School in Concord, New Hampshire echoes Rousseau in claiming that though “many children who are asked to read above their grade levels may be able to identify words, [they] will not be able to understand the inferential meaning within the stories.” Valerie Strauss, “Learning Shifts from Basics to Analysis,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2005.

⁴⁶ Rita Giordano, “Too Young for Tests – But Not for Tutors,” *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, May 31, 2005.

⁴⁷ Amy Dickinson, "Kinder Grind," *Time*, November 8, 1999, p. 61.

⁴⁸ Leonard Sax, "Ritalin: Better Living Through Chemistry?" in *The World and I Online*, <http://www.worldandi.com/specialreport/sax/sax.html>, retrieved May 2005. Works such as Richard De Grandpre's, *Ritalin Nation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), point to the veritable epidemic in the use of medical means to deal with so-called inadequacies in our young. Sax highlights some alarming statistics from De Grandpre's work.

In 1961, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Ritalin for use by children with behavior problems. In 1975, roughly 150,000 American children were taking Ritalin. By 1988, that number had increased over 500 percent, to just about 1 million children. This year about 6 million American children—roughly one child out of every eight—will take Ritalin. No other medication in American history has had this kind of success in achieving and maintaining such a grip on its market. The United States, with less than 5 percent of the world's population, now accounts for 85 percent of the world's consumption of Ritalin.

⁴⁹ As early as 1976, Matthew Dumont connects the effects of television with the onset of ADD. Dumont suggests "that the hyperactive child is attempting to recapture the dynamic quality of the television screen by rapidly changing his perceptual orientation," causing him to "wonder if it is possible that amphetamines [and Ritalin] control his behavior by producing a subjective experience comparable to the fleeting worlds of television." Matthew Dumont, "Letter to the Editor," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, April 1976, 457. Cf. Sax, "Ritalin" *Op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Alfie Kohn, for instance, notes that new elementary schools in Atlanta, Georgia are being constructed without playgrounds. See Alfie Kohn, "Sacrificing Learning for Higher Scores," in *What Does it Mean to Be Well Educated? And More Essays on Standards, Grading, and Other Follies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004). Article originally published in *USA Today*

(2001). Kohn observes, “Despite the nearly unanimous view of experts that play is critical to development, recess has been cut back as a result of testing pressures” (p. 62).

⁵¹ Eric Jensen, whose approaches to teaching and learning are based on many of the latest findings from the neurosciences, concludes that, “The single best way to grow a better brain is through challenging problem solving, [which] creates new dendritic connections.” In *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), p. 35.

⁵² “Playing ‘Better Than Lessons’” in *BBC News: Education* (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/4456131.stm>), March 18, 2005. In a report by England’s National Foundation for Educational Research, it was concluded that “children should have more access to ‘play-based’ learning” rather than “the literacy and numeracy strategies designed to ensure a thorough grounding in the basics,” with which children struggled. We have gone as far as “criminalizing play,” author Richard Louv concludes in his *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2005). Brooke Adams reports on the “real costs for children” of being kept from play: “diminished use of senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illness.” In “Go Play Outside,” *The Salt Lake Tribune* (<http://www.sltrib.com>) retrieved June 13, 2005.

⁵³ Little-league baseball players are having surgeries to repair their overused arms as parents and coaches force these children to play in an inordinate number of games and throw pitches the forces of which their young arms are not yet strong enough to withstand. See documentary, “America’s Newest Arms Race,” *HBO Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*, aired April 2005.

⁵⁴ Gene R. Carter, “A Vision for Public Schools: Academics Is Not Enough,” ASCD, <http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem>, retrieved May 2005.

⁵⁵ See, Center for the 4th and 5th R's (Respect & Responsibility), "Smart & Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond" (SUNY at Cortland), www.cortland.edu/character/highschool, retrieved May 2005.

⁵⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book III, p. 208.

⁵⁷ Christina Hoff Sommers, "How Moral Education Is Finding Its Way Back into America's Schools" in *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education*, ed. William Damon (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 2002), p. 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Paul Henderson, "Progressivism: Vying for our Kids" *Evidence* (Spring 2002), p. 49. Henderson attributes the foundations of progressivism in education to Rousseau, and their subsequent formulation by psychologist, Carl R. Rogers. Henderson blames these two, along with Dewey, for the ills that besiege public education in New Zealand. According to Henderson, "Rogers went on to describe the day when teaching would cease as a profession; pupils would educate themselves and adults, as in Rousseau's *Emile*, would be exiled from education as a corrupting influence" (p. 47). One can only cringe at such glaring oversimplifications as that offered by philosophical counselor, Lou Marinoff, who summarily dismisses Rousseau's contributions to both, political and educational theory. Marinoff offers that, "Although his Romanticism provides a counterbalance to Hobbes' authoritarianism, Rousseau's philosophy of education is a recipe for disaster." Lou Marinoff, *Therapy for the Sane: How Philosophy Can Change Your Life* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 359.

⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book I, p. 38; p. 45; p. 63; p. 50. In regards to forfeiting his own children, Rousseau has this to say later in his life: "If I were to state my reasons, I should say too much. Since they were strong enough to mislead me, they might mislead many others. My error in handing over my children to the state to educate, for want of means to bring

them up by myself, I thought was behaving like a citizen and father" (*Confessions*, p. 367, cf. "Reading Rousseau's *Emile*," (<http://192.211.16.13/curricular/PE/lecrous.htm>). Later, he admits: "The course of action taken, however rational it had appeared to me, had not always left my heart in peace. I felt that I had neglected duties from which nothing could excuse me. My remorse at length became so keen that it almost extorted from me a public confession of my error at the beginning of *Emile*" (*Confessions*, p.617). As we see in the passage cited above from his *Emile*, Rousseau has come quite close to one.

⁶¹ *Emile*, Book IV, p. 231; Book III, p. 166; p. 172; p. 177; p. 179, (emphases mine).

⁶² *Ibid.*, Book II, p. 120. Further, Rousseau writes, "he will doubtless have to be guided a little—but very little, and without this becoming apparent. If he makes a mistake, let him do so; do not correct his errors until he is ready to see and correct them himself; or, at most, carry out some operation which may make him aware of them" (*Ibid.*, Book III, p. 171). Throughout nature we find such examples of lessons wrought by the simple direction of natural processes on the part of a tutor. Take, for example, the wolverine mother. She captures some small prey and, while being careful not to kill it, maims it for the purpose of teaching her young cubs a lesson in hunting. She places the wounded animal close enough in proximity to her den so that her cubs will be able to detect, all on their own, the sounds and smells of the struggling animal. In the meantime the mother hides herself so that she is not in the sight of her cubs, though at all times they remain in hers, and patiently waits for nature to take its course. Once the cubs' courage and instincts stir them sufficiently, they proceed to "hunt" their prey, noticing nothing all the while of the deliberateness of their mother's lesson.

⁶³ Dewey, LW 13: 41-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁵ Bloom, "Introduction," in *Emile*, p. 13, (emphases mine).

⁶⁶ Constructivists today claim Piaget as their theoretical champion, though we can easily detect some of the defining characteristics of Constructivism within Rousseau's work, not to mention Dewey's as well. I say this for at least two reasons: First, the idea that we construct our own understanding and meaning, that is, the manner in which we make sense of the world, is already proposed by Rousseau. Specifically, we find this in his description of intelligence or learning as the ability to draw connections or make relations among ideas, starting from the images of sensation. Second, Constructivists argue that these "constructs" of understanding develop, that is, they become more sophisticated the more we experience, implying a developmental-stage theory. This is no surprise, again, since they find their theoretical roots in Piaget, who held a stage-theory of cognitive development. Jacqueline and Martin Brooks write: "These cognitive structures recognized by Piaget, grow in intellectual complexity as we mature and as we interact with the world we come to know and as we gain experience. Through maturation and experience, the groundwork for new structures is laid." *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms* (Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, [1993] 1999), p. 26. For a careful assessment of Constructivism as an educational theory and the potential danger of subjectivist fallout, see C. David Gruender, "Constructivism and learning: A philosophical appraisal," *Educational Technology*, 36(3), 1996, pp. 21-29.

⁶⁷ Take, for instance, the case of a child who lies. According to Rousseau, what is illogical about physically punishing the child is that in essence this takes the attention away from the actual consequence of the fault itself. When children lie and are then physically punished, they associate the pain or frustration from the punishment with the telling of the lie. Furthermore, the punishment is then associated with the parent, as the dispenser of pain. Rousseau suggests, instead, that if the child lies it is made present to him that he will simply no longer be believed "even when [he] tells the truth" (Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, p. 101).

⁶⁸ Far from believing that all learning ought to be easy, simple, or fun, Rousseau would allow lessons to be painful if need be. For far be it for Rousseau to be "attentive to protecting

Emile from injury,” as he writes, since “to suffer is the first thing he ought to learn and the thing he will most need to know” (Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, p. 78).

⁶⁹ Kohn maintains that the process by which we arrive at rules may be just as important as the rules themselves. Therefore, disagreements and conflicts in devising our rules ought to be viewed as opportunities for teaching and learning about how we overcome adversity and frustration—to learn the significance of having rules in the first place. According to Kohn, conflict is perceived by teachers as a kind of “dandruff”—“something unsightly to be eliminated as rapidly as possible.” Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996), (p.75). Kohn suggests, we are missing the point that “the conflict is the lesson,” adding that, “To discourage (let alone punish) objections is to sacrifice the development of judgment to the imperative of conformity” (p.76).

⁷⁰ In Book II (p. 117) of his *Emile*, Rousseau provides the example of the child who is at first reticent about learning to read. The tutor concocts the scenario whereby the child receives invitations addressed in his name, from family and friends, to various outings and festivities. But due to his inability to read these on his own he misses the opportunities. When the reason for his missing out on the events is brought to his attention the child understands his own need and, driven by this, is motivated to set about learning to read.

⁷¹ Sidney Hook, in his “Introduction” to Dewey’s *Schools of Tomorrow*, MW 8: xxxii.

⁷² John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916), MW 9: 124. Here we must guard against an oversimplification of Rousseau on Dewey’s part. After all, Emile’s lessons are meant to extract from his “native powers” all that makes possible his healthy adjustment to nature and society.

⁷³ Dewey, MW 8: 249. We find Dewey pushing the issue so far that as a consequence he makes a very un-Deweyan claim by uncharacteristically separating mankind from nature.

This is part of the important, though seemingly subtle move Dewey makes in distinguishing human intelligence from the mere happenstance of nature—a point that distinguishes him from Rousseau.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250. Some twenty years later Dewey reflects on his experiences at the Chicago Laboratory School where, “It was held that the process of mental development is essentially a social process, a process of participation.” Dewey, “The Theory of the Chicago Experiment” in *The Dewey School – Appendix 2*, LW 11: 206.

⁷⁵ Dewey, LW 13: 35.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷⁹ Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline, Op. cit.*, p. 101. There are also the educational benefits from having a better understanding of one’s students, which is made possible through shared trust and affection. Further, Jensen stresses, “Threats activate defense mechanisms and behaviors that are great for survival but lousy for learning.” Conversely, “Learners with lower stress can put together relationships, understand broad underlying theories, and integrate a wider range of material.” Jensen, *Op. cit.*, p. 57. Add to this the physiological component, such that “when feelings of competence increase, students release fewer catecholamines, the body’s natural chemical response to stress” (p. 36).

⁸⁰ Testament to the glaring inconsistencies when it comes to interpreting Rousseau, Homer Lane, mentor to the libertarian educator, A. S. Neill, accuses Rousseau of exercising too much control over the child. He writes: “[Rousseau’s] whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet-show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is

never to suspect in what manner they are moved.” Cf. Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 61. Though perhaps just as hasty as the opinions of his detractors, this is a welcome change from the more common dismissals of Rousseau.

⁸¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book I, p. 63.

⁸² Dewey compares the growth of a seed, which is constrained by nature in ways that human potential for differentiated growth is not. He writes: “Seed-growth is limited as compared with human growth; its future is much more prescribed by its antecedent nature; its line of growth is comparatively fixed; it has not the capacities for growth in different directions toward different outcomes characteristic of the human young” (Dewey, “The Need for a Philosophy of Education” [1934], LW 9: 195).

⁸³ Dewey, “Habit” in *Educational Lectures Before Brigham Young Academy*, LW 17: 301.

⁸⁴ Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey’s Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 136.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), MW 14: 67. Later in the same work, Dewey adds: “Impulse defines the peering, the search, the inquiry. Old habit supplies the content, filling, definite, recognizable subject matter. Without habit there is only irritation, and confused hesitation. With habit alone there is machine-like repetition. With conflict of habits and release of impulse there is conscious search” (*Ibid.*, p. 126).

⁸⁷ Dewey, LW 13: 45.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Dewey, LW 9: 197.

⁹⁰ Dewey writes, “The natural or native powers furnish the initiating and limiting forces in all education; they do not furnish its ends or aims” (Dewey, MW 9: 121).

⁹¹ Ayn Rand, by way of criticizing ethical altruism, instead advocates the rational pursuit of self-interest. Rand observes that self-interest has a negative reputation in great part due to its portrayal as the principal trait of the “brute” or its identification with the “irrational emotions, feelings, urges, wishes, or whims” of the individual. Ayn Rand, “The Virtue of Selfishness” [1961], cf. *Conduct & Character: Readings in Moral Philosophy*, Mark Timmons (ed.), 4th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth-Thomson Learning, 2003) p.22.

⁹² Comparing a “natural” to a “civilized” state of affairs, Rousseau writes: “In fact, the real source of all those differences is that the savage lives within himself, whereas social man, constantly outside himself, knows only how to live in the opinion of others; and it is merely from their judgment of him that he derives the consciousness of his own existence” (Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 245). Likewise, De Botton argues, in the modern world, “The attentions of others matter to us because we are afflicted by a congenital uncertainty as to our own value, as a result of which affliction we tend to allow others’ appraisals to play a determining role in how we see ourselves; our sense of identity is held captive by the judgments of those we live among” (De Botton, *Status Anxiety*, p. 8).

⁹³ This is, after all, a nation in which our pets’ needs are in excess of \$36 billion a year, complete with magazines, psychologists, spas, and \$36,000 birthday parties featuring—brace yourselves—pony rides for dogs. Advertisements constantly promise us that we can “have it all.” But exactly what are the implications of *having* “it all?” I’m not quite sure. Nor do I think people bother to consider what such a proposition would actually entail. To begin with, what would I do with “it all”—where would I put it?

⁹⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, p. 80.

⁹⁵ My contention is that a presumption of irony here is precisely to erroneously assume Rousseau's romanticism entails a view of emotions as somehow inherently erratic and irrational, or even contrary to reason; an assumption that I argue is a symptom of a simplistic and inadequate reading of Rousseau, and which flies in the face of current studies on emotions.

⁹⁶ Mark Forstater, *The Spiritual Teachings of Marcus Aurelius* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2000), p. 18.

⁹⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book V, p. 473.

⁹⁸ In what follows I barely skim the surface of the plethora of recent research and philosophical discussion on brain function, with specific attention to the role of desires, emotions, and feelings. The relation of these to rationality, and the disputes that ensue from discussions of the ways these are related, would be enough to fill several dissertations. My concern here is only to point to ways in which Rousseau intuited generally, a conclusion shared by these works, that the ability to reason well is formed by the proper development of our emotional capacities. See Steinberg, *The Fiction of a Thinkable World: Body, Meaning, and the Culture of Capitalism* (2005); Evans and Cruse, *Emotion, Evolution, and Rationality* (2004); Mendoza, "Experience as Reason: Emotions and Values in the Construction of Rationality" (2004); Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotions* (2004); Solomon (ed.), *Thinking About Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (2004); Hatzimoysis (ed.), *Philosophy and the Emotions* (2003); Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* ([2001] 2003); Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* ([2000] 2002); Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (1999) & *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (1995); Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (1998); Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1997); de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotions* ([1987] 1997); Stocker, "Intellectual Desire, Emotion, and Action" & Solomon,

“Emotions and Choice” in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotions* (1980). What these works have in common is that they pose criticisms against the presumption of the irrationality of our emotions by arguing that we are capable of reasoned decision-making precisely because of our emotions, which play an integral role in our beliefs, desires, and decisions.

⁹⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, pp. 80, 84. In similar fashion, Epictetus states: “Whoever wants to be free, therefore, let him not want or avoid anything that is up to others. Otherwise he will necessarily be a slave.” Epictetus, *The Enchiridion*, translated by Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983) no. 14, p. 15. If we are not careful to balance our wants somewhere in between our capabilities and our needs, we continue to encourage the kinds of gratuitous excesses that belie the very nature of what we intend by satisfaction. A pernicious type of anxiety—ironically, born of abundance—arises from our inability to limit our wants. De Botton writes: “There are two ways to make a man richer, reasoned Rousseau: give him more money or curb his desires. Modern societies have done the former spectacularly well, but by continuously whetting appetites they have at the same time managed to negate a share of their success” (De Botton, *Op. cit.*, p. 43).

¹⁰⁰ Dewey, MW 8: 297, 215.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹⁰² Kohn, *Beyond Discipline*, *Op. cit.*, p. 103, (emphases mine).

¹⁰³ Antonio Damasio, in *The Feeling of What Happens* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Inc., 1999), pp. 41-2, captures the essence of the relation between emotion and reasoning, when he describes emotion as “an embodiment of the logic of survival.” He goes on to claim:

It certainly does not seem true that reason stands to gain from operating without the leverage of emotion. On the contrary, emotion probably assists

reasoning; especially when it comes to personal and social matters involving risk and conflict. Well-targeted and well-deployed emotion seems to be a support system without which the edifice of reason cannot operate properly.

Damasio arrives at his finding by studying individuals who suffer neurological damage and yet do not lose their emotions *per se*, but only their ability to experience, that is, to know them. Also lost is their ability to make rational decisions. Ironically, we understand what functions specific parts of the brain carry out when these parts fail happen to fail due to trauma or illness. Thus, we learn that reasoning and feeling are inextricable when we see an instance of someone who experiences emotion without feeling. Damasio points to the case of the man who suffers a stroke and thereby damages a connection between the nerves carrying information back from his body to the frontal lobe. The information never arrives and so he is not able to make *sense* of his emotions, which remain nonetheless at the visceral level. He is unable to convey a rational understanding of the emotional rendering of a biological state. Damasio tries to show that far from interfering with rationality, the absence of emotion and feeling can *break down* rationality and make important decision-making almost impossible.

¹⁰⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, Book II, p. 108; Book III, p. 168.

¹⁰⁵ Rousseau writes: “At first our pupil had only sensations. Now he has ideas. He only felt, now he judges... [in] a sort of mixed or complex sensation which I call an idea.” Jensen corroborates, holding that “Complex thematic patterns emerge after the brain has gathered sufficient data with which to make a meaningful context” (Jensen, *Op. cit.*, p. 96). Interestingly enough, contrary to what proponents of standardized testing may believe concerning the assessment of intelligence, Rousseau further suggests that, “The greater or lesser aptitude at comparing ideas and at finding relations is what constitutes in men greater or lesser intelligence, etc” (*Emile*, Book III, p. 203).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I, chapter 2, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Rousseau essentially intuits what has since been confirmed by current findings in neurophysiology; that due to the absence of neural connections between the limbic and pre-frontal cortex regions of the brain until the teen years, rationality—judgment, forethought, self-control—does not fully come into its own until well past adolescence.

¹⁰⁹ Robert C. Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 70.

¹¹⁰ In order to lift emotion from these ranks, Lipman continues, we need to “change the popular image of an emotion from a swirling, murky cloud that necessarily obscures and confuses our thinking to a set of conditions that may be able to clarify and organize it.” Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 127-8. Antonio Damasio adds, “Throughout most of the twentieth century, emotion was not trusted in the laboratory. It was too subjective, it was said, too elusive and vague, the opposite from reason...and reason was presumed to be entirely independent from emotion.” But this is changing dramatically, according to Damasio, since the “presumed opposition is no longer accepted without questioning,” adding that “work from my laboratory has shown that emotion is integral to the process of reasoning and decision making” (Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 39, 41).

¹¹¹ Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (1930), LW 11: 38. Further, Dewey contends “the particular kind of social direction fitted to a democratic society” is one “which comes from heightened *emotional* appreciation of common interests and from an understanding of social responsibilities” (*Ibid*, p.57, emphasis mine). Lipman equally values the capacity of emotion to help steer our actions. He writes: “The emotional frames of reference in terms of which we think can affect not only the evaluational judgments we make but the classificatory judgments as well. Emotions focus attention, and how we classify is determined by the features we attend to” (Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, pp. 130-1).

¹¹² Rousseau, *Emile*, Book IV, p. 212.

¹¹³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Book A, chapter 1, 980a), cf. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross, (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 689.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT ALIENATION: A DEWEYAN TREATMENT

Love goes towards love, like schoolboys from their books.

Love from love, towards school with heavy looks.

—William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

It will come as no surprise to most that the loathing of schooling is not a new phenomenon. What ought to be troubling though, especially to educators, is the extent to which this phenomenon is accepted as a kind of natural concomitant of education. So embedded is its acceptance that it carries an almost idiomatic appeal, making it easy to relate to Shakespeare's comparison of the resolve of lovers to the disdain of children towards their schooling. Yet, when we consider the pervasiveness of this problem within our schools and what this says about the educational experience young people have to look forward to, it behooves us to investigate the reasons behind students' continued aversion to learning. To be sure, if we are not getting it right in our schools, then chances are we will not fare much better under other, less deliberate circumstances.

So why is it that so many students would rather be doing just about *anything* except attending school? Who, or what, is responsible for this? Certainly, students must bear some of the responsibility. After all, why should we not expect students to take an active interest in their own education? Part of the problem is that even teachers acquiesce on this front by unwittingly squelching in their students any incentive to assume a sense of personal agency when it comes to their participation in learning. Education professor, Maureen Stout, addresses this very issue in *The Feel-Good Curriculum*. Here, Stout examines the fallacies behind a “dumbing-down” curriculum that absolves students of practically all accountability for learning, and places this, instead, entirely upon the teacher. She writes:

Self-esteem advocates believe it is more important for students to focus on getting in touch with their feelings than to have any responsibility for learning, so it is the teacher's job to ensure that they learn. What this means is that students are not expected to work hard, turn in their work on time or study for exams unless *they want to*. Since they are not expected to do anything they don't want, all the responsibility for learning falls on the teacher.¹

Greater expectations notwithstanding, realistically the onus has to fall on teachers. If education is going to have any meaningful impact on the intellectual and emotional development of students, its effectiveness will require that teachers invite students to actively participate in that process. As Locke and Rousseau propose, ultimately student interest in and desire for learning must be intrinsically won, as opposed to something simply imported from without.

It is my contention that the repugnance associated with schooling, manifested as a lack of interest in and effort toward learning—an emotional and intellectual apathy—is primarily a natural consequence of exposure to experientially irrelevant curricula. Alienating curricula, along with alienating methods of instruction, prevent students from drawing meaningful connections between their lived experiences and the subject matter, skills, and values we expect them to learn. As a result, this sort of estrangement creates a rift between what one finds conducive to one's personal fulfillment and what is one's own obligation to one's self-development, that is, to one's education. Once we separate what *is* in our best interest to learn, from what we *perceive* to be in our best interest, the necessity of the former loses out to the impulse of the latter—a dangerous concession for education to make. When we perpetuate, through our very educational methodologies, an incongruity of life and learning, it ought not to come as a surprise that apathy, scorn, and resistance become the ways of learning for students.²

For over a hundred years, John Dewey has been suggesting that the way we invite students to take an interest in their education is by getting teachers to accept their students' lived experiences as the *alpha* and, in a sense, the *omega* of instruction. As Dewey puts it,

The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education. Save as the efforts of the educator connect with some activity that the child is carrying on of his own initiative independent of the educator, education becomes reduced to a pressure from without. It may indeed, give certain external results, but cannot truly be called educative.³

Later we shall see how some of Dewey's educational principles may help us find a viable solution to the ongoing debate about exactly how much 'relevance' is relevant to learning. But first, to better understand the alienation associated with schooling, we will turn to Karl Marx and some interesting parallels that may be drawn between the alienation experienced by students and the forms of alienation experienced by workers under capitalist relations of production.

5.1. Marx and the Alienation of Irrelevance

According to Marx, humans are naturally creative and productive beings.⁴ This is evidenced, at least in part, by the fact that unlike other animals humans are able to create beyond instinctual necessity. Birds, for instance, communicate and build nests. Humans, on the other hand, sculpt words and sounds into poetry and building materials into deliberate designs. The problem for Marx then, is that under capitalism those who are not necessarily interested in the pursuit of creativity for its own sake monopolize the means by which humans are able to express themselves creatively. These "relations of production" prove to be alienating in various ways.

First, there is the alienation workers experience from the products of their labor—no longer produced for personal subsistence but, instead, for an imposed subsistence—to fulfill the needs of socially necessary labor. Also, because workers do not own the means or materials used in production, they are estranged from the results of their creative efforts. Secondly, workers are alienated from the very process of production, since they have no significant input regarding this process. Thirdly, workers are alienated from their

“species being”—from their very nature as creative and productive beings—since they are forced to produce from necessity. Finally, workers are alienated from other human beings. These others include not only the capitalists, whose interests are in obvious opposition to those of the workers, but also include other workers with whom they compete for jobs, higher wages, and lower prices.

Now, if we wanted to gain a genuine understanding of the impact these forms of alienation have on workers, would it not make perfect sense to seek them out in their working environments and allow them to bear witness to their plight? Likewise, what better place to uncover student alienation than in our schools? What better way to investigate this than by asking those who are directly impacted by education—students? In *Doing School*, Denise Clark Pope does both. Pope spends eight months of a school year shadowing five high school students, during which time she documents their experiences in and out of school.⁵ The pictures these students (all of whom are considered “model” students) paint are disheartening. The subtitle to Pope’s book is no coincidence: *How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students*. Pope’s work provides us with a front-row view of the pernicious and alienating values of an “ideology of achievement” being played out on the very stages where we should be instructing young people in the art of human fulfillment and happiness.⁶ What Pope describes points to the fact that we are losing touch with what students need from their teachers in order to grow and thrive, and in the process we are creating enormous numbers of children who are disaffected, alienated, amoral, emotionally stunted, and in some instances even violent.

Without exception, these students report feeling alienated from the very material they are expected to learn—what amounts to the products of their labor—because what they are taught is imposed upon them and oftentimes is simply irrelevant to their lived experience. All five students report varying levels of stress, from anxiety about grades and achieving the credentials required for entrance into the best college possible, to physical ailments such as chronic illness and ulcers. The emphasis placed upon achievement and success *via* grades, not only takes its toll on students’ emotional and physical well-being, but also displaces the locus of motivation, from an intrinsic desire to learn to an extrinsic need to be rewarded at any cost.⁷

In order to keep up, students become adept at memorization, as opposed to the kind of learning by which they internalize knowledge, values, and skills because they recognize these as somehow relevant and meaningful to their lives. The kind of genuine and deep understanding necessary to generate sophisticated insights—what we want students to view as the goal of their educational labors—is seen as incidental in comparison to test scores and grades. As a consequence, students fail to see the relevant connections between their efforts and other facets of their lives. As teachers, we have all expressed our frustrations when students fail to make relevant connections between new material and material previously covered, or simply fail to understand how material from one subject area relates to another. Without meaningful reinforcement the continuity, between what is learned in the classroom and how this relates to life outside the learning environment, is disrupted. Simply put, students lose interest in doing the kinds of things that reinforce genuine understanding of what they are being taught. This lack of interest promotes a vicious compartmentalization. Whatever is learned in the classroom stays in the classroom and, consequently, does not inform their lived experiences. Conversely, life experiences are not employed in the service of validating those lessons presented within the classroom.

Students feel alienated from the process of learning, seeing their work as fulfilling the needs of teachers, curriculum, administrators, and policy makers, and thus, as irrelevant to their own needs and interests. Because students are systematically kept from assuming any type of “management” role in the process of their education, they see no reason to commit emotionally or intellectually to the subject matter or the process itself. It may come as a surprise to many that these students actually want to feel engaged with and passionate about what they learn. The reason this is not apparent is because they are being forced to learn according to a process that saps them of their self-determination.⁸ This disengagement from the process, in turn, has a negative affect on the efforts they put forth and, once again, on the quality of their work—their product.⁹

Students feel themselves alienated from their “species being”—from being able to express themselves creatively. Simply put, they are not fulfilled by the work they do. They experience physical exhaustion, are mentally and morally debased, and generally feel unhappy. The creative process takes a back seat to achieving an end result, such as a

grade or memorization of standardized information. This is as true of the knowledge they are expected to gain, as it is of their sense of happiness. Students are being convinced that what society expects of them can be achieved by getting high grades at any cost, even when this compromises integrity and honesty. Meanwhile the goal of financial success is touted as the end-all to happiness. This not only confuses students about the nature of happiness—something often found in the very *process* of seeking it, and not in some end result—but also leaves them ignorant as to the skills necessary to achieve it. Shouldn't our schools instead be providing the tools with which students might realistically attain happiness?

Finally, students report being alienated from their teachers and fellow students. Although under this “ideology of achievement” students and teachers appear to share goals, this is only because the former are in essence forced to learn what is put before them. The amount of dishonesty and contrivance students summon to *appear* as if they are complying with the goals set before them by their teachers clearly shows their interests are in opposition. With respect to their peers, students are pitted in intense competitions over grades. Although certainly a little competition never hurt anyone, the emphasis upon individual results promotes a solitary and atomistic learning experience. On an interpersonal level, our students become underutilized resources for which teacher, fellow students, and lessons themselves must suffer.¹⁰ An approach more reminiscent of the ways we experience our social world would have students come to see one another as co-participants in a cooperative effort to engage in learning.¹¹

If *what* we teach and *how* we teach do not bear their own worth, then why should we expect students to expend any effort beyond simply looking out for their own interests? The chasm between what we romanticize as education for our students and their true experiences only lends credibility to the old adage, “Don't let your schooling interfere with your education.” For instance, we speak of a democratic way of life and the value of critical thinking, yet authoritarianism and parroting win the day. We seem to be having trouble recognizing that the incentives we use to get students to exhibit effort have not much to do with what is most important to their development. Is effort something we want to exact from them by bribing their interest? To continue to do so only invalidates

the very subject matter and our methods of instruction. Over a hundred years ago Dewey spoke to this issue.

If the subject matter of the lessons be such as to have an appropriate place within the expanding consciousness of the child, if it grows out of his own past doings, thinkings, and sufferings, and grows into application in further achievements and receptivities, then no device or trick of method has to be resorted to in order to enlist “interest.”¹²

Interest and effort, along with the knowledge these give rise to, if they are to be genuine, are not things we can ransom. They are what flows naturally from the personal connections any one of us would make with what is experientially relevant and meaningful to us.

5.2. The Relevance of ‘Relevance’

The role of relevance within the educational curriculum has a longstanding tradition. For instance, Isocrates reacts against the irrelevance of both the Sophist and Platonic curricula.¹³ According to Isocrates, sophistry is too irresponsible because oratorical skills and political success, at the expense of truth, are not sufficient for the education of an individual. He is also critical of Plato’s approach, which requires life-long learning in order to arrive at ever-elusive truth, and this reserved only for a select group. In the early part of the sixth century, Cassiodorus¹⁴ criticizes the “ornamental” and “narrow” oratory curriculum of Quintilian,¹⁵ who views eloquence as the supreme objective of an educational program. Yet these early attempts at relating curriculum to the needs of students are not based on life experience *per se*, but instead remain grounded in the study of classical literature, which itself serves as the ultimate authority and arbiter of what is considered acceptable knowledge. As we enter the medieval period the irrelevance of the curriculum is still apparent, given the language restrictions of Latin and the historical perspectives founded in Classical literature.

Interestingly enough, the idea that a curriculum ought to instruct in and relate to matters of experience actually arises from religious exigencies. It is John Comenius' position that since God places human beings within the physical realm, their efforts to fulfill their duty to God need to be grounded in practical knowledge of this world. Even before John Locke, Comenius proposes an empiricist pedagogy that recognizes sensory impressions as the primary instructional conduits for children's learning.¹⁶ Now, Comenius is not in fact arguing for the exclusion of the classical curriculum, but instead is simply interested in developing its instrumental value. Along with universal schooling and coed instruction, Comenius proposes instruction in the vernacular, because it is the language of the student's lived experience. In *The Great Didactic*, he writes: "Nothing should be learned solely for its value at school, but for its use in life...whatever is taught should be taught as being of practical application in everyday life and of some definite use."

In the modern period, Locke and Rousseau continue the debate over relevance. Both maintain that in order for learning to be intrinsically motivated and of interest to the pupil, instruction ought to be informed by the real needs of the student, which is often not captured through a "bookish" approach. Locke warns, "Long discourses, and philosophical reasonings, at best amaze and confound, but do not instruct, children...I mean that you should make them sensible that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them."¹⁷ In particular, Locke downplays the type of learning embodied in theoretical texts and language studies, complaining that too much is "made about a little Latin and Greek, how many years are spent in it, and what a noise and business it makes to no purpose, as if a language or two were [education's] whole business."¹⁸ Concerned with whether or not the subject matter is understood by the student given their capabilities, Locke admonishes us to "confound not his understanding with explications or notions that are above it, or with the variety or number of things that are not to his present purpose."¹⁹ He goes so far as to declare the "great skill" of a teacher, as something to be found in the extent to which one can "make a child comprehend the usefulness of what he teaches him."²⁰

Though they firmly disagree in their approaches to instruction—specifically in relation to the age at which reason is to be developed in the child—Locke and Rousseau

agree that abstract and theoretical lessons could never take the place of experientially relevant ones. Commensurate with his attempts at fostering Emile's self-sufficiency and single-mindedness, Rousseau declares simply, "Living is the job I want to teach him."²¹ Adding to this that any lessons learned, "He ought to receive them only from experience."²² Who can argue that Emile will forget the true worth of astronomy now that he can find his way back to Montmorency after getting himself lost? That a child ought to learn lessons relevant to his experience and capabilities is the greatest contribution Rousseau makes to later developmental-stage theories of learning. He dedicates an entire book in *Emile* to the stage in which 'usefulness' serves as the proper guide to lessons; with the caveat, that "this word ['usefulness'] is very striking to him, provided only that it has a sense relative to his age and that he sees clearly its relation to his present well-being."²³

Even more important than their respective criticisms both Locke and Rousseau share a mutual interest in assuring that both *why* and *what* a child learns is always embedded in an interest that is intrinsically motivated. Whether by means of an early development of reason, as Locke proposes, or the early development of an emotional steadfastness, as propounded by Rousseau, the impetus for learning is always to be found in the actualization of capabilities that help the individual to, in essence, fend for him or herself, and to learn what is necessary to do so autonomously. This *self*-understanding, that *why* and *what* one learns is itself a necessity, becomes a necessary condition for autonomy.

Just as important as any rational component of learning, as championed by Locke, is the intelligently organized expression of emotion in relation to what is being learned, as Rousseau offers. Evoking an emotional response or allowing an emotional expression of interest to become a part of the educational process itself, goes a long way toward promoting engaged learning. Taking an interest in something fosters an inclination to effort on the part of the interested individual. Of course the effort that is educationally significant—that bears the most educational fruit—is the one that arises from within or is made sense of by the student and not one motivated by some extrinsic imposition, under promise of reward or threat of punishment. Self-effort, in turn, is the very means by

which individuals come to understand that education is not something done *to* them, but rather something they ultimately must do for themselves.

5.3. A Minimalist Account of Relevance

Contemporary debates over relevance usually take two tacks. Some will choose to debate about the value of theoretical versus practical knowledge. Others choose to pit the exigencies of curriculum against the needs and interests of students. Those who depreciate the value of relevance by associating it with practical knowledge, assign a purely intrinsic and “higher” value to abstract thinking—thinking for its own sake. This not only depreciates practical wisdom, but also absolves those who engage in theoretical thinking of any obligation to demonstrate the practical significance – relevance – of its results or effects on the lives of students. The other opposition to relevance comes by way of its association with the needs and interests, or what is perceived as worse, the inclinations or impulses and desires of students, by those who believe that when we appeal to students’ needs and interests we compromise academic rigor altogether. According to these positions, our choices are either to neglect the practical application of theoretical knowledge, or not allow the perspectives of students to occupy valuable class time better spent on strict adherence to the curriculum. Unfortunately, because neither of these is very inviting of student engagement, they instead invite opportunities for alienation.

The problem with these extreme positions is their reliance on a narrow definition of relevance—one that implies a kind of teaching and learning that needs to have a *direct* and *immediate* impact, as far as the transmission of knowledge is concerned, on the lived experience of the learner. Proponents of the first position simply do not see the need for knowledge of the abstract and theoretical ilk to have such an impact, and hence deny the significance of relevance. Meanwhile, proponents of the second position simply want to stave off anything that detracts from rigor, such as the pressing needs of students’ lives. A broader understanding of relevance is needed.

This broader understanding would still require that subject matter relate to the lived experience of the learner by means of some direct application to this experience,

including the ascertainment of *some* knowledge. At the same time, it would broaden the conception of “direct” and “immediate” ascertainment or application to include the very significance of the information being conveyed as an aspect of its being understood, as well as of its relevance. Establishing relevance in this broader sense would include minimally the very demonstration of importance, irrespective of whether or not there is a perceived “direct” or “immediate” impact on lived experience. In other words, what is minimally required is that we make explicit what is interesting, or of importance, about the subject matter being taught, apart from the content itself. This way, though the impact of learning complex and abstract mathematical concepts need not be immediately “felt” in our lived experience, we never lose sight of the relevance to the learner, of this information’s theoretical point of interest. Conveying, minimally, the importance of subject matter satisfies relevance to the extent that it also fulfills a minimal need of the student—the need to understand why this is important to learn.

In response to the second type of opposition to relevance, the one coming from concerns of a “softening” or “diluting” of the curriculum, this broader conception of relevance invites the perspective that collateral or peripheral learning, deemed by these critics as somehow unnecessary and distracting from the established curriculum, is just as important, if not more so, as an orthodox rendering of the curriculum. This is not to say that the established curriculum is any less significant, but simply that a demonstration of the relevant importance of the subject matter goes beyond a merely intellectual response by making an emotional appeal that invites the interest on the part of the student—that which turns the student toward the intellectual aspects of the lesson. Implicit in this minimalist account of relevance, is the assumption that collateral or peripheral learning is not damaging to established lessons, but rather often merely represents different perspectives and interpretations on the very same “expected” subject matter. According to this broader, yet minimalist conception of relevance, an “established” curriculum is taken as an end-in-view, dynamic, and made flexible by the needs, interests, and capabilities of learners.

5.4. Dewey and the Embeddedness of Relevance

According to Dewey, there are two principles without which education cannot be said to occur—interaction and continuity.²⁴ Interaction, according to Dewey, refers to the constant give and take between human being and environment—transactions between internal (subjective) and objective (environmental) factors that together constitute experience. Internal factors include those aspects of an individual that at any given moment arise from and constitute that individual. These might include a person's thoughts, feelings, inclinations, desires, interests, capabilities, and habits. Objective factors are those conditions that exist independently of the individual, although this independence is never absolute, as the environment one finds oneself in is that very same with which one inevitably transacts.

According to Dewey, the observer (individual) and the observed (environment) are interdependent. As Dewey puts it, "Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, [experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world—at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events."²⁵ In other words, there is an organic relationship between objects and events (the known) that I experience, and the experience as "had" by me (the knower). Knowledge, then, and therefore learning, is had most effectively when we accommodate avenues for such interactions. According to Dewey, for this to be a genuine inter-action a mutual transformation of sorts must take place; one in which the internal and objective conditions so impact one another that they are never the same following their interaction. This type of trans-formation is, as I argue in the previous chapter, epitomized in the aesthetic or artistic experience.

What this means is that relevance is not something superfluous to the educational experience—a point well understood and defended by both Locke and Rousseau. It is not simply something to be gratuitously imported into the learning process because, in essence, it is *already* built into that process. In other words, interaction that leads to educational growth invariably implicates the internal states of the individual engaged in said experience. Students uniquely experience their education—there is no way around this. Their particular needs and interests, which represent the internal *loci* of their

individual experience, transform and are in turn transformed by their educational environments. Dewey would think ridiculous the notion that we can import something like an idea ready-made into the understanding of a student, without that idea being affected somehow by the internal states of that student. Dewey asks, “What, then, is the problem?”

It is to get rid of the prejudicial notion that there is some gap in kind (as distinct from degree) between a child’s experience and the various forms of subject matter that make up the course of study. From the side of the child, it is a question of seeing how his experience already contains within itself elements—facts and truths—of just the same sort as those entering into the formulated study.²⁶

It is this neglect of the student’s internal (subjective) contributions to the interactive process that moves some to consider relevance dispensable. What the students bring to their learning experiences, which inevitably involve exchanges or transactions with what they are presented, are the very impulses, thoughts, needs, and habits that drive their experiences and, along with whatever guidance a teacher is able to contribute, together guide the realization and fulfillment of these toward the continued development of new and hopefully more intelligently channeled impulses, thoughts, needs, and habits.

Marx understands this all too well, as he describes how the source of human creative labor arises initially from human purposes and needs, which are then turned toward their own realization only to set the stage for their eventual transformation into new purposes and needs. In this sense, both Marx and Dewey remind us that there is no overlooking the subjective (internal) contribution to the creative or productive process, as somehow beyond the process itself. Both Marx and Dewey would have us understand that an individual, say, an artist producing a work of art, not only transforms the physical world, but also is herself transformed just as much. Marx writes, “Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of production...but the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new

needs and new language.”²⁷ Any productive effort, whether on the part of an artist or a student grappling with subject matter is, or, ought to be in response to a genuine need. The transformation caused by that effort also transforms and sets these needs in new directions. The key, though, is that the individual is not an innocent by-stander to the process, but takes part in the process in a way that through a personal transformation she has her purposes and needs transformed continuously.

This view of creative transformation, akin to aesthetic production and appreciation, is what Dewey identifies as the very process of learning—education itself as a process of continued growth and adjustment of the living organism—whereby we make and then build upon what we make. This is a point often missed by so-called progressive methods of education criticized by Dewey. There is a “danger” Dewey warns, that the “[new education] regard the child's present powers and interests as something finally significant in themselves. In truth, his learnings and achievements are fluid and moving. They change from day to day and from hour to hour.”²⁸ It is because we bring habits of our own that we grow and learn by a transformation of said habits. The adjustments we make to our present habits create new needs that are satisfied or not, in the service of further growth. Whether or not these are, or even ought to be satisfied is a matter for intelligence and experience to determine.

The same is true for Dewey’s conception of freedom, which he thinks we ought not to value for its own sake, but instead for the level of freedom it empowers us to continue to exercise in future experience. Any freedom that impedes our future freedom or growth is not true freedom, according to Dewey. This is echoed in Stout’s criticism of the “feel-good” curriculum, such that any approach overemphasizing students’ interests (internal states) will also err; this time at the expense of objective (environmental) conditions.

Continuity is the other component, according to Dewey, essential to genuine learning. As one experience necessarily connects to another, the very development of our habits depends on this experiential continuum. What we experience, for better or worse, modifies us in some way. But continuity in and of itself is not enough, educationally speaking. In order for an experience to be truly educational it must take up something from the past in ordering our present and informing our future. Dewey uses the example

of the spoiled child who is influenced by the continuity of previous experience in a direction that is not conducive to further growth, but instead limits the child's ability to cope with future situations. In order for continuity to be educative it must allow for continuous growth, development, and readjustment of habits. In other words, there is no learning unless an experience affords one the opportunity for continued learning.

Because each of our lives represents a unique experiential continuum, any growth we experience also uniquely belongs to us. Continuity involves a modification of the individual that assumes something already there to be modified. Dewey labels the disregard for what the student already brings to the learning experience as one of the "typical evils" that result from "the lack of any organic connection with what the child has already seen and felt and loved, [which] makes the material purely formal and symbolic...dead and barren."²⁹ It is essential to genuine learning, then, that students are able to draw personally meaningful connections between what they already know and what they are being taught. When subject matter is conveyed solely from the perspective and understanding of the teacher, without attention to how students will appropriate or how they will make sense of this, given their own perspectives, it is not *their* growth we will witness. If any growth is to be had under these circumstances, as far as continuity is concerned, it will only be the teacher's.

For both teacher and student, in the sense that they occupy opposite sides of the same educational coin, the consequence of ignoring interaction and continuity, and therefore, relevance is basically the same. Simply put, no significant learning will come of it. According to Dewey, "That education that does not occur through forms of life, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality, and tends to cramp and deaden."³⁰ Subject matter conveyed by the teacher without regard to relevance is, figuratively, dead. The teacher is shooting blanks. The learner, on the other hand asks, "What is this good for?" "Why am I being made to learn this?" "What does this have to do with me?"

An approach that disregards relevance leads to a divided interest on the part of students, who easily recognize the rift between what is academically expected of them, and their own interests and expectations. Dewey counts the resulting "lack of motivation" as yet another of the "typical evils," since "There are not only no facts or truths, which have been previously felt as such with which to appropriate and assimilate the new, but

there is no craving, no need, and no demand. What we mean by the mechanical and dead in instruction is a result of this lack of motivation.”³¹ This divided interest can only lead to what Dewey calls a “negative form of effort”³² on the part of students, which results in either forced effort or no effort at all. By alienating purpose from the individual’s lived experience and thus, seeking to compensate for the interaction and continuity missing from the educative experience, teaching based on divided interests requires extrinsically imposed incentives for learning. Inevitably, because of its very nature such imposition will bring with it a flood of discipline and classroom management problems fostered under the auspices of alienation.

On the other hand, when a student is afforded opportunities to draw significant lines of relevance from lived experience to what is taught the results are positive and constructive. As Dewey states, “The outcome is continuously growing intellectual integration. There is absorption—but it is eager and willing, not reluctant and forced. There is digestion, assimilation, not merely the carrying of a load by memory, a load to be cast off as soon as the day comes when it is safe to throw it off.”³³ In short, it is relevance that gives way to genuine interest, and interest, in turn, that drives the emotional and intellectual investment needed on the part of students to commit genuine effort toward their own development. So long as students’ agency is thwarted, personally meaningful goals, let alone educational goals, will not be realized. True learning only occurs when the learner deliberately and wholeheartedly participates in the learning process.

5.5. Freire on Relevance as Respect for Autonomy

Understandably, many students continue to be influenced by methods of instruction that promote a kind of docility in the way they approach their learning. In their exchanges, with one another, teacher, or subject matter, students view themselves as passive and education as something that is somehow supposed to happen *to* them. Passivity, as one might expect, disengages students from the products, processes, genuine creative efforts, and exchanges with others that are integral aspects of learning. When a student takes no interest in subject matter or a particular activity, that student is less

inclined to approach that subject matter or activity with careful attention and rigor. The idea that education occurs when individuals actively participate in their learning experiences instead, requires that students have an adequate perception of themselves as agents who have an emotional and intellectual stake in their own educational development.³⁴ It is precisely this sense of personal agency that is undermined by the alienation students experience in various forms.

Paulo Freire understands this all too well, working among the poorest of the poor—the destitute and forgotten of Brazil—with a vision toward improving the stark and stultifying realities of those who are educationally, economically, and politically victimized. His concerns speak of a human spirit devoid of hope and purpose, rendered meek and submissive by a socio-politico-economic system that allows education to perpetuate its oppressive menu. Just as people are confined to ever-repeating cycles of imposed labor and poverty, so students are relegated to passive roles in a classroom designed to perpetuate these cycles of despair. From a young age, minds are taught to accept the realities of their lives as irrevocable products of history, unquestionable and unchangeable, where “there is no room for choice. There is only room for well-behaved submission to fate.”³⁵ The imposition of this idea—that history is unquestionable and unchangeable—prevaricates its status as a mere hypothesis and forges the molds of hopeless conformity and an impotent resignation to the inevitability of fate.

To combat these subversive elements of education, Freire proposes a method whereby disinherited masses are awakened from their intellectual and emotional lethargy to an awareness of self, as they move to transform themselves as well as the society they live in. Freire describes a “culture of silence” characterized by the ignorance and lethargy of the dispossessed, and identifies this phenomenon as a direct product of economic, social, and political domination. Rather than being equipped to understand and respond to the concrete realities of their world by an educational system sensitive to relevance, children are kept submerged in a situation in which critical awareness and individually motivated responses—prerequisites for autonomy itself—become practically impossible.

According to Freire, there is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education functions in either of two ways. It may serve as an instrument used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system, and to

compel their conformity to it, as epitomized by the “banking model” of education. On the other hand, education may become a “practice of freedom” and the means by which humanity critically and creatively responds to reality and discovers how to participate in the transformation of the world, as characterized by a “problem-posing” method of education. In the former, teachers are the sole owners and depositors of information into submissive, voiceless receptacles. In the latter, rather than delivering didactic monologues to a captive but unresponsive audience, teachers are viewed as embracing, open, and humbled participants in a mutual give-and-take experience; in a way that teachers not only teach, but themselves possibly learn from their students.

In the problem-posing model, the role of the student changes radically from a passive victim of rigidly prescribed “deposits” from the teacher, to someone who actively participates, considers ideas, and who compares these ideas to life, to history, and to a future that is “to be constructed through trial and error rather than an inexorable vice that determines all our actions.”³⁶ Freire's approach affords individuals the opportunities for developing a historically rooted critical consciousness (conscientization or *conscientizacao*). Conscientization refers to the process of learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and the means by which we might take action against their respective oppressive elements.

We see clearly in Freire’s description of a form of inquiry situated in the problem-posing approach, the influences of both Marx and Dewey, such that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”³⁷ This involves the individual in a process of self-reflection, self-recognition, and self-assertion, carried on in the midst of a struggle to create a new non-oppressive social order.

Freire is working under the fundamental assumption that a human being's “ontological vocation” is to be a subject who reflects, acts upon—as opposed to being merely acted upon—and transforms the world. In doing so, this subject moves towards ever-new possibilities of fuller and richer life, both individually and collectively. It is the individual who begins the process of self-realization and *conscientization* (critical consciousness), which in turn leads to a new sense of personal dignity and hope.

The most profound aspect of this problem-solving model is the dialogical dynamic that enables both student and teacher to recognize their mutual “unfinishedness” and thereby begin to embark on their now collective “ontological vocation”—both becoming subjects who have value, who can indeed alter the seemingly fixed scheme of historical events, and who can hope that the future holds infinite possibilities. For Freire, educability itself is grounded in the “radical unfinishedness of the human condition and in our consciousness of this unfinished state.”³⁸ This world to which we relate and in which we interact, is not a static and closed order—a given reality of harshness and cruelty which mankind must unconditionally accept and to which we must inevitably conform. Rather, it must be understood as a construct of problems to be worked on and solved, both individually and socially.³⁹

Although Freire focuses on the ontological awakening of students, it is implied that in facilitating this awakening in their students, teachers also realize their own ontological vocation. Since “there is, in fact, no teaching without learning,”⁴⁰ teachers fulfill their role only when students learn; for, “To know that I must respect the autonomy, the dignity, and the identity of the student and, in practice, must try to develop coherent attitudes and virtues in regard to such practice is an essential requirement of my profession, unless I am to become an empty mouther of words.”⁴¹ Even beyond the sharing and communication necessary to solve socio-politico-economic problems, the primary lesson to be learned is that of mutual regard, respect, and even love between teacher and student. Freire considers a deep regard for the uniqueness and intrinsic value of each student as essential for motivating teachers to comport themselves nobly in the classroom—to show unity of word and deed. For, “How can I be an educator,” Freire reflects, “if I do not develop within myself a caring and loving attitude toward the student?”⁴² It is this commitment to the almost sacred task of helping to fashion the mind and the epistemological curiosity of each precious person that, according to Freire, becomes part of the ethical responsibility of the teacher.

In the regard for the value of each student, teachers realize their own “unfinishedness” and humbly come to consider the very personal and relevant life experiences of each student; not merely as a starting point for their mutual epistemological journey, but as a rich supplement to their own perspectives. This

openness to the offerings bestowed by the experiences of her students instructs the teacher's own humility and leads her to recognize "that there are some things I know and some things I do not know."⁴³ Achieving such humility is the key to being open to life and to the sharing of knowledge for both teacher and student, as both learn to speak "with" rather than "to" each other.

But even more importantly, as alienated students more and more must summon their own motivations for learning, humility can engender in students a hunger for involvement in their personal development that awakens in them the recognition of "themselves as architects of their own cognition process."⁴⁴ Mutual regard for the shared relevance of experience and a recognized interdependence awaken an awareness of the uniqueness, value, and beauty of each—an emotional and critically conscious awareness that, according to Freire, overshadows any other motive for learning.

Whereas Dewey highlights the significance of students' needs and interests as necessary elements within their lived experience and, specifically, within the contexts of their educational transactions, both Marx and Dewey share an appreciation for that reconstruction or transformation that individuals undergo within the creative process. Freire, demonstrating a marked influence from both Dewey and Marx, in turn makes the relevance of students' historical contexts a necessary condition for the realization of their ontological vocation as autonomous agents. All three together propose an antidote for the stultifying and alienating approaches to education that ought to be, instead, currents leading to a healthy development of autonomy, self-directedness, and sense of self-worth.

So, what is the relevance of 'relevance'? As teachers, it is among our responsibilities to not only incite an interest in what is being taught, but to do so in a manner that demonstrates to our students the experiential relevance and significance of what we expect them to learn. This requires a pedagogy that presents learning as an activity—much like aesthetic creation or appreciation—whereby both the process and goal of that activity allow for a personally meaningful re-creation of what is to be learned. Any educational process that does not deliberately draw connections between the subject matter and something in students' experiences, or that does not allow them to "make sense" of the subject matter for themselves, is quite literally a pseudo-process,

educationally speaking. Inevitably, pseudo-teaching fosters pseudo-learning. Under such a system, genuine interest in learning, and in what is to be learned, can only be stillborn.

¹ Maureen Stout, *The Feel-Good Curriculum: The Dumbing Down of America's Kids in the Name of Self-Esteem* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2000), p. 170.

² According to the *Met-life Survey of the American Teacher, 2002, Student Life—School, Home, and Community* (New York: Met-Life Foundation and Harris Interactive), a survey of 2,308 public school students in grades seven through twelfth, and 1,111 teachers, 20% of these students consider dropping out because neither the school's subject matter nor the teachers engage them. Some 76% of these students cite as their reason for wanting to leave school that it is boring, while 42% of them claim they are not learning enough. Of the total number of students surveyed 37% of them claim they miss school because it is boring. This number increases to 49% for grades 10-12, specifically.

³ John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), EW 5: 85. All references to Dewey are from *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1990). References designated by Early, Middle, or Late Work, volume number, and page.

⁴ The following discussion of alienation is based on Marx's, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd edition), ed. Robert Tucker, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978), pp. 70-81.

⁵ Denise Clark Pope, *“Doing School”: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Interestingly enough, as the author indicates, most studies concerning education and schools seldom involve the perspectives of students. See, p. 190, note 3.

⁶ The pervasiveness and subtlety of this particular “success-driven” ideology, is reminiscent of that form of cultural reproduction identified by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977). According to Bourdieu and Passeron, school environments are

part of a vast symbolic system that reproduces the existing status quo by means of the perpetuation of the values of the dominant culture, which basically affirms what it means to be educated.

⁷ Pope opens our eyes to the many ways even the “model” students are cheating their way to good grades. She is certainly not alone in this assertion. A national epidemic of cheating is more frequently being reported. For a few examples see, “School Takes Action, But Pressure to Excel Remains” in *Mercury News* (May 30, 2004); “Schools Chief Talks Cheating” in *Mercury News* (June 6, 2004); and “California Says 200 Teachers Helped Kids Cheat on State Exams” in *Contra Costa Times* (June 24, 2004).

⁸ Education philosopher, Henry Giroux, uses the term “resistance” or “oppositional identity” to describe the persistence of will and the kind of self-knowledge with which students must arm themselves in order to confront the debilitating forces of schooling. Resistance has traditionally been attributed to deviant behavior or individual pathology. On the other hand, Giroux sees resistance as a legitimate (though not necessarily conscious) response to domination, used to help individuals or groups deal with oppressive social conditions and injustice. See his, *Theory and Resistance: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1983).

⁹ According to the *Met-life* survey, 47% of those students considering dropping out, claim to have skipped school because they did not complete an assignment, while 43% blame not being ready to take an exam. Of the total number of students surveyed 53% of those who are getting D’s and F’s claim they miss school because it is boring.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, as Pope observes, teachers are not exempt from the “culture of gain.” They, too, are pressured by this value system to seek results at whatever cost, whether to their students or to themselves. See, *Doing School, op. cit.*, pp. 161-3.

¹¹ For an invaluable discussion and practical tips on how to build a sense of community in the classroom, see Alfie Kohn's, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996).

¹² Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), MW 2: 288.

¹³ Isocrates, *Antidosis* in Loeb Classical Library, vol. II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927-29).

¹⁴ Cassiodorus, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, translated by L. W. Jones (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946).

¹⁵ Quintilian, *The Education of an Orator* in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921).

¹⁶ In M. W. Keatinge, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1896), p. 341, cf. Edward J. Power, *Philosophy of Education: Studies in Philosophies, Schooling, and Educational Policies* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1982), p.51.

¹⁷ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in *John Locke on Politics and Education* (New York: Walter J. Black Inc., [1693] 1947), section 81, p. 267.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, section 147, p. 331.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, section 118, p. 308.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, section 167, p. 346.

²¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, [1762] 1979), Book I, p. 41.

²² *Ibid.*, Book II, p. 92.

²³ *Ibid.*, Book III, p. 178-9.

²⁴ The following discussion of ‘interaction’ and ‘continuity’ is found in Dewey’s *Experience and Education* (1938), LW 13: 17-30.

²⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), LW 10: 25.

²⁶ Dewey, *Op. Cit.*, MW 2: 277-8.

²⁷ Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Random House, [1857-58] 1974), p. 494.

²⁸ Dewey, *Op. Cit.*, MW 2: 280.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

³⁰ Dewey, *Op. Cit.*, EW 5: 87.

³¹ Dewey, *Op. Cit.*, MW 2: 287.

³² Dewey, “Interest and Effort” (1913), MW 7.

³³ Dewey, “The Way Out of Educational Confusion” (1931), LW 6: 87.

³⁴ Incidentally, this lack of awareness of themselves as agents who are responsible for their own development is reminiscent of Marx’s concept of “false-consciousness.” So long as students acquiesce to the role of passive spectators in the learning process, they are living under a kind of false-consciousness from which they cannot escape until they

become emotionally and intellectually aware of themselves as agents; thus, acquiring “class-consciousness.” In this case the pun is very much intended.

³⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, translated by Patrick Clarke (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988) p. 102.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, [1968] 1970), p. 58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁹ Although Freire’s participatory social vision, which impels us to negate a dehumanizing and oppressive order, comes primarily from the suffering and struggle of the people of the Third World, it is nearer to us than we would like to admit. Our advanced technological society, whether through television or an appeal to unbridled desire, is rapidly making objects of us all, and subtly programming us into conformity to the logic of its system. To the extent that this occurs within our own culture, we are also becoming submerged in our very own culture of silence and lethargy.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

CONCLUSION

ELEMENTS OF AN EDUCATIONAL AESTHETIC

For one thing is needful:

That human beings attain satisfaction with themselves—

Be it through this or that poetry and art—

For only then can one stand to look at human beings!

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Froehliche Wissenschaft*

The history of educational philosophy is replete with attempts at invoking rationality or intelligence in general, as a means of directing and even subduing human desires, emotions, and appetites. Understood as that which moves human beings to action, these latter inclinations are directly associated with our impulses to action. As I have argued in previous chapters, the association of these inclinations with impulses to action has led to an identification of impulsive action and human freedom. In this sense, freedom is understood only as a form of license—the expression of an impulsive action in its simplest form—as yet unconstrained by anything beyond the particular limitations of the very desire or impulse itself. This identification leads to the inevitable opposition between freedom, construed as impulsive action, and control. Within educational settings in particular, the impulsive action on the part of the student is often construed as something that must be met with the controlling force of the teacher. Traditionally then, rationality and intelligence are understood as means to guiding, curbing, and even subduing our impulses.

Plato, following the lead of the Pythagoreans, gets the ball rolling with his account of the soul's responsibility in curbing and governing our desires, emotions, and appetites, all of which are directly related to our physical nature. Plato takes for granted a separation between the mind and the body (the seat and source of human desires) that drives a wedge between thought and action. Our ability to exercise control rationally or

intelligently over our desires and, thereby, keep our impulses in check, is understood within the context of an opposition between rationality itself and our bodily-driven impulses to action—between thought and action. One of the repercussions of this conception, of this opposition between the rational control of action and action itself, has been the establishment within educational philosophy of an opposition between control and freedom. Freedom, viewed as impulsive action, is thereby construed as an example of our inability to rationally guide or curb our desires, emotions, and appetites.¹ Another important repercussion has to do with the separation between emotion and reason. Expressions of emotion are viewed as antithetical to rationality, and hence, irrational.

Plato thus provides the foundation for the long-standing educational goal of rational self-control. Locke takes up this very same goal in the modern period, though his appeal to rationality in the governance of action takes us well beyond Plato's account by demonstrating how we realize self-control within specific pedagogical frameworks. Locke attempts to show how we might instill a habit of rational self-control in children from an early age. Locke nonetheless, like Plato, perpetuates the distinction between freedom and self-control—albeit reconciled in the form of a balance—along with the distinction between reason and emotion. Locke proposes that achieving the “great art” or uncovering the “true secret” of education, something all educators by implication ought to be interested in understanding, involves finding the balance between rational self-discipline and maintaining the freedom and initiative of the student.

Although Locke lets us in on the “secret” of education, it is Rousseau who begins to uncover an even greater secret. That is, that learning in the form of guidance and direction from the teacher, to avoid imposition, may itself have to be secretive. Otherwise we risk the butting of wills that necessarily results when one's freedom is even seemingly compromised by the will of another. Rousseau wants to avoid a “war of wills” by advocating that we guide children with a sense of necessity, so that what they do, they see as necessary and not simply demanded from them according to the will of another. Sometimes we may even have to “trick” the child into believing that what the teacher requires is nothing more than what nature necessitates he or she do; all in the name of the child's freedom and authenticity.

The balance, according to Rousseau, is no longer to be sought between freedom and control, but instead between will and power, or desire and capability. As we move to strike this latter balance, freedom appears as an aspect of both our will and our power. Freedom becomes an integral part of both, what one desires and the capability by which one acquires what one desires. Balancing the two, within the context of freedom, determines the degree of control one possesses. Rousseau takes for granted that our desires and impulses are spurs to and examples of free action, and simply recommends that what is necessary for the exercise of self-control is that we balance that free action with our ability to bring it to fruition.

The individual who can exercise self-control in this manner is happiest, since one is less prone to disappointment when one never desires or wills anything more than is necessary, or more than one is capable of attaining. At the same time, one also avoids the disappointment that comes from an inability to realize one's powers due to a lack in desire, or emotional impetus. Rousseau reconciles the seeming opposition between control and freedom in the form of a "well-regulated liberty." The idea here is to achieve self-control while maintaining the fullest respect for freedom. It is this balance, more so a symbiosis, between freedom and control—between desire (along with its implicit connections to emotion) and capability—that Dewey's educational aesthetic brings to its fullest realization.²

That which Rousseau keeps secret, Dewey finally brings out to the open. Dewey takes Rousseau's ideas even further by uncovering what the dualisms of control and freedom, thought and action, and reason and emotion have kept covered for so long. Dewey uncovers the "secret" that effective guidance necessitates a deliberate cooperation between the will of the teacher and that of the student. In order to attain this balance of wills, the teacher must be able to draw from the free impulse and emotion—the energy—that drives the student's will. The teacher then directs or guides that energy toward an educative experience—as Dewey would have it, growth that leads to continued growth. The student benefits because his freedom is not relinquished and his emotional energy is not thwarted. The teacher benefits because learning is not opposed. The teacher no longer has to provide the entire impetus for learning, but instead draws from the student's own

free will and emotion, that is, from the student's energy, and simply offers direction and an end.

The critical educational point here is that, beyond a mere academic exercise or show of power on the part of the teacher, learning ought to involve a personal and emotional experience on the part of the learner. As Dewey puts it, "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does [the student] think...[If] he cannot devise his own solution and find his own way out he will not learn."³ So long as the initiative of students is opposed by the external imposition of control on the part of the teacher, they will be unable to understand that control, along with learning itself, is something they ultimately must accomplish for themselves.

Just as important as the personal nature of educational experience is the emotional aspect involved in learning. This is precisely why exploratory learning, that is, learning for ourselves from our failures and successes, along with the freedom to discover our own boundaries in terms of our capabilities and desires, translates into growing emotionally comfortable within the play of our limitations and possibilities. Not to mention the role of desires which, in their emotional configurations are the mainspring from which the very motivation for learning arises.

Dewey promotes not only the intellectual facets of learning, but also, beginning with his appreciation for the role of impulse and desire in the movement toward intelligent action, equally values those facets of learning typically associated with our emotional states. Conversely, when we consider the impulses and desires that drive activity as somehow divorced from intelligence or cognitive processes in general, we mistakenly identify "freedom with immediate execution of impulses and desires" and thereby necessarily oppose "impulse with [intelligent] purpose."⁴ As a matter of fact, Dewey argues, so long as the intellectual aspect of our experience is detached from desire, impulse, and emotion, our thoughts are stillborn, since "[intelligence] must blend with desire and impulse to acquire moving force" thus giving "direction to what otherwise is blind, while desire gives ideas impetus and momentum."⁵

At this point an important clarification is necessary. The idea here is not that there is something wrong with the notion that our impulses and emotions ought to be guided by

rational intelligence. Actually, the very goal of Dewey's educational aesthetic is to draw out from the continuity he sees between ordinary and aesthetic experiences, a method of intelligence by which to direct our impulses and emotions, that is, our energies toward meaningful fulfillment. The problem seems to lie with the way one approaches the curbing of impulses, especially in the manner of a hyper-rationalization of emotions. Hence, this is a methodological issue. Dewey is not interested in doing away entirely with the theoretical distinction, if you will, between thought and action, control and freedom, or reason and emotion. What he does *not* want us to do is to invoke the distinction at the expense of thwarting the action, freedom and emotion that provide the initiative, drive, and energy to the learning experience of the student. When we throw out the freedom, desire, and emotion of the child, we "throw out the baby with the bath water." Instead, the idea is to use intelligence to harness the freedom, impulse, desire, and emotional energy of the child, appropriate this, and use it as the driving force that propels the child's learning. According to Dewey, nowhere do we witness this appropriation, this symbiosis, of freedom and control, thought and action, and reason and emotion to a greater extent than in aesthetic experience.

6.1. Our Understanding of Experience

Dewey struggled for many years with trying to formulate general traits that would help us clearly define 'experience'. His first and most thorough attempt to do this is in his seminal work, *Experience and Nature*. His attempts to circumscribe the nature of experience by offering a list of "generic" traits exhibited by all experience were criticized then and throughout the rest of his life.⁶ Criticism led Dewey to later admit that if he had the chance to, he would substitute 'Culture' for 'Experience' in the title of his book. Dewey writes, "I would abandon the term 'experience' because of my growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevented understanding of my use of 'experience' are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable."⁷ The obstacles Dewey refers to include the philosophical distinctions (dualisms) that bifurcate what is our sense of experience. These include theoretical distinctions such as: theory and practice, fact and value, reason and emotion, and nature and experience, just to name a few. In particular,

according to Dewey, the distinction between nature and experience leads to the view that experience is inevitably subjective, in contradistinction to the objective world of nature. A wedge is thereby driven between the world as uniquely experienced and the world as it exists apart from our experiences of it. The problem, according to Dewey, is not with the distinctions themselves, which may serve a useful purpose, but rather with the ways we come to reify these distinctions as if they point to something actual about experience.

According to Dewey, the Greeks are the first to draw a significant line of distinction between experience and nature. The pre-Socratic, and later Platonic, separation of reality and appearance paves the way for a corresponding distinction between the mental and physical realms, theory and practice, thought and action. The physical world of appearance, under the purview of mere mortals, may only be imperfectly reflected through our subjective sensations. Whereas nature consists of the constant and universal, sense experience is relegated to the changing and particular.

In response to these bifurcations, Dewey invites us to view experience organically. For Dewey, experience involves the inter-actions and trans-actions among living organisms and their environments. The observer and the observed are interdependent of one another.⁸ As Dewey puts it: “Instead of signifying being shut up within one’s own private feelings and sensations, [experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world—at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events.”⁹ In other words, there is an organic relationship between the objects and events (the known) that I experience, and the experience as “had” by me (the knower).

Dewey was opposed to any kind of dualism that separated the natural and empirically funded act of thinking as process from some strictly mental result. For, to emphasize the latter due to some philosophic loyalty would mean we depreciate what is worthy in the acquisition of knowledge, which is always the result of an interactive experience in which we significantly partake. According to Dewey, we are in the world. Therefore, the processes by which we arrive at knowledge of the world are themselves inextricably bound to it and our selves. Our knowledge is *in* and *of* experience. As sociologist Lawrence Hazelrigg maintains: “The inescapable condition, ‘foundation’, ‘ground’, or ‘basis’ of our production of knowledge is the historically contingent here-

and-now of making life, the sensuous world. We cannot stand behind that.”¹⁰ Hazelrigg here follows Dewey in criticizing any philosopher who fails to link thought to action and, more specifically, who proposes a theory that itself is detached from the “inescapable condition” of its experiential scope. In other words, Dewey is critical of those who fail to relate cognitive operations to the processes of ordinary experience, the latter including the emotional or affective qualities of experience.¹¹

Dewey captures these concerns with a statement about what he admits is the problem that has most preoccupied him: “To reintegrate human knowledge and activity in the general framework of reality and natural processes, without, at the same time, taking from humanity what distinguishes and exalts us among living creatures.”¹² According to Dewey, not only will this integration not detract from our place among living creatures, but also, and just as importantly, it will demonstrate that this very integration, that is, the symbiosis of thought and action, or reason and emotion, is *itself* “what distinguishes and exalts us among living creatures.”

6.2. Making the Ordinary Extra-Ordinary

According to Dewey, everything we do occurs within a natural web of experience. Within this web there is a wide range of experiences to be had, from the mundane to the creative. The former we might consider ordinary, while the latter include those we usually classify as aesthetic. Their qualitative differences seem to lie not only in their degrees of intensity, but also in the levels of deliberative involvement with which we engage in either sort of experience. The more intentional and deliberative the experience, the more we call into action our rational and emotional capabilities, and thus, the more meaningful the experience. It should come as no surprise that the great part of experience is typically of the ordinary sort. Fortunately for us though, experience does not have to remain ordinary.

So how does one make ordinary experiences, extra-ordinary? In order to understand how we might arrive at the latter, we need to understand the former. As we have already seen, Dewey’s understanding of experience is based on his conception of human beings as living organisms who, confronted with varying environmental

circumstances, find themselves having to constantly satisfy certain needs. Knowledge, then, arises as a natural outgrowth of our need to control a stable yet precarious and ever-changing environment, in order that we may maintain some level of stability, at least for the interim. According to Dewey, this capability for acquiring knowledge functions within the contexts of “problematic” situations. Dewey views intelligence as the ability of a living organism, being in a particular relationship to its environment, to maximize its possibilities for attaining particularly desired results. Let us take a simple example of how this occurs.

According to Dewey, human beings systematically engage in habitual behaviors. Take for instance, driving home from school or work. Some of us can recall instances when we engaged in this routine activity without being fully aware of the events that transpired along the drive. We arrive in our driveways and realize that we were not paying attention, yet we find ourselves safely at home. Dewey would say this is made possible by the fact that we possess a certain amount of funded knowledge—in the form of memories and habits—about objects, events, and behaviors that allows us to act in such an unreflective manner. At this point, we have not had to implicate conscious or thoughtful deliberation. Yet, as we continue in our normal processes of living we find our routines and habits suddenly interrupted by some problem situation or uncertainty. According to Dewey, it is problems or uncertainties that initiate inquiry.

Let us now extend this simple example. Every day we put the same amount of change in the vending machine and each time we receive our dose of carbonated sugar-water and caffeine. But today is different. We do not get the same or usual response from the machine. We find ourselves in a situation that is unresolved, incomplete, and indeterminate. The expected result has not been realized. According to Dewey, we are now primed for thinking. As we begin our attempts to find a resolution to our problem, to complete the task we had originally set upon, our problematic situation establishes the context for our inquiry.

Our first re-action, once we move past determining that we now have a problem and so long as we seek an intelligent resolution to our problem, must be to formulate hypotheses about possible alternative plans of action. So, for instance, we might set upon jiggling the change lever, shaking the machine, kicking it, putting more money into it,

making another selection, or taking the civil approach of calling the number on the machine so that we might retrieve a refund. What is informative here with regard to the nature of experience is that Dewey would have us keep in mind that all of our hypotheses are necessarily derived from the possibilities made present to us by this particular environment along with the fund of knowledge we already bring to the situation. As we continue to search for a possible resolution we might further refine or clarify our hypotheses to better suit the problem at hand. Ultimately, we must do something overtly to bring about the anticipated result and, thereby, test our hypotheses. It is important to note that until we have actually acted upon our ideas so as to bring about the desired outcome, that is, until we have tested our hypotheses, we have not yet brought our experience to fruition. Once we do so, whether or not we actually get our soda, since resolution of the issue does not necessarily mean we end up with a soda in our hands, our habits have been transformed through an adaptation to circumstances that have been encountered and resolved. In other words, we have learned. Dewey puts it in the following way:

To learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying, an experiment with the world to find out what it is like, and the undergoing becomes instruction—discovery of the connection of things.¹³

When we pay careful attention to this process and its outcomes, we reshape our previous understanding of similar situations. At the same time we have, even if ever so minutely, transformed not only our environment, but also, in transforming our habits we have transformed ourselves. According to Dewey, engaging in a process of inquiry by means of which we resolve problem situations somehow changes us, if for no other reason, because it adds to our *repertoire* of possibilities for future thought and action. This holds true of our impulses as much as our habits, such that by intelligently re-directing our impulses and habits, inquiry empowers us to better deal with our subsequent “problem” situations. Such is the basis for growth and development.

In this vein, the learning experience has much in common with what Dewey calls aesthetic experience. In both, whether as artist or student, we may begin with a problematic situation and forecast the consequences of possible alternatives for thinking and acting. We do this in our search for a path that will integrate competing desires and, through readjustment, restore equilibrium to our incomplete and dislocated experience. According to Dewey, inquiry itself “is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.”¹⁴ This is as true for the artist as it is for the student. For both, inquiry (learning) is the process of re-organizing, re-solving, and trans-forming problematic or incomplete situations into unified experiences. Further, and critical for educator and student alike to understand, engaging in such activity, as process and result, means and end, is akin to what both artist and appreciator of art must undergo in re-creating the intentions of the appreciator and artist, respectively.¹⁵

6.3. The Nature of Aesthetic Experience

Dewey defines education itself as, “that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning and value of those experiences.”¹⁶ In other words, meaning is derived from an improved perception of the connections and relations among the activities we engage in—perceptions that lead to an increased ability to control and direct future activities. According to Dewey, art and learning share this tendency to render ordinary experiences ‘meaning-full’, since both involve the enhancement of our perceptions, which in turn lead to the re-construction of meanings that re-establish the harmony upset by our constantly changing conditions. Thomas Alexander summarizes Dewey’s notion of the aesthetic: “An [aesthetic] experience is one which has been successfully transformed through intelligent action so as to be an inherently complete and dynamically moving whole, which realizes the sense of meaning and value as deeply as possible.”¹⁷

Dewey derives this conception of the aesthetic nature of experience from what he takes to be typical inter-actions and trans-actions among human beings and their

environments, whether social or physical. These inter- and trans-actions progress, according to Dewey, in a continuous “rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union.” These recoveries, in turn, provide the “material out of which [one] forms purposes”¹⁸ and meanings. According to Dewey, “Because the actual world, that in which we live, is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and re-unions, the experience of a living creature is capable of aesthetic quality.”¹⁹ The fact that we experience disruptions and so-called frustrations or problems in an otherwise normal flow and continuity of experience, as endings and beginnings, is what allows us to experience fulfillment and wholeness. Dewey describes this way of experiencing the world:

We have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment...A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience.²⁰

The aesthetic quality of such experiences comes into play when this sense of completion, culmination, and fulfillment is heightened by our very awareness of its progression. In the case of the artist, for instance, there is a consummation or sense of having reached a point of fulfillment, say, at the end of a performance. In the case of the one appreciating the performance, in his role as interpreter of the performance, the culmination may come by way of an appreciation or understanding of purpose in the performance.

Aesthetic experiences, besides evoking intelligence and emotion, also reflect these in “an internal integration and fulfillment reached through an ordered and organized movement.”²¹ Put in another way, “In as far as the development of an experience is *controlled* through reference to these immediately felt relations of order and fulfillment, that experience becomes dominantly aesthetic in nature.”²² Involving oneself aesthetically in experience is nothing less, nor more, than experiencing the integration of

one's thoughts, impulses or emotions—in a word, one's energies—as something purposefully and deliberately experienced.

Whether engaging in laboratory experiments, introducing brush-strokes to canvas or being energized by the crescendos in the movements of diverse rhythms and tempos while dancing to music, our circumstances are simultaneously adjusted and unified. New meanings are derived and former ones given new life, energies are explored and redirected. As Dewey states, “all intelligent activities of [mankind], no matter whether expressed in science, fine arts, or social relationships, have for their task the conversion of causal bonds, relations of succession, into a connection of means-consequences, into meanings.”²³ An aesthetic sensibility brings our interest, reflection, and emotion into a focused attention upon the very objects and events that provide for us the proper conditions for the realization of harmony in our experiences. Interest, reflection, and emotion, so honed, make way for our ascertaining meaning, equipping us to make better sense of our selves and of our circumstances.

6.4. Emotion and Intelligence in the Aesthetic

According to Dewey, “Art is a process of production in which natural materials are re-shaped in a projection toward a consummatory fulfillment through regulation of trains of events that occur in a less regulated way on lower levels of nature.”²⁴ These less regulated trains of events refer to the continuities we find in “ordinary” sorts of experiences, which include the mundane, rote, erratic, and habitual. That is, the kinds of experiences we naturally engage in without having to exert any significant amount of thoughtful energy. Traditionally, going back to the Greeks at least, these ordinary experiences are understood to be “less regulated” precisely because reason, which is entrusted to transform them into “more regulated” experiences, has not yet had its way with them. Due to such a view a distinction is made between our pre-rational, impulsive and emotion-laden states of experience, and our more “refined” rational or intellectual states. But for Dewey, this is yet another distinction that needs blurring.

The difference, according to Dewey, between a “raw” impulse and the “refined” experience of, say, playing a musical instrument, lies in the ability and desire of an

individual to intelligently direct that impulse.²⁵ This unadulterated impulse will, if we are diligent and fortunate enough eventually complete the process whereby it realizes itself aesthetically. Yet it is important to keep in mind that, for Dewey, the emotional aspects of the impulse are not entirely lost in its evolution toward the aesthetic. As a matter of fact, Dewey maintains that all experiences, from the "lowliest" and most "ordinary" to the "fullest" and "richest" of them—aesthetic experiences—begin with an impulse, and often enough this impulse is emotionally driven. According to Dewey, though the impulse comes to be refined, the experience is said to retain an aesthetic value only to the extent that its emotional element remains intact.

The fact that Dewey continues to exalt the emotional qualities of experience, by allowing these qualities to seep into that realm of experience supposedly evolved beyond the affections—intelligent, rational, or deliberative experience—leaves him open to some criticism. Dewey, the consummate anti-dualist, is criticized for supposedly maintaining dualisms of his own. On the one hand Dewey champions rationality and deliberative experience, epitomized by the scientific method and traditionally understood in terms of an elevation in kind above the trappings and strictures of our emotion-driven impulses. On the other hand Dewey is unwilling to relinquish the unique, necessary, and pervasive role played by emotion, even in experiences classified as deliberative. We may refer to the former position as the *Excluded Middle Criticism (EMC)*, since the claim is that no "middle ground" is possible—emotions are either transformed by reasoning or they remain irrational. In other words, Dewey cannot have it both ways. So long as emotions are allowed to seep back into the rational elements of our experiences, our attempts at reasoning will remain tainted and confused.²⁶

The second criticism, although related to the first, is actually its contrary. The accusation is that Dewey's attempts at reconciling "aesthetic" and "ordinary" experiences, by blurring the steadfast distinction commonly held between the two types, actually fail. Dewey is accused of *aestheticism*—of being a "closet" aestheticist—because he maintains that the essential characteristics of aesthetic experiences include certain ineffable emotional qualities or traits that lie beyond the mundane and practical realm of everyday, ordinary affairs.²⁷ The very immediacy of such emotional qualities would render them unapproachable by reason, since they are to be felt, not thought. According

to this position, when we view emotions in terms of personal experiences, blocking deliberative access to them due to their immediacy, we only perpetuate the very dualism Dewey sought to abolish. We will refer to this as the *Aestheticism Criticism (AC)*.

These criticisms, I will argue, are ultimately unfounded. The *Excluded Middle Criticism* simply does not follow from a comprehensive reading of Dewey. Meanwhile, the *Aestheticism Criticism* does not acknowledge that Dewey is only making a theoretical distinction when he tries to explain the role of emotion in the aesthetic experience. For the purposes of organization, I will address the *AC* first, and then the *EMC*.

6.4.1. The Aestheticism Criticism (AC)

Dewey's intention in *Art as Experience*, what he terms the "nature of the problem" he is addressing, "is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience," that is, the "normal processes of living."²⁸ In order to accomplish this, Dewey must criticize those who exalt the end of art as something entirely distinct from practical activities, those involved in its very production, and the common affairs and emotions in general of ordinary life.²⁹ In other words, he criticizes those who esteem the "finished" product, the 'art work', above the very process of its production. For Dewey, this devaluation of process is no different from the depreciation of learning that we find within our educational settings; where an absolute value is placed on the results of standardized tests at the expense of those everyday transactions and processes which, if intelligently and empathetically directed, might instead enrich intellectual and emotional development.

Aestheticism refers to the devaluing of ordinary experience and the corresponding exaltation of the aesthetic as a uniquely distinct experience, together with the emphasis on the product of art over the process of its production.³⁰ Throughout *Art as Experience*, Dewey criticizes this form of aestheticism and those who maintain a "compartmental conception of fine art."³¹ Among those Dewey criticizes is the Formalist Clive Bell. In one fell swoop Bell fragments the ordinary from the extra-ordinary, when he states that, "Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For

a moment we are shut off from human interests, our anticipations and memories are arrested, we are lifted above the stream of life.”³² If Bell were to have his way, aesthetic delight would never rub elbows with the supposedly mundane and ordinary (living) emotions and affairs of “human interests.” Only a privileged few, from the company of which even some of his close friends, Bell admits, would have to be excluded, could achieve such majesty. Due to this fragmentation, aesthetic experience is not only detached from ordinary life and emotion, but it is also detached from serving any significant practical purposes related to either of these.³³

On the contrary, according to Dewey, aesthetic experiences intensify, concentrate, and refine those same traits and qualities that we find in the everyday warp and woof of life. As such, they lead us to an enriched understanding and appreciation of our “average” and “ordinary” experiences. According to Alexander:

The moral taught by the arts is that when the self-conscious attitude of the artist toward his material has been extended to all experience, to the whole range of human life, then life itself is capable of becoming art. When such an attitude prevails, the aesthetic dimension of experience will not be regarded as a special, limited, or effete kind of experience.³⁴

In a sense, the aesthetic dimension of our lives reveals to us “what more of life could be like and, what we ourselves could be like if we really work at it.”³⁵ An aesthetic sensibility affords us richer and fuller lives, a sensibility consistent with Dewey’s educational goals since it entails growth. But if Dewey was opposed to such compartmentalization, why then was the charge of aestheticism leveled against him?³⁶

Although, throughout *Art as Experience*, Dewey attempts to show the continuity that exists between aesthetic and ordinary experiences, he is at the same time interested in demonstrating the uniqueness and immediacy of aesthetic experience. For Dewey, what distinguishes aesthetic experiences is the extent to which they are “exemplary in their unity” and “in their consummatory yield.”³⁷ This yield, Dewey strongly holds, extends beyond the rational contributions from intelligence, to the emotional qualities inherent in all human experience. The problem here is that Dewey’s theoretical distinctions are being

read outside the context of his overall philosophical *corpus*. For Dewey, the value of aesthetic experience warrants singular consideration, without us having to lose ourselves entirely to its raptures. In the following passage, Dewey describes the aesthetic quality as:

[That] feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. *We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world that is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences.* We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. I can see no psychological ground for such properties of an experience save that, somehow, the work of art operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity, that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience.³⁸

Herein Dewey hints as to why someone may mistakenly accuse him of aestheticism—with the simple mention of “...a world beyond this world.” But this is too simple. At the same time, we need to discern the continuity so important to Dewey, which prevents the aesthetic from being anything but an aspect of experience in general—of “...this world that is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live our ordinary experiences.” Dewey’s naturalism would not allow for any escape from the here-and-now world of everyday experiences, which would relegate action and, even more specifically, human emotion to some realm that transcends nature.

6.4.2. The Excluded Middle Criticism (EMC)

Whereas the *AC* proposes that Dewey fails to avoid a dualism, the *EMC* proposes that a dualism between reason and emotion would actually be appropriate, that is, that Dewey *ought* to more clearly distinguish between the emotional and the rational. According to this position, by continuing to exalt the emotional aspects of consummatory experiences, Dewey this time devalues the role of reason in the ordering and refining of unresolved and indeterminate situations—in the ordering of experience. Interestingly

enough, a Deweyan response to this criticism sheds light on his insights regarding the significant role emotions play in the learning experience of the student.

As we have seen, although Dewey values the aesthetic aspects of experience, he does not situate aesthetic qualities, which sometimes include ineffable emotions, outside the realm of ordinary and natural experience. Therefore, any connections he may draw between aesthetic and ordinary experiences are always relative ones. The *EMC* fails to respect Dewey's account of the relations that exist among differing aspects of experience. In other words, Dewey's response to the *AC*, that although emotions are unique they are not distinct from the rest of experience, points us to the practical import of emotions. The response to the *AC* is therefore, implicitly a response to the *EMC*.

Characteristic of aesthetic experience is a sustained intentional process that is not much different than most other instances of sustained intellectual activity, be they artistic, scientific or educational. Yet, intelligence alone does not an aesthetic experience make. There is also emotion involved. The role played by emotion in the ordering of experience was clearly demonstrated to everyone in an *Introduction to Philosophy* course I taught a few years back. One of the students in the class made it known to us that she played Classical violin. So I invited her to perform for the class.

On the day of her performance, she first had to go through the "routines" of preparation. She unfolded and set up her metal music stand. Then she carefully placed her selections on the stand. Finally, she proceeded to properly position her violin in her hand and under her chin. And from the moment her bow first moved across the strings, she immediately shut her eyes. For the remainder of the performance, she never once opened her eyes to look at the notes on the sheets in front of her. Now, this is not to suggest that her performance did not require intelligence and deliberation. Obviously she had "thought over" this music and practiced it so much in the past that her playing was now second nature to her. What this example demonstrates is that deliberation, at this point, might have actually only hindered the performance. The closing of her eyes told of an emotional immersion, an interpenetration between her and her violin that went beyond mere intellection. At this point, as Dewey would say, she was engaged in an emotional trans-action between herself and the music, and her instrument and, of course, her environment—yet, on this day, she "felt" the music, and then played it accordingly.

Understanding the practical role played by emotions is important for two reasons. First, it does not hide from us the uniqueness of the emotional quality within an aesthetic or learning experience. Secondly, it demonstrates that an aesthetic or learning experience also needs to be understood in terms of the level of emotional investment, involvement, and engagement on the part of the artist or student. As with the artist, the student's emotional dispositions must be acknowledged, especially when we consider their motivations for learning.

There is no reason to view emotions, or even impulses for that matter, as somehow inimical to proper deliberation, learning, or aesthetic fulfillment. Dewey, writing on the nature of freedom, states: "Mere foresight, even if it takes the form of accurate prediction, is not, of course, enough. The intellectual anticipation, the idea of consequences, must blend with desire and impulse to acquire moving force. It then gives direction to what otherwise is blind, while desire gives ideas impetus and momentum."³⁹ Learning takes more than just intellection and reflective thinking—it is more than merely academic. As we saw in Rousseau's approach, learning also requires an emotional disposition. For instance, especially beneficial to learning might be those emotional dispositions that elicit open-mindedness, interest, effort, cooperation, and perseverance.

Most importantly, emotion leads to an initiation of interest. Evoking an emotional response on the part of a student toward a lesson, or simply allowing an emotional expression of interest to become a part of the learning process, goes a long way in promoting engaged learning. John Holder, who supports Dewey's attempts to reconcile our non-cognitive ("background") with our cognitive ("foreground") operations by means of a naturalized epistemology, describes this often overlooked function of emotion. He writes: "Thus, emotion can be a guiding force in thinking when it becomes the attitude of concern that in part controls and directs thinking."⁴⁰ When emotion is invoked in the service of arousing interest, the student becomes more likely to exert an effort. Of course, we are not referring here to just any exertion of effort, but rather to an impulse that has its energy intelligently directed toward a purpose. A child incessantly rocking back and forth or running amuck in a supermarket aisle is exerting an effort. But this kind of effort has no purpose and, therefore, does not qualify as an intelligently perpetrated—purposefully designed—expression. Rather, the emotionally and intelligently robust kind of expression

or effort we are looking for is the kind exemplified by the aesthetic sensibility. “The difference,” As Alexander describes it, is “between a mute, uncontrolled ‘seizure’ and the fully controlled and funded expressive gesture which realizes the aesthetic.”⁴¹

The ability and desire of the artist to engage his subject matter with a sense of meaningfully directed purpose, driven by thought and emotion is itself an exemplary approach to learning. Of course, the effort that is ultimately most beneficial to learning is the one that arises from the student, and not one motivated by an imposition from some external force. It is self-effort that will lead to a heightened sense of responsibility, since the effort is understood as one’s own. As Dewey states, “The alternative to externally imposed inhibition is inhibition through an individual’s own reflection and judgment.”⁴² Dewey is trying to show us how we might apply his conception of the aesthetic sensibility to directly inform our educational practices. In particular, we find that an aesthetic sensibility fosters the kind of self-discipline and self-direction sought after as an underlying goal of education throughout history.

6.5. The Learner as Artist

Aesthetic, that is, intentional and intensified experiences are in essence educative. “They open the door,” as Jackson puts it, “to an expansion”—and one might add, a reconstruction—“of meaning and to an enlarged capacity to experience the world”⁴³ in new and creative ways. The educational task becomes one of teaching students “to attend to the rhythm of doing and undergoing as they work on their own constructions [of meaning] or seek to appreciate those of others.”⁴⁴ In effect, this renders an aesthetic sensibility adaptive to and even constitutive of democratic forms of association, especially in the Deweyan sense.

An aesthetic sensitivity or awareness, that is, an “aesthetically funded” imagination, Jackson adds, “encourages us to push beyond surface appearances, to reach down toward a level of meaning that only a steady gaze and calm reflection”—deliberate and carefully articulated experiences—“have the power to reveal.”⁴⁵ For students, an aesthetic sensibility and awareness provide a broader perspective from which to embrace the contents of their immediate and particular surroundings, as well as the entire fabric of

their lives. One might say Dewey's goal is to make artists of students. Dewey's hope is that with the help of education, students, and all of us for that matter, may come to discern greater degrees of meaning among the ordinary objects and events of everyday experiences.

Education, like art, is an active enterprise that evolves out of human interaction with nature. The artist engages in thought that organizes activity into meaningful plans of action—purposive activity. The artist intelligently organizes means-ends relationships, with the goal of satisfying deliberate aims. The process of art “making” is itself one of redirection of thought, as experimentation and trial come to inform our ways of thinking and feeling. The artist, much like Dewey sought for the student through social avenues, manifests self-discipline that arises from within the activity itself; thereby doing away with the need for external imposition of control. We usually do not have to coerce artists to engage in their crafts. This, full-circle, brings us back to the emotional or affective aspect of art.

Both, aesthetic objects and the processes by which we arrive at them elicit from us an emotional response that is ultimately favorable or unfavorable. As Dewey puts it, “*Things* are beautiful and ugly, lovely and hateful, dull and illuminated, attractive and repulsive.”⁴⁶ It is the same with learning and the emotional responses from students. They take either an aversion or interest toward the subject matter presented for learning. This interest, or lack thereof, in turn, directly influences the degree of effort put forth by the student in engaging the activity or subject matter. Likewise, the artists' attention to or interest in their pursuits is one with their level of engagement—the amount of effort put forth—both emotionally and intellectually.

As was noted earlier, according to Dewey, continuity and interaction are a part of all experience. Whether or not the experience ends up thwarting our continuity or sets up barriers for our interactions is another issue altogether. Though continuity and interaction are most effectively, richly, and fruitfully manifested in the aesthetic experience, not all experiences will end up being of this sort. So, what assures the quality of an experience that is truly educational or aesthetic is this symbiosis of interest and effort—the dual “linchpins” of a quality experience.⁴⁷

Learning, like art making or aesthetic appreciation, requires more than just an intelligent and deliberate organization of our impulses. Just as important as the rational aspect of learning, is the expression and organization of emotion with regard to what is being learned. As I have argued in previous chapters, this broader understanding of what motivates us is crucial to whether or not we ever realize an authentic democracy. Whether artistically, educationally, or socially it is the expression and organization of emotion that leads to interest, which in turn allows the artist, student, or citizen to focus on self-discipline and self-direction—effort effected from within.

So, what other contributions to education may we gain from art? Jackson, in his insightful account and practical application of Dewey's educational aesthetic lists the following contributions:

The arts, Dewey tells us reveal the rewards of bringing an experience to its fruition. They reveal what it takes to fashion works whose form and structure are holistic and unified, yielding a reaction on the part of both artist and audience that is at once satisfying and fulfilling...They thus offer indirect lessons about fashioning the more mundane aspects of our lives.⁴⁸

From art making and appreciating, students learn about process. They learn by direct example what it takes to follow a process to its completion.⁴⁹ Specifically, carrying democratically-laden processes to their fruition helps to develop individuals' sense of self-discipline, as these processes require that we intelligently, patiently, empathetically, and effectively direct our impulses and desires.

Dewey, of course, understands this all too well, and perhaps even better than Plato, Locke, and Rousseau. Dewey places the seed of control and discipline in the heart of the individual, and places this heart squarely in the hands of the individual's freedom—a commitment essential to any self-directive form of social organization. Dewey writes:

It is, then, a sound instinct that identifies freedom with power to frame purposes and to execute or carry into effect purposes so framed. Such

freedom is in turn identical with self-control—for the formation of purposes and the organization of means to execute them, are the work of intelligence.⁵⁰

Dewey has taken us beyond the opposition of freedom and control, by uniting these two seeming opposites in the same aesthetic effort to achieve self-discipline.

For Dewey, the impulses, desires, energies—in a word, the freedom of individuals—are the driving forces of life. As such, these ought not to be excluded or suppressed, but rather guided and directed. Speaking educationally, Dewey adds: “Since freedom resides in the operations of intelligent observation and judgment by which a purpose is developed, guidance given by the teacher to the exercise of the pupils’ intelligence is an aid to freedom, not a restriction upon it.”⁵¹ By evoking an emotional response from students, art making and appreciation allows them to understand first-hand the nature of interest. Taking an interest in something fosters an inclination to effort on the part of the interested individual. Self-effort, in turn, is the very means by which individuals come to understand that education is not something done to them, but something they ultimately must do for themselves. More so, self-effort is the most appropriate and democratic means by which individuals come to understand that the responsibility for their lives is not something to be dispensed with but rather something to be esteemed, cherished, and continually expanded in the direction of greater freedom. Art, therefore, empowers students with the ability to transform their lives.

Implementing an educational aesthetic requires that we take seriously the elements of common experience as a basis for our aesthetic and pedagogic endeavors, specifically, and our social and moral motivations in general. Everyday transactions, deliberately and intentionally cultivated, render intelligent, purposive, and meaningful experiences—whether in a laboratory, on a canvas, on a basketball court, or in a classroom. When we no longer look to make steadfast distinctions between our aesthetic and our everyday experiences, that is, when we view the aesthetic as an aspect or mode of experience in general, we are well on our way to making artists of us all. If we allow it, education, like art, may bring to our attention methods for developing and enhancing what is meaningful about our lives.⁵²

According to Dewey, our very social existence is at stake. Social progress requires critical and inquisitive minds. To behave otherwise would be to leave us to our habits and prejudices, that is, to thought and emotion that have not been transformed by the process of inquiry. The purpose of education is to render us capable of understanding and evaluating our social circumstances, while intelligent inquiry allows us to increase our capabilities for dealing with and controlling those circumstances. According to Dewey, an aptitude or disposition, if you will, for intelligent and purposive activity, developed through education, is not only necessary for the emancipation of humans from the perils of nature itself, but also to save us from our own natures. The educational and the aesthetic afford human beings the capacity to celebrate our lives in our continuous efforts at creating for ourselves lives filled with meaning and value.

So long as we continue to limit our aesthetic sensibilities, we limit our capability to live as fully as is humanly possible. By educating individuals to live “aesthetically funded lives,” to borrow an expression from Fesmire, we greatly enrich their aesthetic capabilities to feel, think, and imagine greater moral responsibility with an eye toward realizing more fulfilling lives. So long as we continue to ignore the educational value of our latently-aesthetic ordinary experiences, we lose out on the enriching possibilities available to us from the sphere of ordinary life—the domain, incidentally, which contrary to what we may wish for, most of us occupy for the greater majority of our lives. Likewise, so long as we isolate our social goals from the processes by which we nurture and educate our habits, we alienate ourselves from the richness of life in general. Instead, when we develop our aesthetic sensibilities, which is to say raise our emotional and rational awareness, at the very least we stand to uncover our “latent possibilities for growth, meaning, and fruitful action.”⁵³ Such an outlook seems perfectly fitted to a democratic social vision, because it proposes to enliven our sensibilities toward mutuality in the direction of empathy in relation to our social surroundings. Dewey’s educational aesthetic, I think, gives us a reasonable and hopeful glimpse of these possibilities.

¹ In *The Republic*, Plato draws an analogy between the tripartite nature of the soul (appetitive, spirited, and rational) and the three naturally occurring classes within the ideal society. With the aid of this analogy Plato comes to a definition of justice—the goal of both the ideal society and the morally virtuous individual—as a harmony and unity among these distinct elements. According to Plato, democracy as both a political system and a personal disposition is precisely where this harmony and unity go awry. Our inability to exercise rational self-control, making us literally slaves to our own desires, leads to our placing individual interests above what is in the best interest of the community. I examine Plato’s account of rational self-control in chapter one.

² What exactly constitutes the ‘aesthetic’, an ‘aesthetic experience’, or an ‘aesthetic sensibility’ is quite difficult to ascertain and, further, is most likely not entirely discernable from what follows. What I do hope is discernable is at least some understanding of the manner in which an aesthetic theory, Dewey’s in particular, coalesces with an educational approach founded on a democratic vision. And, more so, with an approach that enriches the ordinary aspects of our lives. As Eugene Kaelin has surmised, I take the liberty here of invoking the ‘aesthetic’ as metaphor. Others have made thorough attempts at understanding, elucidating, and even applying Dewey’s aesthetic theory. Among these are Philip Zeltner, *John Dewey’s Aesthetic Philosophy* (1975); Thomas Alexander, *John Dewey’s Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature* (1987); Michael Mitias, *What Makes an Experience Aesthetic?* (1988); Eugene Kaelin, *An Aesthetics for Art Educators* (1989); Philip Jackson, *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (1998) and “If We Took Dewey’s Aesthetics Seriously, How Would the Arts Be Taught?” in *The New Scholarship on Dewey*, Jim Garrison (ed.), (1995). Making the further connection between Dewey’s aesthetics and morality, see David Seiple’s comprehensive dissertation, “John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Moral Intelligence” (1993); and Steven Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics* (2003) and “Educating the Moral Artist: Dramatic Rehearsal in Moral Education,” in *New Scholarship on Dewey* (1995).

³ Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916), MW 9: 167.

⁴ Dewey, *Experience and Education* (1938), LW 13: 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See George Santayana's, "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics" first published in *The Journal of Philosophy* (December 3, 1925), as a review of Dewey's first edition of *Experience and Nature*. Subsequently published in Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn (eds.), *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, Vol. 1, *The Library of Living Philosophers*, [1939] 1989, pp. 243-261.

⁷ Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (1925), LW 1: 361.

⁸ We see here the influences of both Hegel and Darwin, on Dewey's philosophy. While at Johns Hopkins University, Dewey is under the tutelage of George Sylvester Morris, whose Hegelian Idealism has a tremendous impact on his early philosophical development. See Neil Coughlan, *Young John Dewey: An Essay in American Intellectual History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). As did Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. See Dewey's, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy" (1910), MW 4, as well as Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (1949), LW 16: 1-294.

⁹ Dewey, LW 10: 25.

¹⁰ Lawrence Hazelrigg, *Social Science and the Challenge of Relativism*, Vol. 2, *Claims of Knowledge: On the Labor of Making Found Worlds*, (Gainesville, Florida State Press, 1989), p. 224.

¹¹ As I describe later in this chapter, for Dewey, the emotional qualities of experience are found all along the continuum between ordinary and aesthetic experiences. Some would

like to see emotion rendered obsolete once rationality has taken over control of an experience. While others accuse Dewey of ‘aestheticism’ because he argues for the emotional quality inherent in aesthetic experiences—a quality critics believe sets the aesthetic apart from the practical and ordinary. For an insightful handling of Dewey’s struggles with such ‘compartmentalists’ as Clive Bell and Roger Fry, see Seiple, “John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Moral Intelligence,” *op. cit.*, especially chapter one, as well as for clarification on his use of the term ‘aestheticism’, see p. 14, n. 19. This discussion, particularly concerning Fry, may also be found in Zeltner, *John Dewey’s Aesthetic Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, especially chapter three, pp. 42-4.

¹² Dewey here concurs with the assessment of his critic, Dominique Parodi, who summarizes Dewey’s own position, in Schilpp and Hahn (eds.), *Op. cit.*, p. 597.

¹³ Dewey, MW 9: 147.

¹⁴ Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), LW 12: 108.

¹⁵ Philip Zeltner, in *John Dewey’s Aesthetic Philosophy* (1975), p. 29, describes eloquently Dewey’s point that “The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works” (Dewey, LW 10: 55). And *vice versa* that the perceiver, by means of her interactions with the art she observes, shares something with the artist.

In creating one’s experience, or in reconstructing consciousness, one must include relationships comparable to those which the original producer underwent. It is by no means the case that all relationships [need] be present. What is essential is that the perceiver undertakes an ordering of constituents which in form, although not particularly in detail, is the similar process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced.

In addition, Seiple (and we may as well include Fesmire) sees the goal of an educational aesthetic as developing the “interpretive competence” of the individual (I will call this the ‘education’ side of the equation), which in turn may lead to greater capacity for “imaginative reconstruction” (and this, what we get when learners become artists). Both Seiple and Fesmire are pushing for moral artistry.

¹⁶ Dewey, MW 9: 82.

¹⁷ Thomas Alexander, *John Dewey’s Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 186.

¹⁸ Dewey, LW 10: 20-1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²³ Dewey, LW 1: 277.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁵ This example hints at what Dewey would want to say about the role of emotion in the aesthetic experience. We might hesitate to say that the musical performance is “intelligent” in the sense of being purely “rational” since it would be hard to believe that the performance could be entirely devoid of emotion. Actually, one might be more

inclined to say that the performance is truly artistic *because* it is driven by an emotion, or it exemplifies an emotional quality.

²⁶ This is, as I have argued in the first chapter, Plato's position. It continues to be, to some extent, Locke's position as well. Rousseau's Romanticism, on the other hand, seems to move him away from this tradition and closer to the position held by Dewey. After all, along with the moniker 'philosopher of freedom', Rousseau is also known as the 'father of Romanticism'. Rousseau, in reaction to the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality, advocates and defends the primary cultivation of our natural emotions as a basis for the later development of our reason.

²⁷ Again, Seiple's discussion in his "Aesthetics of Moral Intelligence," *Op. cit.*, is helpful and insightful here. Seiple seeks a Deweyan reconciliation of aesthetic experience, which he sees compartmentalists associating with the effete and intrinsic qualities often attributed to pure intellection as separate from the practical, with our presumably mundane practical moral concerns. In Deweyan fashion, he seeks to reconcile what is valuational in the aesthetic with what is intentionally imaginative about morality.

²⁸ Dewey, LW 10: 9, 16. What is crucial here to our understanding of Dewey is that he views aesthetic experiences as only *aspects* or *modes* of experience viewed within the contexts of natural processes, instead of as separate entities or forms of existence altogether. Similarly, in *A Common Faith* (1934), LW 9, Dewey's clearest statement of his philosophy of religion, he depicts the embeddedness of experience in nature in his claim that there are no such things as religious experiences, distinct in kind from other experiences, but only religious *aspects of* experience.

²⁹ Similarly, in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), MW 14, Dewey criticizes those who attempt to "remove" ethics or the study of human conduct from our understanding of human nature within the contexts of our natural human practices.

³⁰ Seiple, *Op. cit.*, especially chapter one.

³¹ Dewey, LW 10: 14.

³² Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Capricorn Books [1914] 1958), p. 25.

³³ See Seiple, *Op. cit.*, chapter one, especially his *Significance-for-Praxis Thesis* (SPT).

³⁴ Alexander, *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

³⁵ Jackson, “If We Took Dewey’s Aesthetics Seriously,” *Op. cit.*, (1995), p. 26.

³⁶ Specifically, I am referring to the “idealist” charge leveled against Dewey’s aesthetic philosophy in Stephen C. Pepper’s “Some Questions on Dewey’s Esthetics” in Schilpp and Hahn (eds.), *Op. cit.* Pepper claims that Dewey’s pragmatism and organicistic aesthetics are incompatible, due to the significance Dewey assigns to the autonomy and immediacy of the aesthetic quality.

³⁷ Jackson, “Dewey’s Aesthetics” (1995), p. 26.

³⁸ Dewey, LW 10: 199, (emphasis mine).

³⁹ Dewey, LW 13: 45.

⁴⁰ John Holder, “An Epistemological Foundation for Thinking: A Deweyan Approach,” in *New Scholarship on Dewey*, *Op. cit.*, p. 16. Holder goes on to quote Dewey (MW 14: 184), who argues “the conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can or should be eliminated in behalf of bloodless reason. More ‘passion,’ not fewer, is the answer.”

⁴¹ Alexander, *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁴² Dewey, LW 13: 41.

⁴³ Jackson, *Op. cit.*, (1995), p. 27.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Dewey, LW 1: 91. Most importantly for our purpose here, Dewey goes on to contend that the process itself takes on a quality all its own that may itself be aesthetic. Using the process of laboring as an example, Dewey writes: “If labor transforms an orderly sequence into a means of attaining ends, this not only converts a casual ending into a fulfillment, but it also gives labor an immediate quality of finality and consummation” (*Ibid.*).

⁴⁷ I discuss the role of continuity, interaction, interest, and effort, in connection with relevance, in the previous chapter.

⁴⁸ Philip Jackson, *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 6.

⁴⁹ Even more than simple completion, an aesthetic experience marks a consummation of which we are wholly aware emotionally and intellectually. We gain more than the simple sum of its parts. Steven Fesmire, in his essay “Educating the Moral Artist,” *Op. cit.*, (1995), describes this difficult idea:

The aesthetic concerns more than just the enhanced perception of closure that follows on the heels of an experience. It is also the feeling of fluid

development that suffuses and unifies the whole experience and guides or steers our thoughts and actions. We savor the movement of our purposes and interests toward completion. The aesthetic is the feeling of growth, the opening of awareness of a situation's latent possibilities for meaning.

⁵⁰ Dewey, LW 13: 43.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵² Other benefits that come from instruction in the arts or learning approached as an aesthetic process are numerous. Eric Jensen, whose teaching techniques are based on the latest findings in the fields of neuroscience and cognitive psychology, includes among these the building of "creativity, concentration, problem solving, self-efficacy, coordination, and values attention and self-discipline." Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 1998), pp. 36.

⁵³ Fesmire, *Op. cit.*, (1995), p. 56.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

After writing an entire dissertation concerning how one might go about taking deliberate hold of one's life, my biography must begin with a chance event that had a greater impact on my life than perhaps any intentional act on my part has. I began my life in Managua, Nicaragua, but immediately following the earthquake of December, 1972, my family moved to Miami, Florida, where I first learned the English language and continued to live throughout my youth. After attending two years at the University of Miami, I discovered philosophy through an introductory course, which led me to change my major from Biology. I earned my B.A. with Honors in Philosophy from Florida International University, in Miami, and then completed the requirements for my M.A. (*en route* to the Ph.D.) in Philosophy from Florida State, in Tallahassee. Just before beginning my dissertation I was offered a full-time teaching position at Bergen Community College in Paramus, New Jersey, where I taught for four years. I then transferred to Felician College in Lodi, New Jersey, where I currently "corrupt the youth." During these years I was able to teach courses ranging from my areas of specialization in Social-Political and Education, to other areas of interest including, Existentialism, Philosophy of Art, Philosophy in Film and Literature, History from Ancient through Nineteenth-Century, and even managed a couple of sections of Philosophy of Death. Of course, keeping so busy also kept me from completing this dissertation, until about two years ago when I began to write in earnest. Next up; piano lessons.