Culture, Identity, and Islamic Schooling

A Philosophical Approach

Michael S. Merry

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To Nicholas, Sophia, and Peter

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Foreword

Philosophical discussion concerning religion or religious schools in liberal societies is nothing new. In many ways, this book joins the efforts of others seeking to grapple with the many challenges facing political philosophers, religious schools, educational policymakers, and ordinary parents. Yet this book's contribution is on two fronts. First, this is the first multinational comparison of Islamic schools that extends beyond Europe. Although a very small number of studies have examined the phenomenon of Islamic schools in a particular country or compared the phenomenon in two or three European countries, none have compared Islamic schools in Europe with those in the United States. This omission is significant, as the United States hosts more Islamic schools than any other Western country. Moreover, in light of the growing phenomenon of Islamic schools in the United States and Europe, I consider it extremely worthwhile to examine some policy issues related to these schools as well. I shall say more about this shortly.

Second, very little philosophy has been written about the place of Islamic education in liberal democratic polities, particularly from a non-Muslim point of view.[1] Because Islamic education in the West is in its infancy, it is my hope that this book will provide a cogent analysis of its potential challenges, viability, and promise. It is also my hope that this book will help to further the dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim educators in the interest of furthering understanding about education that is beneficial for Muslim children, but also for all children who attend religious schools. In particular, I believe there to be three groups for whom such a book will be especially relevant.

One is the political philosopher who reflects critically upon the sorts of educational challenges this book examines in detail. Many of the questions I will address have been broadly explored by others in ways that are extremely beneficial to anyone concerned about the place of culture and religion in shaping identity, how society ought best to accommodate the rival goods parents desire for their children, and what role the state ought to play vis-à-vis religious schooling.

A second audience that is likely to find this book useful is the educational policymaker, particularly to the extent that I take up questions concerning how the state might best govern or regulate religious schools without crushing their administrative autonomy. A comparative look at Islamic schools in three countries provides the policymaker with a broad perspective from which to view the issues that affect schools, families, and society. Notwithstanding the likely opposition to some of my arguments, the forthcoming discussion will show that there is much thinking that remains to be done on the issue of religious schools.

Finally, it is my hope that this book can contribute greatly to the conversation that is well under way among Muslims living in Western societies. Considering the challenges that Muslims in particular face in the post-9/11 world, Islamic schools carry special significance for how Muslims living in the West choose to carve out identities for themselves and their children that are true not only to their individual or collective faith(s), but also to the societies of which they are an integral part. I hope that this book will highlight some of the debate that needs to be taken up by *any* community interested to preserve values or lifestyles that may be outside of the mainstream culture, particularly when it chooses to do so through a form of religious schooling.

But what *is* schooling? The title of this book implies something about education without calling it by its proper name. Education and schooling have much in common but of course they are not synonymous. I take a serviceable definition of education from a noted historian: "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skill, or sensibilities, as well as any other outcomes of that effort" (Cremin 1977, p. 134). Of course, the outcomes that Cremin alludes to need not intimate a static result, and education entails more than what occurs inside a school building. Education also takes place in family life, extracurricular activities, libraries, employment, and many other community-bound practices, including the cultural and religious activities that inform the educative process. Still, most education also requires some form of schooling.

Critical pedagogues of various sorts have interpreted schooling as the reinforcement of the institutional status quo (Shujaa 1994). While there is much evidence to support this interpretation, I see no reason to view schooling exclusively in pejorative terms. By schooling I mean a set of institutional practices and expectations that participants are expected to conform to in their thought and behavior. Schooling entails educative purposes as well as explicit and hidden cultural values and attitudes that may support or be at odds with those of the broader society. In this book I argue that both Islamic education and schooling serve a spiritually integrative purpose though this

need not be all-encompassing or total. In other words, individual agency is not eclipsed, and internal criticism is possible. Even so, I will use education and schooling interchangeably throughout this book, as it is my view that one implies the other.

Though its primary focus is Islamic education and Islamic schools, this book encompasses several foci, including the meaning of an Islamic philosophy of education, the construction of cultural identities, personal well-being, the prerogatives parents may assume in their children's upbringing, and the oversight the state might provide vis-à-vis religious schools. I address these important issues as a philosopher of education. In particular, I aim to determine the extent to which Islamic schools might be expected to contribute to the goals of an educational system appropriate for a liberal democratic society.

Methods

In this book, I will undertake a critical examination of Islamic schooling and focus my attention on the United States, Belgium, and the Netherlands. While much of the information I have gathered is empirical in nature, my purpose is mainly to reflect on the potential goods and harms to come out of an education that singularly endeavors to provide a strong cultural and religious identity to its students. Much of my information concerning Islamic schools is derived from a small but emergent literature in Europe. Knowledge of this literature brought me to Europe for five weeks in the summer of 2003, where, as part of a European Union Fellowship with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I conducted a series of interviews/conversations with both qualitative and quantitative researchers in Belgium and the Netherlands. Each of the subjects I interviewed has an expertise either on Dutch or Belgian Muslim populations.

In the spring of 2004, I attended the annual Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) education conference in Chicago, Illinois. During 2003–2004, I toured six Islamic schools in several cities in the American Midwest and conducted interviews/conversations with numerous school administrators and teachers. I chose the schools that I did mainly for reasons having to do with geographical proximity. The closest school I visited was one hour away from where I carried out this writing, while the farthest I traveled to visit a school was seven hours. I spoke with about eight principals and roughly thirty teachers, some of whom were graduates of Islamic schools themselves.

I want to be clear about the significance of these interviews/conversations in this book. The purpose behind my conducting them was principally to *supplement* the information available to me in print, particularly as policies

continue to change in the months and years since publication and because the existence of Islamic schools continues to provoke widespread public debate in the Dutch press. Public debate in Belgium stalled many years ago (for reasons I will discuss in Chapter2) but there have been recent attempts to resuscitate the discussion. In the United States, in contrast, there is no public debate concerning Islamic schools, and no comprehensive studies have been carried out on their aims and performance. Some publications that describe the curriculum, parental expectations, and the aims of Islamic schools are available from Islamic educators, yet *critical* information about Islamic schooling is self-reported and scarce, even in the best cases, and is almost completely absent in the United States. Curiosity drove me to visit several Islamic schools and talk to Islamic school educators both in person and, when necessary, on the phone. I wanted to know whether my piecemeal impressions would offer me different insights from those I had already researched.

Educational ethnographers spend months, if not years, embedded in particular school contexts, shadowing students, getting to know their subjects on a rather intimate basis, and systematically gathering data from scores of interviews over extensive periods of time. Conversely, the "payoff" of my own interviews/conversations is quite limited. On the one hand, it is *necessarily* limited owing to the comparably brief amount of time I actually spent in Islamic schools. Moreover, I only visited a small number of Islamic schools in North America. Yet the payoff is limited in another sense, for I went into these interviews/conversations on a particular day, a brief moment in time, and met with a few school staff individually that the school principal and I had agreed to beforehand. (There were a couple of times when I spoke with two people together, but this was not usually the case.) I was also eager to speak to teachers who had grown up in the West, or, if possible, who were not themselves Muslim.

From there, guided by specific questions, I conducted semistructured interviews and conversations. My questions could have been asked of anyone in a religious school. They went something like this:

> Some critics say that religious schools indoctrinate children and fail to prepare them to live in a multicultural society. What is your thinking about this?

Or, take another:

> Some critics claim that religious schools fail to foster autonomy or civic participation in their students, seeking rather to instill unreflective conformity to a set of beliefs and practices. How would you respond to this claim?

Most of these conversations lasted for forty-five minutes. Some participants were more eager to talk at length, in which case we had follow-up conversations at other times. Others gave only minimalist responses. What the participants knew about me was that I was a researcher conducting comparative research on religious schools in multicultural societies. My being non-Muslim (though this could not be divined simply by my being white) or a university researcher did not appear to interfere with the conversations I had, at least in no way that I could discern. Nor did my being male appear to interfere with conversations with female staff. Some female participants may have been a little reticent at first, though I could only surmise that this was typical of most interviews with an unfamiliar someone. But in any case, I talked with no one who objected to my questions or who found my research uninteresting or threatening in any way. Several asked to read the finished product and most interpreted my interest in Islamic schools in a positive light.

Be that as it may, readers accustomed to hearing the voices of interviewees may be disappointed or frustrated with their absence in my text. I can appreciate this frustration. However, I have hidden their voices deliberately. My reasons are as follows: first, my own training is not in ethnographic or qualitative research; about this, I must be perfectly candid. No transcripts of interviews are contained within this study. Second, in my view, the book would read more unevenly for me to insert, somewhat randomly, comments in certain chapters (and not in others) in order to buttress a particular point. It seemed better for me to maintain a consistent style and voice throughout, particularly since the qualitative "voice" differs considerably from the philosophical "voice." As I have already noted, I approach the writing of this book as a philosopher of education situated in the liberal democratic tradition interested in the sorts of questions that can be teased out by the empirical research available on Islamic schools. Educational ethnographies, in contrast, generally read consistently in another way, with the voices of parents, teachers, and school staff selected and displayed on every other page. It is doubtless a debatable point whether the inclusion of transcripts would enhance this work.[2] My own opinion is that it would not.

Here is why. I went into my school visits optimistic that I would learn many things about Islamic schools that extant reports did not reveal. For the most part, I was mistaken. Rather what I discovered was that these conversations revealed (a) the extent to which Islamic schools are very much like other religious schools and each other, and (b) that the literature on Islamic schools in Europe and North America—though limited—sufficed to underscore the challenges Islamic schools face, as well as the myriad ways that individual Muslims were responding to these challenges. I uncovered

very few exceptions to this rule, yet even where this happened, it hardly seemed sufficient warrant to include one or two participants' voices. Much of what I learned during my interviews/conversations about the Muslim experience in the Low Countries, for instance, is supported by the available literature. Similarly in the United States, most of what I heard during these interviews/conversations, as well as witnessed in my observations of school functions, is reflected in articles published in English language magazines like *Islamic Horizons*.

It is true that I could be criticized for not approaching interviews in a more systematic way, or for only visiting a relatively small number of schools, and in a relatively small section of the United States. However, nothing in what I encountered at much larger Islamic education gatherings, which hosted Islamic school educators from across North America, suggested that Islamic schools elsewhere in Canada or other regions of the United States differed *fundamentally* in their organizational approaches, philosophies of education, or efforts to secure an accredited school status. In fact, listening in on Islamic educational forums attended by Muslim educators throughout North America, I was consistently surprised at the level of congruity and uniformity I came upon in discussions as varied as developing an Islamic curriculum, fostering an Islamic identity, or promoting a strong civic awareness. So in the final analysis, the credibility of this book should not rest on how many interviews I conducted or how many schools I visited. Chiefly as a philosophical work, its credibility should rest, I think, on the persuasiveness of my arguments and the plausibility of my proposals.

In Chapter 1, I will place the topic of Islamic schools in the context of debates among political philosophers and policymakers about religion and religious education in liberal democracies. Next, I will lay the groundwork for subsequent philosophical discussion by considering several characteristics of a liberal educational ideal.

Notwithstanding that this is chiefly a philosophical work, I have chosen to include an entire chapter of nonphilosophical material. This is important, I think, in order to properly set the more abstract discussion against the prosaic day-to-day realities of Islamic schools. Therefore, in Chapter 2, I describe the educational options of Muslims in three highly industrialized Western countries. I also provide a comparative analysis of the mechanisms for funding, choice, and control of Islamic schools in these countries. While a great deal of discussion has been taken up in recent years concerning state funding and monitoring of religious schools, little has been done to compare the policies and procedural norms of Islamic schools among countries with sizable Muslim populations. This chapter will inform the

philosophical discussion to follow in the subsequent chapters, and some of the empirical detail here foreshadows the discussion I take up in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 3, I will attempt to provide an overview of the general philosophy behind Islamic education. I will argue that there exists a disjuncture among Islamic educational ideals (as expressed by Muslim philosophers of education), the aspirations of school administrators, and the manner in which Islamic schools operate in practice. Above all, this chapter is an attempt to highlight the challenges that Muslim educators in the West face as they aim to reconcile an idealized caricature of Islamic philosophy of education with the on-the-ground needs of Muslim children that are socialized in a non-Islamic society.

In Chapter 4, I will examine the concept of cultural coherence. Cultural coherence describes an important aim in the process of passing on deeply held commitments, values, and beliefs that are necessary to sustaining identity formation and psychological health. I shall consider whether Muslim students are better served by cultural coherence in Islamic schools, especially in the early grades, in order to foster better academic outcomes and a stronger sense of self-worth. I will argue that cultural coherence, if not too restrictive, can lay an important foundation for individual autonomy.

In Chapter 5, I will focus on the tensions between the interests of the state, the parents and those of the child. I will endeavor to wed the cultural coherence needs discussed in Chapter 4 to the attendant duties and prerogatives of Muslim parents to educate, as they deem appropriate, without transgressing either the immediate or the future interests of their children. I will argue that Muslim parents are justified in having their children educated in Islamic schools with the proviso that in doing so they attend to the well-being of the child. I hold the view that (a) most Islamic schools are capable of promoting the kind of learning (and learning environment) that speaks to a child's well-being, and (b) most Islamic schools are sufficiently capable of cultivating civic virtue.

In Chapter 6, I want to address philosophical questions that are related to the state funding and oversight of religious schools. Given the provocative debate over funding Islamic schools in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and elsewhere, this discussion has special relevance. While parents and administrators of Islamic schools may have reasons to be diffident toward the state and its oversight, I will argue that the education of all children (including Muslim children) is in the public interest, and therefore the state must assume the responsibility of ensuring that its future citizens receive a quality education. Because of the sorts of challenges Islamic schools face in Europe, as well as the apparent constitutional obstacles, which prevent

the direct funding of religious schools in the United States, my arguments, for the time being, must be interpreted as a thought experiment.

In Chapter 7, I speculate on the future of Islamic schools in the United States by considering the case of Catholic schools before offering some concluding thoughts.

Michael S. Merry
Spring 2007

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Connecticut, 41–70. (Copyright 2006, Information Age Publishing, www.infoagepub.com) The material from this book appears in Chapter 3.

Indoctrination, Moral Instruction, and Non-Rational Beliefs: A Place for Autonomy? *Educational Theory* 55, 4, 399–420. (Copyright 2005, Blackwell Publishing) A portion of this material appears in Chapter 4.

Cultural Coherence and the Schooling for Identity Maintenance, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 39, 3, 477–497. (Copyright 2005, Blackwell Publishing) The material from this article reappears in a different form in Chapter 4.

Advocacy and Involvement: The Role of Parents in Western Islamic Schools, *Religious Education* 100, 4, 374–385 (Copyright 2005, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC., www.taylorandfrancis.com) The material from this article appears in a different form in Chapter 5.

The Well-Being of Children, the Limits of Paternalism and the State: Can Disparate Interests be Reconciled? *Ethics and Education* 2, 1, 39–59. (Copyright 2007, Taylor & Francis, http://journalsonline.tandft.co.uk/). The final and definitive form of some of this preprinted material appears in Chapter 5.

Should the State Fund Religious Schools? *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 24, 3, 155–170 (Copyright 2007, Blackwell Publishing) The material from this article appears in a different form in Chapter 6.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

For some years now, many Westerners have endeavored to understand Islam. The terms on which this sought-after understanding takes place are heavily weighted against Muslims. Many struggle to distinguish themselves from the stereotype that has prevailed in film, polemical theology, literature, and sloppy journalism, no small thanks to the dastardly work of extremists. These redoubtable obstacles, coupled with the cynical and calculated foreign policies of Western governments throughout the Muslim world, have fomented a great deal of suspicion and distrust.[1] Many Muslims believe that the values promoted by Western liberal society are in perpetual conflict with those of Islam. Liberal democrats, in turn, look askance at the attempts of a handful of Muslims to openly inject religion into the body politic, some (like al-Muhajiroun in the United Kingdom) going so far as to call for an Islamic state. Many Muslims continue to be nonplussed with the hypocrisy of Western governments that favor Christian (and to a lesser degree, Jewish) symbols and traditions and that go to great lengths to exclude Muslims from the privileges that their Judeo-Christian coreligionists take for granted (Merry 2004). Legal battles have been fought—particularly in Europe—over ritual slaughter, polygamy, and the funding of mosques, to take but the most conspicuous examples. In the United States, lawsuits have been brought against the state from prison inmates and against employers in cases involving discrimination (Moore 1998, 2002). Many of these cases have led to changes in legislation, and legal provisions are on the rise.

Yet in several European countries today, it is Islamic schools that are the bête noire over which policymakers and the general public debate. Debating religious education is not new in the United States either. The mid-nineteenth century in the United States witnessed what would become several decades of bitter rancor over the right of Roman Catholics to educate their faithful separately and, what is more, with either state subsidies or tax exemption. More recently, some have insisted that tuition tax credits and vouchers take

away public money for the schooling of children in private (often religious) institutions. Yet, while Catholic and Jewish schools have long since found their place on the educational landscape, Islamic schools are a relatively new phenomenon. Moreover, while Catholics and Jews in the United States waged their cultural wars over the right to a separate education for religious purposes many decades ago, Muslims in North America represented a barely acknowledged ethnic and religious group until the 1990s.

In the academy, political philosophers have long disputed the benefits and costs of private religious schools. As part of the American educational landscape and political fabric, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish citizens have long been at the center of this dispute. However, except where recent voucher initiatives have aided some families in using state monies to place their children in religious schools, there has been, in recent memory, no public debate in the United States concerning the existence of religious schools, their methods, or their philosophy of separateness from public schools. This is doubtless because of the strong divide between church and state, which disallows direct fiscal aid to private schools, and a long history of local control in American schooling. In Europe, however, the picture is different.[2] Religion classes have long been a part of the educational establishment, and provisions are routinely made for their maintenance and support. The same applies to most denominational schools.

Yet Islamic schools and the policies that make fiscal provisions for them are a new addition to this reality. The viability of such schools has been front and center in several European countries and is openly debated at different levels. As their numbers continue to climb, much of the debate surrounding these schools focuses on the public funds that help to pay for them, a penchant for sectarianism due to the countercultural motivations of parents, and a highly contested quality of education (Kabdan 1992, 1993; Dwyer & Meyer 1996). Focusing on the debate in Europe is useful for at least three reasons. First, notwithstanding the inordinate attention that high-profile cases (*Wisconsin v. Yoder,* 406 U.S. 205, 1972; *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education,* 827 F.2d, 6th Cir. 1987) have received from legal scholars and political philosophers, no national debate exists concerning sectarian schools in the United States. Second, each of the pedagogical objections marshaled to oppose the establishment of Islamic schools in Europe (i.e., that they are sexist, threaten social cohesion, exhibit poor academic standards, and segregate according to religious beliefs or ethnicity) highlights the precise concerns of many political philosophers over religious schools in general. Yet, with few exceptions, these concerns, however relevant they may be to other religious schools, are seldom directed against them. Hence, while the American and European polities are decidedly different, there are at least prima

facie reasons for believing that Islamic schools are a special case. A comparative approach, taking into account both the American and the European experience, will possibly allow one to assess whether this is so. (However, because much of this book focuses on the place of religious schools in Western liberal democracies in general, it is probably better to see Islamic schools as not a very different case. In fact, it will gradually become clear that I am treating Islamic schools and Muslim pupils and parents similarly to other religious schools, pupils, and parents.) Third, the state's active involvement in founding and maintaining Islamic schools in Europe provides educational policymakers in the United States with enlightening—though certainly not problem-free—models for holding schools accountable to minimally civic aims.

Such aims point us toward the discourse of philosophical liberalism, and the following remarks lay the groundwork for the kinds of arguments I shall make, especially in Chapters 4 through 6. Since this book principally concerns Islamic schools in Western societies, let me begin by addressing a central Western feature: pluralism.

The Fact of Pluralism

Pluralism is simply the condition of multiple value systems inhabiting the same political space. All societies encounter pluralism to some degree; some actively suppress it, while others welcome it. Western liberal democracies aim to accommodate pluralism to a greater degree than nondemocratic societies. This does not mean that liberal democracies consistently implement policies that take account of all value systems. Indeed, insofar as the nation-state model continues to prevail, certain cultural norms, customs, and institutions persist in being privileged over others (Merry 2004; Swaine 2001). A commonly heard claim is that pluralism is a necessary element to schooling inasmuch as a more diverse school culture is more likely to foster tolerance toward others whose views differ.

Most liberals (by which I mean philosophical liberals) will argue that a homogeneous school environment will fail to properly prepare a child for living in a pluralistic society, where different ideas—some public, some private—about the good are entertained. Thus, in a schooling atmosphere that wittingly or unwittingly promotes uniformity, realistic options for other ways of imagining the good are denied to pupils. What is unsettled is the matter of public versus private education and whether one is more conducive to the open encounter with the difference that liberals seek out. Increasingly challenged is the idea that "free" public education facilitates not only the possibility of a plural environment (owing to certain residential patterns

related to race and social class) but also a meaningful engagement with difference. So, while facilitating pluralism remains a cardinal tenet of liberalism, how best to accommodate it—and to what degree—is a matter of grave dispute among liberals.

Liberal Educational Ideals

The liberal education of children is not merely the parents' or the local community's business; indeed, the broader society also has an interest in the education of its citizenry. Given the condition of pluralism, the need for public education stems from the legitimate interests of society and its members concerning the social stability, economic prosperity, and democratic functions of learning. Why democratic? Education needs to be democratic—as opposed to indoctrinatory—so that pupils come to learn in an environment that gives considerable weight to not only their willing participation but their intellectual contribution as well. Soliciting the willing participation and cooperation of a community's members is legitimate.

Legitimacy will also be relevant to the acceptable or unacceptable nature of policies that potentially infringe on people's freedom or resources. Liberalism claims to be "neutral" to the private interests and belief systems of the citizenry, but this so-called neutrality is not in fact neutral to *all* notions of good or the desirability of pursuing *all* aims. Indeed, where liberalism concerns itself with the public's good, certain goods (e.g., toleration, nondiscrimination) are championed, while others, seeking justification from sectarian principles, are not validated or do not enjoy equal recognition. Liberalism accommodates a variety of ways to define the good life (though not those that bring harm to a community's members), without making explicit what those definitions must include. Yet, while liberals value pluralism, they do not deny that certain values, including specific cultural values, have universal significance and application. Therefore, any justifications for liberal principles and the institutions they support require noncoercive public reasons to which all persons have admittance. Yet, because of the countless ways to conceive of the good and the insistent diversity of moral convictions, there are real worries about coercing those who find the aims of liberal education morally objectionable. When children's education is at stake, conflicts inevitably arise between parents and the state concerning the content and purpose of schooling.[3]

Yet legitimacy continues to be important to liberals not only because its absence implies coercive action, but also because it will be difficult for any liberal democracy to "sustain conscientious support if it tells millions of its citizens that they cannot rightly say what they believe as part of a democratic

public dialogue" (Galston 2002, p. 116). Rawls (2001) further explicates what legitimate political power entails:

> Political power is legitimate only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution (written or unwritten), the essentials of which all citizens, as reasonable and rational, can endorse in the light of their common human reason. (p. 41)

Reasonableness must not be confused with rationality, which denotes merely a capacity to reason.[4] Importantly, reasonableness entails a moral constraint on rational thought and action; it describes those who are disposed to propose, or acknowledge others who propose, "the principles needed to specify what can be seen by all as fair terms of cooperation" (Rawls 2001, p. 7). That citizens may exercise reflective thought and reasoned judgment does not, of course, mean that they will. Many rational people exercise their judgment in ways that foster unreasonable outcomes. However, this is no reason for the state to assume that unreasonableness is irremediable or that unreasonable people ought to be ignored. Rather, it means that the state ought to pursue "political strategies which, other things being equal, make it more rather than less likely that more people will come actually to endorse the constitutional essentials in the light of their common human reason" (Brighouse 2007).

Whatever these strategies entail, a legitimate state will regard its citizens as free and rational beings who possess at least the *capacity*[5] to endorse the principles and policies that "specify our basic rights and liberties and effectively guide and moderate the political power to which we are subject" (Rawls 2001, p. 94). A state's legitimacy, then, is directly tied to the personal autonomy and civic virtue of its members. To dismiss those who appear unreasonable is to treat with contempt a large number of citizens, many of whom, given appropriate opportunities, may come to obtain the relevant dispositions and habits. But the result is far more serious than that, for to dismiss the apparently unreasonable is to effectively shut them out of the deliberative process altogether, which will likely have two consequences. First, the state's actions will be deemed illegitimate by many of its citizens, leading many either to actively resist the state's overtures or to completely opt out of the political processes by which oversight becomes a possibility. Second, if some citizens resist or opt out of the deliberative process, their children, too, will be denied opportunities to cultivate the deliberative capacities that are conducive to reasonableness. Consequently, the number of children likely to receive an education that fails to promote equal educational opportunity—and hence free and equal citizenship—will likely increase. These are worrying outcomes for liberal democracies.[6]

Liberal educational ideals matter, because a liberal education aims to foster independent thinking and a capacity for rational evaluation that enables one to weigh different and potentially competing claims. This deliberative process guides the civic aim of education, which is to advance the public good. Liberals recognize that there are a multitude of ways of living well, but all of them consider the public good best served by educating children to practice tolerance toward views other than those that they have borrowed from their parents. This tolerance can be fostered by exposure to and engagement with ideological differences and by learning about the various rights and opportunities that are available to members of a liberal democracy. A liberal approach to education will strongly encourage a rational pursuit of one's interests, but more importantly, it will include a critical self-evaluation of those interests, including the ancillary aim of possibly revising them. Provided this is done well, a liberal approach to education can lead to a more intelligent evaluation of choices, as well as a more empathic appreciation of others.

Many liberals stoutly underscore the need to educate children in an environment different from that at home and according to principles different from those of the parents (Rawls 1993, 2001; Gutmann 1980, 1995, 1999; Barry 2001; Brighouse 2000; Dwyer 1998) so as to encourage rational reflection on one's commitments. Others give more weight to children's particular interests and their unique relationships with their parents (Lomasky 1987; Galston 2002; Burtt 1994; Macedo 1995, 2000) and concern themselves less with any need to rupture the privileged nexus that constitutes one's alleged cultural coherence. These positions are each impressively nuanced,[7] may naturally overlap, and are not mutually exclusive of one another. What is important to recognize in all of them is that education, in light of the pluralistic environment we all inhabit, is meant to teach political virtues such as social cooperation and tolerance of differences. It must also seek to cultivate enough autonomy in subjects so as to serve broadly civic purposes. Finally, no one's self-conception should be so all-consuming that it cannot be revised or exchanged for another. In what follows, I will spell out in more detail what each of these constituent components of a liberal education entails.

Civic Virtue

Liberals are keen to promote civic aims that involve a sociodeliberative engagement vis-à-vis the public good. This involves the cultivation of various types of virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for social cooperation. There is considerable dispute concerning which virtues ought to be inculcated, though most endorse an education that promotes literacy, numeracy, truth seeking, and public reasonableness. Yet because different ideas concerning the meaning

of the public good abound, civic education might be best achieved by educating all children to appreciate the value of toleration and by teaching citizens to respect one another's basic rights and opportunities. Teaching toleration may mute hostilities and distrust among ideologically different groups, and it may even aid in the effort of preventing state power being used to promote one conception of the good to the exclusion of others.[8] However, minus respect, one will be powerless to oppose or preclude various forms of discrimination that are difficult to perceive when carried out, say, in the job and housing markets (Gutmann 1995, p. 561). Thus, by teaching mutual respect for individual differences, schools can "aid pupils in understanding and evaluating both the political choices available to them as citizens and the various lives that are potentially accessible to them as individuals" (p. 559).[9] *Compelling* the questioning of one's private commitments—to say nothing of their revision—is not the goal of a liberal education. Making it a *possibility* is.

Yet, while there is some contention among liberals concerning the necessity of respecting differences versus learning about and tolerating them, the public virtue of mutual reciprocity is underscored, so that ideas concerning the common good can be successfully debated among citizens who may nevertheless fail to share ideas about ultimate truths. Mutual reciprocity implies that the civic purposes of education must include fostering the capacity to evaluate and respect different points of view that others may deem central to a good life. Should this mutual respect be lacking, citizens will be ineffective in deciding matters affecting their common future if they hold to very different visions of the good.[10]

Some liberals who advocate the cultivation of robust civic virtue also believe that it will (and perhaps ought to) provide an adequate substitute for other types of cultural and social identities. This claim remains controversial, but some continue to assert that a liberal political citizenship can plausibly replace other forms of identity. An education that seeks to engender loyalty to a particular creed or cultural way of life, in short an education for cultural coherence, is seen as sectarian, politically irrelevant, and inappropriate to the task of a liberal education. The same holds for religious parents who decide to keep their children in a protective environment, safe from the "corruption" of counterfactual thinking.

The worries about thwarting the acquisition of the virtues and skills needed for liberal democratic citizenship are real, and all liberals recognize the need for at least a modicum of social and political stability if the conditions necessary for liberal education are to be achieved. Nevertheless, the demands of a civic education are rigorous. They call upon us for full political participation seen in terms of a nonnegotiable duty, even when this flies in the face of opposing parental wishes or communal concerns.[11] Therefore, some liberals

feel that civic education surpasses the valuing of diversity that many have reason to prize, including the right *not* to be politically engaged.

Economic Self-Reliance

The public also has an interest in the education of its children owing to future-related interests, which include the social stability and economic prosperity of the state. Thus, a liberal education will concern itself with the basic need of individuals to be economically self-reliant. The whole society gains from having a populace of literate, economically self-supporting, and legally competent individuals. When considering the *content* of schooling, one must also ask about the employment prospects of pupils. This is not to say that education must be purely instrumental in character—that is, a means to material ends. Nevertheless, one must be able to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge required for living a self-directed life. If independent wealth or an economically enabling education is absent, few will find the opportunities for living well—that is, the capacity to enjoy the minimal conditions necessary to facilitate autonomous choices and promote the kind of reciprocity that one can hope to find in a plural environment. Having the capacity to evaluate one's own opinions and judgments in light of opposing views and criticisms better enables people to attain economic independence and flexibility. Meira Levinson (1999) explains why an education that promotes self-reliance, creativity, and flexibility is essential. She writes,

> Individuals who develop the capacities for autonomy simultaneously develop many of the exact capacities needed in the workforce today. This is because the modern economy demands of both individuals and societies that they be adaptable and self-reliant: the prizes go to those who adapt themselves to new technologies, who can anticipate and set trends rather than following them, and who can take responsibility within a horizontally structured work environment, rather than to those who have a fixed set of skills which they only deploy in response to orders imposed from above.
>
> (p. 137)

A liberal education, then, has as one of its core commitments the self-sufficiency of individuals, though this need not conflict with the interests of parents. Some parents' efforts to limit the range of opportunities available to their children in order to promote and perpetuate the interests of the community are in conflict with the goals of liberal education. Communal interests do not *necessarily* conflict with a child's autonomy, but inasmuch as certain choices are systematically denied (e.g., postsecondary education, certain types of respectable employment), there is reason to be concerned for the child's autonomy.

Autonomy, Culture, and Well-Being

As I suggested above, tolerance has long been a kind of sine qua non of liberalism and liberal education. Yet tolerance of different cultural practices may lead some to recognize as legitimate certain customs and behaviors that do not value the autonomy—and, if the cultural practices are particularly heinous, the *dignity*—of people. Indeed, tolerance toward all forms of diversity may prove inimical to the capacity of some people to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms, let alone cultivate the capacity for personal autonomy. Brian Barry (2001) observes,

> The object of political programmes designed to promote diversity or tolerance is precisely to insulate the members of illiberal groups from the danger of corrosion that illiberal values are liable to suffer from when exposed to the freedoms offered by a liberal democracy.
>
> (p. 121)

In principle, autonomy has to do with the capacity to freely form and pursue a conception of the good. However, autonomy also involves the ability to take a critical distance from one's inherited values, commitments, and beliefs, as well as the ability to assess different truth claims and revise one's position relative to those claims, should there be reason to do so. Naturally, a number of enabling conditions are relevant in order for autonomy to be possible, including good health, minimal environmental constraints, and an absence of coercion as well as the incapacitating effects of fear and guilt.

For Rawls (1993), autonomy is not necessarily a constitutive end for private citizens, but merely a means to public discourse and justification. In bifurcating the public from the private sphere with respect to autonomy, Rawls calls upon people to behave autonomously for whatever purposes are necessary to sustain the processes of political deliberation, while leaving traditional behaviors and role-playing to the discretions of the private sphere. Nevertheless, supposing that education ought to promote the kinds of rational enquiry and deliberative capacities essential to an autonomous life does not get us in the clear. This is so because autonomy may conflict with deep commitments passed down from generation to generation. A mandate to cultivate autonomy through education is likely to conflict with time-honored customs and beliefs. Indeed, many liberals and nonliberals alike are displeased with (a) Rawls's tidy separation of the public and private spheres and (b) his unremitting emphasis on political deliberation, which downplays the role of culture in facilitating individual autonomy.

Many of the strongest convictions of people spring from cultural or religious commitments that guide much of what they do. Delimiting how

one's commitments can be exercised is both to act unfavorably toward one's true self and to privilege those whose commitments easily coalesce with the mainstream. Moreover, it may be difficult in many circumstances to assess autonomy. Autonomy, for example, must admit of degrees; in some instances it entails a condition for choosing, while in others it signals a restraint on choice. The capacity to choose from a variety of options or to reflect on one's choices cannot be unilaterally applied. Thus autonomy, owing to its distinct purposes, must mean very different things to different people in different contexts, and reasons and causes need not proceed in lockstep. Not only must autonomy be adequate to its own constitutive project, but we must also never lose sight of the fact that "it is the state and society that provide us with the tools and the contexts of our authorship; we may shape our selves, but others shape our shaping" (Appiah 2005, p. 156).

"We are, all of us, culture-producing individuals," noted Michael Walzer (1983, p. 314). Liberals have increasingly responded to such claims in arguing that personal integrity is only possible once individuals humbly acknowledge their cultural and moral debt to a set of practices and norms critical to the development of rationality and autonomy. Autonomy, after all, must take account of inherited culture; only when this necessary contextual space is granted can autonomy assume any meaning, for individuals are not capable of autonomy bereft of a culture. Indeed, the idea that individuals are able to judge, assess, and compare different versions of the good life that is absent from an identity shaped by their cultural milieu is one that few will venture to defend.[12]

How much weight ought to be given to autonomy as the central feature of liberal education remains categorically vague. No liberal denies its importance in enabling human flourishing, yet much confusion and disagreement surrounds its precise scope and meaning as well as its pride of place within the liberal tradition. For example, no settled agreement exists that might suggest that autonomy should unseat tolerance as *the* key liberal virtue. Indeed, more and more liberals are also questioning the centrality of individual autonomy without discarding the incomparable freedom that liberalism allows. Liberals are averse to prescribing the particular ends of cultures or individual lives, but do insist on a particular "style or manner in which we should conduct our lives" (Callan 1997, p. 18). Therefore, while autonomy is typically central to the liberal's concern, it "is not the high road to all that is good nor is its absence a guarantee of evil" (p. 49).[13] It is true that an inordinate stress on autonomy can lead to a kind of unwarranted coercion inasmuch as (a) it may be promoted by the state through the education system, or (b) it militates against values endemic to communities that understand individual lives as part and parcel of an organic whole.

Autonomy, then, might conflict with the nexus of roles and relationships that prevail in certain communities. Further, supposing it were possible, the *imposition* of autonomy through education is both a violation of the state's neutrality—as an entity that ought not to respect the ideals of the good—and an infringement on the freedom of individuals *not* to be autonomous.

However, for liberals, the greater worry is in defending a conception of education that places paramount importance on a sense of belonging to a community with specific beliefs and practices, since the capacity to distance oneself from these received ideas and values will likely be exceedingly difficult. Education of this sort, it is often alleged, denies its pupils life options that are available to others. Moreover, it potentially leads to irrevocable harm owing to an uncritical acceptance of adopted values and beliefs. In fact, the absence of autonomy, some proclaim, is surely a short route to repressed or adapted desires and servility. Its absence may even lead to an abuse of the vulnerable at the hands of the powerful.

Even so, many liberals question whether the importance of autonomy might usurp other goods capable of enhancing *well-being* by participating in some other conception of the good. Though imprecise, well-being speaks to the pursuits that individuals take up to contribute to a flourishing life, including habits, vocations, activities, and relationships that are intrinsically worthwhile, as defined by socially embedded individuals. By well-being, I also mean a person's capacity to wholeheartedly identify with a set of pursuits, habits, or relationships that have inherent worth to the relevant individual.[14] Importantly, individual well-being may equally be the product of choices that liberals deem *bad.* Because liberals acknowledge the value of pluralism, there is no consensus on what well-being must include beyond what I have stated. However, most of them believe that well-being requires children to have the capacity for autonomy in order to authentically identify with intrinsically worthwhile pursuits. Others have argued that we need not choose between these competing claims; instead, we can settle for certain conditions that make autonomy possible without ensuring that it happens for everyone.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, we need not infer that an education used as a primary means of shaping an individual's identity, one that seeks to replicate the valued commitments of the parents and the cultural milieu, is unquestionably at odds with an education that stresses autonomous rationality. Further, and this is extremely pertinent to a discussion about Islamic education, far from expanding the range of choices from which one chooses, autonomy may actually complement self-denial. Put another way, *showing restraint* is essential to autonomy, for the liberal aim

is to act on our reason and not our appetites (Spinner-Halev 2000, p. 92). Autonomy as such need not come into conflict with an individual's deep commitments. Further, it need not demand either the revision or the abandonment of one's belief system. It merely requires the *possibility* of revising one's beliefs and behavior should the need arise. Hence, paradoxically, one may autonomously choose to renounce autonomy. None of these statements settle the ongoing debate concerning the role of autonomy; they merely shed light on the fact that while all liberals *value* autonomy, its priority in the larger scheme of things is greatly contested.

Conclusion

After this brief propaedeutic to liberal educational ideals, the next chapter will be an intentional hiatus, in both content and method, from the philosophy that comes afterward. Readers primarily interested in the philosophical discussion may wish to skip this chapter. However, I have included it for two reasons. First, the empirical details will be of interest to many readers keen to know more about how Islamic schools operate in Western society, including the interesting similarities and differences between the three countries I consider. Second, I believe that the discussion in Chapter 2 will provide important contextual information to situate the more abstract discussion in the subsequent chapters, particularly Chapter 6. Chapters 2 and 3 contain considerable details about Islamic schools and Islamic philosophy of education, yet each of them provides a practical grounding for the theoretical discussions by considering the various ways in which Islamic schools inform the philosophical questions I raise.

CHAPTER 2

The Politics of Islamic Schooling: A Comparative Look

> Can a minority group insist on maintaining its exclusivity and distinction [at] the same time that it insists on being treated equally and given equal access to resources?
>
> Yvonne Haddad

There are many constructed polarities between Islam and the West. Varieties emerge both from the Islamic and the non-Islamic world. Yet, however these constructions are formulated, it cannot be assumed that the West is synonymous with secularism or that Islam denotes a unified front. For starters, secularism among the Muslim community itself is widespread in the West, though Islamic identity is rarely questioned. Even nonpracticing Muslims who smoke and drink or eat forbidden (*haram*) food seldom completely renounce their Muslim identities and are likely to remain "deeply conscious of their Islamic selfhood, being part of the Islamic civilization and umma [the global community of Muslims], and they share the basic Islamic *Weltanschauung*" (Malik 2004, p. 79). Moreover, an Islamic identity for many Muslims translates as little more than a nationalist feeling toward their countries of origin. This is especially the case with most Turkish Europeans, for whom public expression of Islam is discouraged.[1] This is not to deny the dramatic increase in Muslim piety that has resulted from living in a Western society. A study in Los Angeles, for example, found that slightly more than half of all Muslims surveyed had become more religious because of living in the United States. The researcher had the following to say:

> A significant number of Muslims are thus finding shortcomings in American culture and society, which in turn reinforces their own religiosity. When asked

> whether the popular culture of the United States has had any influence on Muslims' lives in the United States, an *imam* indicated, "I tell you there are Muslims who . . . gave up drinking alcohol and womanizing after they came here.
>
> (GhaneaBassiri 1997, p. 46)

Finally, Islam, despite idealized portraits of a unified religion and a corresponding absence of internal conflict by its apologists, is in fact fraught with internal tensions. These tensions are evident not only in the different cultural manifestations of Islam, but also in the weight given to particular jurist interpretations (especially with respect to *sharī'āh*), traditional orientations, and political expressions (Saadallah 2004; Kazmi 2003; Kurzman 1999; Khan 1998). Beyond the five pillars of Islam, there is much dispute over the manner in which Muslims should express themselves qua Muslims in a Western context. Similarly, by situating Islamic schools in this context, it cannot be assumed that Islamic schools (a) are undifferentiated or (b) occupy a "secular" space. First, Islamic schools can be quite different from one another; although a broad pattern of resemblance can be expected, they operate according to different pedagogical goals and with varying levels of administrative efficiency. Second, no matter how much institutional Christianity has been in decline over the past decades, the privileges for nominal Christian membership are still firmly established throughout Europe and North America.

In this chapter, I will compare the place of Islamic schools in three countries: the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium. The reasons for choosing these countries have to do with the interesting differences that emerge in such a comparison.[2] Culturally, there is much to compare between the Netherlands and Belgium owing to their contiguity and political affinities. Both countries are robust welfare states. Catholicism enjoys a strong (if vestigial) influence in both, though it encompasses nearly all the social institutions in Belgium, while the Calvinist tradition has historically been dominant in much of the Netherlands. The Netherlands and the northern half of Belgium (Flanders) also share the Dutch language. One can find examples of nondenominational and denominational schools in both countries, with a majority of children attending denominational (overwhelmingly Catholic in Belgium, and either Protestant or Catholic in the Netherlands) schools.

The United States offers an example of a highly industrialized Western democracy that endeavors to maintain the separation of church and state. Yet, despite its well-intentioned claims, even a cursory glance at the political rhetoric of American politicians, the practices in courtrooms across the country, and the privileging of Christian symbols and holidays in American public life reveals that the separation of church and state in the United

States is far from clear. While church and state battles have played out in public schools for various reasons, Islamic schools have inconspicuously grown in number and influence and are mostly able to enjoy the freedom accorded to various religious groups. With this freedom comes no direct federal aid, and only minimal accountability to the state.

The picture is quite different both in the Netherlands and in Belgium. While religious education is widely available in both countries, in the Netherlands classes in "spiritual currents" (*geestelijke stromingen*) are required only in primary school, while in Belgium either religious instruction in any recognized religion (including Islam) or nonconfessional ethics classes are compulsory for both primary and secondary levels. The secularization process in the urban areas in both countries has been profound since the 1960s, especially in the non-Catholic provinces in the Netherlands and the French-speaking areas in Belgium. Conversely, in the United States, faith continues to be a powerful catalyst in public decision-making and political campaigns.

In what follows, I will provide a brief historical sketch of the rise of Islamic schools as well as a comparative analysis of the mechanisms for the funding, choice, and control of Islamic schools in three highly industrialized Western countries. While a great deal of discussion concerning the state funding and monitoring of religious schools has been taken up in recent years (Judge 2001; Underkuffler 2001; de Jong & Snik 2002), little has been done to compare the policies and procedural norms of Islamic schools in countries with sizable Muslim populations. The Dutch case in particular is a unique test case for the full funding of all denominational schools, and not only those that have been historically privileged. (I will return to Dutch Islamic schools in Chapter 6.) The governmental monetary support is due to Dutch constitutional guarantees that have been in place for more than eighty-five years. The Belgian situation is infinitely more complex. Aside from its various language communities and regional governments, Belgium is unique in all of Europe for its large-scale provision of Islamic instruction in state schools.[3] Many feel that this fact largely explains why there have been so few proposals for more Islamic schools (Rath et al. 1991; Wagtendonk 1991; Dwyer & Meyer 1996; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1995). That is why I have chosen to include Belgium in this study. Thus, highlighting two countries in Europe that have much in common yet have responded in very different ways to the large presence of Muslims warrants a closer look. The United States, in contrast, hosts the largest number of Islamic schools in the Western world, yet it famously requires only minimal controls on their operation. The United States has also received comparatively little attention in the scarce research that has been conducted on Islamic schools.

To get a quick glance at some of the key differences between the three countries, I have provided a reference guide in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Islamic education in three countries

Country	*Type of educational provision and accountability*	*Type of educational curriculum*	*Funding of religious schools*	*Muslim population*	*Number of Islamic schools*	*Islamic instruction in state schools*
Belgium	Regional and municipal government	Regionally centralized	High (Catholic schools having a privileged status)	350,000 or 4% of population	1 primary school	On demand and widely implemented
The Netherlands	National	Nationally centralized	100% (provided all conditions are met)	1 million or 6% of population	46 primary schools, 2 high schools, 2 universities (fall 2006)	Permitted but seldom organized or implemented
The United States	Individual states and local districts	Localized in compliance with state standards	No direct funding	2–5 million or less than 1% of population	300–400 (est. 2006)	No religious instruction provided

Rather than look at only Islamic schools, I will also more broadly consider the educational situation of Muslims in each country. This is important given the fact that the overwhelming majority of Muslim parents choose not to send their children to Islamic schools (Daun et al. 2004b). Next, I will examine the motivations and participation of parents and teachers, and finally, I will consider the mechanisms for the funding, choice, and control of Islamic schools, including the academic achievement of Muslim students.

A Changing Climate

Policy decisions affecting Muslims began shifting in the 1970s in Europe. Immigration was dramatically retarded, and later, in the 1980s, the realization that Muslim immigrants were not returning to their countries of origin led to the rise of rightist political parties in several countries. In recent years, changes have been more accelerated, though not all bode well for the Muslim community.[4] As the number of Muslims in the West swells, so do changes in policy necessary for taking into account their particular needs and demands. There is resistance, but also concession. In the same countries where fierce opposition to a Muslim presence exists, one also finds a growing infrastructure of Islamic rights and provisions.[5]

Yet more worrying to many Europeans is the sharp rise in the number of Islamic schools across the Western Hemisphere, from only a handful twenty years ago to currently several hundreds across Western Europe and North America. While Islamic schools are being increasingly recognized and subsidized—not without fierce debate—in some countries, particularly in Britain, the Netherlands, and Denmark, other formidable obstacles remain. As it concerns education, a great number of the disadvantages that Muslim children in both the Netherlands and Belgium face are not of their own doing. Many parents are either illiterate or lack the fundamental knowledge about how schools work. The vast majority of Muslims in the Low Countries occupy the lower economic strata, and most first-generation immigrants remain resolutely oriented to the country of origin. The reasons are complicated. In part, this is because the country of origin remains the yardstick against which "success" can be measured (Roosens 1989). But equally important is the fact that one's culture, which cannot be neatly disentangled from religion, is of considerable importance to the immigrant families, and these parents maintain an overriding interest in socializing their children into its core values, including a kind of folk Islam.[6]

But more structural issues emanate from the non-Islamic schools themselves: low expectations among teachers of Muslims minorities, inadequately equipped schools to deal with the needs of the student population, deep

frustrations with very high unemployment and poverty, and daily encounters with racism among the Muslim groups. All these factors contribute to the poorer academic performance, on average, of the Muslim immigrant pupil, and these structural and familial constraints *cannot* be erased from the equation of Muslim minorities in Islamic schools in Europe. In the United States, the presence of Islamic schools has yet to raise concerns, doubtless because religious schools across the board operate largely without government interference or aid. Yet a number of unique challenges face American Muslims, including association with a mosque, selective FBI surveillance, confiscation of Islamic charities, ethnic profiling, denial of visas for returning university students, and so forth (Elliott 2005).

The Education of Muslims in Belgium

The freedom of choice over one's schooling is an absolute right in Belgium, though in practice limitations are imposed by poverty or unfeasible transportation, as well as subtle methods (e.g., requiring school uniforms) that some Catholic schools employ to exclude the "undesirables." Studies have shown that parental choice often works selectively and against the interests of students of color and minorities (Osler & Hussain 1995). Even so, while a high percentage of Muslims send their children to municipal schools, in sheer numbers Muslims enjoy greater representation in Catholic schools (Leman 1991). Many Muslim parents opt to send their children to Catholic schools because they believe not only that the quality of education is better in these schools but also that morality is more strongly emphasized and strictly enforced (Renaerts 1999). Whether or not this is objectively true, it is a widely expressed opinion among parents, professors, and students, who report that Catholic schools across the country maintain a higher academic standard by offering more challenging courses (Merry 2005a). Despite increasing secularization in Belgium, Catholic institutions (hospitals, schools, insurance companies, universities, etc.) assume a prominent place in Belgian society. Furthermore, nearly 69 percent of Flemish children attend private, mainly Catholic, schools, with close to 50 percent in Wallonia. Notwithstanding denominational differences, schools differ more in compositional authority than in actual curricular content (Leman 1991), though proactive parents intuitively know which schools to avoid. As one parent put it, "Can anything good come out of [the schools in] Brussels?" There, the Dutch-speaking schools continue to have a better reputation.

Limited Islamic instruction is available in some Catholic schools, but its provision is only required (on request) in public schools. Such instruction

has been provided since the 1975/1976 school year, when salaried posts for Muslim teachers became legalized and available. Since that time, the law has allowed for the teaching of Islam in public schools on the same basis as other religions; close to 800 Muslim teachers—many of them overqualified (Maréchal et al. 2003)—provide Islamic instruction and are employed in the Belgian education system. For many years, the embassies of the various governments contracted out these teachers and the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) in Brussels confirmed their appointments. Since 1986 all instructors of Islamic education in Belgium are required to have either the Belgian nationality or a minimum of five years' residency, demonstrate the ability to instruct in either Dutch or French, and receive a diploma recognized by the Ministry of National Education (Leman & Renaerts 1996). Furthermore, since 1990 the ICC has ceased to be in charge of the organization of Islamic religious education (Dwyer & Meyer 1996).

Because Muslims in Belgium (and elsewhere) typically self-organize along ethnic lines, there may also be ethnic tensions—for example, Turkish parents not wanting their children to be instructed by an "Arab," and vice versa, though a desperate shortage of qualified teachers remains, chiefly because of language competency. Language proficiency tests are exacting and may take up to three years to complete. Furthermore, most teachers taking these tests do not have theological training of any kind. Where religious instruction occurs, it consists of two hours per week, and its only requirements are that it be offered in the local language (Dutch or French) and that lessons not include criticisms of the Belgian government or public policies.

Provision must be made for Islamic education in state schools on demand once a minimal threshold is reached. The Muslim Council, inaugurated in December 1998, alone may determine the content of the religious instruction, though generally the subjects taught include the *Qur'ān* (with recitation), the *fiqh* (Islamic law and jurisprudence), the *sira* (life of the Prophet and the period of the first four Caliphs), and Islamic dogma. Estimates suggest that roughly 40 percent of Muslim children receive Islamic instruction in state schools, while the majority attends the nonconfessional ethics classes (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1995). Many Muslim parents feel that these classes lack substantive content, but given the relatively high degree of secularization among (particularly Moroccan) Muslim children, this concern seldom amounts to anything. To date, neither regional government has required that specific content be covered nor has any systematic inspection of the lessons transpired.

The Flemish and Wallonian regional governments are addressing the challenges of schools with heavy immigrant concentrations differently (Merry 2005a). Like the Dutch, the Flemish have an approximate count of

immigrants in schools, while the Waloons—following the French model—wince at the thought of collecting information on race or ethnicity. More money for ethnic minorities is available in Flanders. More funds are allocated for schools with greater concentrations of poor and minority children, and special classes for newcomers are also available. Structural cutbacks in French-speaking Belgium have worsened the crisis with "concentration" schools. Expression of Muslim identity is also handled differently in both regions. In Flanders, headscarves are allowed, while in Wallonia and French-speaking Brussels, schools follow the model of *laïcité*, allowing headscarves in only Islamic classes. In Flanders, the celebration of non-Christian holidays is permitted for those who request it; hence, one need only be registered in the corresponding religious classes in school to observe Islamic holidays. What is more, one need not be a Muslim. Non-Muslims may register for Islamic instruction, though few reportedly do. Schools require physical education classes throughout Belgium to be coed, though many school administrators succumb to the refusal of some parents to have their children participate and turn a blind eye to exemptions.

Belgian Islamic Schools

One can trace many reasons why Muslim parents are not happy with the choices of schools available to them, particularly those with high concentrations of minorities. Even so, a large section of the Muslim population remains quite satisfied with the two hours per week of Islamic instruction provided by the Belgian state. One can also find Islamic instruction provided in some Catholic schools with a heavy concentration of minorities. This has meant that calls for Islamic schools in Belgium have, for now, been muted. For the handful of parents who insist on a total Islamic education in which the values and ethos of Islam are incorporated into the entire school culture and curriculum, few options remain.

While there have been several unorganized attempts to establish Islamic schools in Belgium, there remains only one Islamic primary school (L'ecole al-Ghazali) in Brussels. Following an announcement in the daily newspaper *Le Soir*, L'ecole al-Ghazali opened in September 1989 amid a storm of controversy. Indeed, its establishment led to an incendiary debate over the Belgian constitutional guarantees of the freedom of education. Housed within the ICC, it is fully funded by the state. However, owing to its strong Saudi links, its orientation is rather orthodox. Its student body consists of about two hundred primary school students, most of whom are in the kindergarten level (Renaerts 1999). A significant number of the students are foreign diplomats' children.

The initial reactions to an Islamic school on Belgian soil were similar to those of the then Brussels secretary of state Vic Anciaux, who argued that such a school would obstruct the aim of "integration" that the Belgian government was pursuing. (Mieke Vogels of the leftist *Agalev* party in Belgium voiced similar comments.) The then royal commissioner of immigration policy Paula D'Hondt voiced similar skepticism by insisting that the only acceptable Islam in Belgium was an "integrated" Islam. As reported in newspapers such as *Het Nieuwsblad* and *De Standaard*, others (in particular two mayors in Brussels-Capital municipalities)[7] vowed to resist the establishment of an Islamic school "by all means." Members of several political parties openly denounced it, including the *Christelijke Volkspartij* and the *Volksunie* (Nielsen 1995; Dwyer & Meyer 1996; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1995). One politician, when asked about the difference between Islamic and Jewish or Christian schools, announced that the latter do not "question the fundamental rights and liberties of the Belgian society." No convincing argument was produced to suggest the illicit nature of founding Islamic schools (they are allowed as per article 17 of the Belgian Constitution). Rather, reactions had everything to do with the desirability of such schools (Dwyer & Meyer 1996; Leman & Renaerts 1996; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1991, 1995). Arguments against Islamic schools typically have run in the direction set forth by Anciaux, who claimed that these schools create a situation where "it is impossible to integrate children who are educated in a totally isolated environment [into] a harmonic society" (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, September 18, 1989).[8]

In Belgium, despite an increase in calls for more Islamic schools (mainly from the Arab European League), little has been done about it and public debate is minimal. This is so for at least three reasons: (a) state schools make wide provision of Islamic instruction, as previously stated; (b) most Muslim parents lack the motivation and savvy to organize new schools; and (c) there is strong public opposition to the idea, especially from the *Vlaams Belang* (previously *Vlaams Blok*), which enjoys a third of the vote in the province of Antwerp and in the last elections became the largest party in Flanders.

The Education of Muslims in the Netherlands

As in Belgium, the freedom of education is also a jealously guarded right in the Netherlands. Public and private schools in the Netherlands have enjoyed absolute constitutional equality since 1917. This implies, among other things, the freedom to found a school and the freedom to teach according to a particular ideology or certain educational and instructional

principles. These freedoms and the associated right to equal funding by the government have led over the years to a colorful array of denominations, including many Islamic schools (Walford 2001c; Driessen & Van der Slik, 2001; Driessen & Merry 2006). Constitutional law cannot discriminate along religious lines. What makes the Dutch constitutional provisions for schools unique in all of Europe, however, is that the government provides full funding to all the schools that meet the national requirements, regardless of denominational affiliation. Each Dutch municipality owns and supplies its school buildings.

The Dutch situation is also exceptional owing to its system of "pillarization" (*verzuiling*), which has historically penetrated all aspects of society. Previously the various pillars translated into a society compartmentalized along political and religious lines. Each pillar contained its own political parties, labor unions, schools, media networks, newspapers, hospitals, and so forth. Over the past three decades, there has been a gradual depillarization (*ontzuiling*) of Dutch society as increasing secularization, individualism, and democratization have challenged the pillar system (Dekker & Ester 1996). In particular, the deconfessionalization of individuals has secularized Dutch society since the late 1950s—further buttressed by a constitutional separation of church and state, gradually weakening the Catholic and Reformed church privileges. Notwithstanding these changes, the denominational educational system has remained largely intact. To this day, roughly 69 percent of all primary-school-age children and 73 percent of all secondary-school-age children in the Netherlands attend "private" schools (Walford 2001c, p. 366), most of which are Protestant or Catholic, although there are sixteen other denominational schools, including Jewish, Hindu, and Islamic schools. There also exist some non-governed private schools (e.g., Montessori, Jenaplan). It has been estimated that roughly 41 percent of Muslim children attend schools of a Christian denominational character (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1995, p. 118), though this figure will fluctuate considerably from year to year. The Christian character of many schools, while already in doubt, is believed by some to be further compromised by heavy concentrations of children from a non-Christian background. Paradoxically, these same schools rely on their mainly Muslim student populations to remain open.

The educational opportunities for Muslims in the Netherlands are, at least on paper, identical to any other group, although special provisions are made for children with "disadvantaged" backgrounds. Until very recently, all ethnic minority children were able to receive two and a half hours a week of instruction in their mother tongue and culture of origin. During these lessons, Muslim pupils often received explicitly Islamic instruction.

Studies that point to the overall failure of such programs to provide ethnic and religious minorities with an education equal to that of other Dutch children (Driessen 1996), coupled with increasingly conservative government policies, have contributed to the demise of these programs. While Turkish or Arabic can be provided during kindergarten and first grade to help with the transition of young pupils, an immersion approach (*Onderdompelingsmethode*) to learning Dutch dominated over the past few years.[9] Islamic instruction is to be provided in state schools if demands are made by at least twelve parents, and teachers and facilities are to be provided by the local religious community. Still, owing to a host of bureaucratic and legal obstacles (including the requirement that instruction be in Dutch so that it is accessible to everyone and that teachers' salaries be paid by parents), it is rarely offered outside of four or five municipalities. Estimates place the number of Muslims receiving Islamic instruction in state schools at 3 percent (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1995, p. 112). Islamic instruction in Christian denominational schools has also been unsuccessful. Previous endeavors to teach Islam in "Christian Encounter Schools" met with sharp criticism, and elsewhere there is an obvious non-Muslim bias in the presentation of the material.[10] As in Belgium, recruiting qualified Muslim instructors has been a major difficulty, either with respect to educational qualifications or Dutch language proficiency. The same is true of teachers in Islamic schools, despite a sharp rise in the number of such schools.

The May 2003 elections raised Islamic schools to a new level of national debate. Led by a Somali-born woman of Muslim descent, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the right-wing party *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD) openly challenged the growing number of Islamic schools in the country in the fall of 2003; one of its demands was that Islamic schools be more open to outsiders and ethnically mixed. But the VVD was not alone. The Center Democratic Party (D'66) and the Christian Democrats (together with the VVD, they formed a three-way coalition government)[11] also succumbed to public pressure. Then, the D'66 withdrew its previous endorsement, and the others seemed likely to follow. Now, only the VVD strongly opposes Islamic schools with any consistency, for the Christian Democrats, who also oppose them, know that to discriminate against Islamic schools is to challenge the existence of religious schools in general and thus challenge that of their own Christian schools—something that few Dutch people are prepared to endorse. Even those adamantly opposed have been compelled to honor the right to establish Islamic schools, even at the risk of unpopularity. "Denominational segregation," says Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "is a holy cow in this country, which cannot be done away with easily" (Radio Nederland, November 14, 2003). Hence the Dutch political

parties are caught up in a volatile game vis-à-vis their stance toward the presence of so many Muslims in general and the growing number of Islamic schools in particular. Not wanting to appear soft on crime and terrorism—especially after March 11, 2004, in Spain and more recently the assassination of the iconoclast filmmaker Theo van Gogh[12]—many politicians are winning popular votes by taking a public stance against Islamic schools. Yet their quandary remains being (un)able to reconcile that position with the Dutch Constitution (art. 23), which grants equal rights to each religious community to establish schools according to its respective creed.

Dutch Islamic Schools

The first initiatives were taken in 1980, but it was not until 1988 that the first Islamic schools were founded in the cities of Rotterdam (which now has an Islamic university also)[13] and Eindhoven. These initiatives took very long mainly because the Muslims who wished to found a new school were often inexperienced and did not speak the Dutch language well. Moreover, most were not familiar with the complexities of the legislation, the political balance in the city councils, the bureaucratic rules, and the power of the civil servants. Equally relevant was the fact that the people who took the initiatives generally did not receive a great deal of cooperation from the central or local authorities; sometimes they even felt that the authorities had a policy of actively discouraging the founding of Islamic schools (Rath et al 1997; Teunissen 1990). As regards the latter, in the cities of Utrecht and Rotterdam, for instance, the process and success of founding an Islamic school varied considerably. According to Rath et al. (1996), this was because in Utrecht Muslims were judged from a religious perspective, while in Rotterdam they were judged with regard to their social and socioeconomic characteristics (Driessen & Merry 2006). The result was that the Muslims in Rotterdam met with far fewer obstacles than those in Utrecht. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the way that the Muslims present themselves and how the town councils and civil servants perceive them.

Still, most Muslims were not entirely deficient in their efforts. The pioneer work of the first schools and the establishment of the Islamic School Board Organization (ISBO) paved the way for the founding of later schools. In 2006, there were forty-six Islamic primary and two Islamic secondary schools. Each of them is supported by sections of the three major Muslim communities: Turks, Moroccans, and Surinamese (Dwyer & Meyer 1995). It should be noted that these are still only small numbers; there are more than 7,000 primary and almost 700 secondary schools in the Netherlands. The total primary school population amounts to 1,550,000 students, of

whom 100,000, or almost 7 percent, are of Turkish or Moroccan descent. Some 8,400 students, or 0.5 percent of the primary-school-age population, attend the Islamic primary schools; 40 percent of them are Moroccan, 37 percent are Turkish, and the rest constitute a heterogeneous population of, for instance, asylum seekers from such countries as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. The two secondary Islamic schools host 1,300 students, or 0.1 percent of all secondary-school-age students. Most schools attract students from one specific ethnic group, usually Moroccan or Turkish, but the existing Islamic schools service a wide area. Many pupils have to spend one to three hours just to commute. This leads—contrary to the aims of the schools—to lower parental involvement.

Islamic schools face many obstacles in maintaining an idealistic Islamic atmosphere conducive to promoting Islamic values and norms. Besides a severe shortage of qualified Muslim instructors, Geoffrey Walford (2002, p. 406) elaborates other reasons why Islamic schools are not able—for the time being—to foster an exclusively Islamic culture within the schools: (a) while Islamic schools are well funded, they have insufficient funds for developing Muslim-oriented materials, or, for that matter, to translate existing materials into Dutch; (b) the challenges facing new Islamic schools are so great that resources are spread thinly and energies are invested in other time-consuming projects; (c) the very existence of Islamic schools is seen as a remarkable improvement over the previous situation, and many of them are content to make minor adjustments and modifications to the existing curriculum. For some Islamic schools, this means that the school atmosphere is little different from other Dutch schools, denominational or not. This certainly applies to the non-Islamic schools that mainly Turkish and Moroccan pupils attend.

Many studies have shown (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1996) that Islamic schools in the Netherlands are far from homogeneous, though commonly schools are organized along ethnic and ideological lines. While there is a governing board overseeing and supporting Islamic schools (ISBO), a relatively high number of schools are considered "liberal" inasmuch as they reflect orientations similar to those of Dutch society and non-Muslim schools. The Turkish-affiliated Islamic Foundation in the Netherlands for Education and Upbringing (ISNO) founded several of these schools. It sought to promote a Kemalist interpretation of Islam—that is, largely confined to the private sphere—found in Turkey. This has led some critics of Islamic schools to point to the Turkish-nationalist character of some of these schools, something that Dutch legislation will not allow. (The ISNO was dismantled in 1993). Various local efforts initiate the founding of other schools, usually constituted along ethnic lines, without the aid or interference

of any national coordinating organ (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1991, 1992). The lack of qualified Muslim teachers is less of a concern, and only *Qur'ānic* instruction is required to be taught by a Muslim. In some schools, (e.g., the al-Ghazalisschol in Rotterdam), one even finds Muslim children drawing representations of living things (people and animals) and using musical instruments, both of which are typically not condoned by Islamic religious authorities. Other schools are affiliated with the Turkish religious-political organization *Milli Görüs*, which is based in Cologne, Germany.[14]

Another type of Islamic school in the Netherlands—organized by orthodox Moroccan Sunnis—could be categorized as "conservative" owing to the contents of religious instruction and the observation of the Islamic rules of behavior by staff and students. The main difference from the other two groups, however, has to do with its stronger orientation to the Islamic world and not to Dutch society. Indeed, these schools continue to elicit consternation and close scrutiny by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. What is important to point out, however, is that regardless of a more "liberal" or "conservative" orientation, most Islamic schools are quite disposed to make minor adaptations to the existing Dutch curriculum, and to "Islamicize"—to varying degrees—the learning materials. Thus far, it would appear that no non-Muslim children attend Islamic schools in the Netherlands. This situation may change, some believe, once Islamic schools get on their feet and move beyond the growing pains that many of them are currently experiencing.

The Education of Muslims in the United States

The vast majority of Muslim children in the United States (and Canada) attend public schools (Nimer 2002; Malkawi 2004; Tarazi 2001; Hamdani 2000). A significant percentage also place their children in private, particularly religious, schools for reasons usually having to do with morality and academic excellence. In a few places, Muslim students actually constitute the majority in the local public schools. In Dearborn, Michigan, for example, both high schools have a sizable Arab-American (the ordering of the two words connected with a hyphen indicates the priority of attachment) population. Both school offers bilingual classes in Arabic, accommodate Islamic holidays, excuse those students who are inclined toward Friday prayers, and offer *halal* meat in its cafeteria. However, this is an exception, and not the norm; elsewhere, the challenges are more vivid. Some Muslim youths, especially girls, have been harassed (since 9/11 in particular) for wearing conservative clothing, but the level of "racism" against Muslims is muted in comparison with several European countries (Daun & Walford 2004; Hewer 2001). Mostly, challenges facing Muslim youths have to do

with peer pressure and the difficulty of practicing Islam in a culture that makes few provisions for the needs of conservative Muslims. Many Muslims are tired of having their American loyalty questioned because of the terrorist actions of an extremist few. Many also express their frustration concerning the ignorance about Islam among their teachers and fellow students (Ahmad & Szpara 2003) and would like to see more positive images of Muslims represented in schools.

Broadly speaking, there have been few barriers to economic advancement. While only 36 percent of Muslims today were born in the United States, as a whole they enjoy the highest level of literacy and affluence of any group of Muslims anywhere in the world. The number of college graduates among American Muslims is 58 percent (against 37 percent for the general population); a 1990 census report shows that Arab-Americans have twice the number of graduate degrees (15.2 percent) than the general population (Sulaiman 2000). Income levels are similarly impressive: 28 percent of Muslims have an income of $75,000 or more compared with only 17 percent of the general public (Haniff 2003). Unlike their European counterparts, a large percentage of American Muslims are suburban dwellers and select only the best schools for their children. Further, many are just as involved in the education of their children as other parents of a comparable social class. If parents are less involved, the reasons are typically identical to those of other parents: either they lead extremely busy lives and cannot be troubled with their children's schooling, or, in the case of more recent immigrants, they, like their counterparts in Europe, lack the savvy of how schools work and feel intimidated by the prospect of interacting with teachers and school administrators. Networking in the American Muslim community often eliminates this problem. More and more information revealing that there is a tight correspondence between religious participation and higher education levels is also coming to light.

American Islamic Schools

Owing to the divide between church and state, the establishment of Islamic schools has virtually escaped detection by the public. To this day, most non-Muslim Americans are surprised to learn that Islamic schools flourish throughout the country. Currently, there are roughly 30,000 students attending as many as 400 Islamic schools in the United States (Malkawi 2004, p. 50; Maughan 2003, p. 35).[15] Among Muslims, however, there are sharp divisions concerning the priority that ought to be given to Islamic schools. In a Chicago poll, for example, many people felt that these schools would promote isolationism, impede integration into American society, and

even encourage elitism within the American *ummāh* (Husain & Vogelaar 1994). An earlier study in three American cities (two on the East Coast and one in the Midwest) also indicated that 40 percent of the Muslims surveyed did not consider Islamic schools favorable at all (Haddad & Lummis 1987). Yet a favorable attitude toward Islamic schools is growing, especially as their academic reputation increases. In Los Angeles, a recent study demonstrated that 52 percent of those surveyed indicated that Islamic schools are "very important," while another 24 percent indicated that they were "quite important" (GhaneaBassiri 1997, p. 46). Among African Americans, the same study indicated that 67 percent of those surveyed viewed Islamic schools in a favorable light (p. 46).[16]

The time line for the genesis of Islamic schools in the United States is quite similar to Europe; the earliest schools were being established only in the late 1970s, though the numbers grew significantly in the 1980s and 1990s. During the same time, two Islamic colleges were also founded in Chicago, and plans for an Islamic seminary on the East Coast are under way. The formation of the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA) in 1991 marked the dawn of a new age in organized Islamic schools. Growing pains were evident for several years, and a series of halting attempts were made to coordinate efforts across the country, despite serious obstacles in the areas of representation, leadership, and direction (Muhammad 1998). As private schools, Islamic schools must do little more than acquire a space for learning and the staff adequate to provide rudimentary services. No minimum number of students is required. For now, most Islamic schools continue to borrow heavily from the surrounding public and private schools ideas on the school charter, lesson plans, textbooks, and pedagogical concepts.[17] This dependency on ideas and practices of others has created a certain identity crisis for those who work in Islamic schools.

Funding continues to be an enormous challenge for Islamic schools, both old and new. Money may be available through the mosque, provided the school is mosque affiliated. This affiliation causes innumerable problems, however, as it concerns control, pedagogy, and *masjid* politics. School governance can be difficult either way, and Islamic school administrators are often overworked and underpaid. The average length of employment for an Islamic school administrator is three years, roughly half of the public school average (Saleh 2000). Reports of inadequate administrative support, low pay, staff burnout, and school board[18] ineffectiveness are common, and teacher retention remains an ongoing challenge to Islamic schools (Ezzeldine & Moes 2004). Moreover, independent Islamic schools face formidable financial problems, and increasingly one hears calls for a national Islamic educational trust fund. Very few Islamic schools, including those that are well

established, are able to provide a school nurse, proper science lab facilities, social workers, music or fine arts classes, special education services, or guidance counselors. Most also do not have a library or extracurricular activities. Many schools have slow institutional developments, are understaffed, and have poor standards. Many are also still struggling to procure accreditation and state recognition, largely because they are unable to meet state requirements. Only a small number of Islamic schools benefit from voucher programs. In Milwaukee, for instance, both Islamic schools (one of which is a Clara Muhammad school) currently have more than 70 percent of their enrollment filled by students who are voucher recipients.[19]

Islamic schools manifest some ethnic diversity, but in the main they continue to be organized around ethnically dominant groups. Palestinian and Indo-Pakistani families, for example, are two groups that frequently organize Islamic schools. Ethnic minorities can be found in most Islamic schools, including some Caucasian converts, but one ethnic group typically dominates. Islamic schools may not discriminate in the admission process on racial grounds because of the limitation imposed by Title VII of the Civil Rights legislation of 1964 (42 U.S.C. sec. 2000d), but they may discriminate on religious grounds if they choose to. They may also not discriminate against children with disabilities, but beyond "reasonable accommodations," laws do not require to adjust their programs or facilities. Some private schools have, however, made arrangements with local public schools for special needs education (e.g., speech therapy, interpretation for the deaf, tutoring).

Clara Muhammad Schools

The Clara Muhammad schools, named after the wife of the Nation of Islam's most famous leader, Elijah Muhammad, are a network of Islamic schools whose provenance until the mid-1970s was with the Nation of Islam. Founded in 1934 as the Muhammad University of Islam School System, they were renamed three years after her death by Warith Deen Muhammad, one of the nation's most prominent black Muslims and son of Elijah and Clara Muhammad. Partly because of the diplomatic challenges from some of his Sunni Muslim teachers (Hakim & Muhammad 1992), Warith Deen Muhammad in the 1960s began moving away from what he felt were his father's heterodox beliefs, and by the 1970s he was keen to align the African American Muslim community with orthodox Sunni Islam. The leadership of the Nation of Islam was then taken over by Louis Farrakhan, who continues to fight for the concerns of inner-city black Americans.[20] Earlier racist pronouncements (particularly against whites and Jews, but also Sunni Muslims) have been dramatically in decline in recent years.

Headquartered in Fayetteville (Atlanta), Georgia, currently at least forty Clara Muhammad schools are scattered throughout the United States and Bermuda, usually in the larger cities. Each school is independently governed and administered, although the curriculum is centralized. The students tend to be predominately African American, though anyone, regardless of race, class, or creed, may attend. There is no "denominational" or cultural equivalent in Europe (these schools are a distinctively black American manifestation of Islam that has twentieth-century origins in Detroit and other northern cities), and most students in Clara Muhammad schools do not originate from immigrant families. Interestingly, however, important parallels with Islamic schools in Europe *do* exist on a socioeconomic level.

These schools seek to promote not only self-pride, cleanliness, and self-determination, but also academic and moral discipline, which are often not found in inner-city schools. They operate under the banner "Intelligence without morality is a destructive force" and have made tremendous efforts to develop their own curriculum, independent of the materials and philosophy of other schools. One researcher explains, "Their collective objective is to carry the spirit of the *Qur'ān* to enable the human intellect to be revived for the advancement of human society" (Muhammad 1998, p. 92; cf. Rashid & Muhammad 1992). There is also, of course, an argument to be made for cultural coherence in Clara Muhammad schools (a theme I take up in Chapter 4). To the extent that the Clara Muhammad schools seek to redress the socioeconomic disadvantages of black American children, there is much to compare with Islamic (as well as African-centered; see Merry & New, forthcoming) schools elsewhere, particularly with respect to identity formation and the building of self-esteem.

Relations between Clara Muhammad schools and other Islamic schools appear to be lukewarm, and very little collaboration exists. Many African American Muslims feel shunned by the more immigrant-oriented community and feel that aspects of African American culture (e.g., hip-hop music) are not welcome. At times, tensions have been high. From the side of the Sunni Muslims, certain beliefs of the Nation of Islam are deeply troubling, including the notion that the Nation of Islam's founder, Wallace D. Fard, was divine, or that Elijah Muhammad was a prophet. African Americans are conspicuously absent from most proceedings of the Islamic Foundation of North America (ISNA), and the Muslims that I asked either had no knowledge of Clara Muhammad schools or displayed very low opinions on the basis of perceived behavioral issues—that is, unruly behavior, teenage pregnancy, and drug use. This may be the case because a number of Clara Muhammad schools serve an unusually high concentration of disadvantaged children, many of whom are not even Muslim but whose parents are looking for more discipline, character development, and better educational

opportunities. Parental involvement may vary widely from one school to another, and many schools host a disproportionate number of troubled children, making the task of discipline and higher achievement formidable. Challenges facing Clara Muhammad schools include the effort to be more "Islamic" and the generation of sufficient resources to maintain high-quality instruction (Rashid & Muhammad 1992, pp. 183–184).

Teachers and Parents

Many studies (Tiffani & Phillips 2004; Lareau 2000, 2002, 2003) have amply demonstrated the manner in which parental engagement with children's schoolwork enhances academic outcomes. Furthermore, these studies show that the level of the parents' schooling strongly affects the children's overall success, as does their socioeconomic class, nationality, country of birth, and language used at home. The downside to parental involvement, of course, is that many children have parents who are uneducated, lack the primary language skills, or work full-time and are unable to be as involved in their children's schooling as they would like to be. One of the goals of Islamic schools, wherever they are established, is greater academic achievement resulting from higher parental involvement.

Belgium and the Netherlands

In Belgium's only Islamic school, the staff is entirely Muslim. No systematic studies on parental involvement have been carried out, though most Belgian schoolteachers seem to be "firmly convinced that the parents of Turkish and Moroccan children do not care at all about the school performance of their sons and daughters" (Roosens 1995, p. 17; cf. Hermans 1995, 2002). On closer inspection, however, these postulates are difficult to corroborate. Most Muslim parents have similarly high expectations for their children's futures as the more privileged parents do (Roosens 1998; Renaerts 1999). Muslim parents expect the schools to not only push the pupils on to success, but also give attention to their culture, language, and history (Merry 2005a). This is precisely the role that l'École al-Ghazali hopes to fill, and it promises greater parental access, contrasting itself with other schools in the Brussels area.[21] The parents who send their children to al-Ghazali have extremely high expectations concerning the quality of education (Renaerts 1999), but it is unclear at the moment whether their involvement is qualitatively greater than it is elsewhere.

The Netherlands has a severe shortage of adequately qualified Muslim instructors.[22] School principals are also in short supply. The Dutch Inspectorate

of Education has repeatedly found that nearly 80 percent of all teachers in Islamic schools in the Netherlands are non-Muslim,[23] because there are few Muslims in higher education, language proficiency requirements are demanding, and finally most second- and third-generation Muslims do not find education to be a desirable vocation to pursue. The non-Muslim status of most teachers makes it rather difficult to maintain an Islamic ethos in the school culture. Cultural conflicts frequently arise between Islamic teachers unaccustomed to Western society and its language and cultural norms and the students, many of whom will not identify with their parents' homelands (Driessen & Merry 2006). Moreover, there is no evidence at the moment of more parental involvement in children's schooling in Dutch Islamic schools, including, for that matter, interaction between parents and teachers. Yet, while parental satisfaction may be higher, this situation would appear to challenge one of the central aims of Dutch Islamic schools, namely, to augment parental involvement (Driessen 1997; Driessen & Bezemer 1999). Most Islamic schools serve a very wide area and are therefore not a realistic option for many Muslim families, which makes it difficult for parents to visit the school and talk with the teachers. Also, many parents feel that education is solely the responsibility of the schools, just as the streets are that of the police, and the home that of the parents.

The United States

Thus far, there is no shortage of Muslim teachers willing to work in Islamic schools in the United States, though many have a few non-Muslim instructors.[24] Still, there continue to be problems in recruiting well-trained Muslim teachers, which leads to school instability. It is not uncommon to find new principals every two to three years, and teacher retention is a formidable problem. Therefore, most (but certainly not all) Islamic schools are forced to hire either well-qualified non-Muslim teachers or eager, but underqualified, Muslim teachers (Uddin 2004). When non-Muslims are hired, they are expected to honor the Islamic rules and the cultural norms. Non-Muslim women must agree to wear the *hijāb*. Most Islamic schools, however, employ a Muslim staff of 95 percent or more, even when schools aim to hire only the best-qualified people.[25] Most teachers in American Islamic schools are well educated, and many have teaching certification. Not a few have extensive experience in other American private or public schools. Where some teachers are not especially well qualified, they often play an important role in the life of the school—for example, in Arabic- or Urdu-language instruction or in Islamic studies. Young, struggling Islamic schools continue to employ a larger number of uncertified instructional staff, making accreditation a temporarily elusive ideal.

The role of parents in governing school affairs, especially in small communities, is another ongoing challenge. Even in extremely small, overstressed Islamic schools with poor facilities and not enough staff, parents can be unreasonably demanding and expect the school to operate the way a social club or neighborhood alliance might—that is, through cajoling and quid pro quo. Because many of the parents are highly competitive, some teachers expect that they will protest any grade that suggests "average" performance.[26] On the other hand, parents are often passionately concerned about the quality of education for their children. How best to channel parents' enthusiasm is being worked out on a school-by-school basis, but some parents complain that opportunities for their involvement are extremely limited (Keyworth 2002).

For the time being, most parents continue to be disinterested in Islamic schools for various reasons, including steep school fees, too great a commute, concerns over integration, academic quality, or simply a rather casual religious adherence (Daun & Walford 2004; Pulcini 1995; Haddad & Lummis 1987). This is hardly surprising, as most Muslim parents do not frequent the mosques or practice even the most minimal religious requirements. However, this is changing. The large number of Islamic schools to have come about in the last twenty-five years is indicative of a change for many families, but they continue to be an option for a minority. Convinced that American education is, as one Muslim educator put it, "held hostage by socialist government schools," some are embracing an education model built on the free market system (Ezzeldine & Moes 2004). That is to say, American Muslims are beginning to join the growing numbers across the country pursuing both private schools and public charter schools and homeschooling networks are also rapidly developing (Sulaiman 2000).[27]

Funding, Choice, and Control

In comparing Islamic schools in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States, notable differences are apparent, but perhaps no other aspect separates them more than the level of state oversight. One of the strongest arguments for funding religious schools is greater accountability. Yet, as the following discussion will show, there is more to accountability than meets the eye.

Belgium and the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, state oversight in religious schools, as a result of complete funding, is quite high. Only a tiny percentage of schools manage to avoid

tight regulation. These are mainly elite, fee-based international schools, of which there are only a few (though their numbers are rising). Belgium's situation is remarkably similar, except that not all types of schools are funded in exactly the same manner.[28] State control in both countries means that the range of subjects and number of hours of instruction is carefully specified. Attention must also be given to multiculturalism, meaning that no one perspective can eclipse others that are represented in Dutch or Belgian culture. Also required is attention to several world religions. All students in both countries are required to take courses in religion or ethics, though non-Christian instruction is widely available only in Belgium. Religious or ideological instruction can occur in any school, but the number of hours is tightly regulated. Geoffrey Walford (2001a) comments on the Dutch arrangement:

> Each school must produce a "school plan" which has to be submitted to the Education Inspectorate for approval . . . Although there have been some recent changes towards greater local management of schools, the normal practice is for the government to set and pay directly for all teachers, buildings and school costs. The number of teachers for each school, their salaries, and conditions of work are determined by the government. A very important feature designed to ensure equity is that private schools are not allowed to charge any "top up" fees, and may only charge (and most state and private schools do) for extra-curricular activities including visits.
>
> (Walford 2001a, p. 366)

Schools in both countries are required to appoint only qualified staff, but they may use religion and lifestyle as criteria in their selection.

Both Belgium and the Netherlands allow complete freedom of choice for state schools, though in Belgium schools are further divided according to communal (Flemish, German, and French), regional (Brussels, Wallonia, and Flanders), and municipal levels. The linguistic divide in Belgium also complicates the choice available to Muslim minorities, but this is slowly changing. Denominational schools in the Netherlands continue to show preference for children from the same religious background, while in Belgium this is no longer legal, but continues surreptitiously, that is, by requiring a certificate of baptism or by insisting on expensive school uniforms that poorer families are unable to afford. Furthermore, new laws require that state schools in Belgium no longer show preference on the basis of language, nor may state schools in the Netherlands give preference to native Dutch children. Provided there is room, no one who applies can be turned away.[29]

As in the United States, not all schools in Belgium and the Netherlands have the same reputation. Important national differences, however, emerge. In the Netherlands, school tests results are made public and can be

cross-referenced. In Belgium, while very strict requirements are imposed on the material that teachers must cover, every school has its own tests and reliable comparisons are difficult to come by. Both countries have attempted to provide intercultural education and instruction in the mother tongue, though efforts in both countries have largely failed (Driessen 1996; Martiniello & Manco 1995; Hermans 2002; Roosens 1998). In the Netherlands, both intercultural and mother tongue instruction were abandoned after it was shown that disadvantaged children were more likely to be placed in special education classes, fall far behind their peers, or repeat a grade.

Both countries allocate more money for schools with high concentrations of poor students through an Educational Priority Policy (EPP). In Belgium, different initiatives correspond to each regional government.[30] The Netherlands has a very systematic approach, known as the *Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid* (OVB), resulting from its EPP: "average" Dutch children count for 1 point, working-class Dutch children count for 1.25 points, while ethnic minority children count for 1.9 points. (No group is weighted the same; some groups are considered more disadvantaged than others.) This means that schools with high concentrations of ethnic minorities can expect to receive nearly twice as much funding for staff, school materials, and programs.[31] Schools with large concentrations of socially disadvantaged pupils are more likely to use their extra resources for remedial teaching, special teaching methods, contacts with the parents of ethnic minority pupils, etc. (Mulder & Van der Werf 1997). Despite these efforts, at least one longitudinal and cross-sectional study suggests that there has been little direct effect of the OVB on the academic improvement of disadvantaged Muslim children.[32] Further, there are reasons to believe that more local control, increased parental choice, and the publishing of school achievement levels have worsened prospects for Muslim pupils (Driessen 2000).[33]

A Closer Look at the Dutch Case

Full government funding is available to Islamic schools once certain minimal requirements are met. Statutory requirements, having become much stricter since 1993, now stipulate that there must be at least a 200-pupil minimum (with some exceptions, depending on the population density), the language of instruction has to be Dutch, the teachers have to be qualified, and the curriculum has to comply with the stipulations laid down in the Primary Education Act. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that no other school already in existence within a two-kilometer radius is able to replicate the aims of the school. Most difficult, school sponsors have to demonstrate that the number of students can be maintained for a full fifteen years beyond the first five years. It is the municipality that grants permission for the schools to be

established. If the proposals for a new school accent the wrong thing(s), the process can take years to complete. Because these regulations have been tightened to curtail the number of new schools being established, it has meant that many schools, even across denominational boundaries, have had to merge to remain open. The number of new schools established since 1990 has fallen dramatically (Walford 2001a). This legislation is fairly specific and explicit, which makes it hard for the local authorities to prevent the founding of these schools, though the process of founding an Islamic school is nonetheless arduous and poses many challenges.

Yet, while there continues to be a steady rise in the number of Islamic schools, the current number does not even begin to meet the demand for more schools. According to a study by Van Kessel (2000), in the city of Amsterdam, where approximately 50 percent of the primary school children were of foreign origin and six Islamic schools already existed, there was a need for an additional 20 schools. More recently Van Kessel (2004) concluded from a series of studies on school choice that 30 to 40 percent of Turkish and Moroccan parents would send their children to an Islamic school if there were such a school in the neighborhood. Based on this preference, he estimated that in the Netherlands as a whole there is, in addition to the then 41 existing Islamic primary schools, a need for another 120 such schools (Driessen & Merry 2006; Phalet & Van Praag 2004). Local municipalities, no matter how much they are disinclined, must cooperate with establishing Islamic schools once minimum requirements are satisfied. With more demand for Islamic schools, there is typically a commensurate hesitancy, to put it mildly, on the part of local governing councils to cooperate with the initiatives (Mureau 2004).

Several recent investigations by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (*Inspectie van het Onderwijs*, 1999, 2002, 2003) have concluded that almost all of the Islamic schools have an open attitude toward Dutch society and play a positive role in creating conditions for social cohesion. Furthermore, the schools' instructional approach is culturally sensitive, Dutch language instruction is prominently featured, contacts with other schools and local educational and welfare institutions are apparent, and parental participation remains an important goal. Only in a handful of schools was the religious content questionable, but the reports have emphatically stated that Islamic schools are no cause for alarm. Other studies have demonstrated similar findings (Walford 2002; Driessen & Bezemer 1999).[34]

Each Dutch political party knows that to deny rights to one group of schools, or, even some of the schools (i.e., those one out of five Islamic schools believed to be receiving monies from foreign Wahhabi donors and more worryingly, from the radical Al Waqf al Islami organization) is to

espouse an untenable and potentially embarrassing position. More likely is an attenuated route to "integration" via measures that require Dutch language proficiency for immigrants prior to arriving in the Netherlands, citizenship education requirements, and compulsory Dutch nationality for all Islamic school directors. The challenge that remains for Dutch policymakers is whether Muslims living in the Netherlands will be attracted to tolerant, liberal values when Muslims' own freedoms to assemble are increasingly under intense scrutiny. For now, however, public opinion is strongly against Islamic schools. The reasons typically are that these schools are perceived as socially divisive and nationalistic, or as encouraging intolerance and separatism from liberal Dutch values.

Yet, as of April 2004, these perceptions constitute the least of Muslims' problems in the Netherlands. As reported in *De Volkskrant* (April 22, 2004), the minister of education Van der Hoeven proposed a law that requires any new Islamic schools to have a school board composed entirely of Dutch nationals. If the law were to pass, Islamic school boards would have to explain to the Ministry of Education how they plan to adhere to Dutch norms and values, and no more than 80 percent of the student body could be from a disadvantaged background (Sharma 2004).

These proposals—buttressed by public opinion following the murder of Van Gogh in November 2004—undoubtedly portend negative consequences for the founding of new Islamic schools but also existing Islamic schools and even state schools with heavy concentrations of poor minorities. Dutch Islamic schools, while at one time very promising in the Netherlands, now face formidable challenges from the state.[35] How Dutch Islamic schools will even manage to find 20 percent students who are not from disadvantaged backgrounds remains unclear, especially as some 95 percent of the children in Islamic schools qualify as socially disadvantaged and a mere 2 percent of the parents are Dutch-born (see Driessen & Merry 2006). Though unlikely to pass given the results of the November 2006 election, the proposed law, if passed, would have immediate repercussions for proposed *and* existing Islamic schools, most of which would be forced to close[MS1].[36] Presently, what stands in the way is the Dutch Constitution.

The United States

The situation in the United States is noticeably different. Because public schools are partly funded by local property taxes, school resources vary widely.[37] Further, notwithstanding a very strong religious ethos in the United States, the separation of church and state remains sacrosanct.[38] All public

schools must follow the state-approved curriculum and testing procedures, though preferred instructional methodologies (e.g., constructive vs. algorithmic math) can vary from one district to the next.[39] Where private schools (including religious schools) are concerned, no direct funding is available, from either the individual states or the federal government. Provided that monies are given to school boards and not to schools directly (a violation of the Establishment Clause of the constitution), schools may be granted real estate, income, and sales (but not employment) tax exemption and many private schools benefit from textbook and transportation subsidies. Only a few cities (e.g., Milwaukee, Cleveland) currently experiment with voucher programs, which allow those who qualify (usually by random drawing) to attend other schools that participate in the program, including private religious schools.[40] It is unclear how many Muslims are availing themselves of these different initiatives. Many religious (including Islamic) schools make financial assistance available to families that have difficulty paying the fees, but it is the exception rather than the rule that a school can provide full scholarships except in the more elite private schools. Most private schools have a religious affiliation (though a significant number of elite academies also exist which have no denominational basis) and are far more likely to have smaller budgets; this translates into lower teacher salaries and fewer resources for school facilities and teaching materials.

The same applies to Islamic schools. Despite noble aims and a very committed staff, tight budgets also mean that many Islamic schools are far from where they need to be to live up to their claims of excellence.

A Closer Look at the American Case

Since 1997, CISNA has ardently pushed the accreditation issue for Islamic schools, and it continues to be a prominent theme at regional and national education conferences. Schools seek out accreditation for a variety of reasons. Mainly accreditation gives a school its seal of validation or approval. It tells the parents and other schools that an accredited school meets certain recognized standards (Selby 1994). However, being accredited does not guarantee quality. Private, nongovernmental agencies normally govern this domain, and quality controls vary widely. Therefore, a rather rigorous process must unfold with a reputable accrediting agency if schools are to meet the requirements necessary for approval, including recognition by the state. Several religious denominations have their own accrediting agencies, most of which are honored by the respective states, and state recognition[41] is important to qualify for state-funded programs, scholarship commissions, foundations, the military, and employers, to name a few.

If an Islamic school recruits an accrediting agency that shares an inspection team with members of the state board, it typically finds that quality levels remain high. If shortcuts are taken to receive the "accredited" label, quality may be severely compromised. Before receiving accreditation, however, a school must have the appropriate health, safety, zoning, occupancy, fire, and physical structure permits. If a school must provide, say, a nurse or physical education activities to receive state accreditation, the staff typically does everything within its means to follow through. An accrediting agency will usually be patient with a school that has two or three noncertified teachers if they play a critical role in noncertifiable areas (e.g., religion). The main items to determine, once these basic requirements are accomplished, concern the role that parents will play in the internal affairs of the school[42] (Zarzour 2003; Zarzour & Siddiqui 2004). Finally, the question of mosque affiliation also continues to be a difficult one for schools. Independence from the mosque means more freedom to organize the school according to the aims of the school board, but independence also brings with it daunting challenges for school budgets. School fees for a typical student at a well-staffed Islamic school can run several thousand dollars a year, not including uniforms or textbooks.

For the time being, Islamic schools are well advised to use the existing accrediting agencies rather than look to an Islamic educational agency such as CISNA, which cannot currently enable schools to implement a set of standards. States may not regulate the content of religious instruction, but other religious accrediting agencies give a great deal of freedom for the religious character of schools to flourish (Zarzour 2003; Saleh & Zarzour 2004), which makes the need for a specific Islamic accrediting agency redundant. Furthermore, while the IQRA International Educational Foundation and the International Institute of Islamic Thought are making impressive efforts to supplement existing curricula, no comprehensive set of curricular materials for Islamic schools presently exists. Most new schools look to neighboring religious schools (e.g., Jewish, Lutheran, Catholic) for the school handbook and teacher contract templates, as well as curricular plans. From there, appropriate adjustments and modifications are made.

Each state may have its own laws concerning not-for-profit organizations and schools. Nevertheless, states reserve the right to regulate the health and safety of all schools and may ensure that religious schools actually provide the services they claim to offer.[43] It is first necessary to know the state requirements and then act, openly and transparently, on them. This helps to avoid religious stereotyping and keeps media distortion to a minimum; also, active participation in the local community through a variety of committees (e.g., city council, school, and zoning boards, etc.) can facilitate the

accreditation procedures and inspections. Transparency also aids in developing a healthy relationship with committee members who may find the school deficient in standards required for accreditation but are inclined to offer suggestions for ways to improve.

Academic Achievement

No quantitative studies have been published on the performance of Muslim students in Belgium.[44] Until fairly recently, the same was true of the Netherlands. Interested to ascertain both cognitive and noncognitive outcomes, Geert Driessen and Frans van der Slik (2001) controlled for both ethnic and religious backgrounds in a series of multilevel analyses and found that Muslim students, most of whom are either Moroccan or Turkish and attend "black schools," (*zwarte scholen*) routinely score considerably lower than other pupils. Among elementary school children, for example, Muslim children scored 35 points, or one standard deviation, lower in language achievement than students with Catholic parents. Math scores revealed a similar finding, viz., Muslim children scored 58 points, or 0.9 standard deviation, lower than students with Catholic parents. Even when socioeconomic background was held constant with lower-income autochthonous Dutch children, a large variance in scores was noted for Muslim youths. This continues to be true even when the Dutch government provides nearly twice as much funding per child when he or she is of immigrant parentage with a disadvantaged background.

Explaining these results is not easy, but it is reasonable to assume that much of the poor achievement of Muslim pupils corresponds to the low education levels of the parents (98% of whom received no more than a primary school education), the poverty of Muslim families (parents make approximately half the income of parents in a reference group), and the language obstacles that many children face (Driessen 1997; Mulder & Van der Werf 1997).[45] The only indicator of improvement in Islamic schools over state schools with a comparable student population was in the area of grade retention, although Islamic schools apparently give more homework, and children in Islamic schools read more than their counterparts in comparable (i.e., similar ethnically concentrated) schools (Driessen 1997). The data reflect only the limited number of years that Islamic schools have been in existence, and subsequent longitudinal studies may eventually contradict these findings. Still, these studies have not only challenged the assumption that Islamic schools will ensure greater academic achievement—something that these schools promise to do—but the sense of self-confidence and well-being among students also showed few differences from their counterparts in comparable schools.

While there have been no studies on the academic achievement of American Muslim pupils, graduates of Islamic schools in the main appear to be doing extremely well academically.[46] Many Islamic schools publish their student achievements—including spelling and geography bee winners and math and science fair participants—on their individual websites. A significant number of children move on from Islamic primary schools to Catholic schools for what parents believe to be an academic environment with a moral foundation. And though it is a minority, many Muslim girls attend single-sex Islamic schools, or else they graduate to attend all-girl Catholic high schools.

As in the Netherlands and Belgium, it is also true that American Muslim parents who place there children in Islamic schools typically identify first as Muslims (and not as Americans), but their education levels, socioeconomic status, and proficiency in English are typically very high. Not only is parental involvement usually higher, but also self-confidence and a sense of well-being among Muslim pupils in the United States appear to be high. This seems to be the case despite isolated incidents of harassment. Balancing different identities, one with peers and another with one's parents and older relatives, is something that most youth are quite accustomed to and manage very well. Currently, there are no critical qualitative or quantitative studies on American Islamic schools and value-added analyses are thus far inconclusive as it concerns the positive longitudinal effects of faith schools compared to public schools (Schagen & Schagen 2002).

Conclusion

For the small (but growing) number of Muslims who seek out an Islamic education for their children, state schools in all three countries embody moral permissiveness and lower academic achievement. Others are dismayed with the extent to which schools ignore the cultural, historical, and religious identities of Muslim children. Even so, most Muslims living in the West continue to be mostly satisfied with the public education available to their children (Parker-Jenkins 2002).

In all the three countries that I have examined in this chapter, some Muslims feel that Islamic schools are a healthy alternative to public schools, though in Belgium, where Islamic instruction in the state (and some denominational) schools is made widely available, this is not the case. In the Netherlands, while full funding of Islamic schools is an attractive feature, the accountability controls and lack of qualified Muslim staff mean that fostering an Islamic ethos remains a formidable challenge. Despite constitutional guarantees and the successful efforts of school organizers, there are still many hurdles in the founding of new Islamic schools, and

new legislation will make it more difficult to maintain even the existing ones. Some also believe that greater state control of religious schools fosters a less religiously based school culture.[47] In some Dutch Islamic schools, observers have found that little separates them from other non-Islamic schools with a similar student population.

In the United States, Islamic schools are growing at a phenomenal rate, though not all survive.[48] The minimal amount of federal or state control of religious schools in the United States does not mean that Islamic schools are doing whatever they want. Anxious to have credibility in the eyes of the surrounding culture and to give their children the best education they can afford—consistent, of course, with an Islamic educational model—the overwhelming majority of Islamic schools eagerly solicit outside "interference" from other schools and local government to bring the school up to par. Academic excellence is foremost in organizers' minds.[49] But one thing is abundantly clear: rather than shun accountability, American Islamic schools enthusiastically embrace it.

The freedom to establish Islamic schools exists in Belgium and the Netherlands principally because of their national constitutions, but Muslims have not found it easy to establish Islamic schools in either country. Notwithstanding its constitutional guarantees, the Netherlands makes no consistent provisions for Islamic schools and thus has been forced—on the strength of its own legislation—to support Islamic schools as long as minimal requirements are met.[50] No private Islamic schools exist in either country nor are they likely to, especially given the lower socioeconomic status of the majority of Muslims in both countries. More worrying for Muslims in the Netherlands is the new legislation currently under review—that no more than 80 percent of a school's students be socially or economically disadvantaged and that all school board members be Dutch citizens.[51] Notwithstanding the positive reports issued by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education, Islamic schools continue to be viewed with distrust, and elections make them easy targets for vilification as unemployment and crime push popular opinion against the presence of a visible minority group. In the wake of the Van Gogh murder, some mosques and Islamic schools have become targets for vandalism and arson.

In the United States, the number of Islamic schools continues to climb. However, owing to the lack of direct state subsidies to private schools, it is partially true to say that U.S. private religious schools are equally *dis*advantaged. Still, with a much wealthier and better-educated Muslim population (indeed, the United States hosts what is arguably the highest concentration of Muslim intellectuals in the world), some American Muslims are better able to pay the steep fees that Islamic schools require to operate. These fees

can be reduced once the tax exemption status is procured and if schools establish links to a mosque to help shoulder the financial burden. Most schools operate according to curricular plans comparable or identical to those of surrounding public or more established denominational schools and receive accreditation from outside the Islamic fold. However, it is also likely that better governance of school curriculum from an Islamic accrediting agency will emerge in the next ten years. Concerns over the quality of education for children in Islamic schools vary from school to school and cannot be indiscriminately applied. In most cases, there is a period of "growing pains" at new schools in all three countries.

Finally, on the matter of academic achievement, as yet no promising trends point to better academic outcomes for Islamic school pupils in the Netherlands, largely because of the heavy concentration of disadvantaged children. Currently, there is no comparable evidence in either Belgium or the United States. However, far graver concerns than the academic performance of the pupils confront Islamic schools in the West. The challenges partly arise owing to the tensions among an idealized Islamic philosophy of education, individual school missions, and daily practice. Closely examining that tension is the subject of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Islamic Education between the Ideal and the Real

> [The] culture of a traditional society is dominated by harmony and unity; all branches of social life are deeply integrated. Education is an integral part of life and so are philosophy and knowledge, and these are deeply interrelated.
>
> Hadi Sharifi

A great deal of presumption can be found among Westerners concerning Islam as a unified religion, including Islam and its place within Western society. It is true that Muslims pride themselves in not having had a Reformation, as did the Christians in the West, but it is wrong to assume that no divisions exist within Islam. In fact, many "denominational" schools (e.g., Alevi, Sufi, Ismaili) thrive within Islam, and the educational philosophies and orientations of various Islamic schools are accordingly inspired by them. Sherin Saadallah (2004) elucidates four broad trajectories within Islam—the secularist, traditionalist, modernist, and fundamentalist. Each of those is dissected further still. Tariq Ramadan (1999) offers a slightly different nomenclature, with each component being more "progressive" than the previous: scholastic traditionalism, Salafi[1] traditionalism, Salafī reformism, liberal reformism, and Sufism. Outside Islam, others have pointed out how Muslims are ideologically constructed from a Western frame of reference, sometimes as a religious group, other times as members of different ethnicities, and sometimes as immigrants (Modood 2003; Dwyer & Meyer 1996).

More interesting, perhaps, is the manner in which Muslims see *themselves* in relation to Western society. A few Muslims have tended toward either a separatist mentality as expounded by thinkers like Mawdudi, Qutb, and Navdi, while others, following the thinking of Ismail al-Faruqi, have

seen their "exile" in Western society as an opportunity to shine Islamic truth into the secular darkness. Most Muslims, however, fit neither of these two trends, and it is therefore important to be mindful of the majority of individuals who see themselves as culturally Muslim and little else (Malik 2004), a point to which I will return later in the chapter. Where statistics are available, they suggest that only a minority of Muslims in the West—fewer than 20 percent—practice their faith with regularity (Cesari 2004; Zine 2000; Ramadan 1999; Pulcini 1995; Haddad & Lummis 1987). As I proceed, therefore, I am mindful of these distinctions and Islam's internal diversity. However, to simplify my philosophical task, I will concern myself principally with the broader purposes and philosophy of Islamic schooling in the West, particularly as it is positioned in relation to liberal educational aims.

I attempt to provide an overview of the general philosophy behind Islamic education through a highly condensed version of Islamic philosophy of education, followed by a brief account of Islamic epistemology, as provided by some of Islam's finest scholars. Such philosophy is necessarily *theology*, inasmuch as all considerations of human endeavor in Islam have God as their point of reference. In my account of an Islamic philosophy of education, I will first render an undifferentiated consensus view, one that would appear to contradict the internally diverse *ummāh* as well as the experiences of Western Muslim educators. Therefore, much of what I describe is an ideal type; *the synthesized ideas I will lay out do not exist anywhere in reality*. This is because the reification of abstract ideas necessarily requires interpretation and varied application according to need, organization, competence, and circumstance. It remains to be seen whether Islamic school educators in the West will develop a philosophy of education rooted in the experiences of practitioners.

The incongruence between an ideal type of philosophy of Islamic education and the heterogeneous body of Muslims and Islamic schools in the West is admittedly an antinomy of sorts. In part, this tension exists because virtually all Islamic philosophy of education is derived from the so-called Muslim world (e.g., Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia), while this study focuses on Islamic schooling in a Western context. This disjuncture poses a serious quandary for anyone attempting to understand the philosophical ideas that inform practice, particularly when a distilled, decontextualized stereotype emerges to inform the highly context-specific practices in Islamic schools. This chapter is an attempt to highlight the challenges that Muslim educators in the West face as they aim to reconcile an idealized caricature of Islamic philosophy of education with the on-the-ground needs of Muslim children socialized in a non-Islamic society.

Following an idealized description of Islamic philosophy of education, I will describe what Islamic schools aim to provide. Islamic schools are as diverse as the individuals who establish, work, and study in them. Therefore, it is impossible to describe what an Islamic school in any pure sense looks like, though certain predictable patterns of organization and operation can be detected and observed. The description I will give is based largely on written accounts provided by Western Muslim educators in Europe and North America. These accounts are diverse in their own right. The synthesized and ideal description that I offer will focus on what Islamic schools in the West *have in common*, allowing for different degrees of emphasis and implementation. Though I shall have more to say about parents in Chapter 5, this chapter will include details concerning the motivations and involvement of Muslim parents in opting for Islamic schools. These schools are often seen as the catalyst to great parental participation in children's schooling.

In my assessment of Islamic schools, I will examine the crisis that Islamic schools face in Western societies. This will occur on two fronts: (a) an analysis of the relationship (if any) between the philosophy of education, the aspirations of school administration, and the actual character and practice of Islamic schools, and (b) an analysis concerning the meaning of an Islamic curriculum. To the first item, I will argue that there exists a disjuncture between Islamic educational ideals (as expressed by Muslim philosophers of education), the aspirations of school administrators, and the manner in which Islamic schools operate in practice. Concerning the second item, I will argue that Islamic schools, notwithstanding their own insistent claims, must struggle to define what is distinctive about an Islamic education. Finally, I will argue that Islamic educators need to encourage open-minded discussions concerning issues on which there is no settled opinion. I will illumine this discussion by drawing upon minority Muslim voices that encourage further dialogue and debate.

Islam versus the West?

Though changes in thinking are afoot, a majority of Muslims[2] and non-Muslims continues to cast the opposition of Islam vs. the West rather sharply. One commonly encounters the paradigm, infamously advanced by the likes of Samuel Huntington (1996) and Bernard Lewis (1993), of two incompatible cultures.[3] The voice of Noura Durkee (1987) is typical:

> [Religiously minded Americans] could become Muslims. They might be among the best of us. They have, in general, lived through and come out of the frantic quest for money pursued by most Americans, born or immigrant.

> They have lived richly and poorly and don't care so much anymore. They do see the poverty in secular humanist materialism. But instead of becoming Muslim, they proceed to invent humanitarian causes like "World Hunger Day", "LiveAid," "Save the Whales." Why? Because Islam is something they know less than nothing about. They live in the Jahiliyyah [state of ignorance, idolatry, and anarchy]. Some of them are Hanif [believers in the One God]. Some of them know they are waiting for something. All of them are misinformed.
>
> (p. 56)

Western values, many Muslims allege, assume a secular starting point, operate on the pretense of neutrality, unduly emphasize rationalism, and are accordingly limited by empiricism. Neutrality, Yusuf Waghid (1996) argues, "separates practice from theory, theory from fact, and fact from value" (p. 44). Islam, conversely, posits the dual nature of humanity. Human beings possess not only a body and a mind but also a spirit (*rûh, nafs*). While Western scientism acknowledges the human heart as a muscle that pumps blood through the body and sustains its biological functions, the heart (*qalb*) in Islam denotes the core reality of humankind (Sharifi 1979); its reality is not, ultimately, of this world but lies in the union with God, so that one may attain *adab* or the inculcation of goodness, leading to the "perfect human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Religious faith (*īmān*) is not a separate compartment unattached to one's daily experience; rather Islam purports it to be a total way of life (*Dīn wa Dunya*). Islamic education, then, reposes in a transcendent reality, and recognition of this leads to wisdom (*hikmah*).

The perceived antagonism between Western and Islamic educational goals is subsumed within the familiar dichotomy of the abode of Islam (*dār-al-Islām*) versus the abode of war (*dār al-harb*), though both are increasingly believed to be outmoded expressions (Ramadan 1999; Khan 1998), and neither is to be found in the *Qur'ān* or the Sunna.[4] Some Muslims describe Western societies as *dār al-Kufr,* or the abode of unbelief, where neither Islam is the dominant religion nor are Muslims under special treaty relations with the state. Yet, obvious difficulties immediately arise; a country like the United States, for example, cannot be understood as an abode of unbelievers. Indeed, a majority of its inhabitants would be classified, in Islamic nomenclature, as People of the Book (*ahl-al-Kitab*). Yet acknowledging this does not prevent some Muslims living in the West from conceptualizing an opposition—often for polemical purposes.

Proponents for Islamic schools, joining the supporters of thousands of other denominational schools, sometimes echo this belief. Islamic educational ideals hold a great deal in common with, for example, Evangelical Protestant and conservative Catholic and Jewish schools. Each, in its own

way, offers an alternative pedagogical vision to the materialist, secularist, and careerist impulses that generally permeate Western society. Each of these traditions recognizes that humans possess a physical and spiritual self. Islamic education aims to address this whole self, guiding the student along a path conducive to righteousness by integrating faith and spirituality into one's entire life. Increasingly, though, Muslims in Western contexts express skepticism concerning the ability to maintain this spiritual ideal. While democratic liberals will typically view a secularist political apparatus as nondiscriminatory and fair, Muslims are more likely to see secularism as an uncompromising force "sweeping the world in all matters of public life" (Hewitt 1996, p. 72), an agenda set on relegating religious values to the private sphere. Secularism in public life is itself believed by some (Yousif 2000) to be discriminatory. Muslims who view their situation in Western societies in this way are endeavoring to vanquish the secular foe, and they will seek to do so in a resolute, confrontational manner (Bleher 1996). Thus Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes,

> The only way to combat this evil is to make arrangements for the widest possible dissemination of the Islamic *Da'wah* [witnessing to the faith], the spiritual-moral teachings of Islam through good healthy literature and journals propagating ethical norms and the awe of God in public dealings. If necessary, laws should be enacted for the purpose and those found offending these rules of conduct should be punished.
>
> (Husain & Ashraf 1979, p. 21)

Thus, though Western countries operate explicitly or implicitly on moral axioms and policies originally framed around religious arguments, there is the impression—from within and without the Islamic community—that the West operates on principles *opposed* to religious faith.

Islamic Philosophy of Education: Aims and Objectives

At the center of Islamic education is the complete submission to the will of God. This is what it means to be a Muslim. The curriculum in an Islamic school, both explicit and hidden, ought to reflect an Islamic orientation. This is because Islamic education is an all-encompassing project, one not reserved for Muslims only. The surest educational proposal for an Islamic education, Muhammad Qutb posits, requires that one make "Allah's doctrine rule supreme" (Husain & Ashraf 1979, pp. 28–29). Islamic education, like most other forms of comprehensive religious schooling, is concerned with the whole person. Its ambit includes the spiritual as well as

the intellectual student. Syed Muhammad al-Attas (1979) explains it in this way:

> The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Quran and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of his status as [vice-regent] to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe.
>
> (pp. 158–159)

In Islamic theology, one encounters the idea that humans are born in a state of *fitrah* ("by decree"), that is, with the innate capacity for worship (*'ibadāh*) and obedience (*ta'ah*) to the will of God.

Muslim educators are occupied with the need to combat a materialist mindset that fails to place Allah at its center. Islamic education seeks to overturn this materialist thinking by laying the stress on purpose and unity in the universe. Underlying this is the concept of *tawhīd*, the oneness of God that permeates all aspects of life. *Tawhīd* entails the complete integration of all that one does; it includes the physical as well as the spiritual. No dichotomy of sacred and profane exists, for all of life is called to submit to the divine will. All separation between science and spirituality is therefore believed to be a Western secular innovation (*bid'a*).[5] Harmony between faith and empirical work, between knowledge and values, must be maintained so that individuals participate in the noblest achievements of Islamic society. Even class differences are rejected inside the Islamic school, and complete equality among all students is the ideal (Ahmed 1990).[6]

If there is an explicit purpose to Islamic education, it is to "teach us how to worship God and so fulfill our task of *Khalifah* [vice-regent] on earth" (Mohamed 1991, p. 15). An Islamic education will bring up children according to their developmental needs and provide the student with

> the creative impulse to rule himself and the universe as a true servant of Allah not by opposing and coming into conflict with Nature but by understanding its laws and harnessing its forces for the growth of a personality that is in harmony with it.
>
> (al-Attas 1979, p. 159)

This vice-regency is not to be seen as being in conflict with one's civic responsibilities. The society in which one lives, and not only an Islamic society, is one's *ummāh.* Islamic schoolteachers frequently discuss civil rights and civic responsibilities and encourage their students to actively engage in

the democratic process, though *da'wa* is usually the motive. Some believe that *da'wa* denotes active proselytizing of unbelievers in the community through interfaith alliances; for others, *da'wa* entails a life of prayer and pious living, that is, living one's faith. Either way, the goal of *da'wa* is to testify to the truth of Islam as the best way to enjoy inner peace and spiritual satisfaction.

Islamic education is impossible unless one has first accepted the revelation (*Wahi*) of God to humanity through the angel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel) to the last of the prophets, Muhammad. Without these premises, there can be no Islamic education. Beyond this prerequisite, Ghulam Sarwar (1996) elucidates the objectives of Islamic education:

1. Prepare and train the future generation to work as agents of *Allāh* on Earth.
2. Ensure the promotion of *Ma'rūf* (good) and the prevention of *Munkar* (evil) in a society.
3. Ensure the balanced growth of the total personality of a person.
4. Promote spiritual, moral, cultural, physical, mental and material development in children in preparation for the responsibilities, experiences and opportunities of adult life.
5. Develop all the faculties to realize the full potential of people.
6. Develop the skills required to enable people to face real-life situations with a clear consciousness about their responsibility and accountability in the *Ākhirah* [life after death].
7. Prepare people to work towards the economic and material growth of a society with a strong sense of the unity of the human race and ensure equitable distribution and proper use of wealth.
8. Develop a sense of social responsibility for the efficient use of resources to eliminate wastage, avoid ecological damage, and safeguard the well-being of all created beings.
9. Encourage competition in good things to promote excellence and the highest achievements for the greater welfare of people and society.
10. Ensure that children grow up with a strong belief in sharing opportunities, equity, justice, fair play, love, care, affection, selflessness, honesty, humility, integrity and austerity.

(pp. 13–14)

The dichotomy mentioned earlier between "Islam" and the "West" (both are presented as undifferentiated) surfaces here again: the West dichotomizes while Islam harmonizes; the West, the argument runs, compartmentalizes disciplines, while Islam situates learning within its proper point of reference, which is revelation (*Wahi*). Also, Islam purports to neatly synthesize the various disciplines together into a unified whole (*tawhīd*).

Again, it must be stressed that the above description of an Islamic philosophy of education captures an oversimplified, decontextualized "essence" as expounded by particular Muslim scholars, mainly from predominantly Muslim cultures, and not the diversity of the Muslim *ummāh* or the variety of practices that individual Islamic schools evince in the West. Most Islamic educators in the West are very keen to develop an Islamic philosophy of education that does not eschew liberal democratic values but incorporates them into an Islamic framework. While the details of this symbiotic relationship have yet to be worked out, it can be said of progressive Muslim educators that they wish to

> advocate a modern educational system, which is inclusive of a clearly defined religious curriculum, that enhances the child's development as a Muslim, in addition to his/her development as an intellectual capability. [This] approach to religious education as a foundation of an Islamic moral code, behaviorism and way of life is essential within [this] understanding of a comprehensive body of education.
>
> (Saadallah 2004, p. 48)

Therefore, for most Muslim educators in the West, Islam is not so much guided by the abstract theology of intellectuals from the Muslim world but from the on-the-ground needs of Muslims struggling to retain their identity in an environment indifferent, and in some cases hostile, to Islam.

Islamic Epistemology

Modern epistemology, many Islamic pedagogues insist, minimizes the knowledge one derives from revelation (*Wahi*) and thus reduces knowledge to a material realm wholly dependent on reason. In other words, they continue, Western thought assumes a secular starting point (al-Attas 1979, 1991; Sarwar 1996; Husain & Ashraf 1979; Nasr 1982; Barazangi 1990, 1991). Knowledge (*ilm*) from an Islamic point of view must take all of life into account; learning cannot be separated from the belief in God. "Seeking knowledge is the duty of every Muslim," reads a famous *hadīth.* Indeed, belief in God is the key to true knowledge and understanding, for all knowledge comes from God. Knowledge must guide the Muslim "towards a high ultimate destiny in the Hereafter" (al-Attas 1979, p. 157). The combination of knowledge with the spiritual discernment that recognizes and distinguishes truth from falsehood is called *'aql,* and it can be used synonymously with "heart" (*qalb*). Real knowledge, however, is the balance between knowledge (*ilm*) and practice (*'amal*), and its purpose is the cultivation of goodness.

The *Qur'ān*, as the final authority on truth (*haqq*), provides the basis for all knowledge claims. These claims provide the basis for proper action (*lim*), spirituality (*īmān, nur,* and *huda*), ethics (*ulama*), and wisdom (*hikma*) (Hilgendorf 2003, p. 65). The point of an Islamic education is to grow and mature according to the wisdom of the tradition. Possessing true wisdom means being able to "effect correct judgments as to the proper place of things" (al-Attas 1979, p. 20). Islam considers all intellectual and scientific learning and achievements to be an expression of wisdom derived from one's Creator. All inquiry and creativity are means to a greater end, that is, to reflect upon the greatness of Allah or to gain deeper insight into the meaning of the *Qur'ān,* and not as ends in themselves (Surty 1989). While Islamic epistemology recognizes all levels of learning and perception, all are subordinate to the edicts of the *Qur'ān,* believed to reflect God's will. This is the idea behind *Tarbiya,* the goal-orientedness of an education, the nourishing of the whole person, in which no aspect of the individual is left untouched by faith (*īmān*). As an act of worship (*ibadāh*), Islamic education is preeminently concerned with cultivating and sustaining faith.

Whereas Western epistemology acknowledges both sensory and intellectual perception, Islam posits that yet another level of perception—namely, the spiritual—realizes the highest level of discernment, and it is only through spiritual insight that all learning assumes a meaningful composite. Manzoor Ahmed (1990) explains,

> The aim of acquisition of knowledge in the Islamic system is not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity but to train rational and righteous individuals for the moral and physical good of their families, their people and for the entire mankind [*sic*]. The Islamic system of education strikes a balance between the need for individual excellence and the requirements of the society.
>
> (p. 6)

There are differences of opinion concerning the degree to which one may blend imitation (*taqlīd*) of tradition with independent knowledge based on reason (*ijtihād*)[7] in areas where the *Qur'ān* and the *hadīth* are silent.[8] Additional knowledge can be gained, for example, from experimentation and observation of the material world, but all knowledge must be carefully integrated into an Islamic frame of reference (Yusuf 1992). In brief, all learning must be *Islamicized,* that is, brought into conformity with the foundation, theory, and principles set forth in the *Qur'ān.*

A popular turn of phrase with earlier theorists such as Ismail al-Faruqi (1982), the "Islamization of knowledge" entails an interpretation of school subject matter that coincides with an acceptable orthodox understanding.

The urgent task of Islamizing knowledge, for many Muslim educators, will "immunize" Muslim pupils from inevitable moral decline as they are confronted by secularist ideologies and practices. Take, for example, the following quote from Allama Kazi (1989):

> Islamic education [means] instruction to lead a life at the period of evolution initiated by the Quran. Anything that is detrimental to this progress at this stage is un-Islamic. Anything that defeats the purpose that the Quran has introduced to be achieved by humanity is bad education, wrong education, un-Islamic education—education that leads man [*sic*] from light to darkness. (p. 84)

A correct understanding of the *Qur'ān* is believed to provide the Muslim with the tools to make sense of the modern world. Definitive answers are accessible to those who apply the "science" of revelation to all modes of inquiry. Those who wish to establish their interpretations as authentic and "orthodox" may avail themselves of the views of other Muslims who are in agreement (Stenberg 2000).

Islamic education recognizes two types of knowledge, acquired (*tahsīlī*) and revealed (*Wahi*). Acquired knowledge includes the human sciences, the natural sciences, the applied sciences, and the technological sciences. In addition to these, one might add the following: comparative religion, Western culture and civilization, linguistic sciences, and Islamic history. Muslim educational scholars encourage the "Islamization" of each discipline. This entails "the elaboration of a prior constituted Islamic conceptual framework to convincingly meet the challenges of modern society" (Mohamed 1991, p. 18). The former takes priority over the latter and becomes the criteria by which all learning is judged. Yasien Mohamed further differentiates the two types of knowledge: "The revealed sciences [*Qur'ān,* Sunna*, hadīth*] provide human beings with permanent objective truths which are important for their guidance, the acquired sciences provide the knowledge of sensible data necessary for daily practical use" (p. 19). To the extent that the acquired sciences usurp the place of revelation, the Muslim, it is said, will be alienated from tradition and its eternal truths.

What Islamic Schools Provide

Islamic schools may organize around Sunni or Shi'a understandings, but they are united in the five pillars or duties of the faith. These duties begin with the profession of faith (*Shahāda*), espousing that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. To sincerely pronounce these

truths in front of two witnesses is to become a Muslim. Other pillars of the Islamic faith include obligatory prayer five times a day (*salāh*), *zakāh* or almsgiving,[9] *sawm* or fasting during Ramadan, and the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. To these pillars the following may be added: a belief in the oneness of God,[10] a belief in angels (except for the Shi'a), a belief in the prophets,[11] a belief in the day of judgment (*Yaum al-Dīn*), and a belief in God's sovereignty over all things. Many also add *jihād,* or spiritual struggle against darker impulses.[12]

Despite the many different types of Islamic schools, including varying degrees of orthodoxy, strictness, and ethnic affiliation, many overlapping similarities unite them. To begin with, all Islamic schools promise to unite the spiritual with the material in the education of children. An awareness of Allah in all that children do and learn is central to Islamic education. One cannot visit an Islamic school without hearing repeated references to God: *al-Hamdullilah* (thanks be to God) or *insha'Allah* (if God wills) infuse the speech of teachers and staff throughout the day. The God-consciousness (*taqwa*) promoted by the Muslim staff is thought to foster student development, which maintains a balance between the spiritual and the material, but this God-consciousness is also believed to lead to justice (*'adl*) and the witnessing to the truth of Islam (*da'wa*). Muslims who spread the true faith must first be mindful of God in all that they do; put another way, they must maintain equilibrium between the physical and spiritual realms. *Taqwa,* then, is best understood as a "conscious balance between the individual, the society, and the limits set by Allah or God as the source of value and knowledge" (Barazangi 2000, p. 30).

Prayers in Islamic schools are routine—though each school varies slightly in the time it sets apart for them—and space is provided for students to carry out ablutions (*wudu*) either in an adjoining mosque (*masjid*) or in the school itself. Friday prayers (*jumm'a*) are typically a community event when a sermon (*khutba*) is given. Gender separation is a common practice in most Islamic schools, at least prior to the onset of puberty. Only in smaller classes, as a practical necessity, does one find the blending of boys and girls, and even then self-segregation tends to happen. Physical education, assuming it is provided, is usually segregated according to sex, except in the most liberal Islamic schools. Because Islam compels modesty, dress codes are usually strict. Beyond a certain age (most schools begin in the third or fourth grade), it is characteristic for girls to wear a headscarf (typically *hijāb*), as a show of inward as well as outward modesty, and a loose-fitting robe (*jilbab*) or wide trousers with an accompanying long dress (*shalwar khamiz*). Makeup is strictly forbidden. Boys also wear uniforms, usually navy blue pants and white shirts. Hair is kept neat and trimmed. Art classes

are sometimes available, provided there is funding and staff, but depictions of persons and animals are strictly forbidden because of the sanctions against idolatry. Music classes are only available in a few schools, but many (particularly stringed and wind) instruments are forbidden. Drums (*tabla*), however, are often part of Arabic culture, as are certain kinds of cultural dance (*dabka*). All Islamic schools celebrate the two important feasts in the calendar: the Festival of Sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*) and the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast (*Eid al-Fitr*). Many schools also take a day off for the Prophet's birthday.

As it concerns the curriculum, one finds important differences in relation to other religious schools. Certainly there is *Qur'ānic* instruction (with recitation), including studies of the life of the Prophet (*sira*) and the period of the first four Caliphs. The moral example of the Prophet Muhammad, whose deeds are collected in the Sunna, and whose attributed sayings are collected in the *hadīth,* provides a reliable moral guide. For older students, there is also study of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), including consideration of Islamic law (*shari'āh*). From these are derived judgments concerning what is either approved (*ma'ruf*) or morally intolerable (*munkar*). Islamic history is taught, as are various cultural studies that reflect the different ethnic compositions of schools. Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that issues of faith can be broached in the classroom, openly and unabashedly. Examples include discussions in literature, social studies, and even science. Children and teachers often use their personal experiences as Muslims for instructive examples in classroom discussion. Many Islamic school staff members have considerable teaching experience in other public and private schools, some for many years. Their ability to contrast previous teaching experience is an advantage in their assessment of Islamic schooling, though some have only the worst public school experiences for comparison. These messages are sometimes passed along to students in Islamic schools, that is, that public schools are ipso facto unsafe, academically undemanding, promiscuous, and materialistic places to be.

This attitude is reinforced by many parents, who turn to the Islamic schools as a way of "escaping" the influences of the public school. Islamic education, on the basis of this reading, is the principal means of combating godlessness in the world.[13] Islamic schools claim to actively promote dual citizenship: one to the global Muslim community and one to the local culture. Thus *da'wa* or witnessing to one's faith is consonant with teaching civic virtues such as mutual respect and tolerance toward others. Indeed, educating Muslim parents to these realities often remains an important priority to Islamic school staff. The same holds true for teaching methods and curricular materials. One can expect to find today's Muslim educator

eager to embrace innovative teaching methods that promote critical thinking and eschew "skill and drill" methods of the past, even if this too often runs counter to the expectations of parents.

It is widely believed that Islamic schools will result in more direct parental involvement in their children's education, not only because of the choice parents have in shaping their child's education, but also because of a shared set of values in the school culture (Ritzen et al. 1997; Dronkers 1995). Islamic schools are said to provide an environment in which parents can freely express their desires concerning what is best for their children, including their academic and personal needs. This is often demonstrably absent in the state/public schools, where recent immigrants—particularly in Europe among the Muslim underclass—do not know how the system works and are unable or unwilling to attend parent-teacher meetings, possibly for fear of looking incompetent, or perhaps because work schedules will not allow for it. In theory, Islamic schools allow parents to advocate for their children in a manner that is comparable to the ways in which other, mainly middle and upper class parents, do elsewhere.[14]

Several American Islamic high schools actively participate in interfaith exercises with other high school students, though the interaction is usually rather tame.[15] Students explain their faith while the others respectfully listen; each group—Jewish, Lutheran, Catholic, et cetera—takes turns. While participants are exposed to different beliefs, challenges to one's faith are not likely to occur at these exchanges. Other teachers try to involve their students in academic competitions with a range of public and private schools, though some claim that other children have not always been culturally sensitive.

Many schools host children whose parents and families are known to the entire school staff. (This is not always the case, of course, because many families drive long distances to reach the school.) Thus accountability is high, and respect toward adults is expected. Moreover, owing to the stronger formal relations that usually exist between school board members and teaching and administrative staff, there is usually a stake in the performance of the school, as well as in the well-being of the students. In a number of Islamic schools, school board members are also part of the teaching staff. Accordingly, Islamic schools strive to provide an atmosphere conducive to higher student achievement.

Critical to the purpose of Islamic schools is their aim to maintain a school culture that operates according to particular values and norms, which are often believed to be opposed to the norms of other schools and the larger society. This value coherence is extended to the general climate in Islamic schools and not just to the dress code, prayer times, and a religiously sanctioned diet. It is especially from curriculum developers and school principals

that one hears that Islam offers a structural advantage over Western forms of education owing to its integration in all aspects of living. There is, generally, very little "clericalism" among those running Islamic schools; school administrators encourage their students to read and interpret the *Qur'ān* within certain reasonable limits, and critical discussion, in many schools, is encouraged.

Assessment

In attempting to assess Islamic education, I have two items in mind: (a) the relationship (if any) between the Islamic philosophy of education, the aspirations and goals of school administrators, and the actual practices of Islamic schools, and (b) the precise meaning of an Islamic education. Considering the first point, Muslim philosophers of education hope their objectives will filter down into practice. Reality, however, can offer less agreeable testimony. Although there is inevitably some degree of confluence, it may appear to the observer that there is an unclear relationship between the ideals of Islamic education, the aspirations of school administrators, and the manner in which Islamic schools operate in practice. Concerning the second point, Islamic school educators are challenged to defend what is essentially Islamic about the education they promote. Generally, attempts to describe what an Islamic education is remain imprecise. On both counts, I base my assessment on a small body of empirical literature and the testimony of both Islamic schoolteachers (not all of whom are Muslim) and former students.

Philosophy of Education

Muslim philosophers of education, most of whom write from contexts outside of the West, aim to provide Islamic school educators in the West with a vision of Islamic education. I have already proffered a condensed version of this pedagogical vision above. Entailed in this vision is Divine Revelation, the dual nature of human beings, the spiritual realm that permeates all that Muslims say and do (and, pertinently, *learn*), the submission of all knowledge to the authority of the *Qur'ān,* and the Islamization of education. None of this is possible without faith (*īmān*), a disposition that unfolds within a community of believers and is witnessed to by the *shahāda.* This disposition is concretized in specific acts of worship and moral duty, including fasting, prayer, and charity. The meaning of Islamic education, if a precise meaning can be properly distilled, is to remember (*dhikr*) and worship (*ibadāh*) God in all that one does. It is to be mindful of the Last Day and to treat others with the dignity and respect they deserve. To bring

all elements of one's life within the jurisdiction of the Divine is both to submit to God and to realize one's true self.

Muslim philosophers of education continue, with few exceptions, to stress how an Islamic education differs *fundamentally* from education offered by other—ostensibly conflicting—philosophical bases. I elaborated in the first part of this chapter how the Islamic vision of education is believed to be at odds with the values and norms of Western culture. However, it must be stressed again that this vision remains idealistic and decontextualized; moreover, these lofty aims, inasmuch as they take little account of the actual practice of educators in schools, approach something akin to a stereotype.

School Mission

Islamic schools and their administrators aspire to the best education possible for their students. Their goals in many ways match those of Muslim philosophers of education though the level of specificity often differs because of the incredible diversity among Muslims themselves and also because of the variety of concrete practices different Islamic schools adopt. Nevertheless, an impressive uniformity exists, as school mission statements from across North America make abundantly clear. Thus from the American upper Midwest we learn of one Islamic school where the mission is to have students understand *tawhīd*, develop a strong moral character, develop a strong sense of responsibility, interact with the community and global issues with an Islamic frame of mind, and recognize Islam as the only viable solution to life's problems and challenges. Another school in western Canada states that it seeks to provide a superior standard of education, foster academic achievement, and cultivate an Islamic spirit in each student. Its leaders also expect a high standard of academic achievement, commitment, and integrity combined with respect, self-discipline, and a code of conduct based on Islamic teachings. On the East Coast, an Islamic school announces its intention to "help Muslim children excel in learning and compete with their counterparts in passing the Standards of Learning as mandated by the Department of Education." Finally, from another school in New England the goals of an Islamic education are expressed as follows:

> The academy guides the children to lead decent contemporary lives, enrich their families, serve their community, tolerate differences, think critically, promote collaboration and respect others. School activities help the children develop individual talent, self-esteem and leadership characteristics and offer an outlet for demonstrating creativity. The entire school community provides high

> learning and practice standards preparing the students to live in a complex, technological and multi-cultural society as proud practicing Muslims.
>
> (http://iane.org/)

Those who manage Islamic schools, unlike most Muslim philosophers of education, recognize the importance of training children to simultaneously identify them both as Muslims and as citizens of the West. Much of the language that Islamic schools adopt to convey their mission is therefore unsurprisingly Western in origin. This includes using the best academic resources, that is, texts, pedagogical tools, and teaching methods. Fostering an identification with Western liberal democratic ideals extends further. One school includes in its mission the aim to "interact effectively with people who follow other faiths, to tolerate differences of opinion within [one's] own community, and to keep [the students'] minds receptive to knowledge from all sources." Yet what remains unclear is the degree to which Muslim students are encouraged to interact with the belief systems of others in that world in which it is hoped they will succeed.

While all Islamic schools seek to cultivate Islamic virtues and character, many also endeavor to equip their students to succeed in a relentlessly competitive world, including being appropriately trained in the technological sciences. Earlier, I pointed out that Islamic schools provide opportunities for their students to interact with others outside the school; moreover, the mission of each school is to train students for success in the marketplace. There are real tensions here. Perhaps as a direct consequence, school principals and administrators frequently act as mediators between the values—many of them cultural—and expectations of parents and the realities facing the children growing up in a society manifestly different from their parents' homeland.

School Practice

Just as one might find in other small religious schools, it is impossible to miss the zeal and commitment among Islamic school staff and teachers. Little can deter those who have put aside other priorities and focused on the education of the youth according to a specific rule of faith. Islamic school staff work tirelessly to provide the highest levels of instruction, while attending to the personal and developmental needs of students. Islamic school educators clearly recognize the advantages Islamic schools provide, including the feeling of security, acceptance, and affirmation of one's faith, and the integration of this faith with learning. One does not have to look far to hear stories of students whose Muslim identities grow stronger as a

result of Islamic schooling. For these students, this translates into a stronger sense of self and a surer set of beliefs when it becomes necessary to confront non-Islamic customs and values.[16]

Nevertheless, teachers learn very quickly that Islamic schools promise many things that they cannot deliver (cf. Amri 2000).[17] Some consider the idea of an "Islamic curriculum" unhelpful. This is hardly surprising when one considers that most Islamic schools continue to borrow heavily from public and other private school curricula and textbooks.[18] Most would rather talk about ways to help develop character. Many Islamic schoolteachers with whom I spoke attest to Islamic schools not developing that special character, let alone managing to nourish a strong Muslim identity. To the contrary, many describe their school as very much like a typical public school, only with Islamic elements added on. Aside from the staff and resource shortages, few are unaware that their schools use the same textbooks as their public and private school counterparts. Moreover, the goal of becoming accredited means that Islamic schools aim to be as much like other state-approved schools as they can. In several European countries, curricular requirements (and hence the degree of conformity) are even stricter still. Further, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, many Islamic schools struggle to recruit Muslim teachers, calling into question the possibility of fostering an "Islamic ethos" in the school.

Concerning claims of increased parental involvement, the ideal is frequently belied by the facts. Even where Islamic schools are available to Muslim parents, parental involvement in many Islamic schools leaves much to be desired; in fact it has been found that Muslim parents may be even *less* involved than most. However, involvement does vary widely, for example, between the Netherlands and the United States. One can detect several reasons for this. Certain studies (Driessen & Bezemer 1999; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1992) reveal that many Muslim parents in the Netherlands have work schedules that are too demanding or they are too far away from schools to be actively involved or they simply believe that a child's education is solely the school's responsibility. In the United States, Muslim parents are generally more involved; some parents are thought to be unreasonably demanding where their children's academic success is concerned. Many teachers report how intensely competitive the parents are, including those from lower-class backgrounds. Many parents are also driven by their high expectations as immigrants; others, recognizing the fiercely competitive nature of Western society, desire to see their children succeed at all costs. This may have undesirable results, including insensitivity to the (in)abilities of one's child; learning disabilities and psychological needs are a new subject for many Muslim parents.

Because Islamic schools are perceived to be schools *for* Muslims, most Muslim parents appear to think of the local Islamic school as a service to the their community. In the United States, the private nature of Islamic schools means that this sense of ownership is powerful indeed. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that Muslims in the United States are, on average, better educated and occupy middle-class status. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the hypothesis that social class and educational levels of the parents continue to be the chief determinants of parental involvement in the education of their children (Rothstein 2004; Lareau 2003; Tiffani & Phillips 2004). Other reasons for parental involvement include the lack of funding that Islamic schools receive in the United States. (Concomitantly, fewer social safety nets exist in the United States for individuals who are unemployed.) Whatever the reasons, one thing is certain: whether in Europe or North America and regardless of social and economic status, Muslim parents have very high academic expectations for their children (Roosens 1989; Hermans 1995).

Analyzing Islamicized Knowledge

While Islamic schools encourage an Islamic approach to knowledge, many individuals object to the suggestion that knowledge can be divorced from specific interpretations or constructions of knowledge. Most readily agree that interpretation cannot be a neutral endeavor, for it involves incorporating specific attitudes, "which arise out of particular social rules and historical conditions" (Waghid 1996). Yet, directives pointing to "Islamic history" or the "Islamic tradition" pose myriad difficulties for students if they are not invited to join a conversation that questions the habit of imposing a monolithic structure from a previous age onto a new set of experiences (e.g., biotechnology) not faced by previous generations (Khan 2004; Kazmi 2003; Dahlén 2002).

The reader may remember that the "Islamization of knowledge" concerns making all acquired knowledge conformable to an acceptable understanding of Islam. Yet not only is an "acceptable" view not disclosed, but the claim casts the meaning of Islamic education in rather stark contrasts: truth vs. falsehood, orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, and so forth. The truth as revealed in the *Qur'ān,* according to this view, is presented as unproblematically obvious in its message. This somewhat static view of knowledge, as propounded by numerous Muslim scholars, has not made way for more progressive voices (Safi 2003). These new voices beckon Muslims to see knowledge as dynamic and unfolding. Syed Sajjad Husain (1996), for example, warns,

> [Muslims] stand more or less where the Christian world in Europe stood at the end of the mediaeval period when any interpretation of dogma which

> deviated from the teaching of the Church Fathers was condemned as heretical . . . Human knowledge is a constantly changing process in the humanities as well as the sciences; nothing the source of which is man [*sic*] can ever stand still . . . Every new generation of Muslims must be prepared to re-examine knowledge in the light of their understanding to keep pace with advances outside the community. Torpor and stagnation will confront us with the same dilemma in every age.
>
> (p. 50)

Unless unprecedented situations and intellectual challenges give rise to new interpretations (*ijtihād*), critics worry that the idealized, "pristine" projection of Islam will only alienate those who strive to adapt the norms of the *Qur'ān* and the Sunna to modern life. Without this creative and critical approach to the Islamic tradition, several unfortunate consequences are likely to occur. At a minimum, students will feel overly constrained to address contemporary issues with an outmoded and useless vocabulary on the mistaken hunch that the interpretations and rulings (*fatāwā*) issued by Islamic scholars in particular times and places will be adequate to the task in all other circumstances and epochs. Today, Muslim youth are looking for interpretations and adaptations of Islam that are relevant to their lives.

Many Muslim teachers and former students also express frustration with the lack of discussion within Islamic schools vis-à-vis cultural issues (e.g., the manner in which males and females relate to one another) that have taken on a prominent religious significance. This means that even when students are hearing many different opinions about specific issues, they are often uncertain about the way one ought to believe or think about them chiefly because many are reluctant to question the "follow the rules" mentality. (Of course, this is unremarkable when one considers that it is commonplace for adolescents generally to vacillate in this manner). Further, Muslim scholars stress submission (*aslama, islam*) of one's volition to the doing of justice (*'adl*) and what is good and beautiful (*ihsan*) as modeled by the prophets and revealed in the holy *Qur'ān.* To fail in this endeavor, that is, to mistreat others or to stray from the right course, is to wrong one's own soul and to "deviate from what is right and to repudiate the truth and suffer loss" (al-Attas 1979, p. 27). Devout Muslims will do only what they believe God permits; well-being depends on divine favor.

Freedom as understood in Islamic education is more typically about the *limitation* of one's desires and passions. It is an ascetic freedom. This freedom does not seek to fulfill individual aspirations and needs apart from the needs of one's family or community. The ordering of one's life according to divine law (*shari'āh*) is the ideal to which devout Muslims aspire. True

spiritual growth is suitably guided by the *shari'āh.*[19] Yet freedom will bring inner peace and happiness only by pursuing what brings one into harmony with one's essential nature and with the Creator. This kind of freedom, grounded in a life of prayer, aims to liberate the believer. Yet, given these spiritually directed inhibitions, coupled with the range of opinions within each Islamic school—that is, a variety of Islamic traditions and no central authority—not a few students (again, like adolescents elsewhere) complete their schooling unsure about what to think beyond a few core Islamic beliefs. This seems as much an asset as a liability. On the one hand, this uncertainty might lead to greater awareness of diversity and an appreciation for a more complex epistemology. On the other hand, this might lead other students to feel that no right answers are to be found on certain topics, thus undermining one of the core purposes of Islamic schools.

Islamic schools promise to provide an "Islamic orientation" or perspective throughout one's schooling, and this is certainly the case as it concerns a few core beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, few schools, including well-staffed Islamic schools, find it desirable (or possible) to provide a uniformity of beliefs.[20] Instead, Islamic schools will usually follow either a specific traditional interpretation or the opinion of the local imam concerning various controversial issues, for example, the place of music or art in the school curriculum, whether women ought to be allowed to pray publicly at the mosque,[21] or perhaps even the regard one should have for the local community as opposed to "Islamic causes" (e.g., Middle East conflict) abroad. However, each of these issues is handled differently from place to place,[22] and young Muslims increasingly resort to chat rooms and other informal channels to arrive at opinions concerning challenges they face (Schmidt 2004).

Looking Ahead

Islamic schools are one manifestation of the multicultural age. Indeed, they are providing the means of nurturing Muslim children into a highly specific cultural and religious way of life. Yet points of tension remain. Norma Tarazi (2001), for instance, writes, "Muslims have their own philosophy of education, a middle road" between Christians, Jews, and secular variants. This claim is consistent with the highly idealized, decontextualized understanding of Islamic education I reviewed earlier—one untouched by the diverse reality of particular Islamic schools and the broader Muslim *ummāh.* Notwithstanding this caricatured depiction, there is no discernibly single Islamic pedagogy, nor is there a single approach to governing Islamic schools. A comprehensive guide to Islamic education in the West has yet to be written. It is for this reason that Islamic schools in the West, driven

by educational entrepreneurs (Susan Douglass is a fine example), are pregnant with promise. Little wonder, then, that there has been a sharp rise in the number of Islamic schools in several Western countries during the past fifteen years, notably in the United Kingdom and North America.

Aware of the different conditions facing their students, Islamic schools are uniquely positioned to forge an identity well suited to the needs of Muslim youth living in Western societies. Yet, one may still question, given the motivations of many Muslim parents and the general orientation of Islamic philosophy of education, whether Islamic schools can succeed in promoting authentic critical inquiry without delimiting inspiration to non-Western sources. If Muslim educators are to meet one of their desired aims, which is to promote a strong Muslim identity in tandem with an active citizenship in the West, they will need to look for ways to promote uninhibited inquiry and reform fully consonant with one's fundamental commitments within the Islamic tradition(s). Western-born Muslims, Mustafa Malik (2004) says, "are challenged daily to find Islamic answers to existential questions that underscore the urgency of Islamic reforms" (p. 80).[23]

Islamic schoolteachers are often eager to discuss the role citizenship education plays in the curriculum. "I'm always trying to encourage my students to think outside of their immediate surroundings," one teacher explains. "Citizenship," another teacher elucidates, "has to do with respecting others; it concerns getting along with others, working in cooperation." Even where there is clear evidence of sheltering—particularly as it concerns issues involving strong moral opinions—students are reportedly well equipped to handle the "crisis." Further, Islamic school administrators are usually aware of the criticisms detractors make against Islamic schools. It is not, after all, only liberals who worry about the sheltering of children; many Muslims do as well. It is therefore not surprising to learn that a significant number of Islamic schools are seeking to prepare their students to live in a society in which they are a distinct minority. Education of this kind, as A. S. Abdullah (1983) explains,

> Is concerned with developing the unique characteristics of the human being so that he will be able to *adapt* [to] the standards of the society that shares with him the very same ideals. Such harmony is the first characteristic of Islamic educational aims.
>
> (p. 129)

But pedagogy is only one dimension of Islamic schooling, for the internal diversity within the Muslim community also means that the social and political aims of Islamic education remain unclear. Thus, it is a challenge

for Islamic schools to "work together to define a unified social, religious, [and] political role for themselves" (GhaneaBassiri 1997, p. 184). This challenge is not, however, cause for dismay. After all, there is—as I've stressed throughout this chapter—incredible diversity among Muslims. Whether or not it is an explicit objective, Islamic schools participate in as well as contribute to a variety of projects and seek to have an impact on public life. For some, the local community is a priority. Here, the aim is to sew "Islamic values" in the midst of a secular society through public service or *da'wa.* Others prioritize promoting awareness of Muslims in other countries (Chechnya, Bosnia) where their plight goes unnoticed by the rest of the world. The majority fosters tight local networks contained by familiar family ties. Perhaps Islamic schools can accommodate each of these. Nevertheless, defining what "true" Islam is continues to challenge notions of what an Islamic education must look like.

Islamic philosophy of education, in particular, continues to be problematic to the extent that its aims are largely defined by scholars living outside of the West. In particular, the anti-Western flavor of much of Islamic philosophy of education continues to create obstacles for Islamic schools eager to depart from secular models of education. Some believe that becoming more self-critical of one's core commitments, including adopting different attitudes and perspectives, is an abrogation of an Islamic identity itself. But this seems more a *betrayal* of Islam. Akeel Bilgrami (1992) is trenchant here:

> It is because their commitment to Islam today is to a large extent governed by a highly defensive function that moderate Muslims find it particularly difficult to make a substantial and sustained criticism of Islamic doctrine . . . Their defensiveness inhibits them with the fear that such criticism would amount to a surrender to the forces of the West, which have for so long shown a domineering colonial and postcolonial contempt for their culture. [Therefore], the historically determined function of their commitment, the source of their very self-identity, loops back reflexively on Muslims to paralyze their capacities for self-criticism.
>
> (p. 835)

Muslim educators may think that in teaching a more open approach to Muslim identity they will be inviting division and disunity, a particularly uninviting prospect to face when so much vilification against Islam already thrives in the West. But it is crucial to the health and survival of Islam as a religion that it be able to confront challenges facing the next generation in ways that are open-minded and transparent. The community of believers (*ummāh*) instantiated in the Islamic school (inasmuch as it is true to the revelation witnessed to by the Prophet) will need to do justice to the day-to-day

experiences of its members. Doing so only fosters trust and respect. Having a group of believers divided over a particular issue is far better than having a body of conservative clerics insisting that there will be no discussion at all. There is, Tamara Albertini (2003) reminds us, a long tradition within Islam that celebrates the *adab al-ikhtilāf* or "ethics of disagreement" concerning different schools of interpretation.

The issues facing Islamic schools in the West confront *all* religious groups but they are arguably more pronounced for the Islamic community in the West because of the negative press the schools routinely receive (Pitts 2004; Noakes 1998; Abu-Laban 1983; Said 1981). Issues like domestic violence[24] and clinical depression are only beginning to be openly discussed in some Muslim communities, while cultural divisions,[25] the acceptability of fine arts, arranged marriages, and the relationship of Muslims to public education remain largely controversial topics desperately in need of further discussion. The West is providing the space and the freedom to organize and develop strategies to respond to the needs of the Muslim community, in many ways, better than other so-called Islamic countries (Ramadan 1999; Abdul-Rauf 1983; Malik 2001, 2004). Nevertheless, the resolution of Muslim educators to grapple with issues such as these will determine the health and sustainability of Islamic schools in the generations to come. If predetermined principles win over continued reflection and interpretation, if open discussion about controversial issues is met with denunciations of "*bid'a!*" or "*haram!*" (i.e., innovation or unlawful), one can expect a certain measure of cynicism among many Muslim youth, who may consider Islamic schools to have nothing to say to their lived experience.

Yet whatever the failings of Islamic schools, they are not lacking able and eloquent defenders. So to the question, "what makes an Islamic school unique" one is likely to hear that the students feel at peace, that the Islamic school fosters better character and aligns the actions of students with God's will. The school staff continues to provide abidingly strong support, even when the precise mission of the school is unclear and dire shortages in resources and faculty persist in those countries where direct government funding is unavailable. What is more, there are rewards. So, for instance, one may hear how much better behaved Islamic school children are compared to other schools (Abdus-Sabur 1995). This the staff attribute to a school philosophy built on *tarbiyah*,[26] a life guided by prayer, morality, and God-consciousness (*taqwa*). Academic excellence, too, is a feature every Islamic school wants to promote, especially to parents eager to see their children succeed in an intensely competitive environment. It is also not uncommon to hear from teachers and former Islamic school pupils (some of whom return to teach at their alma maters) that a feeling of unity prevails among

the student body. This is the case especially as it concerns the dress code, prayer times, eating *halal* food, and celebrating Islamic holidays. Other items include a higher degree of adult supervision and concern, fewer cliques, and more self-confidence among the student body. In short, well-being is enhanced.

Conclusion

Contrary to the Western custom of reasoning by way of doubt and uncertainty, Muslims—while encouraged to be critically minded—are called to an education built on the premise of faith in a divine order. Freedom to exercise one's intellect, on this understanding, must be restrained by an awareness of one's finitude. Furthermore, knowledge claims can only be predicated on the understanding that acquired knowledge is not likely to conflict with revealed knowledge as given in the *Qur'ān* and the Sunna. The curriculum in Islamic schools systematically affirms the identity of the students in a way that the state and private schools do not. Whether it is the role of Arabic scholarship in transmitting and enhancing valuable Greek education to the West or the different perspectives that attend social studies lessons, one's cultural identity and contribution is not degraded or ignored in Islamic schools; rather, it is affirmed, elaborated, and celebrated (at least for the majority ethnic group in a particular school).[27]

In this chapter, I have elucidated the main themes in the Islamic philosophy of education as an ideal type. Against that decontextualized type I have examined ways in which Islamic schools conform or deviate from those normative ideals. Though there are exceptions, in most cases Islamic schools follow the standard educational practices found in public and other private schools. They also insist upon a very high moral ethos. Teachers are expected to live up to the values that they teach, and accountability is highly regarded. At the same time, Muslim parents, like most parents, desire that their children attain high academic and vocational achievement. It remains an open question whether material competitiveness, per se, is at loggerheads with the spiritual aims of an Islamic education.[28]

The aims of an Islamic education continue to be a challenge to Islamic educators in Western societies; to wit, locating the precise meaning of an "Islamic curriculum" and ascertaining how to integrate one's faith into a way of life that largely excludes Islam from the public sphere. Whether Islamic schools can successfully navigate this route, cultivating strong Muslim identities while at the same time aiding students in the integration process so essential to their identity as citizens of a liberal democracy, is still being assessed. Many Muslims claim that living in an environment in which

they must interact daily with others who are unfamiliar with Islam or, more likely, have serious misconceptions about it, strengthens their faith.

This is as much an argument against Islamic schools as one for them. For those who opt for Islamic schools, the challenge of interpreting the Islamic tradition remains. Muslims in the West are arguably better placed than anywhere in the world to give attention to interpretive polyvalence,[29] to the benefits of democratic pluralism, and to the relevance of human experience to a living faith. Still, many teachers recognize that literal readings of the *Qur'ān* and the *sharī'āh* remain a problem.

Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that Muslim educators are seeking to have a fruitful parley between Western and Islamic norms. Yet this relationship to Western educational norms continues to divide most Muslim educators into two camps. The first camp plays host to those who are keen to locate commonalities with the Western discourse and believe that many Islamic norms are in fact culturally based and must be jettisoned in deference to context-specific reinterpretation. Those in this camp will also see the *ummāh* as broader than the Islamic world, namely, to include the immediate space in which one dwells. As one *hadīth* says, "Loving one's country is a portion of one's faith." Those in this camp will strongly oppose the blending of Islam with state building and instead liken the diaspora of Muslims in Western countries to Muhammad's own *hijra* or migration from Mecca to Medina. Yet many in this camp would also not send their own children to an Islamic school because they believe that it is only in "the world" that one comes to understand the meaning of living out one's faith. Conversely, the second camp includes those who would seek to dissociate themselves from the "corruption" of Western ideas that inhabit the "abode of apostasy" (*dar al-kufr*), and replace them with normative Islamic ones. For the time being, the second camp is winning on the level of rhetoric and theory. But it is the first group that is prevailing in practice. The significance of this disjuncture augurs continued struggle for Islamic school educators.

Despite an overlying philosophical unity concerning the purposes of Islamic education, a great deal of diversity manifests itself in the practical realm. Indeed, Islam is every bit as much an internally conflicted religious community (Bilgrami 1992) as any other. Therefore, inasmuch as Islamic schools seek to promote and emulate behaviors and beliefs that reflect a "true Islam" it is necessary to distill its meaning and, specifically, to examine instances where conflicting notions of what it means to be a Muslim—of the sort I discussed above—can be found. A self-critical approach to Islamic education will allow Muslim students to openly question prohibitions on beliefs and practices even when it is widely believed that the *Qur'ān* has spoken definitively on the matter. Notwithstanding the tremendous assets one is likely

to find in Islamic schools, there continue to be enormous challenges associated with the meaning of Islamic education. Further discussion, including a continued appeal to jurisprudence (*fiqh*)[30], both appropriate to Western contexts and sensitive to contextual considerations, must be sought after if Islamic schools are to have the efficacy and relevance needed to build strong Muslim character capable of tackling new challenges. This will entail moving beyond binary oppositions of *dar al-Islam* versus *dar al-harb* and will necessitate taking into account the freedoms, protections, and opportunities of Muslims to participate in society to a degree almost not found in many Islamic countries themselves. This attitude will avert a defensive posture against Western societies (Cesari 2004; Mernissi 1992), naively believed by so many to be devoid of moral principles. Moreover, it will also facilitate a much-needed discussion among ordinary Muslims concerning different ways of appropriating religious sources.

How Islamic schools in the West will address these challenges remains to be seen. Yet the fact remains that many Muslims are calling out for fresh reexaminations of their conceptual models and terminology. The formidable influences of popular culture, purveyed through various media and many hidden curriculum[31] (not excluding children taken out of the state school system and placed in religious schools) will exert considerable influence on a child's thinking. Simplistic moralizing and Islamic prohibitions, to which many immigrant Muslim children are exposed in after-school and weekend *Qur'ānic* classes, will not suffice to counter these influences, nor will they be likely to appeal to the Muslim child without more culturally-sensitive lessons that take account of non-Muslim societies.[32] There is no better time for Islamic schools to begin tackling the challenges Muslim youth face with frankness and honesty. The alternative is waiting another generation when the controversy will be passé and acceptance, minus the standard vestigial resistance, will have become mainstream. Is it only the most reactionary Muslim voices that will have a say in this matter? Has all truth been settled once and for all in Islam? If Islamic education entails the cultivation of wisdom (*hikma*) (and possessing true wisdom, according to al-Attas, is being able to "effect correct judgments as to the proper place of things"), surely it is the Islamic school in the West that is best equipped to take up the charge of having this conversation.

Part of this conversation will include a more critical examination of the cultural and religious elements that are used to justify an Islamic education. Another will be to formulate an intelligent response to criticisms of culturally or religiously coherent education. I will now turn my attention to the concerns related to a culturally or religiously coherent education and how they speak to the practices of Islamic schools.

CHAPTER 4

Educating for Cultural Coherence

> When you are alone, you are a drop of water. But here with the other Muslim students, you are part of the sea, one of many drops.
>
> A Muslim student in California

In the previous chapter I argued that Muslims in the West are roughly divided into two camps, one that is inclined to accommodate Western cultural and political norms and one that is not. The latter camp is far more likely to see Islam and the West as inveterate foes, one being the abode of belief and the other the abode of unbelief. I argued that most teachers and administrators in Islamic schools in the West appear not to espouse this oppositional dichotomy. Yet, whichever ideological orientation one may speak of, it is fair to say that today all but the most secular Muslims share the feeling that society is increasingly adrift owing to a moral void.

This crisis appears to be especially acute for individuals thought to be products of the modern age. Or perhaps it is simply that the ineluctable rise of capitalism, limitless urbanization, smaller family sizes, greater geographical mobility, and an explosion in information and technology pave the way for a very different world, one that requires flexibility and adjustment. Short of a massive state effort to curtail these freedoms, there can be no reversal of the sociopolitical trends that undo fixed cultural boundaries. Clear identities and purposes, another argument runs, elude today's youth, and fixed standards by which morally responsible choices might be made are eroded to the point of nonrecognition. This has led one author to note, "modern individuals lack a clear identity and purpose in life because they lack cultural coherence" (Levinson 1999, p. 92; cf. Ackerman 1980).

One response to this cultural crisis has been to buttress the crumbling walls of value and belief instantiated in specific cultures. By narrowing the

choices available to a community's members and by reasserting moral truths and reestablishing cultural boundaries, individuals may once again find reassurance and calm amidst the madness of competing claims that perpetuate conflict. If cultural coherence is the key to a manageable range of life purposes, a more lucid personal identity, and well-being, it will be necessary to examine this claim in light of some basic psychological facts about human development and the social modalities that are assumed in relation one's culture. It will also be necessary to assess the philosophical challenges invited by the reassertion of cultural claims.

In the first half of this chapter, I will define culture, albeit briefly, and discuss what it means to form an identity for oneself; this discussion is informed by the developmental psychology of Erik Erikson. Second, I will expound upon the meaning of cultural coherence and determine whether its cultivation and protection is indispensable to healthy human functioning. In the second half of this chapter, I will focus on cultural coherence as an argument advanced by educational philosophers who apply its logic to religious schools. Partly this entails giving consideration to a two-stage learning pedagogy that aims to protect younger children from a fearsome number of choices or options, postponing the time that children will encounter those choices until a later stage of psychological development.

I will also examine several criticisms of cultural coherence, including illiberal and liberal claims vis-à-vis the role of culture in our lives, the internal restrictions imposed on some cultural members—and the adapted preferences that may ensue—and the need to understand cultural identity in a more hybrid sense. Finally, I shall consider whether Muslim students are better served by cultural coherence in Islamic schools, especially in the early grades, to foster better academic outcomes and a stronger sense of self-worth. I will argue that cultural coherence, if not too restrictive, can lay an important foundation for autonomy.[1] Yet while children may be embedded within communities that are intent on passing on particular values, they are not *determined* by these cultures, nor must they be unduly burdened with the identity expectations parents and communities may wish to impose on them.

Defining Culture

Defining culture is no easy matter. Its various meanings and boundaries are disputed, and its significance in the lives of its members remains an open question. Yet we can begin to understand culture through approximate descriptions. Culture relates to people (not animals), and it includes their particular shared history, language, habits, customs, and values. In brief, culture is a way of seeing and believing (Goodenough 1976). Culture is

dynamic; it changes over time and according to place and circumstance. Though culture shapes the thoughts, experiences, meanings, and opportunities its members have available to them, they are not passive recipients of culture, but rather are like actors, shaping and projecting the culture into the future.

And while culture is transmitted from generation to generation—in parts or as a whole—its manifestation in the future may not be recognizable to those in the past. Culture, according to Bhikhu Parekh, is "a historically created system of meaning and significance . . . a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life" (Parekh 2000, 143). To expand upon the role that culture plays in our lives, he adds,

> Our culture gives coherence to our lives, gives us the resources to make sense of the world, stabilizes our personality, and so on. Its values and ideals inspire us, act as our moral compass, and guide us through life; its arts, rituals, songs, stories and literature fill us with joy and add colour and beauty to our lives; and its moral and spiritual wisdom comforts and helps us cope with the inevitable tragedies of life.
>
> (p. 159)

Religion also influences culture. Indeed, culture and religion are often seen as roots of the same tree. Without culture, the conventional wisdom runs, religion has no vehicle through which it might be interpreted; without religion, cultures lack definite shape, even meaning. While it may be fair to say that each imperceptibly influences the other, in what order and to what degree, very few individuals are prepared to say. However, I would argue that it is not only possible to separate religion and culture, but that it is a dangerous reductionism for one not to. While culture usually sustains religion, it can also distort it, and religion can be turned against a culture in the form of self-criticism.[2]

Culture provides the "organizing and legitimating principles" of personal relations and links an individual to various customs, a particular history, or language. Yet, as it concerns coherence, culture may specifically involve a religious orientation in the learning process. Culture provides us with structured boundaries, the absence of which supplies no point of reference for making meaningful decisions. Moreover, culture may also provide a strong foundation for self-esteem and confidence building, enabling children to assert their own ideas with the assurance that the ideas they have formed are, to a degree, reliable and trustworthy. How one relates to members outside of one's culture will largely be delineated by the values, beliefs, and influences promoted within that group.

Forming an Identity

Formulations of identity are fraught with many tensions. For several decades, there has been an antithetical relationship between a universal or essentialist and a social constructivist notion of identity. In the former, cultural content is subordinate to the "natural self," while in the latter, cultural content constitutes identity. The former is sometimes (disparagingly) labeled "Western," which is meant to connote some abstract, decontextualized self, while the latter has come to represent the countervailing position, which situates selves within the collective and posits cultural content as the "essential influence on the patterning of psychological structures and processes" (Miller 1988, p. 280). Neither construct is without its problems, though there has been some oversimplification of both. Notwithstanding the autonomous and transcontextual articulations, critics of Western representations of identity often fail to appreciate the variety of selves revealed in everyday life that "are neither bounded, stable, perduring nor impermeable" (Holland et al. 1998, p. 29). Similarly, despite the encompassing implications of culturalist[3] claims on identity, individuals often are resilient enough to transcend any *inherent* ascription of cultural embeddedness. Agency is seldom entirely suppressed. I will not pursue this discussion further here, nor will I attempt to heal the cleavage between individual and social psychology. It will suffice for me to build upon the following definition of identity:

> Identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations. [Identities must also entail] psychohistorical formations that develop over a person's lifetime, populating intimate terrain and motivating social life. Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them.
>
> (Holland et al. 1998, p. 5)[4]

Taking this characterization as my cue, it is fair to say that devoid of an anchorage to a specific set of norms and goods, young children, in particular, are vulnerable to an impoverished sense of self, including a stunted self-confidence and abiding insecurity. The danger, this argument runs, is that children will grow up unattached to anything of importance, lacking both emotional stability as well as any conviction or commitment to ideals requisite to a vigorous, coherent self.[5]

Identity formation is key to the cultural coherence argument. Possessing a clear and coherent identity does not come about without the aid of exterior influences. An identity is always relational and comparative to others.

Thus while the formation of an identity is key to the development of a healthy sense of self, it is also, in tandem, a defense mechanism if seen against the backdrop of other competing, albeit identity forming, selves. This otherness may manifest itself positively or negatively depending upon the manner in which it is perceived. The more threatening the other appears to us, the more likely we are to frame it negatively (Banks & Banks 2001). This means that the inferences we draw from competing others may result in mere boundaries, or we may find it necessary to erect borders. Either way, it is inevitable that conscious identity formation should lead to comparisons with others, even if these comparisons invariably favor one's own identity.

Identity, for many psychologists, is often defined as a stable and essential core of personality that gives meaning to a person's self-understanding. Knowing who one is translates—with varying degrees of difficulty—into an ability to relate to others. How persons define themselves and come to reflect on their attachments will have everything to do with their being situated in a particular context peopled by others who share a similar set of commitments. Seeing oneself as a person with particular commitments depends on this social arrangement. *Autonomy itself will depend a great deal on a coherent sense of self*. This self will begin with trusting relationships, the cornerstone to a vital personality, and should lead to a trust in others as well as a sense of trustworthiness about oneself (Erikson 1968). Much of this derives from the mother-child bond, in which the earliest sense of identity that involves mutual trust and recognition is to be found. Describing the privileged maternal relationship, Erikson writes,

> This forms the very basis in the child for a component of the sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right," of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become.
>
> (p. 103)

Erikson's stages of human development highlight how self-confidence and a sense of initiative, leading to autonomy and its nourishment, are critical to defining and outlining a person's capacity for psychosocial intimacy and strength. Trust remains the glue, holding together the other attributes yet preceding them. Without this foundational trust, so critical to obviating the crippling effects of guilt and self-doubt, the courage necessary to become an individual possessing a unique identity seems unlikely, if not impossible.

When I speak of identity formation, I am referring to the formation of a coherent sense of self *within* a particular cultural matrix. Identity development

may be stunted by many things, some of them environmental, that is, external, to the child, while others remain stubbornly internal. For example, no amount of proper psychological and social nourishment will prevent (though it may mitigate) all forms of psychosis. Whether a child's culture is undifferentiated or uniform does not concern me here. It is sufficient for my present purposes to refer to a cultural context into which all people are born and in some, perhaps imperceptible, way remain attached to for most of their lives.[6]

Yet, cultural identities do not evolve from pristine cultures completely shorn of foreign elements or without multiple, oftentimes conflicting, attachments. Indeed, the stable and fixed identity so favorable to earlier psychologists is increasingly being challenged by others who argue that our identities, far from being fixed and secure, are constantly unfolding, adopting new meanings and appropriating habits, customs, and beliefs according to contextual need. Indeed, most of us possess hybrid identities that combine, mix, and separate identity components to adapt to different environments (Wardekker & Miedema 2001; Dwyer 1999; Modood & Werbner 1997a).[7] It is cavalier to claim that people with hybridic identities lack historical depth and the resources to make meaningful choices. This is an exercise in denial concerning those whose cultural identities daily overlap between two or more cultures. One's cultural identity need not be of a singular type. Indeed, it may encompass many sources, some of them even in tension with others. Coherence, then, ironically may involve cognitive dissonance, though it is unlikely that it will be disruptive enough to undermine an individual's sense of self, their primary identity. Jeremy Waldron (2003) explains why our identities are complex:

> Most human lives are not led within the confines of a particular culture but are framed and formed both by the movements of people among cultures and by the movements of culture among peoples. Indeed the beginning of wisdom in multicultural education is the rejection of any simple correlation along the lines of "one-person-one culture."
>
> (p. 26)

These hybrid identities reflect the cultures we live in, and we do not so much discard one identity for another so much as we interchange multiple, not entirely consonant, identities. Thus when we speak of education—either in the home, community, or school—it becomes necessary to reinforce a positive identification with others, particularly, but not exclusively, with parents and teachers, with whom one has developed (or will need to develop) rapport and trust.

Cultural Coherence[8]

Cultural coherence points to an important aim in the process of passing on deeply held commitments, values, and beliefs that are necessary for sustaining identity formation and psychological health. Cultural coherence can, and often does, encompass religious identity; either way, it does refer to the shaping of one's identity by a particular group. To speak of cultural coherence, then, is to refer to the shaping of one's identity by a particular group. Coherence with one's group identity denotes the psychological congruity that enables an individual to make sense of the world, relate to others, and make evaluative choices from within a particular conceptual matrix. It attends to the social needs and attachments of children and their emotional dependence on others (Halstead 1995a). Even members of the majority group are restricted in the roles and opportunities that their culture provides for them, though it is not inconceivable that an individual may wish to explore other identities besides those that are readily available.[9]

Cultural coherence is usually framed in one of two ways: either as an extension of a parental right to ensure value continuity or as a pedagogy best suited to ensuring the well-being of the child. Well-being refers to the capacity to identify from the inside with a set of pursuits, habits, or relationships that have intrinsic value. The latter view, in particular, has the raising of self-esteem and self-image among its goals. Sound identity formation, therefore, is crucial to having commitments to a particular community and its shared values and beliefs. Realizing harmony with the basic ideas and beliefs about the world with one's cultural group provides the necessary conditions for making choices for oneself. Cultural coherence suggests a stable context from which to weigh alternatives as one evolves into an agent capable of making one's own decisions in the marketplace of ideas. Cultural coherence does not mean, however, that one must have only one source of commitments, merely that a child's emotional health is enhanced to the extent that her context for choice coheres with her family or community's.

Advocates for cultural coherence are not deceived into believing that cultures are entirely static. Cultures must adapt and change if they are to avoid dying out. Moreover, no culture is undifferentiated or univocal but contains a variety of interpretive strains within it (Geertz 1973). This means that no cultural identity is ever settled or fixed permanently, for new situations and knowledge necessitate an ongoing reevaluation of culture. One could plausibly make the case, then, that cultural coherence is a self-defeating notion. Be that as it may, cultural coherence suggests a conscious attempt to provide the necessary educational supports to ensure continuity with the life-world of

one's parents. How much and for how long this coherence ought to be actively sustained is a matter of considerable dispute.

Coherence and Psychological Development

Cultural coherence advocates sometimes divide a child's learning process and socialization into primary and secondary stages. In the first stage, the form and content of a child's education needs to be consistent with the values espoused by the parents or the community to lay the foundation for what later development holds in store. More precisely, it is necessary that the child internalizes the values, attitudes, narratives, and social roles of one's "significant others" (e.g., parents or other care providers). By identifying with one's community in this way and by seeking to emulate appropriate role models to win recognition and approval, a child "becomes capable of . . . acquiring a subjectively coherent and plausible identity" (Berger & Luckman 1971, pp. 151–52). Of paramount importance is the emotional and social stability of children whose parents may adhere to a set of cultural and religious values that lack endorsement by the society in which they live. While cultural coherence may in one sense apply to *all* families, including those whose values and needs receive widespread approval, it is especially relevant to minority communities, whose specific values and beliefs are more likely to be ignored or even proscribed in certain cultural contexts. For educators, cultural coherence assumes that a learning environment culturally (or religiously) consonant with the parents is more likely to produce healthy learning outcomes for young children and is more likely to foster a firmer sense of self.

Where it concerns religious schooling, the values that are instilled during the early ages are those that should provide the backdrop for a child's entire schooling career. Yet there is also merit to critical thinking at a later stage if, through a series of Kohlbergian exercises, those values previously inculcated and nourished are gradually undermined. If pushed too quickly into having to absorb a conflicting array of societal roles, expectations, and responsibilities, the pupil may discover to his dismay that

> the color of his skin or the background of his parents rather than his wish and will to learn are the factors that decide his worth as a pupil or apprentice [and] the human propensity for feeling unworthy may be fatefully aggravated as a determinant of character development.
>
> (Erikson 1968, p. 124)

This position would represent an extreme form of cultural coherence, one committed to sheltering children from "harmful" influences, that is, those at odds with the parents or community, for the duration of their schooling.[10]

A more expansive view, however, suggests that there ought to be a second pedagogical stage to cultural coherence, one consistent with a development scheme that is sensitive to the cognitive processes of children and adolescents. Adolescents will begin to expand the scope of people in whom they can, indeed ought to, trust. This stage, which will likely focus on the adolescent, will involve developing the capacity for choice in students so that they come to own the ideas and beliefs they possess in a manner they previously had not. Once children are old enough to do this (and the threshold is not clear), these educators will encourage a higher degree of critical thinking about one's own truth claims. One accomplishes this, the argument runs, by exposing the youth to a variety of ways of life, including different cultural and religious norms, so that they may come to respect truth claims other than their own but in the process be more confident about the uniqueness of their own particular commitments. Such an approach will not seek merely to support a solid cognitive and emotional identity through passive reception of ideas, customs, and beliefs. It will invite the student to actively participate and contribute to the story/tradition of which he or she is a part. This will entail an openness to revise one's identity and thus to remain autonomous. On this view, cultural embeddedness is far from restrictive or confining; it merely provides the original context from which others are seen, understood, and appreciated.

The second pedagogical stage remains controversial, even for older children. Many families will not welcome an approach to learning that will promote the critical evaluation of their views in light of alternative traditions and beliefs. This stage, roughly approximating eleven to twelve years through the midteens, is known as the "formal operational period," and during this time children can begin to deal with hypothetical situations, that is, scenarios not inextricably linked to their immediate context or perhaps scenarios that are factually untrue. During the pubescent years, a person's mental apparatus is as sophisticated as it will ever be, though the learning process continues and thought and opinions need careful guidance. These are generalizations, of course, and variables such as maturity, heredity, and individual learning abilities also must be factored in.[11]

Cultural Coherence and Education

Several pedagogical questions need to be asked about cultural coherence. These include: (a) does a culturally coherent education prevent children from considering different conceptions of the good, that is, does it encourage students to take a critical distance from their inherited values and beliefs; (b) if so, does an education that endeavors to protect students from competing cultural norms adequately prepare students for life in a pluralist society, that is, does it foster the civic virtue of tolerance; (c) finally, does

comprehensive cultural or religious education adequately prepare students for the skills necessary for economic self-sufficiency? Many liberals, view sectarian cultural propensities as autonomy-inhibiting, thus weakening the capacity to be rationally self-governing. Liberals view children as separate agents from their parents, and to discourage having one's beliefs challenged either directly or simply by exposure to other beliefs is seen at best as a questionable imposition onto separate individuals and, at worse, coercive. Those who argue for cultural coherence, however, see this approach to education as fundamentally in the child's best interest, thus contributing to well-being and as autonomy enhancing.

Advocates argue in favor of cultural coherence—at least in the early years of schooling—to preclude epistemological conflict with the life-world of the parents. In so doing, continuity is ensured with the values expressed and promoted at home. Many religious parents who desire to educate their children in this way see secular society as a corrupting influence, a sort of nemesis, to be avoided. Indeed, the values that many religious parents associate with secular society are believed to be a calculated assault on the piety of the God-fearing individual. Where it concerns the parents' culture, it need not in the strict sense be manifestly different from the general culture. Nevertheless, each of the following is derived either from the parents, or from a combination of the parents and the society in which one lives: a sense of self, a notion of right and wrong, and a conception of the good to which those indicators correspond. Influences ranging from the media, popular culture, and public education with its commitment to value pluralism, combine to strengthen the resolve of some parents to educate their children according to their personal beliefs.

The litmus case is the child of the immigrant. Children raised in the cultural environment of their parents are usually taught to abide by cultural norms manifestly different from those outside the home and thus face an uninviting dilemma. If they conform to the cultural expectations of the parents to the exclusion of—or in opposition to—those of the surrounding culture they risk a pared down assortment of opportunities. However, conformity with the exterior culture often leads to alienation from the culture of the home. How might this tension be assuaged?

Many educational philosophers have marshaled strong arguments for a culturally coherent primary school education (de Jong & Snik 2002; Spinner-Halev 2000; Halstead 1995a, 2003). Coherence advocates argue that children's primary identities need to be respected and any disruption of a child's psychological equilibrium avoided. The idea is that children need to be educated in a learning environment where the basic cultural or religious values are consonant with those of their parents and the communities

to which they are attached. This often takes the form of separate schooling, usually but not always of a religious orientation, and, in the United States, is increasingly achieved through homeschooling.

Proponents for religious schooling point out that the freedom to educate children in an environment that fosters cultural coherence will shelter them from the pressure to conform to norms outside the school walls that are alien to the parent culture. Whether it is the need to pray at noontime meals, abide by specific culinary requirements, or examine scientific theories from a particular religious point of view, advocates for culturally coherent schooling seek to minimize the stress that children may otherwise experience if all students do not follow the same rules and share the same ideals (Mustafa 1999). The inescapable reality the dominant cultural ethos imposes upon less dominant cultures is believed to justify the kinds of sheltering one often finds in religious schools.[12] Beyond these familiar reasons, however, there is a concern not just for greater academic performance and less peer pressure resulting from coeducational academic settings. There is also concern for cultivating a sense of belonging, solidarity, and a firm sense of self, so that upon entering education beyond one's early years, one will have a strong foundation on which to build and relate to other views. This leads some to say that socialization into a comprehensive way of life is perfectly justifiable "because of the sort of person one is," which is to say, the sort of cultural background that parents or guardians provide and that one willingly or unwillingly adopts. A culturally coherent socialization, thus, is believed to produce healthier psychological outcomes for children.

Shelley Burtt avers that children encumbered by unchosen obligations and commitments are in possession of the resources necessary for independent thought about those identities. The good life, she says, can take many forms, and this includes different parenting styles. While civic competence and exposure to other ways of life counts for a great deal, Burtt believes that children principally need a moral and sentimental education, one that "provides the material and psychological resources that allow for a full and flourishing human life" (Burtt 1996, p. 428). Cultural coherence is a strength on Burtt's view because children, particularly at a younger age, will flourish with consistent moral messages that they will require for being able to choose, and eventually live, a good life as an adult. She considers an education for autonomy as the capacity to live well according to the norms and customs of one's group. She writes,

> Remaking our world into one in which all children are encouraged to cast all of their commitments as selected on the basis of personal preference does

> not seem to me either necessary for their autonomy or possible given certain fundamental facts about what it means to be human . . . Like Sandel, I believe it is independently a good thing to see ourselves as encumbered by unchosen attachments and loyalties.
>
> (Burtt 2003, p. 193)

Burtt asserts that the capacity for critical reflection is necessary even for those whose ideological boundaries are determined by accepted canons. But she believes that this requirement can be met by religious schooling provided that "certain minimum standards of educational achievement are met," a basic civic capacity is cultivated, and parents' motivations are in the right direction. Cultural coherence, on Burtt's view, is also justifiable principally because parents want what is best for their children and because children's psychological interests are best served in this way, since they are "irrevocably constituted" as culturally embedded individuals. The very fact that their way of life falls well outside the mainstream will, she purports, suffice to encourage critical reflection on one's basic beliefs. This happens because most parents will be unable to shield their children from Western culture's "largely secular, highly commercialized mass culture." One does not need to experience empathy with alternate understandings of the good life to cultivate autonomy.

It is clearly the children's best interests that she has in mind, but Burtt knows that her argument can be misinterpreted. Precisely because of widespread abuse and neglect, she readily admits that even with good intentions, parents are capable of "profoundly misdirecting a child's ambitions and understanding" (2003, p. 181). Yet, Burtt believes that even where religious schooling is concerned, most parents are not "disenabling a child's ultimate choices," because evidence can be adduced showing that some do in fact defect from their communities. She decries any attempts to exploit her proposals as an excuse for parents to fashion an education that "severely compromises children's emotional, material, or cognitive needs or that fails to provide them with the skills and dispositions necessary for democratic citizenship" (1996, p. 433). Predictably, there is a lot of wiggle room in this caveat.

Burtt does convincingly argue, however, that an education for cultural coherence is likely to provide (a) moral courage, (b) character pluralism, and (c) the capacity to identify with a particular version of the good "from the inside." The first concerns the capacity to resist pressures for conformity, especially of the consumerist sort; the second concerns the recognition that some individuals—owing to "different needs, characters, gifts and abilities"—may not find the good life of another to be particularly compel-

ling. The third item concerns the necessity of identifying with a specific way of life in such a fashion that it feels right to the individual espousing it. When this identification does not exist, some other opportunity to live the good life must be made available. Here Burtt assumes that the ability to exit a community is available to those who are so inclined but does not concern herself with the *manner* in which many people are forced to leave. Also the harm principle, in Burtt's view, apparently does not extend to *psychological* harm.

Nevertheless, Burtt does not miss the crucial question. She asks whether those who have received an education for cultural coherence are endowed with the "emotional and cognitive tools necessary to distance themselves sufficiently from their familial or societal educations to ask, 'Are the principles by which I have been raised just? Is this a way of life worthy of human commitment in the first place?'" (2003, p. 196). Burtt responds that we have reason to believe that children who are

> taught to question the justice of the existing social order from the point of view of their parents' religious commitments possess the capacity, in theory at least, to direct that critical sensibility against the principles by which they were taught to live. Any way of life will in practice fall short of at least some of its expressed ideals. It is perhaps in the space opened up by this disjunction that those raised to embrace comprehensive visions of the good life will find the room to reflect on the justice of their own ideals.
>
> (p. 196)

One can only hope that she is right here, though it is perhaps in ascertaining the nuances of *servility* to a set of comprehensive goods that the danger of an education for cultural coherence lies.[13] Further, the extent to which servility results from a set of internal restrictions, which make exit difficult, needs to be taken very seriously. I return to this later.

To summarize the educational aims of cultural coherence, the following three points emerge: first, people need to identify with a particular notion of the good and possess the attendant capacity to pursue it. Second, unless choices are kept to a manageable level, there will be insufficient coherence, which is necessary in shaping identity and fueling agency. Third, without an adequate level of coherence, no clear standard emerges by which their decisions may be evaluated. To elevate choice over a person's need for circumscribed boundaries is to ignore a person's need for limited guidance, a resource necessary in providing psychological coherence. While it may be true that older children possess the capacity to glean insights from alternate cultural views and appreciate the propositional complexity of moral choice

seen from multiple perspectives, it is commonly assumed that younger children lack the cognitive capacity and emotional maturity to make wise and sensible choices without reasonable limitations on the choices made available to them.

Some assume that public schools will pull up the slack and "naturally and simultaneously help children achieve a sense of cultural membership" (Levinson 1999, p. 55). Other liberals will argue that where parents desire it, early elementary education can be a close approximation of the home culture. Eamonn Callan (1997) explains,

> Separate schooling of limited duration, created for the sake of separate education, may be one useful way of creating the developmental antecedents of the mature liberal virtues . . . the early years of schooling may be a crucial stage in securing a deeply felt understanding of what [the parents'] way of life means. From the standpoint of the state, the experiences that separate schooling furnishes will lay the groundwork for the political virtues by cultivating their psychological precursors; and given the close and mutually reinforcing relation between the values of the family and the ethos of the separate school, it may even be a more solid groundwork than common schools could typically provide.
>
> (p. 181)

In Callan's view, cultural coherence acts as a kind of developmental antecedent to one's ability to both understand the life options that are available as well as to choose from among them. Being situated in a specific context also delimits the range of choices available to an individual who otherwise might despair over the sheer volume of possibilities. Limitless choices may paralyze, even undermine a person's capacity to function autonomously, and this has serious repercussions for psychological health. Therefore, it is necessary to speak of an "enabling restraint" (Spinner-Halev 2000, p. 61) on options available.

If an education for cultural coherence requires that a certain degree of willful consent to prescribed norms and critical reflection on one's beliefs be present, that is, what some have called minimal autonomy (Reich 2002) and others nonservility (Callan 1997), then we have a level of autonomy with which most culturalists can be comfortable. On the other hand, if stronger versions of autonomy are put forward, requiring that *all* espoused beliefs and values be held up to critical reflection and that *all* other available ways of life be carefully considered,[14] we have an unfeasible standard that few will attain, and possibly not even wish to. Just how incompatible are cultural attachments and autonomy? In what follows, I consider two formulated responses to this question.

Culture and the Individual: An Illiberal Perspective

Avishai Margalit and Moshe Halbertal argue that a "right to culture" must entail the following: (a) the right to maintain a comprehensive way of life within the larger society without interference, save for the limitation of harm principle; (b) the right to be recognized in the broader society; (c) finally, the right to culture includes support—fiscal support is strongly implied—by state institutions so that the culture can thrive. One's ability to claim group rights depends entirely on one's identification with his or her group, a collective entity, but group rights will also involve the "right to secure one's personality identity." It is not freedom that matters for Margalit and Halbertal (as it does, for example, for Will Kymlicka), but *identity.* An inherited culture provides the way of life from which its members draw nourishment, and this way of life is attributable to the group and not to individuals. A right to culture, therefore, entails a right to identify with a particular group and a corresponding right to secure a personal identity. They write,

> [The] right to culture and to the privileges needed to protect it exists not only in cases where the culture is in danger of disappearing entirely. It is also applicable when it would be difficult for the minority group to maintain specific aspects of its culture without these privileges, or when it would have to spend a disproportionate amount of resources to preserve its culture.
>
> (Margalit & Halbertal 1994, p. 506)

Apart from the two rights mentioned above, the right to culture also entails the right to receive support from the state in preserving a culture and in enabling it to flourish. This has implications for children and schooling, of course, including not only the right to have subjects that pertain to a minority group's culture, but also language and religious instruction to preserve that culture. These requirements cannot be extended to those outside the cultural context, but neither can the rules of the greater society infringe upon the laws that govern culturally specific groups. This is not to say that government laws may not usurp or override when there are civil laws that apply to all citizens equally. Hence, the prohibition against theft and murder are not jettisoned because some cultural groups (improbably) may value these activities.[15]

Margalit and Halbertal do not seem unsettled by protective services that will favor groups rather than their members. The provisions they call for also will most certainly lead to the fiscal and resource support for practices that, in some cases, are unequivocally harmful to children within these communities. In other words, the "right to culture" arguments—those that argue that one's culture, first and foremost, is determinative of one's

very identity—pose a series of troubling challenges to those who might only consider the parent-child or the parent-child-state relationship as germane to their considerations. (I will take up these considerations in Chapter 5.)

Because culturalists insist that cultures provide the moral nourishment and social resources necessary for well-being, the protection of cultural identity is crucial. Because one's ability to flourish, one's ability to actively pursue a particular conception of the good life is completely dependent on the culture of one's parents or community, it is sometimes necessary to place demands upon the state. These demands seek protection for the rights of minority cultures, living in the midst of a dominant culture, by asking for protection and fiscal support. Margalit and Halbertal assert, correctly I think, that liberal "neutrality" serves the majority culture.[16] Yet, as the next section will show, there are reasons to offer protections for individual members of cultural groups, and not the groups themselves.[17]

Culture and the Individual: A Liberal Perspective

For Will Kymlicka, cultural membership is a primary good, for culture provides us with our identity, facilitates trust between ourselves and others, is conducive to intergenerational bonds, and promotes overall well-being. Indeed, culture is the "context for choice" and provides the range of options available to us (Kymlicka 1989). Cultural identity constitutes something absolutely central to the personality and its protection is "basic and primary." Personal freedom (including freedom of association, expression, and conscience) and self-respect result from one's cultural affiliation; for Kymlicka, they are indissolubly linked. Bereft of one's cultural membership, personal agency and development seem unalterably destabilized. Culture, institutionally instantiated in schools, media, and government, provides its members with a "full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres" (Kymlicka 1995, p. 76). Without clear cultural or social affiliations, no true freedom exists; however, it is an individual's cultural context that provides the means of comparison. However, one must also be able to change one's view should one choose to; freedom and social affiliation, then, are complementary and interdependent.

For Kymlicka, it is not the culture or a set of group rights that need protection, but solely the individual's right to a specific cultural context. He distinguishes between different rights to culture and argues—concerning "territorial" or aboriginal (e.g., Mauri, Huron, Mayan) minorities—that they possess rights to government protection and positive discrimination in

order that the group's interests not be swallowed up by the majority culture. A liberal theory of equality, he maintains, demands that this is so. Further down the hierarchy are minorities with strong but not absolute claims owing to a long history of discrimination and marginalization, while at the bottom he addresses immigrant groups who he claims, rather inexplicably, have no comparable right to their native culture and must learn to adapt or assimilate (Kymlicka 1995).[18]

Few will deny that an unequal playing field exists between the majority and minority groups in Western societies, and many are prepared to support programs invested in reversing patterns of systematic discrimination. Kymlicka joins the refrain: "special political rights are needed to remove inequalities in the context of choice which arise before people even make their choices" (Kymlicka 1989, p. 190). He is not sufficiently clear concerning what "privileges to the minority" means except to say that certain "polyethnic rights" may be necessary to protect cultures disadvantaged by the existing legislation. How this will play out will invariably be complicated (as Margalit and Halbertal show with their case study of ultra-Orthodox Jews and Israeli Arabs). Kymlicka thus concerns himself with cultural survival *as a means to facilitating autonomy*, but two problems remain. First, he fails to recognize the extent to which state involvement in cultural preservation will unavoidably favor one reading of that culture, usually the current expression promoted by its leaders, and thus a static view of culture. Not only is this inherently coercive, but as Harry Brighouse observes,

> Government aid . . . if it is to be effective, [has] to be guided by some picture of how the culture is or should be. If government aid is forthcoming to some minority culture it will inevitably affect the development of the culture. Usually the effects will be conservative.[19]

Second, Kymlicka does not appear to prioritize an education that will prepare children to survive *outside* that culture as much as (or, in addition to) living within it. He is, however, prepared to promote measures that may ease the difficult transition for those whose culture is in rapid decline. Either way, the stress here is unmistakably on the welfare of the *individual*.[20]

Kymlicka goes to great lengths to defend culture, not in itself but insofar as it (a) firms up our identities and bestows a sense of belonging, and (b) enhances personal agency and development, situating individuals in a framework within which one makes moral choices (1995, p. 83). He is in earnest to defend the equality of *all* cultures—whether majority or minority—and this may involve special external protections necessary to avert cultural

implosion. However, his liberal theory of minority rights will insist that members of cultures not have internal restrictions imposed upon them; that is, they must have the basic freedoms necessary to leave their cultures or to revise their views if they are so inclined. So while Kymlicka is prepared to defend culture as central to a person's well-being, he nevertheless makes very explicit his objection to communitarianism, that is, a "prerational ordering of the self" anchored in a particular culture, tradition, or conceptual idiom. Defending the liberal position, he writes,

> If we wish to defend individual freedom of conscience, and not just group tolerance, we must reject the communitarian idea that people's ends are fixed and beyond rational revision. We must endorse the traditional liberal belief in personal autonomy.
>
> (1995, p. 163)

Most culturalists will strongly object to Kymlicka's unremitting stress on the centrality of autonomy (rather than well-being), the interiorization of morality (rather than a communally based understanding), and his insistence that a person's views should (or even can) be open to revision.[21]

Some believe that the absence of "cohesion and consecutiveness" (Walzer 1990, p. 9) unavoidably leads to a condition of moral uncertainty. Yet it is dubious whether certain groups of people are uniquely suited for certain traditional ways of life. Culture thus becomes a concealment, a much invoked protection against the encroachment of a democratic society that imperfectly seeks to promote equality of the sexes, education for all, and fair equality of opportunity. By ascribing cultural necessity to nonmajority cultures, we are guilty of a double standard that would have us commit great harm in the name of charity (Wikan 2002). This is because we attribute to ourselves a level of autonomy and rational, critical reflection we seldom do to "them." Brian Barry (2001) notes,

> A great deal of paternalism is embedded in the assumption that while "we" can survive change and innovation and endure the tensions created by modernity, "they" cannot; that "we" can repeatedly reinvent ourselves, our culture, our tradition, while "they" must adhere to known cultural patterns.
>
> (p. 241)

Culturalists are correct to say that each of us unconsciously acquires from our cultural communities bodily gestures, inhibitions, traits of temperament, effortless communication, and a "body of sentiments and memories." In other words, each of us is socialized into a particular mode of being. However, it does not follow that we are indelibly marked by it or even that

we have internalized it.[22] I would also not contest the view that well-being is enhanced on account of the traits within one's inherited community. However, it would be unwise to assume that these habits, for many people, are anything more than expedient behaviors that facilitate familiar social intercourse. There is no doubt that one *does* share a sense of common identity with others by virtue of a measure of sameness that colors their experiences in culturally distinctive ways. Even so, it may be a very thin identification indeed. In societies where experiences are manifold, options seemingly endless, and issues dauntingly complex, narrowly circumscribed cultural norms seem inept to grasp the manner in which millions of people define themselves and negotiate moral choices by *relativizing* their cultural norms. Most importantly, it is imperative that one distinguishes between individuals who embrace or reject their cultural values and those on whom these elements are *imposed* (Merry 2005c).[23]

Culture and Children

There is no segment of the population on whom cultural elements are more often imposed than children. Should children either fail to identify closely with the life that their parents espouse, or even choose to leave, there is equally the need to adequately equip them to encounter views besides those of their parents if they are to lead autonomous lives. An education solely for cultural coherence will not do. Opponents claim that exposure to cultures other than one's parents' will lead to a weaker core identity, but this is far from obvious. This can partly be explained because cultures evolve and people are adaptable. Indeed, there is as much of an argument to be made for helping folks to transition from one cultural identity to another as there is for a school (or, a government) to attempt to preserve a culture artificially. More importantly, even if it could be supposed that children were in some sense entitled to be raised in their own culture, no argument could be made for their being raised *exclusively* within the culture of their parents. Brighouse (2000) opines,

> Children do not have a culture. Ensuring that children are being raised exclusively in the culture of their parents is not granting them their right to their own culture because they do not have their own culture. To suggest that they do is to suggest that they are the kinds of things that can evaluate and assess the options available to them, which they are not. [Even] if they are raised in their parents' culture there is no guarantee that that will be their culture in adulthood, so for those children who quit we shall have failed to prepare them if we allow them to be raised exclusively in their parents' culture.
>
> (p. 101)

On this view, what is essential is that the children receive the kind of education that allows them to quit their parents' culture should they want to. This is not a realistic possibility for those who have little opportunity to be exposed to other ways of life. Those who argue that members of particular groups enjoy the "freedom of association" overlook the basic fact that children "do not enjoy even a formal right of exit from the associations into which they were born" (Dwyer 1998, p. 107). Consequently, claims for special cultural rights or protections typically enjoy little, if any, favor among liberals who look askance at collective prerogatives that pay little attention to a community's weaker members.[24]

Age-appropriate arguments, on the other hand, have a great deal of merit, but it is less convincing to argue that children need to be protected from exposure to ideas other than those of their parents. Living in a pluralist society makes complete sheltering impossible to begin with, and it is unrealistic to assume that children will be protected from this exposure. The inescapable influences of popular culture, purveyed through the media and the hidden curriculum (not excluding children taken out of the public school system and placed in religious schools) will exert considerable influence on a child's thinking. No amount of moralizing will suffice to counter these influences. But there is another reason why age-appropriate psychology must not be applied too literally. Given the remarkable dissimilarity of one child from the next, it would seem highly presumptuous to apply a "one size fits all" approach to an educational model committed to facilitating autonomous selves.

I will not dispute the claim that different children demonstrate varying levels of understanding. Still, there is also no reason to believe that learning about how others live and understanding different culturally specific notions of the good will threaten a child's ability to remain firmly ensconced within his or her culture or to remain committed to its core values. Indeed, regular contact with others whose cultural identities are markedly different may even enhance one's allegiance to a culturally coherent set of values and norms. According to Levinson (1999),

> It can be argued, in fact, that being in a school that teaches respect for other traditions may actually *strengthen* children's commitments to their own traditions. When a student sees other students learning respect for his way of life, he feels proud and learns to see his culture as something worthy of respect. Also, in contrasting his own traditions with others', he learns what is distinctive and noteworthy about his own.
>
> (p. 95)

Growing up within a tradition that provides a coherent framework for understanding the world and for engaging with different views means that

an individual possesses an important *comparative* basis for relating to others. This understanding will grow and expand provided authentic exposure to other views is a genuine option. For some, however, a comparative basis is readily available as a result of a culturally hybrid identity.

Summary

Culturalists often accuse liberals of flattening differences and diversity so that certain common civic virtues may prevail. Indeed, the extent to which certain liberals emphasize the need for self-criticism, mutual reciprocity, and tolerance of all views practically to the exclusion of other, equally important, resources such as religious and cultural traditions and values raise legitimate concerns. One also increasingly hears that liberal values such as autonomy, rationality, and freedom are not reducible to a single standard unconnected to specific contexts. Universal values must depend in some sense on local circumstances if they are to retain "their relevance, meaning and effectiveness." Michael Walzer (1990) puts it this way:

> In a liberal society, as in every other society, people are born into very important sorts of groups, born with identities, male or female, for example, working class, Catholic or Jewish, black, democrat, and so on. Many of their subsequent associations (like their subsequent careers) merely express these underlying identities, which, again, are not so much chosen as enacted.
>
> (p. 15)

The self exists within highly specific "webs of interlocution" (Taylor 1989, p. 36) and emerges from amidst "patterns of relationships and communities of meaning" (Taylor 1990, p. 10). The self's behavior, thus, can be largely explained by the "variable context of interpersonal relations, social norms and reciprocal patterns of expectations" (Spiecker et al. 2004).

So if culturalists stand accused either of a deterministic view of culture, or of sacrificing the child's future interests to an unreflective loyalty to the parents' culture, liberals are frequently charged with fascist-like "atomization," that is, stripping the individual of his or her culture to embrace civic responsibilities and autonomous self-criticism. Both of these characterizations are exaggerated. Both are interested to acknowledge the cultural embeddedness of individuals and do not stand opposed to autonomy per se. Rather they seek to situate critical self-reflection and evaluative judgments within a person's cultural context.

Culturalists insist, perhaps to an inordinate degree, that cultures are *constitutive* of who we are, for cultures not only locate us according to particular

contexts, they affect us deeply and irrevocably to the point of structuring and shaping our very personalities and providing the content of our identities. Even so, culturalists recognize that there is also a universal sense in which people are defined; this universal sense appeals to a code of human rights that can be derived from intercultural exchange, and which seeks to build consensus through mutual respect and understanding (Parekh 2000). This approach is placed opposite what many (e.g., postcolonialists and group rights theorists) believe is an intolerant unilateralism of imposed values endemic to liberalism. This leads culturalists to emphatically deny liberals the right to impose their views on illiberal minorities. They would prefer to see dialogue used as a way to reach respectful compromises. While autonomy, a central liberal value, is an important component to the life worthily lived, culturalists would prefer to speak of well-being, and this, of course, is obtainable from nonautonomous life experiences. Culturalists are also likely to object to the liberal concern that one be able to revise one's cultural allegiances. Indeed, owing to the profound contribution that culture plays in the lives of its members, one's loyalty to it, except in cases where abuse or neglect is overriding, is expected.

Where it is necessary to criticize cultures, culturalists frequently claim that this can usually be done *from the inside*. The internal resources necessary to challenge the prejudices within one's culture are possible because cultures have no "essence" but contain different strands of thought. (On this point, however, there is much contention.) In every cultural tradition, reformers have engaged in a hermeneutical struggle by highlighting those elements that have historically been marginalized or suppressed. Yet because humans are incorrigibly prone to misjudgment, partiality, and bias, authoritarian power structures frequently remain in place, which thwart any attempts to question misapplications of cultural norms from the inside. The resources needed to properly evaluate cultures, then, must surpass the moral compass internal to cultural communities. But liberal universal values, too, must also be "interpreted, adjusted to local circumstances, and related to the moral and cultural structure of the society concerned. In short, contextualized if they are to carry conviction" (Parekh 2000, p. 293).

Liberals, for their part, do not believe that to be autonomous, individuals ought to be denuded of all commitments and loyalties, nor do they believe that they should be exposed to *every* option possibly available to them. However, neither do liberals believe that cultural identity explains in toto an individual's options, nor does culture necessarily provide the sole or even the dominant understanding of the good life. The practices, habits, beliefs, and traditions that give substance to cultures for many people provide only a part of an individual's identity (Rorty 1994). Liberals are also

concerned with group-based identities and stress the importance of identifying "from the inside" with one's habits, opinions, and judgments. What this means is that one's commitments and loyalties, while they may constitute a person's core identity, must ultimately involve willful assent. This entails an autonomous freedom to choose how one will live, irrespective of the values and concerns of the parents or community into which one is born. Furthermore, it means that one's commitments and loyalties, including a loyalty to one's inherited culture, be open to critical evaluation and possible revision. Finally, autonomy entails a realistic option to exit one's community if desired. This right need not entail individuals being raised *outside* of cultural or religious communities. Adequate information vis-à-vis alternate perspectives may come about by living as a minority in a prominently secular and highly materialist culture (Brighouse 1998a). Because the prevailing values of a secular culture permeate all cultural and religious communities in liberal democracies, it is reasonable to expect that, to some degree, many children will grow up only to defect from communities bent on remaining separate.

Internal Restrictions and Adapted Preferences

Earlier I stated the culturalist claim that the resources necessary to criticize culture typically come from the inside. Still, we might ask whether the appropriate internal critical resources can truly be summoned on pains of bodily harm, shunning, or death. In addition, in many cultural traditions reformers are constrained to draw upon religious texts to challenge the power structures. If the rights to interpret religious texts rest with the clergy or its equivalent elite, prospects for authentic challenge are severely inadequate. Culturalists are correct to underscore the multifacetedness of every culture, but this does little to console those who are unable to challenge community leaders who claim the right to define cultural norms for all members (See Merry 2005b).

Most worrying, perhaps, is the fact that many communities exercise internal restrictions on some of their members, including a denial of the right to exit their community. *Real* freedom to choose an exit from a community or its value system requires that adequate information be provided concerning alternate ways of interpreting the reality one faces. However, the difficulties with exiting a community are admittedly complex, as Leslie Green (1995) makes abundantly clear:

> It is risky, wrenching, and disorienting to have to tear oneself from one's religion or culture; the fact that it is possible to do so does not suffice to

> show that those who do not manage to achieve the task have stayed voluntarily, at least not in any sense strong enough to undercut any rights they might otherwise have.
>
> (p. 266)

Susan Moller Okin furthers the critique of culturalist claims: those who invoke a right to culture usually do so at the expense of women and girls who occupy a patently lower status within many communities. She argues that cultures are not only highly differentiated, they are also gendered. Furthermore, she notes, group rights theorists pay little attention to the private sphere, where a great deal of internal constraint in the form of discrimination and abuse occurs (Okin 1998, 1999). Hence, to the plea that cultures need special protection, Okin (1998) replies,

> While a number of factors would have to be taken into account in assessing the situation, [minorities] *may* be much better off, from a liberal point of view, if the culture into which they were born were either gradually to become extinct (as its members became integrated into the surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged and supported to substantially alter itself so as to reinforce the equality, rather than the inequality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture.
>
> (p. 680)

To insist, as culturalists often do, that liberals are in no position to assert moral truths where they pertain to the codes of conduct delineated by various cultures, is to court the worst kind of moral relativism, one callous to the injustices perpetrated within cultures whose survival depends in some measure on group rights and protection.[25]

Given the uninviting alternatives open to many cultural minorities in their social context(s), it is hardly surprising that so many have adapted their preferences to suit their unfortunate circumstances. Culture bestows upon many of its members a deeply embedded emotional inhibitedness. This can prevent individuals from realizing their potential if restrictive norms hold sway. Environmental impediments may render autonomy ineffective when poverty, violence, and social decay in America's inner cities (or *les banlieus* in Europe), together with economic instability and mental distress, operate in ways that impede the use of any autonomy-enhanced skills one may have acquired. The poor and afflicted, in particular, adjust their desires and aspirations to more feasible goals and make "defeatist compromises" with harsh reality (Sen 1992). Though it entails gross mistreatment, permanent subordination, and even cruelty, many are fundamentally unable to see their situation as deserving of improvement. Owing

to unjust social arrangements, many suffer neglect, mistreatment, and injustice precisely *because* of their cultural membership. What they wish for, then, may not be in their best interests but they wish for it anyway because their desires, that is, their preferences, are tethered by pitiless circumstances.[26]

What remains unclear, however, is whether it is ever appropriate to *impose* freedoms on those who may appear to be shackled by custom, traditional practice, and prejudice. In other words, it is unclear whether liberals are ever justified in attempting to change the minds of those whose honest belief it is to persist in habits that *they* find intrinsically oppressive. The challenge of adapted preferences, as it bears on education, runs something like this: affect and desire in individuals can be shaped such that even if autonomy-facilitating education were to come along and work its magic, it will not be able to undo the results of the original process.[27] Undoubtedly where some harmful practices take place (e.g., various indoctrinatory practices), one has compelling reasons to intervene with information, reasoned debate, and even just legislation. But allowing freedoms that may lead to mistaken choices continues to be a vexing problem for liberalism. An equally vexing problem is the allowance for multiple interpretations of well-being according to culturally circumscribed norms.

Muslim Identity and Islamic Schooling

Islam does not play a central role in the lives of a large percentage of the individuals with a Muslim background living in Western societies (Ramadan 1999; Pulcini 1995; Haddad & Lummis 1987). Many have the same material pursuits as other, nonreligious individuals. Others attach only minimal importance to their Islamic faith, preferring instead to participate in ethnically based voluntary associations. Many Muslim parents identify with Islam only in a cultural/folk sense; for them, Islam is not about dogmas and submission to the decrees of the imam. Being Muslim has more to do with cultural customs and values that were honored in their countries of origin but which have largely disappeared since immigrating to the West.[28]

Even most Muslims in the United States who do assume an Islamic identity do not attend a mosque (Haddad & Lummis 1987; Smith 1999). Islam is seen as part of one's cultural heritage, but becoming a devout Muslim is far from these parents' minds.[29] Yahiya Emerick (1999) describes this thinking with chagrin:

> The children are rejecting the ethnic culture of their parents and adopting the American culture they experience everyday. The mother and father want their child to be like them: eating kabobs, wearing a *shalwar* or *jilbab*, speaking

> Urdu or Arabic and identifying with the customs and ways of the old country with respect to marriage, family structure and social interaction. Who cares that the kid's not praying or wearing *hijab*? They're not Pakistani or Indian or Arab anymore!

Naturally, most Muslim parents want their children to learn their language and enjoy their ethnic foods and dance, et cetera, but Islamic schools are seen by many of these same parents to be divisive and unhelpful for children that need to find acceptance in a society in which they are seen as different.

While there will always be some traffic between the collective Muslim identity—the *ummāh*—and the individual self, it is never entirely clear which precedes the other, or, for that matter, which aspect of the *ummāh* one wishes to accentuate at the expense of other aspects. There is certainly no consensus among Muslims concerning an Islamic identity; Sunni and Shi'a divides persist, as do different interpretive schools relative to the *shari'āh*. Tensions and distrust prevail between the Wahhabi and Sufi communities, and one increasingly hears the word "unbeliever" (*kufr*) directed against other Muslims (Khan 1998). Similarly, Old World political concerns (e.g., Kashmir, Palestine, Lebanon) govern the concerns of a large percentage of Muslim immigrants. A unified front of Muslims, though no such thing actually exists, appears only to manifest itself in relation to non-Muslims, though much of this—witness the Rushdie affair—is media generated (Noakes 1998). As it concerns Muslim identity, then, it might be fair to say, in the words of Mohommed Muqtedar Khan, that the process of "reproducing collective identity involves the constitution of the individual self [though in] reproducing an Islamic community, the individual also produces the Muslim personality" (Khan 1998, p. 87).

Islamic schools, many believe, are a strategic catalyst for marking Muslim identity. Islamic schools are more likely, after all, to service parents who identify as Muslims first, ethnicity often comes second, and Dutch, Belgian, or American nationality third. In the Netherlands, surveys have shown that nearly 100 percent of the Muslim parents identify first as Muslims, and very few consider their children as belonging to the wider Dutch society (Driessen & Bezemer 1999; Driessen & Valkenberg 2000; Driessen & Merry 2006). My interviews with principals, teachers, and former students in Islamic schools in the American Midwest revealed similar findings. Muslim identity in Islamic schools typically comes first, particularly when discrimination and stereotyping of Muslims appears to be widespread. Transnational or transethnic identities located in the *ummāh* are increasingly appealing for young Muslims for whom hybridity is an uninviting alternative. "Transnationalist religious formulations," Garbi Schmidt writes, "are [a] means to fight cognitive dissonance,

social isolation, and impotence" (2002, p. 120). Torn between two worlds, that is, cultural norms and expectations derived from one's parents, as well as the host culture to which many young people feel singularly attached, a number of Muslim youth (especially boys) are finding Islam to be a viable identity that transplants compromised attachments and, in both European and American inner cities, societal rejection.

When asked about primary identities, Islamic schoolteachers typically report that Islam does not stress national identity and therefore Islam becomes the meta-identity an Islamic school strives for. Islamic schools also help Muslim pupils to feel more at home, thus contributing to the overall well-being and academic achievement of children (Mustafa 1999; Hewitt 1996). Yet this portrait of the Islamic school—and therefore student—identity is somewhat idealized. It is not entirely clear, after all, what is meant by an Islamic identity. Does wearing a *hijāb* make one more of a Muslim than not wearing one? Do repeated phrases of faith—"if God wills" (*insha'Allah*) and "thanks be to God" (*al-Hamdullilah*)—make one more a Muslim than those who do not repeat these phrases? What of those who do not tithe, fast, or pray? These are questions with no ready answers. Akeel Bilgrami (1992, p. 824) notes that even devout Muslims negotiate their commitment to Islam on a variety of fronts as one among several competing values.

If Islamic schools are absent of a coherent Islamic studies program, including a clear plan of moral guidance, the ethnic or nationalist identity is likely to prevail. Thus, a school with a large Palestinian student body is more likely to lean in its orientation to Palestinian cultural or political concerns. Those schools heavily populated by Indo-Pakistanis, Somalis, or Iranians are similarly inclined to regard their own ethnic and nationalist issues as paramount. Islam, therefore, is mediated through an ethnic or nationalist expression, and Old World nationalities and loyalties are often reproduced in the West, even in Islamic schools. Children who are an ethnic minority (e.g., African American, Latino, Sudanese) are likely to feel excluded from the cultural coherence that Islamic schools purport to provide. It is true that a crisis that targets Muslims is generally likely to unite where there previously was little unity, but in the absence of such tangible threats, a unified Islamic identity is uncertain.

A strong sense of identity that has established roots and finds support in a much broader community (for Muslim children this would be the *ummāh* or community of believers) can be a wonderful resource for combating prejudice, stereotyping, and maltreatment. However, this resource can be—though it need not be—a two-edged sword. This is because the inspiration that provides children with the psychological resources necessary to resist harassment may *also* be rooted in tribalism. For example, within the

Islamic community itself there is considerable fragmentation and clannishness (D'Agostino 2003; Khan 1998) that may only disguise itself when Muslims interface with non-Muslims. Still, while the fostering of intolerance remains a distinct possibility, it does not appear to be the case in most Islamic schools in Western societies. There one typically finds either (a) the humble recognition that Muslims occupy a starkly secondary status in Western society, (b) the understanding that liberal pluralism allows for the flourishing of multiple Muslim identities (Malik 2001; Ramadan 1999), or finally, (c) that others may believe as they do; what matters is how individuals treat one another.

Because most Muslims living in the West struggle to some degree with societal pressures to conform and assimilate on the one hand, and stand apart from the crowd on the other, there is often a fair amount of cognitive and emotional conflict (Barazangi 1988, pp. 50–51). There may be a variety of circumstantial or emotional factors, but whatever the reasons or set of influences, the degree to which one's identity is affirmed both inside and outside the Islamic school, cultural—and thus psychological—coherence may or may not ensue, regardless of the concerted aims of the school. If bridging the worlds between the Islamic school—which in any case may not be able to successfully or consistently supply a culturally coherent environment—and the surrounding society proves too great a feat, cultural and psychological *dissonance* may ensue. The fostering of an American, Belgian, or Dutch Muslim identity will go a great distance in removing the temptation to cast Muslims and Western society in adversarial terms. The promise to come is to be found in the second and third generations of Muslim children living in Western societies. Foreign policies toward Islamic countries and media depictions of Muslims will make forging these identities a daunting task, yet already one sees a political mobilization (through organizations such as CAIR) that is beginning to challenge stereotypes and discrimination.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that an education for cultural coherence can encourage students to consider different conceptions of the good and that it is capable of encouraging students to take a critical distance from their inherited values and beliefs. I have also argued that an education for cultural coherence is not decisively in conflict with the aims of liberal education. Yet, because of the diversity and complexity of culture, the notion of coherence is too problematic to be an entirely lucid position. If nothing else, Muslim identity is too diffuse, too complex to yield any singular notion. It is accurate to say that the very idea of an Islamic identity

"is ideal in its construction [and] is both acontextual and ahistorical" (Khan 1998, p. 89; cf. Bilgrami 1992). Khan continues:

> Muslims today can show a complex amalgamation of identities, with some exaggerated and others muted. This muting of some sources of identity and emphasis on others involves a political process of drawing boundaries.
>
> (p. 89)

Notwithstanding these internal tensions, in my discussion on the two-stage learning theory, I have argued that an education for cultural coherence—as it is defined by its advocates—is defensible at least through the primary grades. That is not to say that cultural coherence during the early grades is without its problems and blind spots—recall that culture, rather than stable and fixed, is dynamic and unfolding—but in light of the real gains to be had for a large number of cultural and religious minorities, the conceptual difficulties (e.g., essentialist articulations) may not be overriding (See Merry & New 2008).

Some might still wish to argue that an education for cultural coherence moves us away from autonomy and rational thinking, or that one is far less likely to learn tolerance of others if day-to-day contact with genuine difference is systematically denied. Further, some insist that cultural coherence invites coercive action on the part of the parents/community. These are legitimate concerns, but autonomy and rational thinking, while they are to be valued, must be seen against the backdrop of a greater good, one that is connected to the lives of people. In some of Europe's largest cities, for instance, Muslim communities comprise a significant portion of the poorest population. It is not an untenable goal, nor is it incompatible with liberal educational ideals, to inculcate values that affirm them in a Muslim identity *provided that these values are not inalterably opposed to the society of which they are a part.*[30] As for the claim that tolerance of difference is less likely to come about in culturally or religiously homogeneous schools, this remains an uncorroborated assertion. Certainly not all education for cultural coherence is averse to exposing its students to opposing points of view. Indeed, the liberal goals of autonomy may very well be congenial to at least some of the aims of religious education.

The case for cultural coherence, on my account, involves an education that recognizes the influence of specific cultures on the ways in which each of us learns and exercises freedom. But an education for cultural coherence, particularly when there is strong parental support and a well-structured, value-coherent atmosphere, appears to contribute significantly to strong learning outcomes and a basic civic capacity. This, by any fair estimate,

is a reasonable expectation of any school. But if, in addition, cultural coherence strengthens our sense of well-being by granting one the wherewithal to make respectable choices and to reflect upon one's commitments while considering the claims of others, a very strong case for cultural coherence has indeed been made.

Where an education for cultural coherence *should* give us pause concerns the manner in which certain minorities—particularly women and children—within minority groups receive treatment inferior to those who hold positions of power. I have tried to address this difficult theme by discussing internal restrictions and adapted preferences, recognizing that many individuals, ostensibly, *willingly* choose to lead a nonautonomous life. This is a murky area to be sure, but there will always be those who do not identify, from the inside, with the culture given to them.[31]

I began this chapter by highlighting an identity crisis that many believe results from a world raging with an overwhelming number of choices and life options. I have argued that there is no substantive reason to conclude that fear and anomie have supplanted former verities. The disappearance of earlier institutions merely gives rise to new ones, likewise with identities. We may lament the loss of previous cultural anchors, but surely our adjustment to an ever-changing social order is healthier and needed. Cultural identities for millions are already hybridic by default, and for millions more by choice. Today's rising numbers of immigrants, mixed marriages, a sharp rise in social and political mobility, and even global consumerism ensure this. These fluid identities, and the well-being many of them portend, provide us with the means of autonomously reflecting upon our commitments and absorbing new ones, even when they conflict. The same will be true of Muslims being educated in Islamic schools in the West. No amount of totalizing education can prevent other influences from coming in.

I have argued that an education for cultural coherence is able to satisfy the demands of liberal education because of its ability to satisfy the requirements of individual well-being. Well-being and autonomy are not inevitably incompatible aims. To wit, if autonomy, in some piecemeal form, entails the capacity to identify from the inside with a set of beliefs, values, and norms, then an education for cultural coherence that has the well-being of children as its central aim, is likely to satisfy the other conditions of autonomy upon which liberals insist. It would appear that Islamic schools are in the business of shaping core identities with a view to engendering moral courage. Owing to the minority status of Muslims in Western society, this moral courage is extremely likely (though not guaranteed) to lead to some degree of critical distance from one's inherited beliefs by virtue of the inescapable differences one encounters in a society Muslim educators

deem unsubmissive to the Divine will. This daily encounter with difference, in particular, secular, materialistic difference, is very likely (though again not guaranteed) to encourage critical reflection on personal ideas and convictions. Critical reflection of this sort is likely to be of a higher degree than that of many cosmopolitan individuals for whom *principled* encounters with difference are often incoherent and irrelevant. Perhaps most importantly, an education for cultural coherence may very well provide people with a vantage point from which to critique a culture of mass conformity, consumerism, and materialism; it also may provide one with an efficacious moral foundation from which one draws strength in countering social injustice.

While embedded to varying degrees in at least the culture of one of our parents, each of us is nevertheless capable of adapting to a new set of circumstances and carving out modified, if not altogether new, identities. Most individual identities are already "defined through many collective affinities and through many narratives" (Benhabib 2002, p. 16). This will also be true, perhaps paradoxically, of the student educated in an Islamic school. This is because an education for cultural coherence is not to be confused with brainwashing and the stuff of cults, as we inhabit a world where "global civilizational encounters" are no longer a thing of the future. Human cultures, far from seamless wholes that neatly distinguish themselves from one another, are "constant creations, re-creations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between 'we' and the 'others'" (p. 8). Certainly each of the Islamic schools I visited appeared to take account of hybridic identities and actively foster dual allegiances: one to the host society, and one to the *ummāh* (which in any event includes the context in which one is living).

While this discussion has highlighted the various ways in which culture may enhance or impede a person's autonomy and well-being, I wish to turn my attention now to the role that parents play. Parents enjoy certain prerogatives to raise their children as they think best, though decisions they make may enhance or hinder their child's well-being. The outcome will largely depend on how sensitive they are to both the immediate and future interests of their children.

CHAPTER 5

The Well-Being of Children and the Limits of Paternalism

> We maintain that it is more fundamental to produce a good man than to produce a good citizen, for the good man will no doubt also be a good citizen, but the good citizen will not necessarily also be a good man.
>
> Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas

In Chapter 4 I argued for the developmental, cultural, and social needs of Muslim children. Now I will endeavor to wed those needs to the attendant duties and prerogatives of Muslim parents to educate their children as they deem appropriate, without transgressing on the children's immediate or future interests. This point needs underscoring, especially in light of the fact that so many children in Islamic schools are children of immigrants. Later in this chapter, I will examine why Muslim parents place their children in Islamic schools, as well as how they participate in their children's education. Chief among these parents' aims is the provision of a total Islamic environment for their children's education, including the reinforcements necessary for a strong cultural identity. What makes Muslim parents arguably unique in the discussions surrounding parents and religious schools—be they Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant—is their recent immigrant status (though as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, the socioeconomic status of Muslims is on the whole strikingly different between Europe and North America).

In Chapter 4, I linked parental motivations to a psychology of cultural coherence. I argued that a positive sense of self, which is derived from an education seeking to buttress the home environment, enhances self-esteem and learning outcomes. I also suggested that while many Muslim parents are keen to guard their children from secular ideas that are inimical to the Islamic faith, an education with a decidedly Islamic frame of reference need not stymie the critical thinking process. I will argue that Muslim parents are justified

in educating their children in Islamic schools with the proviso that in so doing they attend to both the immediate and future interests of the child. It is my empirical conjecture that (a) Islamic schools are capable of promoting the kind of learning (and learning environment) that speaks to these interests, and (b) Islamic schools are sufficiently capable of cultivating civic virtue.

In this chapter, I want to focus more directly on the tensions between the interests of the parents and those of the child. Because in recent years many political philosophers have addressed this discussion, in one form or another, it may seem redundant or unnecessary to revisit these arguments here. Yet the case of Muslims in Western societies—and the Islamic schools to which some are attached—has given particular importance to the following: (a) Muslims are clearly the largest visible minority in Western Europe and a growing political presence; (b) increasingly, Muslim intellectuals are likely to be writing from Western perspectives, especially from the United States; (c) with only a few exceptions,[1] Islamic schools comprise recent immigrants.[2]

I will proceed as follows. First I will examine the basis for rights claims for children, noting that children's rights are of a different sort than those pertaining to adults. I will argue that children have an interest in their own well-being. Again, by well-being I mean the capacity to identify "from the inside" with a set of pursuits, habits, or relationships that have inherent worth to the relevant individual. Second, I will examine the interests of parents and consider where the limits of paternalism lie. By paternalism, I mean interference in the freedom of children with a view to promoting their welfare. For the purposes of my argument, I will take it as a given that parents have strong and defensible—though not limitless and unchecked—prerogatives to make educational decisions on behalf of their children and their children's welfare. Except in the most extreme—and rare—instances of children's rights advocacy, there is typically wide latitude given to the discretionary choices parents make for their own children. Moreover, many people assume that parents are uniquely endowed with the ability to promote their children's well-being. I will challenge some of these claims.

Third, I will outline the interests of the state as it touches upon the civic education of children, particularly as they may push against the interests of the parents. However, I will show that there is bound to be controversy on the matter of civic education (following Amy Gutmann) concerning the content of the "civic minimum" and whether the aims of civic education are being dictated by the state or by those, such as William Galston, who argue that it ought to be left to parents to decide what the precise content of an education for citizenship entails.[3] I will closely examine the tensions that inevitably arise amidst such competing aims. Fourth, I will examine the motivations and concerns that Muslim parents have in selecting Islamic

schools. I will insist, in accordance with the benefits of cultural coherence I examined in Chapter 4, that Muslim parents, like other parents, must be seen as the primary duty-bearers of their children's education, but that children, with the help of the state, must, within reason, have their interests and prerogatives safeguarded.

Narrowing the Discussion

There are many extreme and untenable (not to mention, unpopular) variants to child-centered, parent-centered, and state-centered views. Rather than get bogged down in a lengthy discussion concerning views endorsed by a tiny minority, I will briefly set out a version of each and then focus on more compelling and difficult claims.

First, I shall put aside child liberationist views that claim to promote the autonomy of children in ways that circumvent or render extraneous the wisdom or moral guidance of adults. This is because no practical means for implementing such views have been demonstrated, and because others have shown, decisively in my view, that child-liberationist views are implausible on the grounds that most children lack the cognitive acuity to make wise decisions and assume full responsibility for their choices. Moreover, the line of argument in favor of children's rights generally has been shown to be untenably opposed to the best interests of children and deaf to their emotional and intellectual immaturity (Schapiro 2003; Brighouse 2003; Brennan & Noggle 1997; Purdy 1992).

Some variants of this position argue, provocatively, for children to have exactly the same rights and freedoms that adults have (Cohen 1980). It is a short step from there to argue against the prerogatives of adults to direct the education of children altogether. Children, in this view, are to "find" their own learning according their individual proclivities and pursue only those interests that appeal to them. The idea that children ought to be accorded special rights in this sense—exemplified best in the educational philosophy of A.S. Neill (1960)—has not proven a reliable one, in part because even those who appear to give children wide latitude in making decisions, nevertheless determine the scope of choices they make available to them as children.

Second, I will categorically discard the idea that biology confers the right to raise children, let alone to do so however one wishes to. This is the implicit idea in Loren Lomasky's well-known claim:

> Producing children makes them one's own. That is so whether or not conception of the child was desired or intended. No other individuals stand toward

> it in the same causal relation as the parents. The good of the child may be recognized by anyone as calling out for some appropriate response, but that there exists any good-for-the-child at all is the parents' responsibility.
>
> (1987, p. 167)

While the biological relationship is important given the conventional meaning that cultures typically ascribe to it, Lomasky's claim seems to imply that children are the parents' property, or at least implies a means to ensure "a claim to long-term significance."[4] Indeed, his view of parenting suggests a level of parental entitlement that does not recognize any claims outside of what the family deems relevant to its immediate concerns. Hence there would seem to be precious little room for the rights of children beyond the principle of harm and neglect. Indeed, such a conception of parents' rights allows for almost uncontested presumptive rights concerning the manner in which children are brought up and the values that they come to embrace, including, in some cases, indoctrination or not valuing education beyond a certain minimal threshold. Yet given the amount of available evidence of poor parenting, including cases involving abuse and neglect, biological determinacy is simply too weak an argument for why parents ought to have primary responsibility and care.

I will also put aside the corresponding argument that the family is the ultimate source of intimacy, or that children represent the "expressive significance" of the self-regarding interests that parents have. Both understandings express a profound identification with one's child; indeed, in either of these views, the interests of parents and children derive singularly from their "bonds of recognition" among those who regard well-being as a legitimate concern. It is in families that these bonds begin and are evinced with particular clarity, though the love and intimacy entailed in this relationship is, contra Lomasky, emphatically *moral* and not biological (Swift 2003, pp. 9–20; Archard 2002, p. 151; Fried 1978, p. 152). Indeed, from the point of view of the child, just which adult one might cultivate an intimate relationship with seems perfectly arbitrary.

Third, apart from the salutary role the state may play in the lives of children, I will reject any claim that says the state reserves the right to *impose* any all-encompassing educational norms onto children. Moreover, the state, with its homogenizing tendencies, is likely, in some cases, to promote interests in direct conflict with the more particular interests of some parents. Of course none of this means that the state is absolutely forbidden to interfere. The state already reserves the right to intervene on a child's behalf in cases involving harm or neglect. And, as I will argue in Chapter 6, given the sorts of failings many parents and the schools they choose have, state oversight is quite

warranted. Yet whatever the failings of parents, they are *generally* much better placed to know what their child's needs are and are better disposed, certainly if there is adequate information and the means (e.g., mobility and income), to choose from among a range of options, and decide on the child's behalf.[5]

Rights, Duties, and Interests

One may speak of different kinds of rights, of course, and some come attached with duties and responsibilities, as seen *minimally* in the case of a national citizen, who must obey laws and avoid improperly interfering with the freedoms and property of others, or *maximally* in the case of a physician, who must perform certain functions competently or else face being be stripped of the right to perform those duties. Taking the former case, while in some countries citizens are required to vote or perform jury duty, these are still only minimal requirements imposed on those who otherwise enjoy the benefits of citizenship. In the latter case, however, one enjoys the rights that attach to the title they bear, though those rights are highly contingent on the relative success with which certain duties are performed. Other kinds of rights, however, have no comparable duties and responsibilities attached. One does not expect a child to perform duties for the local community, to, say, guard against robbery or drug trafficking in the same way that can be expected of competent adults (for that matter, no reasonable person expects someone suffering from Alzheimer's to perform comparable duties and responsibilities). Thus it is necessary to make distinctions that clarify what one means when invoking language relating to rights.

One important distinction speaks directly to this. Amartya Sen (1992) contrasts *agency* rights with *welfare* rights. Agency rights involve choices that are crucial to their meaning and application of these rights. One may not be able to control the environment in which choices are made (e.g., I may choose to pursue horticulture over masonry while at the same time be unable to determine the abundance of work available to me within either domain, let alone the availability of other vocational pursuits). Nevertheless, one is still capable of authoring decisions and directing, within reason, the outcome of those choices. Welfare rights, on the other hand, are those that are owed to individuals (and no less to children) irrespective of their capacity to choose them. These include shelter, food, protection from harm, and basic nurturing. They apply to people everywhere, equally, regardless of one's capacity to assume matching responsibilities. Hence welfare rights will seek to protect people on the basis of their status qua people and as such will not discriminate according to ability.[6] Because young children are not deemed competent choosers of their own welfare, they are in need of adult supervision,

guidance, and help.[7] Though they possess the volition and perhaps a healthy amount of reason, young children[8] are not competent choosers of their own welfare and are heavily dependent upon the care that adults (but especially parents) provide them. Generally speaking, before a certain age, they have not developed the capacity to weigh the pros and cons of decisions in the same way as adults. Nor have most been fitted with the survival skills necessary to fend for themselves. Children, therefore, cannot be rights-bearing agents in the sense of being fully responsible for their choices and actions.

The Interests of Children

Owing to their profound dependence and vulnerability, children require the care of adults, and in most cases this care contributes to their well-being. Though well-being will mean different things to different people, according to time, place, and circumstance, it suffices to say that it requires a general capacity to identify "from the inside" with a set of activities that have inherent value to those engaged in them. Such a capacity also requires that individuals be autonomous in the relevant sense. So in order for well-being to have some meaningful import, it requires that children have an interest in developing a capacity for autonomy quite *independent of* their immediate or future preferences. This is not to ignore the fact that all children (as well as adults) have nonrational and thus nonautonomous loyalties and commitments, but even these loyalties and commitments can contribute to autonomy when the individual reflects on them with a sufficient amount of critical attention.[9]

In what follows, I will operate on the a priori assumption that children must be seen as ends in themselves in the Kantian sense of noninstrumentality. This means that individuals are ultimately entitled to determine the course of their own life, that is, *no one*, parents included, has the *right* to do so but the individuals themselves. Yet because "childhood is a liminal stage during which a person is still on the way to constituting herself as a source of activity in the normative sense" (Schapiro 2002, p. 19), children cannot have rights and responsibilities attributed to them in the same way as adults owing to their underdeveloped maturity and reasoning capacities. In other words, they cannot be held fully responsible for their choices and actions in the same way that we attribute responsibility to grown individuals.

To be an agent in the Kantian sense, people are *ultimately* responsible for their thoughts, words, and actions. This type of agency assumes a level of self-governance that would make children their own final authority, an authority to whom every word and deed is attributable. Because children are incapable of the type of agency I have just described, a strong case for paternalism may be made. Indeed, sometimes adults may best demonstrate

their concern for young children by *denying* various choices or activities to them.[10] Tamar Schapiro (2003) expresses the idea this way:

> The conception of childhood necessary to justify paternalism [is] one according to which the condition of childhood undermines attributability in the normative sense. The claim needs to be that although children cause their actions, they are not yet in a position to authorize them.
>
> (p. 590)

It must be stressed that these are generalizations and not hard and fast absolutes. As such, these comments pass muster only insofar as we rely upon typical cases. Obviously there are some precocious, even astonishingly resourceful, children who are capable of reflecting upon decisions and their foreseeable consequences. Perhaps less surprisingly, many adults appear not to have developed mature reasoning characteristics, including the ability to act according to their best interests. Nevertheless, democratic societies hold adults accountable for their choices and actions in ways that comparably capable children are not. No matter how self-reliant children show themselves to be, few will consider them competent to handle their own affairs, let alone be fully responsible for their own decisions in the same way that we expect of adults.

All of this has obvious implications for parenting but also education. No fair-minded parents can afford to ignore the immediate and future interest of their children in developing and maturing in ways conducive to living well in a multicultural, highly competitive, and complex society. Nevertheless, concerning what weight ought to be given to children and their interests, independent of the parents' life projects and prerogatives, it seems reasonable to say that their preferences ought to be considered if not actively solicited. The preferences of children, in other words, while not authoritative, are nevertheless to be taken seriously. That is, their preferences must carry consultative weight. Indeed, their thoughts and feelings cannot justifiably be discounted in making decisions that affect their place of dwelling, choice of school, or type of extracurricular activity. Parents interested in taking seriously the wishes or preferences of their children cannot, for instance, ignore the preference of a child to play a racquet sport over music lessons. Neither can such parents dismiss the preference of a child to identify in ways that are noticeably different from those the family or cultural community endorses. Obviously the older children are, the more the consultative weight that should be given to their preferences.

Yet in younger children, there are considerable reasons for parents' interests to be favored over the immediate preferences of children given the underdeveloped reasoning capacities in children, which fail to protect or promote

their best interests.[11] In fact, many young children's desires and preferences have decidedly harmful consequences. To give one example: children who are exposed (typically because of parental laxity) to substantial amounts of television or video games develop appetites for products that they certainly do not need; it is also possible, if not likely, that these children will incur considerable harm to their psychosocial development. Of course this is equally true of adults. Many adults uncritically imbibe consumerist habits and develop an appetite for products that do little to enhance their autonomy. In many instances, these appetites turn to destructive addictions.

For instance, a startling number of adults gamble away their money, bringing ruin on their families. Liberal societies make provisions for the liberty of individuals beyond a certain age to carry out decisions that bring harm upon themselves. However, liberal societies do not make provisions for the *right* to do so in every case. Societies, such as the United States, appear to condone the liberty *and* the right of individuals to become obese, even as public officials express alarm at the sharp rise in obesity in the populace. Yet no sanctions have been imposed against parents who promote poor eating habits or model for their children an indifference to nutrition and exercise. Valiant efforts are made to counter the unhealthy trends in American diets (despite the poor nutritional value of most school lunch programs) or to prevent suicide and gambling addictions, but the public seems reluctant to deny adult individuals the right to harm themselves. In other areas, however, freedoms do not translate into rights, particularly where they involve harm to others. Hence many adults, though licensed to drive, choose to do so recklessly, imperiling the lives of others. In such instances the state reserves the right to revoke driving privileges. In other areas, however, welfare concerns are clearly inconsistent and only parsimoniously enforced. While state interference is not paternalistic in the strict sense, the point is that freedom is not boundless even for autonomous adults. Restrictions of freedom may be warranted, and in many cases compliance may, in fact, be obligatory.

It is perhaps an enduring irony, then, that liberals give such enormous attention to the place of religious schooling in discussions involving the prerogative of some parents to instill in their children a highly specific set of ideas or beliefs. Given the alternatives one might choose to instill in one's children, an abiding concern, say, for fashionable clothing or stock market savvy, the promotion of a God-fearing life or an education that endeavors to cohere with specific cultural values (e.g., intellectual and material modesty) seems an admirable alternative. Even the inculcation of highly specific moral principles seems preferable to the kind of unreflective moral relativism that one commonly encounters among many young people.

Of course, as I argued in Chapter 4, one will want to give heed to the restrictive practices in certain school and home environments that work against personal well-being and discourage equal opportunities for children. Sometimes these opportunities are denied on the basis of gender or sexual orientation or because the cultural or religious community doesn't value marketable skills that would make it possible for individuals to successfully exit the community or choose a particular career path. Hence, the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable approaches to sectarian education will need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. One may even expect that certain practices and beliefs that are cloaked by culture and religion will need to be disallowed, especially if the state is to play a more prominent role, as it clearly does in a number of European countries (more on this in Chapter 6). However, given the reactive impulses that dominate the thought patterns of younger children, it seems right to argue that parents are bound to honor and protect children's interests, viz., their welfare rights and the capacity to become autonomous, though not necessarily their choices. This is because welfare rights protect people on the basis of their status qua persons and as such will not discriminate according to their capacity to make informed decisions.

The Interests of Parents and the Limits of Paternalism

Though I previously put aside several parent-centered views, we cannot discount parental prerogatives so easily, nor should we. Owing to (a) the dependence and vulnerability of young children, and (b) the mutual sharing of benefits that takes place between parents and their children, parents enjoy considerable oversight in the decisions governing their children's lives. Parents (again, biological parentage is unimportant) are positioned to their children in ways few others are,[12] and highly specific duties and responsibilities toward them—within reasonable psychological and material means—usually apply. This is because children primarily have *needs*, and those needs are very likely to be satisfied most fully in the parent-child relationship. (This is so notwithstanding the fact that children enjoy separate rights as *individuals*.) Indeed, the benefits of intimacy and nurture that accrue to children cannot possibly be rivaled by the nonintimate structures of the state. This is because parents are usually better placed to know what their children need; hence, they are able to attend to those needs with a level of effectiveness that impersonal government institutions cannot. Indeed, on the whole parents are more disposed to be deeply concerned for the well-being of their children, and most seek to provide the conditions necessary for their normal development. In other words, the special relationship existing

between parents and their children, perhaps because there is unconditional love, can usually be assumed.

In light of this, it is reasonable to think that the interests of many children and their parents may not conflict. Indeed, many proponents of parental rights argue that children's interests dovetail those of their parents precisely because children, by virtue of the nurturing they receive and the intimacy that the family provides, take up the concerns and aspirations of the parents to a significant degree. Still, this does not warrant a claim for the unqualified rights of parents. Though young children and parents typically operate according to a fiduciary relationship, it in no way entails property rights over children or the *unconditional* right to perpetuate one's beliefs into the next generation. Indeed, unquestioned parental prerogatives unduly restrict the chances that individuals will come to own their opinions, perspectives, and beliefs in a fashion that is uncoerced by the parents. Parents are certainly not free to harm their children, neither are they free to withhold the medical or psychological treatment a child's condition may demand. Nor are parents free to engender servility in their children, forming automata whose sovereignty is forcefully undermined.[13]

That is all fine. But how will we decide which views are likely to engender servility? As it concerns the upbringing and education children receive, should certain "unreasonable" or "intolerant" views be permitted? After all, the parent-child relationship is not above liberal principles; on the contrary, it provides a reasonable framework from within which liberal principles can operate. Robert Noggle (2002) adds,

> The most practical and efficient way of ensuring that children develop value systems is to allow parents to instill their own value systems (and the world-views that support them). In a free and pluralistic society it would be morally problematic—and probably wildly ineffective—to force parents to teach and advocate worldviews and value systems to which they themselves do not subscribe.
>
> (p. 113)

That said, Noggle does not hesitate to add that "morally indecent value systems or world-views" are repugnant in the sense that they militate against a child being able to flourish in a pluralistic environment. The obvious difficulty with his view, however, is that it will be a matter of grave dispute to determine just what counts as "morally indecent." Who will decide, and by what criteria, whether a set of values and beliefs is acceptable or not? Indeed, his characterization of certain views as "morally indecent" may run afoul of the canonized opinions of several prominent religions. If, for example,

a religious belief or culture evinces an abiding intolerance toward homosexuals, female career advancement, or even the liberal democratic state itself, Noggle's view may not admit of allowing parental rights in fashioning the beliefs of their own children. Extending that parental prerogative beyond the home and into the school where equally few available alternate views are likely to be on display might even be decidedly *wrong* in Noggle's view.

Nonetheless, I am sympathetic to Noggle's view and have already argued that the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable forms of paternalism (including the types of schooling parents choose) will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, it is hugely controversial to claim that children, if undeservedly beholden to the interests of their parents, will lack the capacity to take a critical view of the ideas and convictions handed down to them (see Merry 2005d). First, it is unclear what will count as "unreasonable" to most people. Second, children raised in arguably narrow educational frameworks are still capable of developing moral courage, character pluralism (i.e., the recognition that others will have different beliefs about the good), and the capacity to identify with a particular version of the good from the inside (Burtt 2003). Finally, there are strong reasons to believe that children will come to possess some measurable sum of tolerance toward others with differing views. Most communities in liberal societies are quite demonstrably permeated by the dominant secular milieu; hence, only the most remotely situated families and communities will be able to resist a high degree of permeability, including substantial defections.[14] All of this may grant parents a great deal of leeway in directing the type of upbringing children receive. But what does it say about the ostensible limits of paternalism?

Paternalism ceases to be good for children when it jettisons those qualities that make its exercise legitimate. In liberal theory the promotion of a desirable good (e.g., autonomy, economic self-reliance) is considered legitimate on the understanding that the consent of those whose welfare it affects is procured. Yet, the procurable consent of young children is stubbornly elusive. Because children do not typically consent to the conditions that allow for adult prerogative in making decisions on their behalf, it is necessary to speak of their best *interests*. Yet, because the interests of children are both culturally and contextually specific, one faces considerable difficulty in knowing what those interests are, who should decide them, how they should be executed, and for how long. In Chapter 4, I highlighted the tensions that arise when parents and schools argue for an education that promotes cultural coherence. Yet whatever advantages result from culturally coherent schooling, no unequivocal case can be made for its benefits to students. No matter how the outcome is decided, most liberals will insist that limited parental authority coupled with an education to facilitate rational autonomy

is necessary to limit both the influence of families and their idiosyncratic values and those of the state, both of which potentially interfere with the well-being of children and may misconceive, willfully or otherwise, what their best interests are.

Yet parents must represent not only the children who exist today but also the mostly unknown future individuals who those children will become and the moral community which they can be expected to join. Therefore, any expression of paternalism that demonstrates little concern for the child as a separate agent, an evolving self, is indefensible and must be repudiated. Parental prerogatives cannot be *assumed*; they apply only to those adults who are morally sensitive to protecting their children's interests. The interests of the child will guide these moral sensitivities. The authority that a parent has over a child is in no way carte blanche and does not possess the same authoritative finality as most decisions that affect oneself. In other words, parental authority may not go unchecked. Indeed it must comply with strict rules that govern that authority, specific to particular contexts. Thus in soliciting the relevant views of children in whose care morally charged adults operate, the paternalistic agents will not be guided merely by their own interests. Indeed, there are reasons to replace parental entitlements with child-rearing *privileges* that are limited in scope and consistent with children's temporary interests (Montague 2000; Dwyer 1998). Rather than parents being allowed to speak on behalf of their children, the well-being of the children—and not the rights of parents—ought to be decisive in matters bearing upon their life options, including the type of education they will receive. Children may come to identify very closely with the concerns and projects of their parents; no one could fault them for doing do. As children develop into independent moral selves, they acquire the capacity to see their interests and projects as persisting through time. Parents will need to be sensitive to those present interests in light of prospective future interests.

To summarize, parents are justified in promoting the interests of children as it seems best to the parents so long as children's future interests—which may not coincide with the parents' interests—are borne in mind. Parents cannot be relied upon in every instance to guide their children in ways that enhance well-being; thus, as Rob Reich (2002) suggests, all children "need to grow into adults who possess a baseline set of social, emotional, and intellectual competencies that enable them to navigate and participate in the familiar social and economic institutions of society" (p. 153). Yet owing to a justifiable type of partiality, one that is defined by a particular relationship that expresses special responsibilities, obligations, and an equally strong sense of loyalty reified in voluntary actions[15] (Scheffler 1997; Oldenquist 1982), most parents can be expected to exercise a fair measure of self-sacrifice in

attending to children's needs. As for the children themselves, though strongly influenced by the interests of their parents, their preferences and interests are typically unstable, fluctuating considerably over short periods of time (Blustein 1982, p. 124). Whatever duties or responsibilities children may have, they are usually postponed for some future time when full ownership of choices can be assumed. This is because children are generally lacking in certain aspects of moral agency, including the capacity for a sense of justice and a conception of the good. On this understanding of children's moral status, a fair degree of paternalism seems justifiable and is consistent with the two-stage learning theory I discussed in the previous chapter.

Education and the Interests of the State

As I argued in Chapter 1, an education that fosters civic engagement in relation to the public good is high on the list of priorities for many liberals. Indeed, the liberal democratic state will want its citizenry to be an informed and engaged public. The state is also better served knowing that its citizens are capable of interacting with fellow citizens in a spirit of fairness and tolerance. To best serve that aim, proponents of civic education are likely to come down on the side of public schools for reasons that Laura Purdy (1992) explains,

> Universal, compulsory education is our best bet for making sure that everybody is exposed to the perspectives, knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary for dealing with values. Ideally, the public education system would do such a good job that there would be no market or need for private schools or home teaching.
>
> (p. 157)

Liberals have long assumed that public schools in Anglophone countries are uniquely qualified to promote civic virtues and skills. This is so, the argument runs, owing to the distinctive raison d'être of public schools, viz., to make accessible and available—albeit unevenly in qualitative terms—educational opportunity to all, irrespective of social class, gender, race, or ethnicity.

According to Amy Gutmann (1995), civic education includes cultivating the capacity to "evaluate different political perspectives that are often associated with different ways of life" (p. 577). This is best achieved by educating all children to "appreciate the public value of toleration" and by teaching citizens to "respect each other's basic rights and opportunities" (p. 559). By teaching mutual respect for individual differences, Gutmann believes that public schools—uniquely endowed with the moral capital provided by the

political value of pluralism—can "aid students in understanding and evaluating both the political choices available to them as citizens and the various lives that are potentially accessible to them as individuals" (p. 563; cf. 1987, p. 33). Having acquired mutual respect, citizens with very different ideas of the good life are better able to successfully deliberate in deciding matters that affect their common future. Moreover, respect is necessary to avert discriminatory behavior toward those with whom one does not agree.

Where there might be concern over a loss of cultural or religious identity, Gutmann argues that educating for a "liberal political citizenship" will pull up the slack and offer children an alternative cultural membership. While "good citizenship" does not *require* individuality or autonomy,[16] it may be welcomed "even over the opposition of [one's] parents" (1995, p. 567). Gutmann elucidates her view further:

> Civic education teaches children the virtues and skills necessary to deliberate about politically relevant issues but not about any other domains of life. The political liberal argues that to teach children to deliberate about other domains of life is sectarian precisely because it is not a prerequisite for sharing political sovereignty on fair terms.
>
> (1995, p. 573)

And elsewhere:

> However students have been socialized outside of school, there should be room within school for them to develop the capacity to discuss and defend their political commitments with people who do not share them . . . Schools that fail to cultivate this capacity do not foster democratic virtue even when their students demonstrate the highest degree of political trust, efficacy, and knowledge.
>
> (1987, p. 107)

How does Gutmann balance the interests of the parents with the interests of their children? For starters, the future, if not the immediate, interests of children must be considered. And while most parents provide the "essential goods" for their children, that is, shelter, food, clothing, nurturing, at least insofar as they are available, parents also have a duty to "permit, if not to prepare, their children to choose among a range of conceptions of the good life that differ substantially from those held by the family" (1980, p. 342). That is to say, parents must do a great deal more than merely satisfy basic paternalistic requirements.[17]

Gutmann is right to caution her reader against a naive embrace of parents' rights. Far too many dangers reside in unquestioned parental prerogatives, she says, to relinquish all decision making to their lights and basic

intuitions, particularly when prejudice of one sort of another is often actively *taught* to children. Children are separate individuals with distinct futures and volitions, and these must be safeguarded against unseemly coercion. Children's basic interests trump any parental aim to thwart them, for parents "cannot be counted upon to equip their children with the intellectual skills necessary for rational deliberation" (Gutmann 1987, p. 29). Therefore, children's interests must include a compulsory education that enables them to become rational human beings, individuals capable of personal and political choices, and "full citizen[s] of a liberal democratic society" (1980, p. 349). A democratic education cannot be neutral in the values it espouses; it must "challenge the propriety of some claims and distinctions." Indeed, it must include the active attempt to cultivate moral character, even if this entails "constraining the range of lives that children are capable of choosing when they mature" (1987, p. 37).

Such a robust conception of civic education implies that the state ought to frame the educational context in such a way that parents will be more likely to make well-informed and wise choices on behalf of their children. Naturally this will require considerable oversight, yet ascertaining the limits of that oversight in political contexts that value pluralism is no easy matter. Indeed, notwithstanding a broad endorsement of an education for civic-mindedness, many believe that decisions concerning one's preparedness for civic engagement ought to be left to the parents. Some consider anything different to be an unwarranted usurpation by the state.

Pluralism and the Civic Minimum

Because many parents are skeptical toward the state and its civic demands, arguments that call for a strict policy of noninterference are often ready at hand. This noninterference allows considerable latitude in determining the manner in which children are raised and the type of education they are provided. But a minimalist state, as libertarians would have it, does not bestow upon parents the right to do *anything*; as I have argued, there are reasonable proscriptions against harm and neglect. Yet despite there being some difficulty in stipulating what will count as abuse or neglect, in every case, we can reasonably expect the state to assume a minimally interfering role in liberal democratic societies. This is because there are limits to what the state will or ought to tolerate; indeed, the existence of any liberal democracy may be threatened without some constraint on what will be tolerated. (Thus the state may require Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists to permit blood transfusions for their children when medically warranted, even when doing so militates against their private beliefs.) In short, owing to the

independent ontological and moral standing of children relative to their parents, there are cases where the state may reasonably intervene on behalf of the child.

Nevertheless, the upbringing of children that most parents seek, viz., raising the child to participate in a set of commitments similar to their own, seems reasonable on the whole. What is more, a liberal society must have a range of options concerning what constitutes the good in order for parental choices to have any meaning. It will not do to impose conformist standards and requirements on everybody when some parents might secure alternative educational services for their children, for "[a] socially imposed impersonal standard of value impermissibly coerces those who see their ends lying elsewhere" (Lomasky 1987, p. 174).[18] Rather, the argument runs, the onus is on the state to prove that particular parents are generally indifferent to, or incompetent to oversee, the educational needs of their children.

Pluralism demands that the state respect diversity and choice, including choices the state may deem to be less than optimal. By giving strong weight to the interests and prerogatives of parents, pluralists resist the monopolizing effects of the state that might trump the values and pursuits of families and their communities. This is not an unreasonable claim, for any liberal democracy that celebrates diversity must also respect the variety of choices that express the disparate interests of its citizens. Pluralists (but perhaps especially of the libertarian strain) wish to oppose "all policies that lead to state dominance" or those that monopolize education. Rather, diversity of life pursuits and opinions are seen as the way to both individual flourishing and social progress (Galston 2002). Why diversity? Because diversity is a necessary condition for the cultivation of individuality. William Galston writes,

> The free exercise of independent and group choice within the framework of liberal democratic judgment generates a zone of diverse ways of life that are permissible and safeguarded from external intervention, even when we could not imagine choosing them for ourselves.
>
> (p. 95)

Further, the more choices that are available to parents, the better able they are to meet the particular needs of their children, at least theoretically.

Galston defends the right of parents to "live in ways that others would regard as unfree." This expressive liberty is a nonnegotiable condition on the basis of which parents and families might choose to live what he calls a complete and satisfying life, that is, one that accords with the deepest beliefs concerning what gives meaning and value to one's life. In this view, one cannot have core values without acting upon them. And what more natural

thing in the world is there but to raise one's children in a manner consistent with those core values? A person simply cannot detach their understanding of what is most noble and good and worthwhile from their aspirations for their children. Indeed, a tolerance of deep differences will be "perfectly compatible with unswerving belief in the correctness of one's own way of life." Galston is careful to say that there are important constraints but any "countervailing reasons" must be weighty and sufficient enough to overturn or infringe upon the values parents deem appropriate and good.

Those who invoke the expressive liberty that pluralism allows, such as Galston, are not opposed to the cultivation of deliberative and civic participatory virtues. They merely claim that these only reach *some* of the virtues of citizenship. Responsibility to one's family, jury duty, payment of taxes, and tolerance of social diversity are also elements of citizenship. There will always be important and worthwhile debates—according to time, place, and circumstance—concerning the limits of state interests and the "diverse conceptions of flourishing" its citizens pursue. But toleration, far from being a minimalist conception of the public good as some contend, is for Galston "the virtue sustaining the social practices and political institutions that make expressive liberty possible" (2002, p. 119).

To the charge that his view gives excessive weight to the prerogatives of parents, Galston insists this is a misreading. The parent-child bond is a complex one. It cannot be supposed that a child's rights must be suppressed to further the interests of the parent; but neither can it be supposed that a parent's interests must be subordinate to the child's. Galston appeals to what he calls a reciprocal model. Such an arrangement is not opposed in principle to fostering the capacity in children to be contributing members of society or to exercise sound judgment. In Galston's view, the effective functioning of the basic institutions of a democracy can also be promoted while securing the interests of both parents and children. Disparate interests can be reconciled. Or can they?

Consider the ideological rift between Galston and Gutmann. Besides tolerance, there is much about civic education on which they agree. Both value civic education, the capacity to deliberate about ideas on which there is substantive disagreement, and the role that political liberalism[19] can play in protecting private, discretionary beliefs from encroachment by the state while encouraging reasonable discourse across differences in the public sphere. Gutmann, however, sharply differs from Galston on at least two matters. First, while Galston favors the prerogatives of parents to foster a modus vivendi that may lead to their children becoming nonautonomous, Gutmann defends a conception of education that *requires* the capacity to reflect critically upon one's core commitments. Second, while Galston would prefer to leave the private sphere—including private forms of education—exempt

from public criticism except where specific harm or neglect is manifest, Gutmann argues that both the content of public education and the regulation of private educational content must be set democratically. She concedes that any proposals that go any distance beyond the three R's are bound to be controversial but does not flinch at the obligation to make such proposals, notwithstanding the risks involved. Accordingly, against those who are loath to specify what a civic education must include she has written,

> In order to publicly justify their claim that democratic citizens have no right to mandate a civic education above the minimum, civic minimalists must specify precisely what the civic minimum is and why. Without a substantive defense of a specific civic minimum, minimalism is meaningless. It is a hollow conception into which all citizens, including advocates of democratic education, can put their understanding of civic education and call it the civic minimum.
>
> (1999, p. 295)

Arguments over what passes for a civic minimum are likely to be at least as contentious as any dispute concerning more substantive conceptions; further, mandating civic minimalism such as the three R's is morally arbitrary if it means that nothing more can or ought to be legitimately expected of schools. Neither is there more likely to be a consensus. Better, then, to defend a controversial substantive conception, one that invites contestation. All schools, Gutmann argues, should be "constrained to respect the constitutional rights of students," but a proper civic education, one designed to make liberal democracy work well, will also include the following:

> Religious toleration and nondiscrimination, racial and gender nondiscrimination, respect for individual rights and legitimate laws, the ability to articulate and the courage to stand up for one's publicly defensible convictions, the ability to deliberate with others and therefore to be open-minded about the politically relevant issues, and the ability to evaluate the performance of officeholders.
>
> (p. 298)

The civic minimum on my account also must facilitate a capacity for autonomy and reasonableness, a point to which I return in the next chapter. Yet whatever its proper content, civic education in a democracy should be regarded as a democratic question, something that procedurally must be settled and continually revisited by the public. A minimalist conception of civic education can only go so far toward promoting the welfare of its citizens; it must also have important interests in educating its children toward ends designed to serve the public good. This necessarily includes the capacity to engage with those with whom one does not agree and to show oneself capable of

deliberating on those differences. In fact, robust programs of civic education may be crucial to the development and maintenance of tolerance (Macedo 1995). Finally, a responsible state will be the guarantor of last resort in ensuring that children receive "a basic education sufficient to allow them to become adults capable of independent functioning" (Reich 2002, p. 152).

While few would deny that the parent-child relationship is critical to the development of a child's moral capacities, the state also has an important paternalistic role to play because too often parents surpass their proper paternalistic bounds. This may especially be true of some parents who place their children in learning environments that promise to reinforce the specific values of the home. The degree to which school and home values are coterminous can indeed discourage learning that is conducive to a critical evaluation of one's core beliefs. Yet it need not have those effects. As I argued in Chapter 4, not only can a certain level of value coherence fight off a sense of unanchoredness that one is likely to experience in the absence of communities that provide such coherence, but cultural and value coherence actually can also serve to promote individual choice and critical thinking—not to mention well-being—insofar as children operate from within a stable and lucid set of life principles. A relatively coherent moral framework can provide the basis, at least initially, for assessing other competing claims to truth, provided such frameworks do not impede future intellectual and moral growth. The upshot of the foregoing discussion is simply this: value coherence for children is not synonymous with an unexamined life.

Parents, Children, and Islamic Schools

It is important to note that the overwhelming majority of Muslim parents in the United States and Europe do not appear to be in favor of Islamic schools. Though the study is now somewhat dated, Haddad & Lummis (1987) found that 61 percent of Muslims surveyed in the United States did not consider Islamic schools to be a priority. More recent studies (Nimer 2002; Malkawi 2004) continue to show that the overwhelming majority of Muslims send their children to public schools. In some quarters, Muslims continue to be vociferously opposed to Islamic schools (Kabdan 1992), largely on the grounds that these schools are believed to hinder integration into the host society and cater to "fundamentalist" Islamic groups bent on indoctrination. Suffice it to say, then, that a great number of Muslim parents continue to express concern about the quality of education that they believe their children might receive in Islamic schools, especially in the early years when budgets are tight and either no state funding (Europe) or accreditation (the United States) has been procured. Other parents consider

Islamic schools to be little different from their secular counterparts "except for the appendage of a few religion classes" (Pulcini 1995, p. 185). Paradoxically, however, the demand for Islamic schools is inexorably on the rise (Maughan 2003). Waiting lists at many schools are long, particularly in the younger grades, and some Muslim parents are opting for single-sex Islamic schools for girls. Recent immigrants, largely because of a more conservative religious identity, are partly fueling the increase, but it is often the case, too, with converts to Islam. Widespread discrimination against Muslims also contributes to the perceived need to shore up the identities of one's children. Yet these two realities—wariness and enthusiasm toward Islamic schools—must be recognized to appreciate the ambivalence of the Western Muslim population toward Islamic schools.

Motivations and Concerns

With the specter of secularism and permissiveness looming large, many Muslim parents are eager to shield their children from certain materialist and secular influences by placing them in a comprehensive religious environment in order to foster a highly specific moral orientation. One can discern many reasons why Muslim parents are not happy with the schooling choices available to them, both in the United States and Europe. To take the European case first, most Muslim children attend schools with especially high concentrations of minorities. As I discussed in Chapter 2, high minority concentration schools (*concentratie scholen*) in Belgium, or "black schools" (*zwarte scholen*), as they are called in the Netherlands, indicate schools with larger percentages of immigrants.

In both countries, these schools have a bad reputation among the general population; academic achievements are typically low compared to less urban schools, teacher morale is poor, safety is a concern, and many parents feel that moral permissiveness reigns (Bartels 2000). This feeling is also expressed in the United States (Schmidt 2004b). Indeed, in at least one study it was argued that toleration of differences in public schools is ostensibly the only moral absolute (Powell et al. 1985). For these reasons, religious schools simply appear more desirable. In fact, a large percentage of Muslim parents are also quite pleased to enroll their children in Catholic (and a few in Protestant) schools because of what they believe are stronger moral values, stricter discipline, and higher academic standards. (A few affluent Muslim parents are able to place their children in elite academies and do not concern themselves so much with an Islamic identity).

The primary motivations for those parents who opt for Islamic schools are: (a) religious, (b) academic, and (c) cultural. Occasionally the ranking

alters, but this is the usual ordering.[20] First, for Muslim parents interested in Islamic schools, the religious orientation in one's academic formation counts for a great deal. This means having the values of Islam ready at hand. The preservation of the Muslim community of believers (*ummāh*), with its resolve on collective responsibility, is also of paramount importance. Muslim parents who seek out Islamic schools are chiefly concerned that their children be schooled in a total Islamic environment that provides a strong cultural and religious identity and the means of integrating all learning through an Islamic point of view. Anything less compromises the Muslim child's proper orientation to Islam.

Providing an environment that reinforces the values of the home is also a top priority. Monique Renaerts (1999) reports,

> When they are asked, the [Muslim] parents state that they think that the school is intended to prolong the dynamic process of development and emergence of the personality of the child, the ingredients of which have already been introduced in the family environment. They consider that the ideal environment for reinforcing identity and the formation of the social and religious character of children in Islamic spirit lies in a separate Islamic school system.
>
> (p. 290)

Religiously motivated parents are relieved to find schools that set aside times to pray, provide sanctioned (*halal*) food, and teach virtuous character (Hewer 2001; Haw 1994). Second, Muslim parents are seeking to secure for their children the highest academic formation that they can afford. In large cities such as Rotterdam, Brussels, Los Angeles, and Detroit, Islamic schools promise a more academically rigorous and safe alternative. Higher academic outcomes are particularly important for undereducated parents who live in high-poverty neighborhoods where school quality is poor.[21] More affluent, highly educated parents eager to see their children succeed also share these concerns. Third, Muslim parents—particularly recent immigrants—are very interested to have their children learn about their cultural heritage. This may include gender-sensitive issues (e.g., modest dress codes, sex-segregated lessons), as well as a respect toward authority. Many Muslim families speak a non-Western language at home, and parents hope that their language will be reinforced in the school culture.

Other concerns also beset Muslim parents. These include: (a) persistent experiences of racism, particularly in Europe, in local schools, (b) the perception that one's culture and religion are not only inadequately and inaccurately represented in the school curriculum but the "whole person" is also not being addressed, (c) parents' desire to have higher expectations exercised

on their children, (d) parents' wishes for more discipline and morality in the school culture—particularly for girls (although I encountered cases where Muslim families opted to put their boys in the Islamic school and leave their daughters in public schools),[22] (e) finally, a few parents wish to keep their children "uncorrupted" from the influences of secular society and feel that the only option available to them is an Islamic education. So to this last set of motives we find, for example, Yasien Mohamed asserting, "[An] Islamic traditional education is urgently required to immunize the child against the potent influences of secularization" (1991, p. 28). It must be acknowledged that some families do not want their children to integrate well into the liberal democratic society that surrounds them. They have a different set of goals and objectives. Yet, faced with these opposing educational perspectives, it is hardly surprising that some Muslim parents can be equally wary of both public education and the imagined alternative to be found in Islamic schools.

School-Related Concerns

Muslim parents who choose Islamic schools for their children do not differ substantively from other parents with children in private religious schools. In both cases, parents view their children's schooling as an investment (both fiscal and, assuming there is a close correspondence between the attitudes and convictions of the parents to the school, emotional). Parents may also value the sense of community a smaller school affords. One often reads in Islamic magazines, on websites, and at Islamic education conferences that public school textbooks are major culprits in leading the youth astray with information that undermines faith. Many Muslim educators call upon teachers to critically examine existing curricula, syllabi, and textbooks to make the revisions necessary for reflecting an Islamic view of humanity as taught in the *Qur'ān* and the Sunna. Some will claim that any books that Islamic schools use that contradict the principles of Islam must either be revised, discarded, or replaced (Sarwar 1996, p. 16).

An additional worry is the teaching of sex education, art, dance, and music, the content of which is mostly objectionable to Muslim parents (Halstead 1997). Although many Muslim parents admit to the value of certain forms of dance, drawing, and music appreciation—including learning to play various instruments viewed disapprovingly by orthodox Islam—sex education classes in public schools are particularly seen as instances of school-endorsed immorality. Many Muslim educators speak approvingly of gender-segregated learning about reproductive systems, anatomy, and pubescent changes, but the tolerance stops there for they are likely to be alarmed by the casualness with

which homosexuality, masturbation, and birth control are discussed in public schools and the media. These topics are commonly seen either as contrary to one's cultural practice, inherently immoral, or simply impermissible outside of marriage.

It is distressing to many Muslim immigrant parents to see a secularizing trend occurring in the second and third generation. Schools are often seen as the culprit. Muslim youth more often than not are very attracted to a Western lifestyle; predictably, clothing fashions, makeup, tattoos, material possessions, and relaxed attitudes toward one's elders are met with parental disquiet. Considering how frequently one hears concerns over the Western practice of dating (epitomized in the high school prom dance), the pressures of teenage romance are enough for some parents to send their children to Islamic schools, even when this is not the primary reason that they give to an outsider. Accordingly, Islamic schools, for some, are thought to be a kind of savior that will help their children to "shape up" and learn the morality and customs their parents warmly remember from their youth. Islamic schools typically forbid jewelry, cosmetics, dating, and suggestive clothing. The common practice of gender-segregated instruction, especially during adolescence, is considered a critical asset. Many parents also hope that the school will inculcate an understanding of Islam that is not confined to the private sphere, but it is doubtful whether many of these same parents have adequately explained Islam to their children, or even practiced it themselves.

Muslim Parenting and Restraint

The choice to have one's children attend an Islamic school may appear to be one unencumbered by external pressures. But looks can be deceiving. In many locations, much of the Muslim community expects that good parents will provide their children with a comprehensive instruction in the meaning and significance of their faith. Mothers especially may feel pressured by family members to raise their children in a particular way (Osler & Hussain 1995). Most devout Muslims resort to weekend or after school instruction if they are interested to provide their children with an Islamic foundation,[23] but others deem this approach too fragmented or compartmentalized. Whatever the case, it is not unthinkable that parents may wield no real power in the decision to raise their children to be good Muslims. Brian Barry (2001) observes,

> Parents may have no real choice about the form to be taken by their children's education if they wish to remain members in good standing (or perhaps at all)

> of their community, whether it be defined in terms of ethnicity, language, religion or in some instances social class.
>
> (p. 205)

This raises questions about the freedoms of parents, who may face unpleasant—even draconian—tactics of exclusion from within their own communities, compounding the sense of exclusion from without. But this also raises questions about the children who attend Islamic schools and whether they will receive the kind of education necessary for integrating well into society or exit the community in which they were raised, should they choose to. From his own observations of Islamic schools in the United Kingdom, Geoffrey Walford comments that "while there will still be variation between the parents who use these private schools, it is inevitable that they will tend to be more orthodox or fundamentalist in their views of the faith than those who remain using the state sector" (Walford 2003, p. 12). Similar evidence has been adduced in the Netherlands and elsewhere (Driessen 2002a, 2002b).[24]

Notwithstanding the foregoing realities, beyond limitations on neglect or harm, Muslim parents, in my view, are largely permitted to decide how they will educate their children by virtue of the expressive liberties a plural society affords. Additionally, Muslim parents have the same duties and prerogatives other parents have inasmuch as the choices they make must have the immediate and future interests of their children at heart. There is no prima facie reason to suppose that Muslim parents, given how well placed they are in relation to their children, are any less likely than any other parents to choose, according to their own lights, what is best for them. This means that Muslim parents are entitled to act within the bounds of legitimate partiality, and in some instances their "fiduciary duties" (Swift 2003) may even *require* them to use Islamic schools.[25] Muslim parents are justified in placing their children in Islamic schools provided that (a) they attend to both the immediate and future interests of the child, and (b) the Islamic school they choose is capable of promoting the kind of learning (and learning environment) that speaks to those interests. Further, the Islamic school ought to promote the educational goods a society values.

Nevertheless, there continue to be practices among some Muslim communities and families that overlook what is best for individual children. Some Muslim families go so far as to systematically disadvantage the life options for their children, most especially for girls (Cammaert 1992; Haw 1994; Hermans 1995; Okin 1998). In Western societies, one is more likely to find such practices among Muslims in the lower socioeconomic classes, particularly large portions of the European Muslim population who find

themselves profoundly excluded from the rights and privileges accorded to others. Given all that I have argued in this chapter concerning the well-being of children, these practices ought to be challenged and resisted. Moreover, parental prerogatives can be checked against the interests of children, and, as I have argued, children's preferences ought to carry consultative weight. Therefore, Muslim parents are not justified in placing children in Islamic schools against their will, provided they are of an age capable of understanding what their options are. Though a child's preferences are not decisive, at the bare minimum they must be consultatively significant enough to potentially override those of the parents. Viewed in this way, Muslim parents—like all parents—enjoy certain revocable *privileges*.

Conclusion

There are sound prima facie reasons to support the prerogatives of parents to choose a particular education for their child. According parents prerogatives in raising their children is simply to acknowledge that they are better placed and, in most but not all cases, more inclined than others to attend to the immediate and future needs of children, even when this appears to involve limiting the options that children are meant to pursue. I would go further and claim that most parents, notwithstanding imperfect methods of child rearing and wildly uneven resources, have at their disposal the best means of directing the interests of their children. Yet the prerogatives of parents do not trump all considerations. As I have shown, there will always be competing interests between parents and the state, as well as consideration of children's own interests, and the child is no mere subject upon whom only the wishes of the parent *or* the state may be imposed.

I have argued that the well-being of children is paramount and that one of the best ways to promote a children's well-being is to provide an education likely to facilitate autonomy so that they may eventually be enabled to pursue their own conception of the good. There will always be difficulties in deciding what the interests of the child in particular circumstances actually are but parents are usually better placed to know what the needs and interests of their children are; they are certainly more likely to care *unconditionally* for their children's well-being. Nevertheless, a child's future may not be sacrificed in the interest of furthering the parents' beliefs or goals or, for that matter, the goals of the state. For while the state has a compelling interest in an education designed to serve the public good, the immediate and future interests of children must remain paramount. These interests include the capacity to exercise autonomy and to identify with a set of beliefs or practices from the inside. Specifically, in deciding on the well-being of

children, the focus in particular cases—not only in education but also divorce and child custody—will steer clear of parental preferences and onto the child *simpliciter*. This understanding directly challenges the presumption that parents always know what is best for their children, including what sort of education they ought to have.

Still, a child's well-being requires guidance and supervision until they are able to weigh various options for themselves and are sufficiently (for no one is ever completely) aware of the foreseeable consequences of their choices and actions. One's preferences *may* correspond very closely to another's well-being. However, as I argued in Chapter 4 as well as this chapter, well-being must specify something independent of what our preferences dictate lest adapted preferences invite irrevocable harm on unwitting souls. Owing to the range of differences among individuals, the age at which one becomes capable of competently making decisions for oneself will vary, though it seems reasonable to assume that some degree of intervention is called for. This may entail making a significant number of decisions for children, or it may involve shaping their values and learning processes, particularly their ability to think critically about cultural messages that they are bombarded with on a daily basis. Ensuring that children acquire the skills necessary to test various claims will be good not only for their own best interests but good for the society as well inasmuch as the public sphere is better served by more, and not less, rational people. Indeed, the child-focused approach I have argued for could result in parents feeling obligated not only to their own children, but to others' as well.[26]

This discussion has immediate relevance to the claims of Muslim parents who would have their children educated in an Islamic school. I think it fair to say that most Islamic schools seek to preserve the "affective bonds of kinship" between parents and children. As such, Islamic schools facilitate the function prescribed by Robert Noggle, namely, in loco parentis, Islamic schools are both the agent that works to further the best interests of the child and also that of the moral community.[27] Finally it doesn't matter what motives Muslim parents may have for placing children in Islamic schools. What is important is whether these motives are ones that can be justified given all that has been said about the limitations of parents' prerogatives over the education of children. And here I would stress the role that Islamic schools play. Today one is likely to find most Muslim educators in the West intensely aware of the need to straddle two (or more) cultures. Indeed, many sit astride the culture of their parents and the Western culture they adopted in youth. Helping young people facing similar challenges to negotiate these seemingly conflicting cultural allegiances is one indispensable role that, Islamic schools play. Indeed, Islamic schools are likely to foster cultural

hybridity because most administrators and teachers are either Western-born or have lived many years in the West and therefore realize that no school environment, unless physically very remote, will be able to prevent its students from encountering views and lifestyles other than those of the parents and school staff.

Despite what many parents desire in an education for their children, many Islamic schools are not calling for an education that reflects the culture of the parents so much as they are seeking to promote one that teaches children the core values of Islam (Keyworth 2002, p. 52). This means that Muslim parents often have their provincial expectations challenged at the doorstep of the local Islamic school.[28] Islamic educators are awake to the realities facing Muslim youth in Western societies. They know that Islam, owing to its universality, does not require cultural specification. Many Islamic schools in the West seem particularly well placed to aid Muslim parents interested in guiding their children toward favorable ends. Still not all Muslim parents have such favorable ends in view; neither do all Islamic schools.

Thus while parents inhabit a privileged space from which to direct the needs and interests of their children, they are not impervious to moral criticism. Parents may not pursue their own ends, in some instrumental sense, through their children. Parents are not justified in making decisions for children that merely ensure the cultural or religious continuity of their own values with no thought to the best interests of the children themselves. Indeed, there are reasons to be concerned about the degree to which some parental prerogatives coalesce with the aims of some schools. This is because not all parents or schools can be trusted to promote children's best interests. In my view, this possibility warrants educational oversight by the state.

Given that it is far from a certainty that children's interests and well-being will invariably be served by the parents or guardians, the state must act as guarantor of the last resort in seeing to it that children not only receive certain protections but also that they develop the capacity for autonomy and reasonableness, the means to economic self-reliance. For with children, both their immediate and future interests must guide all decision making on their behalf. It cannot simply be left to parents and schools to do this. One way that the state can check parental prerogative with respect to religious schools is by incorporating Islamic schools into a regulatory scheme that will promise better opportunities for Muslim children than schools that may too easily reflect the cultural biases of the parents. The state has an obligation to guarantee the quality of education a child receives, and arguably the most legitimate way to ensure this oversight is through funding religious schools. That will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

For the Sake of the Child: Religious Schools and Accountability

> The question for Islamic schools is whether they will be singled out for "special attention" just like many Muslims are being singled out for enforcement of immigration laws or other minor statutes while others are not . . . It remains to be seen whether religious schools can afford to tie themselves with the strings that come with government funding.
>
> Safaa Zarzour

In Chapter 3, I mapped out the educational aims of several Muslim scholars and noted that acute tensions exist between the abstract, philosophical ideas about Islamic education and the actions and motivations of actual practitioners in Western Islamic schools. The tension, I argued, has much to do with the sorts of unique cultural and pedagogical challenges that Muslims in non-Muslim societies face. In Chapters 4 and 5, I argued for Islamic schools on a certain reading of cultural coherence and the duties and prerogatives of Muslim parents to pursue their own projects provided that their children's best interests were borne in mind. I also hinted at the minimally interfering role of the state. In this chapter, I want to address the issues that bear upon state funding and oversight for religious schools, particularly as it relates to the United States. More than any other issue, this difference separates American Islamic schools from many of their European counterparts.

Yet, notwithstanding a broad coalition of choice advocates in American education, political appeals to the state for funding religious schools generally meet an icy reception. It is true that religious schools are already accountable in important ways in most American states. The legal basis for this minimal oversight begins with the *Pierce* decision,[1] an Oregon Supreme Court case that upheld the Fourteenth Amendment in guaranteeing equal protection and opportunity to parents in making discretionary choices regarding the

type of school their children ought to attend. *Pierce's* ruling repudiated the 1922 legislation that demanded compulsory public schooling of all Oregon children of school-attending age and countered that "the child is not the mere creature of the State." However, *Pierce* did not give parents carte blanche in directing their children's education. Indeed, its signers argued, "Liberty of all is subject to reasonable conditions deemed essential by the governing body to the safety, health, peace, good order and morals of the community." The decision further stipulated that *the state reserves the right to mandate some schooling and to regulate schools to ensure that children are provided an adequate service*. Even so, the boldness of *Pierce* had been attenuated within a few years,[2] and today its import is widely understood to mean simply that the state does not have a monopoly in socializing the young to citizenship. Accordingly, state oversight of religious schools has been minimal in most of the eighty years since. Specifically, oversight has largely been limited to mandatory attendance, health and safety adherence, financial reporting requirements, and compliance with nondiscrimination laws. Many states also impose requirements on the length of the school year, teacher qualification, and curriculum content.

Yet, beyond the few aforementioned items, there is virtually no state interference in private education unless the school actively seeks accreditation (which, as in other matters—e.g., credentialing teachers, determining completion criteria, reporting performance data—falls entirely to *individual* states). This is because academic compliance is typically voluntary and self-reported. Thus, while most religious schools use textbooks widely in circulation in public schools and endeavor to maintain rigorous academic standards (knowing that parents may opt to put their children in other schools), there is no hard and fast rule requiring it. The analogy is imperfect, but we could say that private schools operate rather like corporations that announce that they will maintain environmentally responsible practices without pressure or sanction from citizen action groups and the Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration (OSHA). Many will, but we may also safely assume that others will not.

Conversely, state funding and oversight of religious schools is normal in Europe. This does not, however, mean that there is a consensus concerning the defensibility of such funding. Indeed, some religious schools (often but not always Islamic ones) are singled out as just the type of schools the state ought *not* to support. Nevertheless, in most Western countries the state takes a central role in governing and funding religious schools. In some countries, education is highly centralized (e.g., the Netherlands) or regionalized (e.g., Belgium) or reflects the requirements of both local and national authorities (e.g., Britain). In these same countries, some religious schools

have been historically privileged. Yet, as the reach of state funding has slowly extended to include Christian minority (e.g., Greek Orthodox, Adventist) and non-Christian groups (e.g., Sikh, Hindu), many of their religious schools receive varying amounts of state funding and oversight (a) as a matter of constitutional evenhandedness and (b) on the understanding that religious schools are an important means of recognizing parental choice in education.

So the United States is an exception. Each state government funds its own schools according to its constitutional standards. The federal government assumes a tiny fraction of the financial burden of public schooling and none, strictly speaking, of that of religious schooling.[3] However, as I will argue, there are strong reasons for the state[4] to take a more central role in funding education in keeping with the democratic educational ideal of equal opportunity. The central question I ask in this chapter is whether, in light of certain philosophical and ethical considerations, the state ought to fund religious schools in the United States in light of some reflections on the experience of other countries.

There are many arguments for funding religious schools. Here are two: pluralism, which must allow for the freedom of exercise of one's conscience, gives parents the prerogative to choose the type of school their child attends provided this choice enhances the child's interests. Yet while intuitively plausible, the claim overlooks the fact that many parents, and a fortiori many schools, do not do well by their children, and their interests are not enhanced. The second argument is based on empirical research, which shows that students of some religious schools have impressive academic success and civic preparedness compared with those of some public schools. To these arguments we might add the important judicial precedents and constitutional guarantees that allow religious schools to exist. For the purposes of my argument, I will accept both arguments and the judicial basis for religious schools. I will argue that

- The refusal of the state to provide funding and oversight is to beg the question concerning why it is allowable for parents to choose these schools for their children in the first place, particularly if some of them fail to educate children adequately or militate against the public good (e.g., through indoctrination or decidedly anticivic commitments).
- The education of *all* children is in the public interest,[5] and therefore the state must assume its responsibility to its future citizens to ensure that they receive quality education.

A quality education goes beyond the three R's and a capacity for economic self-reliance; it closely corresponds to the liberal educational ideals that I elucidated in Chapter 1 and therefore includes facilitating a capacity for

reasonableness and autonomy. Reasonableness describes those inclined to be fair, sensible, and proportionate in their exercise of rationality. The absence of reasonableness signals the collapse of dialogue and the conditions necessary for the most meaningful forms of social cooperation. Therefore, reasonableness is necessary in order to ensure legitimacy. Autonomy matters, as I argued in Chapter 1, because it describes individuals able to reflect on freely chosen commitments and the actions that derive from them. Moreover, autonomous selves are those who possess the capacity to make evaluative judgments in light of counterfactual evidence and are capable of revising their views when there is warrant for doing so. Let me be clear: autonomy per se is not the ultimate aim. Yet one need not personally value autonomy as an end in itself for it to have important instrumental value that is conducive to human flourishing and identifying with a way of life from the inside.[6]

In this chapter, I will argue that the state has an obligation to fund and provide oversight of *all* schools that are allowed to operate, irrespective of their religious or nonreligious character. Naturally this includes Islamic schools. Equal educational opportunities cannot be left to private interests or charitable good will. A state concerned with fairness and equity must, in the final analysis, act as guarantor of these provisions if the children of the less advantaged or the inordinately doctrinaire are to have access to both competitive (e.g., jobs) and noncompetitive (e.g., satisfying pursuits of various kinds) goods. The state has these responsibilities because

> morally, the state is an agent for all members of society. Above all, it delivers on the obligations we all have toward each other, especially toward strangers. The state structures our interactions with one another, and a just state structures them justly.
>
> (Brighouse 1998b, p. 145)

Contestable legal constraints in no way absolve the state of its ethical responsibilities.

While my arguments call for the funding and oversight of religious schools, this will depend in no small way on a more equitable method of funding *public* schools (particularly in the United States). Further, though I argue in favor of state funding and oversight of religious schools, I will take care to show how the feasibility of my proposals depends on a number of relevant empirical realities. For example, parents and administrators of religious schools may have reasons to be diffident toward the state and its hypothetical oversight.[7] I will briefly revisit the case of Dutch Islamic schools to illustrate my point. Because certain conditions may fluctuate or hinder their implementation, my arguments—for the moment—must be seen as a thought

experiment—a philosophical consideration of what *might be*, albeit one very much informed by the empirical realities in Europe and the United States. This thought experiment is entirely consistent with one role that political philosophy is supposed to play, namely, to probe "the limits of practical political possibility" (Rawls 2001, p. 4).[8]

Finally, while my arguments have a particular salience for the United States and its almost unique conception of church and state separation, my conclusions are universally relevant and applicable. Thus, the philosophical questions related to state funding and oversight of religious schools transcend any one national context.

Evaluating Religious Schools

Resistance to state funding and oversight of religious schools has come from many quarters. Owing to their sectarian character, some have purported that religious schools promote social divisiveness and are thus incapable of assenting to the burdens of judgment. According to John Rawls (2001), accepting the burdens of judgment means the following:

> The evidence—empirical and scientific—bearing on any case may be conflicting and complex, and thus hard to assess and evaluate; even where we agree fully about the kinds of considerations that are relevant, we may disagree about their weight, and so arrive at different judgments. To some degree all our concepts . . . are vague and subject to hard cases . . . The way we assess evidence and weigh moral and political values is shaped (how much we cannot tell) by our total experience . . . and our total experience surely differ . . . Often there are different kinds of normative considerations of different force on both sides of a question and it is difficult to make an overall assessment.
>
> (pp. 35–36)

Others have argued that religious schools cannot possibly foster civic awareness and engagement when their primary loyalties lie elsewhere. Indeed, it is on these arguments that proposals in some European countries (notably the United Kingdom) are being forwarded to either remove or deny funding to many religious schools, but Islamic schools in particular.

Still others have maintained that religious schools fail to prepare pupils to live in a multicultural society inasmuch as they fail to instantiate a diverse pupil body and faculty. A correlate of this view is that religious schools are doctrinaire with children in response to many of their questions and distill all instruction through an extremely narrow ideological framework that encourages the children to be raised exclusively within an "all encompassing moral community" (Rossatto & Hampton 2006; Peskin 1986; Rose 1988;

Walford 2002; Apple 2001; Hand 2004).[9] Separate schools, the argument runs, which are founded on customs or beliefs distinctive to a particular tradition or ideology, are unlikely to foster comparable exposure to difference and in any event favor the inculcation of highly specific beliefs that are not conducive to a kind of fallibalist critical examination. Put another way, religious schools fail to provide the kind of diversity of *belief* that is essential to promote critical reflection and diversity of opinion. The result is not only less awareness of difference in religious schools but also less tolerance of those with whom one may not agree.

The idea lurking behind these criticisms seems to be this: if religious schools that have occupied a familiar place on the Western educational landscape cannot pass muster, that is, if it can be shown that most Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant schools fail to satisfy liberal educational demands, then one can reasonably suppose that Islamic schools could meet the same fate. In other words, Islamic schools, because of their relatively young existence in Western society, will only succeed to get public monies on the strength of arguments relevant to their precursors. Criticisms such as these continue to have enormous intuitive appeal, and much of the debate over the funding of religious schools centers on exactly these issues. However, because I believe that this kind of critique is ultimately unsatisfying, I will address yet move quickly past some of these concerns.[10]

I want to push beyond these objections for at least two reasons. First, assessing the extent to which religious schools actually facilitate liberal educational ideals is largely an empirical matter, and, empirically, it is somewhat challenging to assess the performance of individual religious—and particularly Islamic—schools owing to a paucity of qualitative or quantitative studies on their performance.[11] Therefore, empirical judgments must be tentative at this point. Second, a growing literature suggests that religious schools, notwithstanding their unique attachments and loyalties, in fact are quite successful at promoting civic awareness, responsibility, and political engagement (Grace 2002; McConnell 2002; Chaves & Gorski 2001; Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995). Religiosity, Robert Putnam (2000) says, "rivals education as a powerful correlate of most forms of civic engagement" (p. 67).[12] Of course this civic engagement moves in myriad directions, some of them healthier than others.[13] However, the point is not that religious schools ought to *require*[14] civic engagement, but whether children are given an education conducive to fostering civic *virtues* such as reasonableness, autonomy, and tolerance.

Now to the second argument that religious schools are less diverse and therefore less capable of fostering tolerance, there are two things I will say. First, when one considers the de facto segregation of many American neighborhood public schools according to race and social class, the assumption

that children in public schools will receive substantive exposure to difference measurably greater than can be found in religious schools is an idea that does not inspire confidence (Orfield & Eaton 1996). Further, I have already argued in Chapter 4 that a pedagogical model of cultural coherence, especially in the early grades (de Jong & Snik 2002; Levinson 1999; Callan 1997; Halstead 1995a), may actually *enhance* autonomy rather than hinder it.[15]

Second, I have little doubt that some religious schools proffer simplistic answers to complex questions. There are, it is true, limits to the *range* of considerations that some schools will allow given the ostensible limitations of canon and creed, though as I argued in Chapter 3, one will invariably find alternative interpretations and counterarguments within all religious schools just beneath the surface of accepted orthodoxies, even within arguably closed communities. Religious school staffs do not agree on many things, including the manner in which core beliefs are held.[16] Jews, Evangelicals, Catholics, Hindus, and Muslims all dispute among themselves the meanings and applications of their respective texts. Neither are religious schools entirely closed off to outside voices (Parker-Jenkins et al. 2005); even fundamentalist groups "turn out to have more permeable walls than one might think" (Schrag 1998, p. 38). Further, most religious communities are extremely likely to confront "deep diversity" that exists and thrives outside the walls of one's school and home environment. Indeed, with the exception of the most isolated communities,[17] members of cloistered groups are even likely to know *more* about competing versions of the public good than others (Spinner-Halev 2000).[18]

In response to the charge that religious schools are likely to engender prejudice, separatism, and hostility toward difference, Geoffrey Short (2002) has demonstrated that racial and ethnic conflict are just as likely to happen in diverse schools as in those that appear more homogeneous. The critical difference, he points out, is *not the type of school one attends*, but the type of curriculum and instruction a school provides as well as a staff that is committed to teaching respect and tolerance of others regardless of their differences.[19] A religious school, he argues, is just as capable of promoting tolerance and respect of differences as any other, including arguably less homogeneous, schools. Many studies of Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic schools in the United Kingdom amply demonstrate this (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005; Short 2002; Conroy 2001; Miller 2001; Hewer 2001; Walford 2002; McLaughlin 1992). Mere exposure to difference does not a tolerant person make. Conflict and phobias may actually increase if the school fails to provide the ethos necessary to foster tolerance and mutual respect. Attitudes of intolerance and its converse typically derive from the home environment, and even positive contact with others from different backgrounds is as likely

as not to result in imagining them as the exception to their respective groups and not the norm. Even if we suppose that public schools were more effective in fostering tolerance among pupils of different backgrounds within the school,[20] there is still little reason to suppose that this tolerance will prevail *outside* the school.[21]

The foregoing demonstrates, I think, that a critique on civic education that applies only to religious schools is biased. Yet it also demonstrates that many claims against religious schools lack compelling evidence. So an empirical account is inadequate. But, as I argued in Chapter 5, a parent-centered account is also inadequate. Merely because parents and the religious schools they choose *claim* or *intend* to offer children a quality education is no assurance that they will get it. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including a lack of information about school quality. The state, too, may fault on its obligations; witness the inequitable de facto state of public schooling in the United States. Yet a poor original design of state oversight or a lack of current political will does not change the fact that the state has the *ability* to amass and distribute the resources necessary to ensure equal educational opportunity or that it is bound by *duty* to guarantee the institutional arrangements that most reliably ensure that every child gets a suitable level of education (Brighouse 1998b). *Ultimately* it must be the state's responsibility to ensure that children receive a quality education, irrespective of the religious or nonreligious character of the school they attend.

Why the State Should Provide Oversight

Perhaps the most common moral argument to be made for state funding of religious schools is that the freedom of conscience requires it. Many parents want their children to enjoy an education with a religious or spiritual dimension. If parents are to have the liberty to choose religious schooling for their children (on the assumption that basic civic requirements are met), the justification for the exercise of this liberty rests, at least in part, on the great importance attached to the freedom of conscience and the interest that parents have in transmitting their most fervently held values to their children. The capacity to exercise one's liberty to send a child to a religious school should not turn on something morally arbitrary from the standpoint of the freedom of conscience, namely, whether parents have the money to afford it. Dictates of conscience should not hang on the size of one's pocketbook.[22]

Now if the accountability of schools were principally about the educational opportunities of the parents, this argument would wield greater force. Yet what matters is not the appeasement of parental preferences. Placating parents will be particularly contentious when schools are chosen in order

to reinforce the parents' values, as is often the case with the selection of religious schools. At issue here is the *welfare of the child* and the quality of education that he or she deserves. I have elaborated on this at length in Chapter 5 and will not revisit those arguments here. It will suffice to say that children's interests are not always best served by the convictions parents espouse or the choices that derive from them. We must look elsewhere for more compelling arguments.

As I see it, funding and oversight ought to be extended to religious schools for the following reasons. First, education supplies intrinsic benefits, among which is the capacity for autonomy, whereby one may freely form or adopt a conception of the good, thereby contributing to personal well-being. Second, education, like health, is vital to seizing worthwhile life opportunities,[23] which are its instrumental benefits. Yet opportunities are unevenly distributed among society's members owing to disparities in ability, effort, prejudice, and wealth. Therefore, educational justice requires that the state provide basic educational opportunities to all children irrespective of social class background or ability, knowing that opportunities are normally contingent on the enabling effects that education typically affords. Thus, with a sufficient amount and quality of education, one may take up meaningful vocational pursuits and forms of leisure as well as the relationships that derive from them. Third, education is also a prerequisite to achieving an enlightened public, and such a public is infinitely better equipped to sustain the democratic arrangements that a free society affords. Hence, education supplies individuals with the capacity to meet the various minimal demands that citizenship requires.

Should the state provide funding and oversight of religious schools, there would likely be several effects. First, the availability of sectarian schools known for their decidedly intolerant views and indoctrinatory practices would be dramatically reduced. Second, it is not inconceivable that more nonreligious parents interested in their children's autonomy (for the purpose of interacting with those of different perspectives) would be interested to use religious schools, thereby diversifying the student body.[24] The result is likely to be more interaction among children of different backgrounds, though of course the quality of that interaction will matter infinitely more than interaction tout court. More opportunities for religious and nonreligious children to interact may or may not foster higher rates of autonomy, reasonableness, and tolerance, but such an arrangement is certainly more likely to result in the breakdown of stereotypes and misunderstandings that may lead to mistrust, religious segregation, or conflict (Subedi et al. 2006).

Third, equitable state involvement (which includes correcting the vastly unequal funding problem in American public schools) is likely to stabilize

and more equally distribute the quality of education in schools. This cannot be left solely to the individual states to resolve. The federal government, which funds a paltry 7 percent of American education, cannot simply issue achievement mandates through inducement schemes or which merely tighten the monitoring procedures for overseeing the allocation of school funds (McDermott 2005; McDonnell 2005). Of course, equitable funding, while it is a necessary start, does not guarantee comparable outcomes. Well-trained and committed staff, state-of-the-art facilities, and curricular materials will not ensure positive educational results. Too many other factors come into play, notably racial stratification in society (too often reflected in the schools themselves), poverty (thus influencing preference adaptation and social aspirations), and the low educational attainment (thus affecting parenting styles and employment prospects) of parents and their children.

Nevertheless, the state must demonstrate that it has the best interests of all children at heart, and, in light of the above, it shirks its responsibility to children in religious schools if these schools enjoy a bona fide legal status without corresponding oversight. To not hold the schools that the state permits its children to attend accountable is to show unmistakable disregard for the academic and socialization outcomes that these schools provide. Religious schools can both be funded as a matter of equity and be held to reasonable requirements that ensure that as few schools as possible are retreating from their responsibilities to educate future citizens for autonomy and reasonableness but also economic self-reliance.

Legitimacy and Oversight

In order for state oversight to have any teeth, the United States must first have a satisfactory system of school funding and regulation, one that has oversight in curricular and pedagogical matters but that honors the basic requirements of legitimacy. Let me explain what I mean by this.

Legitimacy

I discussed legitimacy in Chapter 1, yet given the nature of my proposals, several points bear repeating. By *legitimacy* I mean soliciting the willing participation of a society's reasonable members. Reasonable persons would be those who are amenable to the burdens of judgment and reciprocity, which means they are "disposed to propose fair terms of cooperation to others, to settle differences in mutually acceptable ways, and to abide by agreed terms of cooperation so long as others are prepared to do likewise" (Callan 1997, p. 175). I previously argued that political legitimacy derives

its strength from the absence of coercion. But this describes only a minimalist conception of legitimacy. Obviously a state eager to win the approval of its constitutional norms and policies will do more than simply *avoid* coercive action. Particularly if the state is to hold religious schools to account for evidence of reasonableness and autonomy, it must provide publicly acceptable reasons for doing so. Religious or not, reasonable persons deserve nothing less. If the state meets the demands of legitimacy (and this need not require a consensus, but merely compelling reasons to which the majority assent),[25] its intervening role will be justified in the maintenance of schools in ways that do not usurp parents' duties and prerogatives. Legitimacy thus secured, the state must fund religious schools directly and provide the corresponding oversight needed to ensure that certain educational goals are being met.

Oversight

By *oversight* I mean a system of accountability that would equitably allocate the funds and governance for staffing and maintaining the general mechanisms necessary for safety, quality of learning, and self-reliance. Quality of learning and self-reliance naturally imply developing a capacity for autonomy and reasonableness.

As I see it, oversight has two different dimensions. The first concerns both the hiring procedures and the certification requirements that schools must adhere to if they are to receive state money directly. At first glance it appears rather straightforward that the government would be able to carefully regulate the terms under which religious schools could hire and terminate employees. Cases such as *Bob Jones University v. United States*, 461 U.S. 574 (1983)[26] have set important precedents that uphold civil rights legislation, prohibiting overt discrimination that obstructs equal opportunity. Indeed, the state's interest in eradicating discrimination in employment may override free-exercise claims. Religiously based employment requirements, like all other employment requirements, which function as a means of carrying out status discrimination, are forbidden (Underkuffler 1989, p. 620), and religious schools can be held to this.[27] Constitutional protections are only one of the considerations one must take under advisement. Other interests must be balanced as well; these include the duty-prerogative that parents have to guide their children's education and, to my immediate purposes here, the compelling educational interests of the state, which include a well-informed and reasonable public.

More controversially, the second dimension of oversight concerns the need for the state to regulate and control the *actual operation* of religious schools,

including in most classroom subjects the number of hours and the precise content of instruction. (The state need not regulate religious content except where such instruction is found to promote bigotry, sedition, or barefaced intolerance or where evidence points to physical or psychological harms or violations of the free exercise of individual conscience. In these cases, the state must follow the dictates of judicial precedent and civil rights legislation in seeking tolerance, equal protection, and equal opportunity,[28] although it may be necessary to close the school.)[29] Private schools have interests that generally coincide with those of parents, and it seems accurate to say that the individual interests of parents acting on behalf of their own children will not always suffice to meet broader societal interests. What are these interests exactly? Walter Feinberg (2000) summarizes some of these:

> Public schools are engaged in shaping and reshaping the citizen base of the nation. They are responsible in a way that parents are not[30] in passing on the basic outlooks, values, and skills required to function in a self-forming democratic community, and democracy requires that the agents of this reproduction ultimately be accountable to a representative citizen body.
>
> (p. 850)

To the extent that society is committed to providing its future leaders with the tools to appropriately engage with democratic values, philosophical liberals maintain that public schools are the locus where these responsibilities are best fostered. Yet the difficulty with this description is that it describes not a reality but an *ideal*. Whether public schools do a better job in fostering these objectives is an empirical matter, which, in any case, has been contested by many researchers (Chaves & Gorski 2001; Putnam 2000; Short 2002; Grace 2000), and there is considerable evidence to suggest that public schools play a complicit role in promoting values to which many parents understandably object (Burtt 2003; De Ruyter & Merry 2009; Pope 2001; Brighouse 2005; Molnar 1996; Powell et al. 1985).[31]

Now ideals serve an important regulative function. They describe goods and aims to which we may reasonably aspire. Indeed, this chapter is premised on the ideal of equal educational opportunity. Therefore, I am not suggesting that ideals are not important, or that we ought not to be constrained by less-than-ideal realities. Yet the idealized portrait of public schools assumes three things: (a) most children in public schools receive an autonomy-facilitating education equally or to a comparable degree; (b) public schools are better equipped than private religious schools to offer children the resources for thinking rationally and making comparative judgments; (c) finally, there is the corresponding assumption that, in contrast,

religious schools do not, or cannot, facilitate autonomy-friendly objectives. I am arguing (a) that these are contestable claims and (b) that very little is illuminated by comparing idealized public schools with nonidealized private ones. It is perhaps true to say that public schools are more *likely* to provide students with the "intellectual resources to see beyond the horizons set by immediate family, community, and religious circumstances and to take on the attachments and concerns of the larger national community" (Feinberg 2000, p. 851), but this is by no means obvious.

What Accountability Encompasses

Accountability assumes many guises. Here are three. First, one could simply separate funding and public accountability. In other words, the state could demand that religious schools comply with certain educational norms even in the absence of funding, just as it does with safety requirements. For example, private schools must abide by fire codes and zoning restrictions quite apart from any funds they may or may not receive, including tax exemption. Similarly, the state reserves the right to intervene in cases involving harm to or neglect of children. As I previously mentioned, in the Bob Jones case the state has justified such moves in terms of pursuing an overriding good, namely, to counter racist attitudes and dispositions. If a good and just state were to hang its argument for holding religious schools accountable on the need to ensure equal education opportunities, I have little doubt that it would enjoy strong public support. Nevertheless, if in so doing the state employs political strategies that both alienate citizens and lessens the chances of fostering reasonableness and autonomy, institutional policies are less likely to be legitimate than those that do.

A second approach for accountability would be to deny funding to religious schools of a "fissiparous" and "unpredictable character." Pondering the challenges that some non-Christian schools pose in the United Kingdom, Harry Judge (2001) avows the following:

> And if it is concluded that, as matter of public policy [that state arrangements rooted in historical compromise, which fund religious schools], should *not* be extended [to other kinds of schools], it follows that a contraction of the present arrangements is to be preferred to *any* measures having the effect of diverting additional funds from publicly maintained and managed schools to those schools attached to particular faiths or denominations.
>
> (p. 469)

This position has a number of strengths. In particular, funding religious schools that do well by their students in promoting tolerance and facilitating

reasonableness and autonomy is a strategy likely to promote the civic virtues that a democracy has reason to value. But Judge's diagnosis confuses things. In the first place, he argues without evidence that continued funding for religious schools will provoke dangerous tensions that are incongruous with "integration." Further, he believes that this funding will result in problems that are "occluded by the cloudy and fashionable belief that 'public' has failed and that 'private' will resolve all difficulties" (p. 469). This seems, however, to needlessly overstate the point. First, Judge assumes that nurturing cultural identities is hopelessly incompatible with whatever "an orderly process of integration" is supposed to mean. Such incompatibility is hardly obvious to lots of people who navigate quite successfully across and between cultural borders. Second, while I would agree that *favoring* the private over the public augurs badly for democracy and for civic responsibility, there are ways to tame the private.[32]

A third approach would be to fund religious schools and to regulate what they do. If the concern is with objectionable content or methods of instruction, particularly where an individual's capacity to reflect critically on his or her commitments is being intentionally impaired, or curricula are used to incite hatred or sedition, the existence of some schools, as I argued above, could well be deemed impermissible. Yet a responsible state will be concerned with the welfare of its citizens and, guided by the axioms of equality of opportunity, fairness, and tolerance, must aim to protect their compelling educational interests. As the guarantor of last resort, the state must ensure that children receive "a basic education sufficient to allow them to become adults capable of independent functioning" (Reich 2002, p. 152). But the state has its own compelling educational interests as well. Indeed, an education that facilitates reasonableness and autonomy will have a direct impact on the deliberative processes necessary to sustain a healthy democracy. In other words, the state will have compelling interests in educating children toward ends designed to serve the common good. This necessarily includes the capacity to engage with those with whom one does not agree and to show oneself capable of deliberating about those differences.

State oversight will not eliminate all inequalities or ensure equal outcomes, yet this is no argument against attempts to alleviate unnecessary inequities. The fact that some inequities "cannot be eliminated never justifies abandoning attempts to mitigate [them]" (Brighouse 1998b, p. 146). The state must play the role of guarantor of the last resort not because parents' wishes for their children are somehow intrinsically untrustworthy, but simply because all children are entitled to have a quality education. And, since most education occurs within schools,[33] it falls to the state to ensure not only that the education on offer is up to par, but that the conditions of

learning are conducive to the facilitation of autonomy and reasonableness. As I argued in Chapter 5, conditions will include principles of nondiscrimination and toleration. None of this changes the fact that the state's oversight will be legitimate and justified *only* "to the extent that [it] provides the best guarantee to all children of an education adequate to full and equal citizenship" (Gutmann 1980, p. 351; cf. 1987, p. 118).

A Hypothetical Accountability Scheme

Previously I described several ways to evaluate religious schools. Yet philosophers of education and policymakers need to imagine a different approach, one that is mostly (but not entirely) unconcerned with how well religious schools measure up to public schools. In other words, what is most important is not the public or private (or religious or nonreligious) status of a school or the academic success or "civic preparedness" of pupils, but rather the *regulatory features of schools* or the lack thereof. The distinctive features of private schools need not be muted or radically altered to mirror the ethos of a public school. Instead, I would argue that what matters supremely is the contribution that religious schools might be expected to make to a broader accountability system in which they participate. If one looks to Europe, for example, it is implausible to say that religious schools, simply because they have a religious orientation, are less likely to promote the best interests of children. If this were so, certainly a majority of Dutch or English children would be the worse for it.[34]

In order to move beyond the public-private rift that currently describes American education, I want to explore a conceptual framework that incorporates both public and private schools into its ambit.[35] At the risk of oversimplifying what are at best conjectural outcomes, an accountability scheme might look something like this. The state, interested in enjoying the consent of as many of its citizens as possible, will seek to work in concert with reasonable participants in public debate, including, but not limited to, the education of the citizenry. The underlying purpose of education will be to promote autonomous and reasonable citizens, and the citizenry has a stake in these aims irrespective of what schools children attend.

This accountability scheme will include religious schools to preclude certain highly variable yet likely outcomes. Specifically, one can expect that at least some children educated in some religious schools will be less likely to become autonomous citizens—that is, hold their views freely and without coercion or articulate them in the vernacular of reason before the critical judgment of others. In such an arrangement, the exclusion of religious schools will make some views *more* dangerous by lessening the possibilities that certain beliefs are ever held up to public scrutiny.

But even where religious schools succeed fairly well in fostering autonomy and reasonableness in their students, a system of accountability will lessen the chances that public schools will be compromised by the successes of some religious schools. This is so because nonreligious children have as much to gain from learning about religious ways of life, particularly from those who hold their beliefs autonomously (i.e., after seriously considering alternatives), as religious children are likely to in being exposed to secular alternatives. This accountability scheme is not meant to discriminate against those who hold religious beliefs. On the contrary, such a system would implicitly respect the rights of citizens to have these beliefs but would call upon believers—with appropriately designed incentives to that end—to dissolve boundaries between themselves and the wider culture. In doing so, the hope is that a reciprocity will occur benefiting both religious and nonreligious persons. Mutually beneficial effects will likely result by exhibiting different points of view—including religious ones—fairly and reasonably, which will be most effectively done, I would argue, when students have the opportunity to interact with others who genuinely espouse different points of view and can articulate the significance of those views to others. Naturally this would mean avoiding tokenistic gestures and stereotypes and engaging one another on terms of mutual respect.

Now it follows from the above that boundaries between the public and the private, or between the secular and the religious, are more likely to dissolve if the state funds religious schools. One cannot justifiably espouse the prejudice that only public schools are capable of promoting autonomous and reasonable citizens. Nor is it tenable to fund public schools, while merely *allowing* private schools, as is presently the arrangement in the United States. To do so is to ensure the effect of undervaluing the importance of an education that promotes autonomy and reasonableness irrespective of the type of school a child attends. Surely the state is capable of harming children just as much when it does little or nothing as when it pays attention to them. Obviously, accountability measures will need to be equally applied if they are to have legitimacy, and, faithful to at least one reading of the Establishment Clause, no religious group will be able to enjoy state funding more than another. Legitimacy will also prove a more likely outcome when funding is provided.

There would be practical ramifications of this accountability scheme as well. It would, for instance, entail not only that religious schools be more open to nonreligious students among the schools' members, but that public schools be more accommodating to the perspectives offered by religious persons. Discussing views openly and honestly, provided this is done in the appropriate forum and there is an insistence on respectful dialogue, is more

desirable than not doing so. This is because a more diverse student population, coupled with a curriculum design and committed staff that would facilitate authentic engagement with student differences, is more likely to provide opportunities to be better informed about the outside world owing to the assortment of beliefs and varied opinions of students. Put another way, exposure to more diverse opinions better disposes children not only to consider the views of others whose ideas, habits, and beliefs may differ strikingly from one's own, but also to critically—though not necessarily detachedly—examine one's *own* ideas, habits and, beliefs in light of this new information. This, in turn, will likely conduce to autonomously held views resulting from greater awareness and the freedom (but not compulsion) to change one's mind that ought to logically coincide with it. On this view, what may mitigate the parental demand that children have the right to attend a school that reflects the family's values is the fact that religious schools will have become a *public resource*. Indeed, religious schools will simply become one of the several ways of contributing to the common good, because the state must guarantee that all of its children receive an education that facilitates autonomy and reasonableness.

If this argument holds, this framework, which essentially advances a social justice claim, does much to fortify the argument that religious schools ought to be funded on the grounds that pluralism and limited parental prerogative claims merely allow for them. This is so because the state must justify in some way why it simultaneously allows schools over which it provides minimal oversight to operate, only to consign some children, following the wishes of their parents, to an education that may potentially fail them. First, however, the state must justify why it consigns tens of thousands of children to a *public* education that in many instances decidedly fails them, an education over which individual states and school districts already allegedly provide oversight. Of course, funding will not solve all the difficulties that schools face. Indeed, even in countries where generous funding is provided to poorer school districts, an alarming achievement gap persists.[36] Nevertheless, where the state is able to redress inequities, it must.

Does Accountability Have Public Support?

I am well aware that formidable legal and constitutional obstacles presently hinder the direct funding of religious schools. The literature on this topic is immense, and I will not attempt a legal analysis here.[37] Even so, in the United States, public opinion in some measure appears to support the allocation of federal dollars to religious organizations that provide important social services.[38] Yet, while opinion polls often reveal that the public

is generally sympathetic to state monies allocated for religious organizations that provide housing, job training, and drug counseling, these same polls reveal widespread disapproval of funding for more marginal religious groups (e.g., Scientology, Hare Krishna movement, Children of God). If the state is not to discriminate in favor of certain religious organizations, deciding thereby which are more "orthodox" or "appropriate," it must be willing to fund equally and without prejudice. Yet this is where the difficulty emerges. Laura Underkuffler (2001) observes,

> Most citizens in the United States would probably not feel a tremendous violation of conscience or other anxiety if they were compelled, through taxation, to fund mainstream Christian, Jewish, or Islamic schools, as long as those institutions adhere to the mainstream values which the majority of citizens believe are critical to the formation of future citizens and with which they feel culturally comfortable . . . What if—instead—recipient institutions adhere to the tenets of radical sects, or reject the idea of civil authority, or teach ideas of religious hatred or racial bigotry? Would the funding of such schools be viewed so benignly?
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> (p. 585)

Of course governments at all levels attach conditions to the allocation of funds, yet it would appear difficult to refuse some groups and not others if the Establishment Clause is breached and the door is opened to direct aid for religious groups. Underkuffler (1995) continues, "It is difficult to justify greater opprobrium for 'sectarian' belief than for 'theistic' belief or belief of another description" (p. 978). Difficult indeed. Resistance to state monies going directly to religious organizations of any kind has come from many different quarters, including from more conservative-leaning recipients. In fact, some politically dominant religious groups eager to enjoy state largesse in order to advance their own schools and faith-based agendas have on occasion been incensed to discover that other religions are equally eligible for funding on the basis of equal treatment under the First Amendment.

In the final analysis, however, the fact that some conservative religious groups look upon equal treatment of other religious groups with disfavor is not sufficient warrant to exclude them. Moreover, politically dominant religious groups that aim to deny funding to other religious groups reveal a penchant for discrimination, for it can be easily shown that many of the historically privileged groups that are likely to oppose equal treatment of other religions have, even in the recent past, publicly and systematically opposed equal rights for racial and ethnic minorities, women, and gays and lesbians. Thus, the moral and legal onus will be on the religiously dominant

groups to demonstrate why their eligibility for state funding merits less scrutiny than religious communions with which they see themselves in opposition.

Objections

An accountability scheme that funds religious schools and provides an appropriate amount of oversight is one that I think bodes well for society in general, though it clearly has implications for the governance of many public schools as well. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework I elucidated is likely to be strenuously resisted owing to certain empirical realities. A number of objections might be made, but I want to consider two. I will call these the opt-out objection and the heavy-handedness objection.

The opt-out objection is this: both parents and schools are well aware that a great many requirements come attached to funding that will, ultimately, alter the school's character in some elemental way. Provided that religious schools have a critical mass necessary to staff and matriculate, many may simply choose to opt out of such a system as a small number of private schools already have in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where government controls are among the strictest. Opting out of a system of funding and oversight is a threat of considerable strength in the United States, which does not have a long history of *direct* funding of private education and accordingly where private religious schools have become accustomed to making do without state assistance.

So resistance to oversight is where we can expect the most resistance from religious schools, for it is in the very nature of being private that some of their uniqueness lies. Islamic schools will want to foster an Islamic identity or a set of practices and beliefs not addressed by public schools, and the same applies to any other private school that operates according to a particular worldview or philosophy. What makes non-public schools special is the prerogative and freedom they have to explore the perspectives informed by their respective texts and traditions and to integrate these perspectives into the curriculum.[39] Thus, it would appear that the state has interests that, at times, will conflict with school interests.

But consider the following. First, a majority of private religious schools already submit themselves to minimal state oversight when voluntarily seeking accreditation. Private schools know that they stand to gain at least as much as they think they lose when raising their standards to meet state requirements. In the United States, where most fledgling private schools (including Islamic ones) anxiously seek out state accreditation, making certain educational norms compulsory for all schools seems a small stretch. Second, one

ought to consider the state funding and minimal governance in Cleveland and Milwaukee, where means-tested vouchers are given to poor parents that enable them to attend schools of their choice.[40] Many, but not all, voucher recipients choose to enroll their children in private religious schools. The participating schools are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of civil rights laws, and the fundamental (religious) character of these schools changes very little if at all. While state oversight in these schools is quite minimal, I believe that these highly imperfect experiments hint at possible salutary outcomes if greater state oversight were the norm. Restrictions on what private religious schools can do would probably increase, yet many changes would require only minimal compliance, such as allowing opt-out provisions for religious activity participation.

The second, and more serious, objection concerns heavy-handedness. Here, the United States would do well to consider cases of state governance from abroad. Sometimes these cases demonstrate that multiple levels of bureaucratic governance capriciously change with the politics of the time—thereby creating greater *instability* in the process (Walford 2001a). What is more, greater government oversight, for all that it offers in the way of seeking to ensure just outcomes for all children, may nevertheless be highly discriminatory.

The reader may recall from my previous discussion of Belgium and the Netherlands what some of the state requirements are, but several deserve repeating. Total government funding in the Netherlands requires the following (see Walford 2001a, pp. 366–367; 375–376):

1. A "school plan" must be approved by the Education Inspectorate.
2. This plan must be able to meet minimal enrollment requirements as well as accurately predict the school's growth over the subsequent *fifteen* years.
3. New schools must be able to demonstrate that no school of a similar character exists within five kilometers of the proposed site.
4. The number of teachers for each school, their salaries, and the conditions of employment are determined by the government.
5. All schools in the Netherlands (excepting a handful of private international schools) must publicize their academic performance.
6. All schools in the Netherlands must establish a participation council with equal numbers of staff and parent representatives.
7. All schools are subject to regular inspections to ensure compliance.

Clearly, there are many impressive features to the above stipulations. Importantly, private schools may not charge "top up" fees in order to ensure equity. Moreover, the publicized scores of all schools take into account value-added

criteria, making adjustments in school performance on the basis of the concentration of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Funding for disadvantaged pupils also comes to nearly twice the amount for advantaged children. Equally significant is the fact that government oversight guarantees that only qualified staff is hired.

Yet the reader may also remember that these rules and regulations may change quickly and dramatically, as they did in the Netherlands during the early 1990s. Some schools eligible for funding one year were not eligible for funding the following year. Also many schools, owing to low enrollments, were forced to merge with other schools to avoid being closed down. Often these schools were of a different denominational, or even nondenominational, character. From 1994 to 1996, primary schools were reduced by 10 percent, while secondary schools were reduced by 30 percent during the same time period (Walford 2001b, pp. 127–128; 2001a, p. 368). Many denominational schools no longer offer specific religious instruction but have resorted to mere factual information about world religions because of the severe shortage of teachers who are themselves religious (Dronkers 1995; Walford 2001b). Moreover, a highly secularized population typically favours religious schools for reasons having to do with proximity and perceived academic rigor and prestige. In any case, while secularization of religious schools may be a desirable aim for liberals, there is no obvious reason why more secular religious schools are desirable, or indeed, whether such a thing even makes sense.

This evidence from the Netherlands reveals two things: (1) empirical findings of the Dutch Inspectorate typically reveal the rather liberal character of religious schools, and (2) popular political opinion can, at times, be more than mildly xenophobic, resulting in pressure to close some religious (often Islamic) schools. There is no comparable tension in the United States. Be that as it may, far more religious schools in the United States than in the Netherlands are likely to evince characteristics that do not facilitate reasonableness and autonomy. Therefore, one will need to consider whether the risks of heavy-handedness actually outweigh those of not holding schools accountable for the quality of education that children receive. Because one does not need to look far to document abuses of power unduly concentrated in the state, a system of checks and balances will need to be built into the exercise of public authority in order to avert discriminatory action and heavy-handedness.

Finally, state oversight need not translate as monopolization or as an attempt to crush local initiative; state governance does not mean that options become fewer or that local variation becomes stifled. A vast panoply of educational options will continue to exist, albeit circumscribed by an inclusive accountability scheme with expectations for all schools. In light of the above,

concerns about too much government control need surely give us pause. Yet, in education and health care (perhaps other crucial areas, too), I sense a much greater threat to a child's well-being if power is concentrated in *private* hands, which are accountable to no one but parents and investors.[41]

Islamic Schools

The lessons to be learned from Dutch Islamic schools are instructive. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Islamic schools, owing to a target population of low socioeconomic standing, struggle to meet the demands of an increasingly conservative government (with respect to immigration), and their survival is in some doubt. Especially in light of recent policy initiatives, it is extremely dubious whether Islamic schools will ever be able to achieve the kind of Islamic ethos their founders and parents desire. Dutch Islamic schools have had to make do with a teaching staff that is often 80 percent non-Muslim, which profoundly affects the possibility of maintaining a distinctive Islamic character within the school. Furthermore, unable to maintain a critical mass of students or native parents to fill school board requirements, some Islamic schools face being forced to close down or merge with other schools. These significant outcomes, desirable to some perhaps, but clearly not to others, must be carefully considered.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the case for funding Islamic schools is strong given all I have argued vis-à-vis the limited benefits of cultural coherence, the well-being of children and both the state's and the child's interests in reasonableness and autonomy. Further, considering that Islamic schools are allowed to exist in the private sector, the choice is either to ignore them or to fund them and provide oversight with the right aims in mind. Brighouse (2007) speaks eloquently to this:

> The government can, and should, use the power to fund schools in a way that supports those Islamic schools most likely to promote engagement with the mainstream culture (because those are the schools which are the most likely to promote democratic character in their children best) . . . Funding the schools helps to deprive sectarian entrepreneurs of the imagery and anecdotes suggesting that the state has contempt for Islam; it strengthens the market position of a kind of schooling which reflects Islamic values, but does so without separating itself from the common project of educating all children; and it does these things without consigning children to a more sectarian schooling than they would otherwise experience.

Other arguments for funding Islamic schools are equally compelling. Empirical evidence in Belgium and the Netherlands strongly suggests that

Muslims occupy the lowest place in society in general and schools in particular. This predicament is only exacerbated by the tracking mechanisms in public schools, the low expectations and even cynicism among teachers toward minority pupils, the omissions of Islamic cultural contributions to Western civilization in school curricula, and the instances of racism that Muslim children regularly encounter (Merry 2005a). In the United States as well, Muslims are being singled out for employment discrimination, hate incidents, and security harassment and surveillance, and the popular press routinely maligns and demonizes Islam (Malkawi 2004; Cesari 2004; Pitts 2004; Moore 1998, 2002).

Islamic schools can and do aid in providing a safe and supportive environment in which children are better able to focus on learning than on worrying about what others think. However, because of the many financial and administrative struggles that most Islamic schools in the United States face (Badawi 2006), a safe and supportive environment—not to mention a strong academic formation—may not be a guarantee. One study suggests that many Islamic schools are closed down within five years of their opening for reasons having to do with petty power struggles and rancor over how to spend scarce resources, or needless divisiveness over curricular content (Keyworth 2004, p. 24). My conjecture on these matters is that funding and oversight of Islamic schools would likely have ameliorating rather than harmful effects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the education of all children is in the public interest and therefore it is the state's responsibility to ensure that its children receive a quality education. I have called for funding and oversight of religious schools on the grounds that the state does potential harm to some children by refusing to monitor what all schools do. This is because some parents and schools actively work against the promotion of autonomy and reasonableness in children. I have also attempted to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the benefits that are likely to accrue to children regardless of the type of school they attend.

I have further argued that funding religious schools will impugn the questionable difference between public and private schooling. Such funding will lend credence to religious perspectives in the public sphere that will only portend healthier outcomes for all citizens, including atheists. This is because an inflexible separation of church and state only discourages the deeply religious from invoking the discourse of reason in dialoguing with others. Such unyielding separation is also very likely to fuel unfettered fanaticism and suspicion toward a state that excludes religion.[42] Despite all

of the lip service paid to religion in government—including, currently, a president who claims to be a born-again evangelical Christian—little if any credence is given to religion in American public schools. In one sense, this is a healthy reaction against the idea of a state religion and ought to be maintained, but in another sense, this arrangement has led to a marked *increase* in religious practice in private life that has been exploited by charismatic leaders eager to mobilize political will toward ideologically divisive ends (Fraser 1999). Whereas organized religious activity has been on the decline in every other industrialized country, religiosity has been on the rise in the United States (Rosenblum 2000),[43] and one very important reason for which is the exclusion of religion from public education.

My arguments have important implications for the practices of public schools as well, for while there are broad provisions for teaching about religion in public schools, these are usually routinely ignored or sedulously avoided in order to avert controversy. This is unfortunate, I believe, because rightly or wrongly the exclusion of religious perspectives not only results in a paler rendering of multicultural education but also convinces cultural and religious minorities that public schools are not serious about the respect and tolerance they preach (Zine 2000; Haynes et al. 2003; Farish 2000). The inclusion of religion in public school education would likely tame the feelings of rejection and illegitimacy that religious conservatives experience. Such inclusion may also reduce the urge to homeschool (thus avoiding *any* kind of accountability concerning what is taught or how) or to enroll children in schools which are committed to immunizing children from different points of view.[44] Finally, I would conjecture that more *public* recognition of religious perspectives would likely mitigate the more radical propensities that flourish and go largely unchecked in a number of religious schools and especially in homeschooling. Indeed, there is a direct correspondence between exclusion of religious communities from the public sphere and the nourishing of robust countercultural identities including, militant Islamist ones. A more inclusive approach to religious schools is likely to mute those antagonisms.[45]

Even so, I am aware that many will have reason to argue against both the *feasibility* and, for many parents, the *desirability* of state oversight for several reasons. These range from a perhaps radically altered school character to parental choice (which often regrettably takes the form of its crudest expression, "white flight") to stubborn local control (teachers' unions often being the most adamant supporters of the status quo; see Loveless 2000). Finally, if we are serious about the role that public schools ought to play, we shall have to appraise the accountability mechanisms themselves before we apply them broadly to religious schools. If the state is structured in such a way

as to lend itself to unfairness and inconsistently applied accountability measures, advocates of religious schools are justified in exercising caution about seeing that system extended onto their own schools, which may struggle financially but nevertheless enjoy relative administrative sovereignty.[46]

Many will object to my arguments, claiming, for instance, that the solution is not to fund religious schools, but to uncouple the public school from local property taxes or to raise the accountability expectations on the "failing" school performance. *I unreservedly support these proposals.* From all that I have argued, I fully endorse a move toward national accountability of all state-supported schools.[47] Yet, given the reality of many public schools in the United States, an idealized view of public schools as the unique agent producing civic responsibility, economic self-reliance and autonomy and reasonableness seems at the very least naïve. Public schools certainly play a special role in fostering democratic forms of expression, but one must not conflate an idealized liberal education with what is unevenly on offer in actual public schools.

All indications are that the current schooling structures in the United States are unlikely to change in the near future. In the meantime, some parents will insist not only that they have the duty to educate their children, but that they have the prerogative to do so in religious schools. Such claims are buttressed by appeals to pluralism and judicial decisions favoring parental prerogatives. Many of these parents are also arguing that the state ought to assist in funding these schools as a matter of fairness. I am arguing (a) because not all religious schools can be counted upon to cultivate a capacity for reasonableness and autonomy, and (b) because parents do not unfailingly choose what is best for their children, *state oversight is necessary*. It remains now only to consider the direction that Islamic schools can be expected to take given all that I have said about cultural identity, well-being, parental prerogatives and state oversight. I will argue that one way to do that is to consider the role that Catholic schools have played in Western Society. As I will show, Catholic schools share a salient resemblance to Islamic schools.

CHAPTER 7

Islamic Schools and the Future

> It is rash [to] condone or condemn certain kinds of separate school solely on grounds of philosophical principle. Much depends on how the institutions actually operate, and what their effects actually are on pupils and the broader community.
>
> Terrence McLaughlin

I began this book by purporting prima facie reasons to see Islamic schools as a different case compared with other types of religious schools. Yet I have proceeded as though those reasons hardly mattered, for despite the unwelcome attention Islamic schools have received in the European press, they are not, in my view, a special case. Devout Muslim parents share similar characteristics with parents of other religions who are eager to school their children in a culturally coherent environment in order to cultivate a strong religious identity. Further, the oversight (or neglect) of Islamic schools operates more or less in the same way as it does for non-Islamic ones. As I discussed in Chapter 2, in both the Netherlands and Belgium, all Islamic schools must follow the national curriculum because they are fully funded by the state and are subject to regulations regarding staff, facilities, and curricular content. In the Unites States, Islamic schools are supported through tuition charges, fund-raising efforts, and the patronage of individual or corporate sponsors. In some locations, vouchers have provided a fourth alternative. The vast majority of American Islamic schools endeavor to conform to state requirements and incorporate textbooks and curricular materials used in public schools or in other well-established private schools. Accrediting agencies monitor—albeit to a limited extent—their progress.

But what can one say about the future of Western Islamic schools in an age of heightened tensions between the West and the Muslim world? Because Islamic schools have so much in common with other denominational schools, perhaps a comparative glance at another, once embattled, religious minority

will shed some light on this question. I believe one can surmise the direction that Islamic schools will go in by considering the experience of Catholic schools in the United States. I do not have the space here to provide an exhaustive history, but I will show some remarkable parallels. In fact, the current resistance to funding Islamic schools in many European countries mirrors the resistance in the United States to Roman Catholic schools during the mid-nineteenth century. Obviously, the geopolitics are remarkably different,[1] but in the main, the arguments brought to bear against Islamic schools echo those against Catholic schools in the United States more than a century ago.[2]

Catholic Schools

For as long as schools have existed, Catholic schools have been privileged in the religiously homogeneous Belgium, while in the Netherlands, they were licensed to form their own schools as early as 1848 and have received funding from the state since 1917, when a Catholic-Calvinist majority coalition chartered the new Dutch constitution. Across the Atlantic, the reality was dramatically different. American Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century, agitated by the decidedly Protestant ethos in public (common) schools,[3] argued for funding of their schools on the grounds that Protestant Bible translations (without appropriate commentary and church sanctioning) were unsuitable for Catholic children.[4] Despite the heroic efforts of, inter alia, Bishop Hughes, their efforts were spectacularly unsuccessful and anti-Catholic (or, anti-Irish, anti-Italian) sentiment was fierce well into the twentieth century. Opposition toward Irish Catholics in nineteenth-century New England was particularly violent (Tyack 2003; Fraser 1999; Nasaw 1979).

Today, American Catholic schools are a diverse assortment of primary and secondary schools, some catering to a wealthy elite, but most struggling to survive and serving an extremely diverse, including in many parishes, mostly non-Catholic, student body. Studies of Catholic schools have noted the sense of community, purposeful leadership, involvement of parents, and shared values that prevail among staff and families, and one begins to understand how these factors actually serve to *enhance* the quality of education by providing a tightly knit community (Grace 2002; Dronkers 1995; Bryk et al. 1993). In fact, Catholic schools have long been seen to promote not only the spiritual but also the cultural and economic capital that society has come to value. Studies have found that relative to public schools, American Catholic schools have stronger academic course offerings for *all* (and not only high-track) students, demonstrate more teacher interest in students, and maintain a much greater sense of order and discipline (Gamoran 1992; Lee & Bryk 1988).[5] Nearly all Catholic schools enjoy tax exemption status but

hire teachers who work, in many instances, for poverty-level wages. However, many claim that this does not argue against the quality of the schools. On the contrary, many Catholic schoolteachers and administrators demonstrate a noteworthy level of devotion and dedication. The best Catholic schools rank among the very best schools in many states. In the United States, these are often located in wealthier suburbs.

Many studies show that Catholic schools lead by example with their egalitarian practices, often educating a broader cross section of American society than most public schools do (Cibulka et al. 1982). In several studies (Greeley 1982; Coleman & Hoffer 1987), it was found that Catholic schools—owing to their tightly regimented curriculum, strong community and family networks, committed head leadership, discipline, and higher expectations—were consistently able to outperform schools with comparable student populations.[6] This seemed especially true with students from a lower socioeconomic background and led Andrew Greeley (1982) to assert, "Catholic schools have their seeming success with blacks and Hispanics because they are geared to work with the upwardly mobile 'poor'" (p. 77). Some studies (Morris 1995, 1997, 1998) have also suggested that the more the Catholic school reflects a strong internal Catholic ethos (as opposed to a more open, pluralistic ethos), the more academically effective the schools generally are.

Yet, whereas most Catholic schools once maintained a very tightly knit Catholic subculture, employing only Catholic teachers and schooling mainly Catholic children, this is often no longer the case. One may locate at least two reasons for this. First, an increasingly secular populace, particularly in Western Europe and French Canada, coupled with the "liberalization" of the Catholic Church following Vatican II (1962–1965),[7] has led to a much stronger laity involvement, which has changed the character of Catholic schools. Second, both the commitment to social justice among Catholic educators[8] and the rapidly changing demographics in Western societies—notably in large cities because of white flight—has meant that many Catholic schools have a large, if not majority, non-Catholic student body. In many cities (e.g., Rotterdam, Antwerp, Brussels), some Catholic schools host a majority of poor Muslim students. Indeed, the ability of some Catholic schools to remain open depends entirely on their largely non-Catholic student enrollment. In other cases, one Catholic ethnic group (e.g., Polish) has been replaced by another (e.g., Mexican).

Concerns over the social divisiveness of Catholic schools because of the perceived allegiance to Vatican authority have proven to be largely unfounded (Conroy 2001, 2003). Indeed, like parents in Belgium and the Netherlands, American parents only sometimes choose Catholic schools for religious

reasons. The main reasons have to do with the perceived academic excellence and discipline such schools appear to have. As I previously highlighted, additional research (Short 2002) has shown that many religious schools are no more likely to promote social divisiveness than public schools. To the charge that Catholic schools "cream" the best students away from public schools and wrongly attribute their success to a "Catholic school effect," the evidence is ambiguous (Lauder & Hughes 1999). While it cannot be denied that some Catholic schools engage in indirect forms of mild discrimination in their admission procedures (e.g., preferring Catholics to non-Catholics, say, or perhaps favoring students with strong previous academic achievement), the social teachings of the Catholic Church and the explicit mission of Catholic schools to strive for equity in disadvantaged urban areas argue strongly against this.

Where funding and oversight is concerned, a case in the Netherlands and Belgium need not be made, because in the Netherlands nearly all religious schools have enjoyed full funding since the 1917 constitution was chartered—provided they met rigorous requirements—while in Belgium Catholic schools are both historically favored and heavily subsidized.[9] Hence, the need to make a case for funding and oversight of Catholic schools pertains principally to the United States. The call for funding of Catholic schools has been made more generally by those who would argue that religious schools, far from merely advancing individual advantage, help to constitute and make provisions toward the public good, provisions that are particularly favorable to the poor (Conroy 2003; Vitullo-Martin 1979; Grace 2000; Bryk et al. 1993; Irvine & Foster 1996). In other words, whereas previously critics felt that Catholic schools provided intrinsic advantages closely tied to their unique cultural capital and school ethos, much has been done to show that the mission of Catholic schools far exceeds the bounds of the Catholic faithful.[10]

Of course, not all Catholic schools perform so marvelously, and many who have received a Catholic education harbor bitter memories of their own Catholic schooling. A product of Catholic schooling himself, James Dwyer has been one very outspoken critic of both Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant schools in recent times. He argues that these schools, generally:

> Infringe children's basic liberties by imposing excessive restrictions on students' intellectual and physical freedom and fostering excessive repression of desires and inclinations. [Further], they fail to promote, and in fact actively discourage, children's development of the generalized capacity for independent and informed critical thinking (i.e., "intellectual autonomy"). Third, they foster in students dogmatic, inflexible modes of thought and expression

> and, at least in the case of Fundamentalist schools, an intolerance for persons who hold viewpoints different from their own. Fourth, these schools have adverse psychological effects for many students, including diminished self-esteem, extreme anxiety, and pronounced and sometimes life-long anger and resentment (1998, 14–15).

I have little doubt that Dwyer's remarks ring true for a great many Catholic schools, as they do for many Jewish, Hindu and Islamic schools. While many religious schools of all sorts contribute immeasurably to the well-being of their pupils, clearly others do not. Thus while I am generally in agreement with the positive assessment of Catholic schools that several studies provide, Dwyer stands among other alumni of Catholic schools (and I include some of my own experience in religious schools, too) in offering powerful anecdotal testimony that challenges a singularly favorable assessment. This only strengthens my conviction that state funding and oversight of religious schools is necessary.

Even so, many Catholic schools do contribute to the autonomy and reasonableness of their students by inculcating a counter-consciousness that challenges market materialism, mindless hedonism, and unchecked individualism (Grace 2002, p. 239). Nevertheless, many Catholic schools now face an identity crisis, one that has already called into question the distinctive character and mission of Catholic schools, which are no longer peopled by a majority of Catholics. This is a balancing act to be sure, one that must weigh both "principled integrity [and] pragmatic survival" (p. 103). Catholic schools are thus at a crossroads, particularly in the United States, where no direct funding is available from the state and the church hierarchy seems ambivalent about supporting the work of Catholic schools beyond its own parochial patronage. Skeptics argue that state funding may further erode its distinct mission and character;[11] only experimentation will tell.

Evaluating Islamic Schools

The comparisons between Catholic and Islamic schools are both striking and instructive in more ways than those I have discussed in these few pages. Even so, important differences exist, and not all criticisms are easily silenced. In the following paragraphs I will briefly address a few lingering concerns related to Islamic schools that continue to surface. They are (a) lack of diversity, (b) unproven academic achievement, (c) discriminatory enrollment and hiring practices, and finally, (d) an inability to foster autonomy and reasonableness.

To take the issue of diversity, it is certainly true that the vast majority of Islamic schools—like most Jewish schools—host a less than diverse student

population. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 4, a culturally homogeneous school need not endorse isolationism or be socially divisive. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that Islamic schools might not one day play host to a wide variety of students similar to contemporary Catholic and Protestant schools. Indeed, unlike Judaism, Sikhism, and Hinduism, Islam purports itself to be a *universal* religion—that is, its message is intended for all irrespective of cultural, ethnic, political, or linguistic affiliation. The growing pluralization within Islamic schools—as is evidenced in interfaith initiatives and sports and academic (e.g., forensics) competitions—will allow for even more perspectives to be heard than those that presently are.

To the question of academic achievement, it is true that for the moment Islamic schools in the Netherlands (no comparable studies are available from Belgium) do not appear to be performing better than comparable schools (non-Islamic schools with a similar student population and identical socioeconomic status; see Driessen 1997, 2002a). Yet, considering that 96 percent of their students are from disadvantaged backgrounds—and we know that a strong correlation exists between parental education levels, low socioeconomic status and academic attainment (Lareau 2003; Rothstein 2004)—this finding is not surprising. In the United States, on the other hand, academic success is something routinely reported in newsletters and on websites by the better resourced Islamic schools, and a very high percentage of graduates from Islamic high schools enroll in university. Again, this is unsurprising given the relatively high socioeconomic status of many American Islamic school students. Therefore, one cannot speak of an academic "value added" from Islamic schools with any certainty at this point in time.

To the question of alleged discriminatory enrollment, it is true that Islamic schools in Belgium and the Netherlands typically cater exclusively to the high demand from within the Muslim community. Conversely, a small percentage of non-Muslims attend Islamic schools in the United States. Yet admissions policies at most Islamic schools extend to anyone who applies, and they are not to be faulted if non-Muslims have yet to queue up to get in.[12] The future is likely to bring about changes in this regard, as indeed it has for Catholic schools, particularly as parents will inevitably be drawn to schools known for strong academic achievement.[13]

On the issue of discriminatory hiring procedures, there is virtually no evidence to corroborate this charge. In contrast to fundamentalist Christian schools in both the United States and Europe, Islamic schools will hire non-Muslim teachers, and most schools are willing to make only minor alterations to the existing state or national curriculum (Walford 2002, pp. 413–415). Further, as I discussed in Chapter 2, some 80 percent of Islamic schoolteachers in the Netherlands are non-Muslim, because of a lack of qualified

Muslim teachers. In the United States, qualified teachers who are Muslim are in greater supply and are favored, but Islamic schools regularly hire non-Muslim teachers who are both qualified and willing to abide by certain moral standards, for example, modesty or religious sensitivity.[14] In any event, Islamic schools are able, in all three countries, to engage in preferential hiring of Muslims on the merits of constitutional guarantees.

But can Islamic schools answer the charge that segregated schooling and withdrawal from a "morally bankrupt" society will undermine a child's chances of receiving an education best suited for autonomy and reasonableness? After all, an autonomy-facilitating education requires that choices be available to students through an expanded range of opportunities that can be provided in an environment that welcomes difference and collaborates with a just state that equitably regulates learning opportunities. There is certainly a religiously and ethnically homogeneous student body in many Islamic schools that frustrates encounters with difference.[15] It is also true that in many Islamic schools there are pedagogies that rightly elicit dismay. Chris Hewer (2001) writes that a "distinctive epistemology" thought to be "given and immutable" underlies the curriculum of some Islamic schools and thus knowledge is something "existent and defined which is transmitted in the educational process" (p. 522). I also discussed in Chapter 3 that while Muslim students are often encouraged to think about their civic duties and the democratic process, they are often motivated by *da'wa*, which for many is the injunction to spread Islam. Whether or not *da'wa* is compatible with the demands of reciprocity and the burdens of judgement will depend largely on what one believes *da'wa* to entail.

To these criticisms I would conjecture that with a little time and some necessary growing pains, a larger number of Islamic schools will provide more of the sort of autonomy-facilitating education that a liberal education demands than those that currently do. One of the ways this will happen, as I argued in Chapter 3, is by informing children in Islamic schools (certainly by their first year in high school) about the debates that occur among Muslims concerning the range of meanings of culture, the various interpretations of the Islamic faith, and the disjuncture that exists between idealized Islamic teaching and the context-specific practices of ordinary Muslims. In a number of Islamic high schools, this is already well under way. But it is also important to stress that autonomy can be understood in ways unfamiliar to liberals. A wide range of choices surround Muslims living in Western societies, yet autonomy sometimes requires *restraint* on choice. For example, devout Muslims who fast during Ramadan are aware that they do not have to, but by choosing to participate in this habit they exercise autonomy through *denial*.[16] The same can be said of dietary customs and clothing restrictions.

If we understand autonomy to mean the ability to take a critical distance from one's inherited values, commitments, and beliefs; the ability to size up different claims on truth; and the ability to revise one's views, Western Islamic schools seem to me as well equipped as any other to contribute adequately to the goals of a liberal education. Certainly, being a student in an Islamic school is no guarantee of autonomy or reasonableness,[17] but as I argued in Chapter 6, state funding and oversight will likely help to foster this outcome.

As I argued in Chapter 4, though Muslim children will likely acquire hybrid identities and change and adapt to their environment, Islamic schools do ameliorate the effects of social exclusion and reinforce cultural and religious identities in ways that public schools can not. On a certain reading of cultural coherence, this is arguably the first critical step toward an education for autonomy. Autonomy, I have argued, is not eclipsed by Islamic schooling and may be, in the long term, *enhanced* inasmuch as the students' complex identities may be affirmed, allowing for greater self-esteem and uninhibited learning. In a pluralist society, toleration allows individuals and communities to retain and promote their own values. Toleration must have its limitations, and internal restrictions that unduly limit the exercise of free will or that impose an exorbitant price on exiting a community must be challenged. Islamic school teachers and administrators must provide the internal resources that children need in order to be autonomously reasoning persons at a minimum who are *capable* of making choices that may wander from the parents' beliefs.

Many Islamic schools are beginning to foster the outcomes that many Catholic schools have been shown to provide and that society values. These outcomes will enrich, rather than balkanize or disunite, a society that cherishes pluralism, respects the prerogatives of parents, and recognizes that there are many ways to serve the common good. Yet, there continue to exist many religious schools – among them Islamic ones – that fail to provide children with an education that even comes close to meeting state requirements for public schools, to say nothing of promoting the well-being of the child or facilitating autonomy and reasonableness. Because this is so, I have argued that an appropriately funded accountability scheme is warranted. In providing religious schools with appropriate levels of funding and oversight, Western societies demonstrate that they value the quality of education all children receive irrespective of the school they attend.

Notes

Acknowledgments

1. Mark Halstead is a noteworthy exception. He has written numerous articles on issues pertaining to the perspectives and sensitivities of Muslims in Western societies. In particular, see Halstead 1995a.
2. Of course it is a debatable point whether the voices that educational ethnographers choose to include or exclude in their writing and the ideological purposes they co-opt accurately reflect the reality as well.

Chapter 1

1. This skepticism does not prevent a large number of Muslims from wanting to relocate to the West, often for reasons having to do with better educational and economic prospects. It is also interesting and ironic that American Muslims rallied behind the then governor George W. Bush to help give him the White House in 2000. Key to their support was Bush's embrace of faith-based initiatives. The previously comfortable relationship between American Muslims and the current American administration—perhaps unprecedented in its callousness toward the interests of Islamic populations abroad and now the civil liberties of Muslim Americans at home—has since engendered a widespread sense of unease.
2. France is an obvious exception.
3. Many religious parents, for instance, strongly feel that academic learning must include a holistic spiritual formation. Certainly, for religious schools, this often goes hand in hand with a dutiful interest in preserving cultural norms, including learning about one's distinctive history. But it may also involve the strong proscription of certain types of learning, including certain forms of art and sex education and even coeducational learning environments.
4. Rawls refers to the reasonable as a basic intuitive moral idea and states, "In each case the reasonable has priority over the rational and subordinates it absolutely" (Rawls 2001, p. 82).
5. At the risk of invoking a tautology, by *capacity* I mean a collection of talents or aptitudes gleaned over an undisclosed period of time that have an enabling

effect. Importantly, one's capacity may be significantly impaired owing to the debilitating effects of fear or coercion, especially during early childhood.

6. Jeff Spinner-Halev notes (2000, p. 18) that it is too simple to tell religious people "they need to leave their religious views at home," especially when we know that affiliations of various kinds will potentially have a powerful effect on one's political involvement, including the type of involvement it is likely to be. Disallowing religious persons from arguing from religiously inspired opinions in public debate often foments sectarian proclivities. Yet, while reasonable persons may be permitted to appeal to nonpublic reasons (e.g., religious dogma) in the arena of public debate (e.g., over the use of embryonic stem cells), reasonable persons must provide *publicly accessible* reasons when attempting to impose the rule of law. The reasons for doing so follow upon what is meant by the burdens of judgment. Coercive political action against those who cannot access nonpublic reasons, say, those of scripture, is a flagrant violation of the freedom of conscience and forestalls any chance of a meaningful debate.
7. For example, Eamonn Callan (1997, 2002) has developed important arguments concerning the nonservility of educated subjects.
8. There are varying degrees of exclusion, including practices of exemption and accommodation. Swaine (2001) gives a useful discussion.
9. However, some have argued that respect may ask of religious persons more than their dogmatic constitutions permit (Brighouse 1998a). Further, many view tolerance and mutual respect, the de rigueur components of a liberal education, as equally ideologically narrow (and hence, illiberal) owing to an abiding suspicion against the "doctrine of exposure as first principle." Take Stanley Fish (2000): "This is where the indoctrination comes in—not at the level of urging this or that belief but at the more subliminal level at which what is urged is that encountering as many ideas as possible and giving each of them a run for its money is an absolutely good thing. What the children are being indoctrinated in is distrust of any belief that has not been arrived at by the exercise of their unaided reason as it surveys all the alternatives before choosing one freely with no guidance from any external authority" (p. 93).
10. Meira Levinson avers, "Detached from the inevitably partial values, beliefs, and commitments of children's families and home communities, the liberal school makes available an essential space in which children are enabled to start defining themselves on their own terms, encouraged—as well as repeatedly challenged—by an educational community in which norms of autonomy have a central place" (Levinson 1999, p. 62).
11. Amy Gutmann claims that the aims of democratic education do not "deny the value of genuine differences that are associated with diverse ways of individual and communal life"; but even so one senses a demarcation telling us what kind of diversity is allowed and what kind is not.
12. This does not require that their cultural attachments will be uniform or static. Nor do one's cultural attachments preclude the possibility that for some people, human flourishing is obtained through being *opposed* to many aspects of that

selfsame culture. This tension, misconstrued by some to be misanthropy or a form of incorrigible self-loathing, enables some to experience a level of well-being that they otherwise might not enjoy.

13. Callan (1997) adds that some religious traditions encourage a spiritual formation that leaves us with "the puzzling phenomenon of many people who seem to prize the rights that constitute their sovereignty as a way of renouncing all aspiration to autonomy" (p. 226). Elsewhere, however, Callan (2000) argues strongly for the *promotion* of autonomy (and not merely its facilitation *pace* Brighouse) to secure legitimacy by "[countervailing] the effects of nonautonomous belief and preference formation" (p. 146). For millions of individuals, certain beliefs are fundamental to the way they approach life, including the education of their children. Indeed, if we have a community that does not appear to value autonomy but rather happiness and life fulfillment as they know and understand it (and religious schooling is one way to achieve this), it is doubtful whether liberals have a priori grounds on which to question the priority of other goods. Fundamentalist believers in particular, rather than allowing others to influence their conception of the good life, are more likely to be dismissive of liberal aims and given to convincing others that they are wrong (Burtonwood 2003; de Jong and Snik 2002; de Ruyter 2001).
14. What remains a matter of considerable dispute is whether well-being is a psychological state of mind (informed, say, by needs and preferences) or an objective state of affairs. Griffin has provided a very judicious account in his *Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Many have argued that culture provides the means to achieve well-being provided that no harm is done to its members and persons possess the ability to quit their culture should they choose to. Doret de Ruyter invokes Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* and argues that human flourishing exists to the extent that an individual finds purpose and meaning in the pursuits he or she undertakes. These pursuits ought to reflect personal interest, including the interests of others over one's own. See de Ruyter (2004).

Chapter 2

1. Kemalism offers Turks a way of identifying with a culture synonymous with the former Ottoman Empire, but in purely secular and nationalist terms.
2. Germany and France each have two state-funded Islamic schools (France added an Islamic lycée in the fall of 2003), which is not remarkable. Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have a significant number of Islamic schools (18 in Denmark, 20 in Sweden, and well over 100 in the United Kingdom). In the United Kingdom, however, the vast majority of Islamic schools are independent schools that receive only partial or no state funds and are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Few Muslim families are able to afford even the modest fees, and schools open and close according to solvency (Parker-Jenkins 2002; Walford 2002; Hewer 2001). The Swedish government covers four-fifths of the

costs of Islamic schools, while in Denmark, state subsidies cover only two-thirds of the costs, but a further qualification is that Islamic schools are only open to Arab and Pakistani children, and the language of instruction is respectively Arabic and Urdu (Maréchal 2003; Pedersen 1996). This is contrary to the situation in the three countries I have chosen.

3. There are several other countries that make instruction about Islam available (e.g., Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, the Netherlands), but none do so on such a wide scale.
4. Several European countries have adopted strict policy changes that explicitly or implicitly target Muslim populations. In January 2004, under President Chiraq, France passed legislation officially banning all "ostentatious" religious displays or symbols in state schools. In accordance with a long-standing tradition of state "neutrality" (*laïcité*), the effort—begun in Creil in 1989, during the infamous *l'affaire du foulard*—to discourage the growing number of Muslim girls from wearing headscarves (*hijāb*) has finally resulted in a law forbidding students from wearing them. Across Europe, many more Muslim girls don the headscarf as a sign of solidarity. The Belgian prime minister has registered his alarm at this practice, while in Germany the state of Baden-Wurttemberg has officially banned all teachers from wearing the headscarf on the grounds that teachers are thereby seeking to unduly influence their students. What the headscarf symbolizes for some Muslims is the freedom of cultural and religious belief, while, for many Europeans, it signals the trampling of women's rights. These tensions were largely absent one generation ago.
5. Oaths may be taken on Islamic scriptures (Britain); religious television and radio programming is on the rise, and in some countries (e.g., the Netherlands), it is state supported; outside of francophone Belgium and France (and recently, the German state of Baden-Wurttemberg), dress code requirements have been relaxed, particularly with respect to the *hijāb* (though discrimination toward veiled Muslim women and bearded Muslim men in the workforce is still very real). Ritual slaughter laws also have been relaxed in several countries (e.g., England, France); land is increasingly being allocated for proper Muslim burial; the chaplaincy in prisons and hospitals is being expanded to include imams; and finally, *halāl* food is increasingly made available to children in schools with sizable populations of Muslim children. In the United States, Islamic insignia have been included in federal government symbols; an *Eid* stamp has been issued by the United States Post Office, and *iftar* dinners have taken place at the White House (Saeed 2002; Merry 2004; Ramadan 1999). There is even a hospital in Detroit (Riverview) that provides complete Islamic health and human services to any patient, including *halal* food, *Qur'āns* available on request, and prayer (*salāt*) offered in the meditation room. Many nurses also wear the *hijāb*.
6. Of particular concern to Dutch and Belgian policymakers and educators is the continued practice of "imported" spouses (usually brides) for the children of immigrants.

7. Its establishment can most certainly be linked to the refusal of two municipalities (St. Gilles and Schaerbeek) in Brussels to make provisions for Islamic instruction (Platti 1990; Nielsen 1992. These refusals were made because of the absence of an official representative recognized by the Belgian state to appoint teachers (the ICC was the de facto organ responsible for instructional appointments). Even so, subsequent lawsuits against these municipalities were successful, and by December 1989 both municipalities were taking steps to offer Islamic education to the children of the litigants. Though there has been some discussion of establishing other Islamic schools (notably in Antwerp), resistance to additional Islamic schools in Belgium has remained strong.
8. Cited in Dwyer & Meyer (1996), p. 236.
9. This form of instruction was abolished in August 2004.
10. Many Muslim children do attend religious instruction in the mosques, which can take up to 10 hours a week outside of regular class time.
11. The November 2006 elections yielded different results, with Christian Democrats (CDA), the Labour Party (PvdA), and the Socialist Party (SP) taking the most votes.
12. Van Gogh's notorious offences were directed at many religious groups and not only Muslims. Oddly, his irreverence was felt by many to epitomize Dutch ideas about freedom of speech and the lengths to which Dutch tolerance would go in protecting this freedom. Van Gogh's fateful collaboration with Ayaan Hirsi Ali in making the film *Submission* ultimately occasioned his demise. Indeed, the note pinned to his corpse was a death threat directed at Ali. She is widely seen by Muslims as having betrayed Islam (she embraced atheism several years ago), her family, and her culture. Ali, unsurprisingly, views it the other way around. See Ali (2006). She has since moved to the United States and works with the conservative think tank, American Enterprise Institute, in Washington, DC.
13. Though the university—which has now split into two separate locations—is not recognized by the Ministry of Education.
14. There are also "boarding schools" operated by groups such as *Milli Görüs* and *Nurçu*, which enjoy some success in recruiting youth failing in schools. However, both have the reputation for indoctrination.
15. Because there is no central agency through which Islamic schools operate (except the Clara Muhammad schools), it is difficult to keep track of their number. Estimates place the number of Islamic schools at anywhere between 200 and 400, though most are elementary schools.
16. The difference in attitude between Haddad & Lummis' study and GhaneaBassiri's study may have more to do with the percentage of participants who had been educated in the United States. The reasons for the dramatic growth in American Islamic schools mainly has to do with some parents' desire to provide a culturally and religiously coherent learning environment for their children as well as the relatively few legal obstacles community members face in establishing Islamic schools.

17. Some even rely on home schooling curricula, and home schooling for Muslims is certainly on the rise. See Malkawi 2004; Nimer 2002.
18. School boards also continue to be comprised mainly of men.
19. Homaira Bokhari, personal communication. Vouchers are tax dollars that are given to families that qualify—often through some sort of lottery—to use for the schools of their choice, including private religious schools. Not all private religious schools participate in the program. In 2005–2006 Milwaukee vouchers were worth $6,351 or the private school's operating and debt service cost per student, whichever was less.
20. Farrakhan gave what many believe to be his last public address in Detroit in February 2007.
21. www.islam-belgique.com/ghazali.cfm
22. More generally, there is a shortage of 10,000 teachers across the Netherlands, and the number is growing. Because of the economic recession, the number of students who want to become teachers is increasing. So the shortage manifests itself mainly in primary schools in the Randstad (the urbanized area of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, and Utrecht) and in secondary schools.
23. Compare this to the conservative *Gereformeerd vrijgemaakt* schools, for instance, which require that all of their teachers be members of the governing church. As it concerns the Jewish or evangelical community in the Netherlands, neither is very large relative to the Protestant and Catholic majority, which accounts for the comparable ease with which these schools are able to recruit teachers of the respective faiths and adapt their curricula to reflect their faith and culture in all subject matter. Evangelical schools have been organized on the claim that other Christian schools are so in name only.
24. One school that I visited had a 40 percent non-Muslim staff, but this was mainly because of its nonurban location.
25. This is entirely consistent, however, with the right to positive discrimination on the basis of religion and the empirical reality that Muslim applicants greatly outnumber non-Muslim applicants.
26. I repeatedly heard from teachers that parents will plead for their children to have additional opportunities to make up poor grades through extra credit work. Many Islamic schoolteachers consider their services a labor of love, and it is not uncommon to hear that some teachers, particularly at new schools, are earning poverty-level wages.
27. For example, 52 percent of the female Muslim converts in one study (Anway 1998) either had placed their children in Islamic schools or were homeschooling.
28. Only nondenominational state schools in Belgium receive total funding. Also, in addition to several international schools in Belgium (of the nine elite European schools, four are in Belgium), there are also a number of Foyer academies (Mcgrath & Ramler 2002; Bates 2000). The Foyer experiment combines three languages in instruction (in a certain pattern). Social interaction between autochthonous and allochthonous children also flourishes. It has been reported that the Foyer has worked remarkably well, even for immigrant children,

though its success (for example, with Italian students) has often resulted from "skimming" the best students from other schools (Phillip Hermans, personal communication). The language divide in Belgium means that the German-, French- and Dutch-speaking communities handle matters as they pertain to education. Education is simply not discussed on a national level but is left to the regional governments.

29. Flemish families in the Brussels region, numerically in a minority position, have found themselves without placement for their children in nearby Dutch-speaking schools. The reasons often have to do with French-speaking families (this includes many Muslim families) who are taking flight from schools with heavy concentrations of immigrants and enrolling in Dutch-language ones.
30. Wallonian policies have attempted to put more money in schools with higher minority concentrations, while Flemish policies have tried to "deconcentrate" schools, thereby expanding the responsibility to be shouldered by more schools.
31. In the mid-90s, some 80 percent of all primary schools received extra staff for disadvantaged pupils. See Mulder & Van der Werf (1997), p. 325.
32. Three reasons are likely for this. First, outside of priority or target areas, school staff were largely unaware of the extra resources. Second, no conditions were set for *how* schools would use extra staff or resources; the only criterion was that the schools submit a plan "describing problems, aims, activities, organizational structure and budget allocations." Third, while some improvements (e.g., class size reduction) were observable, these were not limited to the targeted groups but extended to all groups, thus maintaining the general achievement gap (Mulder & Van der Werf 1997). Some evidence suggests that the situation for disadvantaged autochthonous Dutch children, most of whom live in the rural northern provinces and count as 1.25 (which is a funding ratio; middle-class Dutch children count as 1.0, so working class children receive 25 percent more funding), has deteriorated even more than it has for the allochthonous pupils. See P. Tesser (2003, pp. 53–78).
33. The Educational Disadvantage Policy (*Onderwijsachterstandsbeleid*), which took over where the Educational Priority Policy (EPP) left off, gives more autonomy to the municipalities and local school boards. This portends more difficulties in assessing both the appropriation of funding and the achievement of disadvantaged students (Geert Driessen, personal communication).
34. In 1998, the Internal Security Service (ISS; *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, 1998) published a report on political Islam in the Netherlands. One of the domains the ISS studied was the education at Islamic schools. Specifically, it had concerns with the interference of foreign powers (e.g., Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia) and political-Islamic organizations in education. The results of the ISS' study showed that its suspicion was not completely unfounded. Some schools received substantial donations from the Al-Waqf al-Islami organization, which were used for the financing of student transport and teaching materials. This organization propagates a very orthodox politico-religious worldview and is intolerant toward liberal Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The ISS concluded that the number of

radical Muslims in the Netherlands was very small and that there is no need to fear a growing power and influence in the short run. For the longer term, however, the ISS expects these organizations to gain power as a consequence of the socioeconomic malaise, marginalization, and exclusion of Muslim immigrants. The results, it hypothesized, might be polarization and disruption of the process of integration.

35. Three Islamic schools in Amsterdam (Abraham El Khaliel, El Faroeq Omar, and At Taqwa) will be forced to close this year (2007) for reasons having to do with embezzlement and financial mismanagement that has affected the overall quality of the schools.
36. The Dutch parliament now has its first two Muslims, both in the Labour Party.
37. Public schools are funded by all three levels of government, and the funding ratio varies from state to state. New Hampshire registers at the low end of state funding with 8.9% while neighboring Vermont has the highest at 74.4%. Wisconsin is a more typical model, with roughly 55% of the funding coming from the state, 40% from the local district, and a mere 5% coming from the federal level. Only the state of Hawaii funds its schools more or less the same because the entire state represents one school district.
38. The de-Protestantization of American public schools (which some religious conservatives view as a secular humanist agenda to discredit religion in the public sphere) has, over the years, led to less and less explicit reference to religion during school hours. One usually does not find discussions facilitated about religion in public schools (except perhaps during social studies lessons when brief mention of world religions is made in reference to other countries) despite there being a rather extensive provision for schools to do so. Indeed, teaching *about* religion is required in nearly every state, including the requirement that students learn about the origins, basic beliefs, and practices of each faith; equally important is information regarding the historical context in which each religion arose and developed (Douglass 2000). Of course, this requirement does not guarantee that it will happen, or for that matter, that it will happen well.
39. Charter schools are another way that local communities organize and oversee the type of education available to local children, but the stability of charter schools is often questioned. Some states (e.g., Michigan) have begun to allow both public and private funding for charter schools, but as long as state funding is allowed, the school must adhere to the state curriculum, combining its own special strengths with other core subjects (David & Ayouby 2002, p. 134).
40. Vouchers must comply with three criteria: (a) statutes allowing for vouchers must have a secular legislative purpose, (b) its principal effect must not inhibit or advance religion, and (c) the statute must not foster excessive government entanglement with religion. These are the famous *Lemon* criteria. Other, arguably more successful initiatives (e.g., the rural voucher programs in Maine and Vermont, the McKay Scholarship Program in Florida, and the Scholarship Tax Credit in Arizona) are opening up newer ways for disadvantaged children to

avail themselves of private schooling. In Maine and Vermont, voucher recipients may not attend religiously affiliated schools.

41. Some states offer postsecondary enrollment options programs, which allow juniors and seniors to take free courses at a state university or other approved college for credit. Consequently Minnesota's lone Islamic school, al-Amal, has had difficulty retaining high school students beyond the ninth or tenth grade.
42. Parents also have to decide whether they want their children involved in extracurricular activities that the school may not provide. As is the case for public schools, American Islamic schools are only as good as their staff, facilities, and students' parents make them. Teachers and administrators know that the fiscal constraints of their schools limit the range of educational experiences their students are able to have.
43. Basic school facilities are a top priority for Islamic schools seeking accreditation. If a school has no sinks, eyewash, or acid cabinets for the science classes, this prevents the school from having the status it covets and creates an additional strain on the staff, which must forego pay raises so that the school building may be upgraded.
44. Belgian researchers typically look either to the Netherlands or France for statistical studies of this kind.
45. Parents' proficiency in the language of school instruction—which is required by law to be Dutch—greatly enhances the academic outcomes of children. Children who are saddled with more language help courses do poorer in school, on average, than those who are able to hit the ground running. In a slightly older study, Driessen demonstrated that between 92 and 97 percent of the parents with children in Islamic schools in the Netherlands were born abroad, that the informal language spoken between the children and their mothers was something other than Dutch for the vast majority, and that only a quarter of the number of these children received any kind of preschool care.
46. Several high school principals reported to me that their graduates are being accepted to very competitive universities.
47. It also means that the state may have greater say in hiring and firing procedures if the staff conducts itself in ways inconsistent with moral codes maintained by the school. I consider some of these tensions in Chapter 6.
48. Durkee (1987) surmised that the average lifespan of the Islamic schools at that time was a mere three years. The attrition rate is still high, but it is anyone's guess as to the number of schools that close within, say, five years due to shortage of funds or staff. Durkee claimed, "But for every unsuccessful school, another one or two spring up, because the need is great" (p. 61). It is not uncommon to hear of a small number of parents who try to organize an Islamic school on a shoestring budget. For most of these schools, it takes many years to own a building, have adequate school facilities, and employ a sufficient number of qualified teachers. Not every community can organize itself effectively and efficiently. For the moment, however, these obstacles are not slowing the process for dozens of communities across the United States.

49. Most Islamic schools seek to be accredited by the states in which they are established within a few years and, allowing for a greatly reduced school budget, schools usually emulate other reputable school models (this includes, among other things, parent-teacher conferences, state-standardized tests, learning targets for each grade level, and nationally recognized textbooks). Some educators are even encouraging a charter school model in order to receive government subsidies.
50. If the pillarization system were to be further dismantled, it would bode very badly for Islamic schools, as the constitutional guarantee of denominational equality would lose its efficacy. Yet the further unraveling of the Dutch pillarization system seems unlikely at this point given the broad support from the public, as well as influential political parties such as the center Christian Democrats (CDA), and the right-wing party (VVD).
51. It would be untrue to say that Muslims are being singled out on the issue of separate schools. Hindus, and evangelical Protestants in the Netherlands have also waged legal battles to win the right to establish separate schools, some of them lasting years (Walford 2001b, 2002). Still, Muslims *are* commonly seen as a threatening political presence in a way that the other groups are not.

Chapter 3

1. Salafi means the followers of the "Salaf," the title given to the companions of the Prophet and the pious Muslim leaders of the first four Caliphs or the first three generations of Islam. The more conservative the Islamic orientation, the more one believes that all interpretive truth derives from this early period in Islam's history. Reinterpretation (*ijtihād*) is therefore forbidden or limited only to an elite or '*ulemā*'. Salafi varieties of Islam (and one may add Jamaat at-Tabligh and Barelvi) tend to be ahistorical, decontextualized readings of Islam, and their idealized visions of an Islamic society place a great deal of stress on "purity" and an uncompromising observance of Islamic regulations.
2. It is necessary to distinguish between those who attempt to practice Islam and those, mainly in the West, who only see themselves as Muslim by virtue of their ethnic or national origin. Devout Muslims would likely assert that the latter are not really Muslims. However, many from either grouping do not see their Muslim identities as incompatible with Western values. Secularism among Muslims can take two forms: (a) Islam is nothing more than the cultural forms (including music, dance, dress, and manners) that comprise one's identity, or (b) Islam is to be confined to the private sphere and not to be mixed with politics. Secularists, as well as many progressive Muslims, are also willing to recognize man-made laws, democratic institutions, and embrace education in its modern and secular forms. See Saadallah (2004) for a more elaborate discussion.
3. Increasingly there are voices, notably Tariq Ramadan, who have incisively argued for the abrogation of this paradigm. Ramadan argues that this binary model fails to take account of different political arrangements today that make

the practice of the Islamic faith, for instance, more possible in Western contexts than is to be found in many Islamic countries, where the governments are often hostile to all religious freedom. See Ramadan (1999).

4. The Sunna, a collection of the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, serves as the model par excellence of morality for Muslims.
5. This alleged scientific hostility to religion is a very narrow reading of the history of scientific inquiry. Many scientists then (Faraday, Newton), as now (Polkinghorn, Hawking), were interested in addressing questions about human purpose and meaning.
6. Here is an example of an ideal aim that is not reflected in reality. Most Islamic schools appear to ability-group their students, and tracking is obvious in many Islamic high schools, where one finds regular, accelerated, and advanced placement classes. These graded levels of difficulty in Islamic school classrooms would seem to facilitate—rather than downplay—inequalities among students.
7. *Ijtihād* is the third arm of Islamic jurisprudence (the other two being the *Qur'ān* and the Sunna) though it is usually thought that only the jurist (*mujtahid*) or legal expert (*mufti*) is qualified among the leaders (*ulemā*) to make decisions according to *shari'āh* where the other sources are silent. The difficulty remains, however, because there are several traditional schools of law (*madhāhib*), including Shāfi'ī, Hanbalī, Mālikī, and Hanafī. One's position with respect to *ijtihād* will determine a great deal about one's position as an Islamic traditionalist, modernist, fundamentalist, et cetera. Traditionalists and fundamentalists (not to be confused with radicalists) will incline toward the view that all truth for Muslims was canonized prior to the thirteenth century, and thus no *ijtihād* is acceptable. All authority lies, therefore, in the period of the four major schools of interpretation, and application of these canonized truths are limited to the *ulemā* or clergy.
8. Even when there is silence in the *Qur'ān*, there may be varying degrees of consensus among scholars.
9. Sometimes *zakah* is translated as "poor tax."
10. The Muslim God is an undifferentiated monad, with whom there can be no "associators." The notion of *šurik* or associating anything or anyone with God has its origins in the repudiation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Many of the debates between Christians and Muslims (ca. 700–950 CE) focused on this doctrine.
11. The prophets, of whom Muhammad is the last and final seal, are said by some to number 125,000. The *Qur'ān* mentions: Adam (the first Muslim), Ibrahīm (Abraham), Nûh (Noah), Musa (Moses), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qûb (Jacob), Dawûd (David), Yusuf (Joseph), Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyûb (Job), Yûnus (Jonah), Zakariiyya (Zechariah), Yahya (John the Baptist), Isa (Jesus), Idris, Dhu l-Kifl, Hûd, Salih, and Shu'ayb. Jews and Christians will recognize most of these.
12. *Jihād* also carries a secondary meaning (one appropriated by militants) of "holy war," that is, an armed struggle.
13. Garbi Schmidt writes that while many Islamic schools use the rejection of American society to legitimize their existence, in practice "they are forced to

include aspects of American society, because the curriculum must satisfy parents' academic ambitions for their children as much as parental desires for an "Islamic" environment. Muslim schools, therefore, become American institutions." (Schmidt 2004b, p. 81).

14. It is true that Muslim parents are more likely to speak Arabic, Urdu, or Turkish with the school staff and with their children. Parents often presume a teacher's language proficiency based on ethnic appearance or affiliation to the school. Yet a large percentage of Islamic schoolteachers in Western countries do not speak these languages. In North America this is the case because many of the school staff are second or third generation, but in countries like the Netherlands, approximately 80 percent of the Islamic school staff are native Dutch and not Muslim. In these cases, the school principal plays a crucial role of mediation between parents' wishes and (non-Muslim) teacher expectations.
15. Some parents continue to object to these school functions. The events of 9/11 have removed much of this opposition, as more and more Western Muslims see the necessity of conveying a positive image to a society that consumes only negative stereotypes concerning Islam.
16. But this is not the case for everyone, and many Muslim children succumb to the same peer pressures that other ordinary children do.
17. For these individuals, an encounter with the world outside of the Islamic school may not occurred to a significant degree before attending high school, and for those who attend an Islamic high school, this "awakening" often does not occur until university, where many students struggle to interact in coed situations, or to accept the lifestyle options and opinions of others. Some former Islamic school students confess that they believe public schools do a better job helping young people adjust to the "real world," and even many of the most eager proponents of Islamic education lament the absence of music in the curriculum, the social awkwardness of adolescent youths with the opposite sex, and the gendered nature of certain school activities. Many Muslim teachers acknowledge the shock that their graduates experience as freshmen in university. Open discussion about abortion, same-sex marriage and child adoption, euthanasia, depression, et cetera, catches many students unawares.
18. Some Muslim American organizations, notably IQRA, are trying to change this by independently publishing textbooks written from an Islamic point of view.
19. Free will (*qadariyyah*) exists, otherwise there would be no responsibility and human destiny would be predetermined (*taqdīr*).
20. Following the events of 9/11, a considerable amount of internal division among Western Muslims abated. This was likely the case, so that Muslims might combat Islamic stereotypes and ethnic profiling as well as communicate their faith, in a positive light, to other Westerners. Even so, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri (1997) observes, "The fact that Muslims do not have the same understanding of Islam prevents them from being able to unite behind [various] issues. What kind of Islam [will] be taught at school? Whose definition of Islam will be presented to non-Muslim Americans?" (p. 185).

21. In North America, Muslim women generally enjoy greater freedoms to associate with others in public, to pursue higher studies, and to remain employed, even while most sports and music are out of the question. Increasingly Muslim women also assume leadership roles in the *masjids* and fewer women are confined to strictly gendered roles. Nevertheless, struggles continue for many Muslim girls and women as it concerns a woman's right to marry, remain single, or divorce—independent of the disapproval of the Muslim community (Sarroub 2005; Mernissi 1991). Muslim women also face a great deal of opposition concerning the right to practice exegesis in the *Qur'ān* (Wadud 1999; al-Hibri 1999). Classes in Europe and America are increasingly being organized to teach women about their religion. These classes are believed to empower women when faced with discrimination and mistreatment either by their husbands or by their local community (Peleman 2002; Smith 2002). In some of these classes, women are taught that Islam gives full political participation to women. Muslim women are told that Islam is not the reason for oppressive practices of women; rather cultural customs in many Arab countries are to blame. Islam, they are told, has been co-opted to suit the patriarchal whims of various ethnic groups. Whether participants in these classes are informed that Muslim women are entitled to pursue opportunities in a Western, secularized society or follow only maternal ones varies from one place to another. Some Islamic "feminists" blame modernization for the general weakening of women's place in the family and the surrounding milieu. They characterize women who pursue careers outside the home and women who follow pursuits other than maternal ones as dupes of peer pressure and popular culture (Jamal al-Lail 1996).
22. Consider two separate issues. First, music and art in the curriculum of Islamic schools continues to be an extremely contentious issue. There are those who would argue that music and depictions of animal or human faces in drawings or paintings are strictly forbidden. Others take a more lenient view. Some Islamic schools, for example, allow paintings of persons as long as the facial features are—in a kind of "impressionist" way—blurred. Perhaps a majority of Western Muslims considers music acceptable if one's intentions do not stray from basic Islamic principles, though one is likely to find many Muslims espousing a position publicly opposed to instruments in school while privately seeing to it that their own children receive lessons in the home. Consequently, with the exception of a cappella choirs, very few schools will venture to include instruments or musical appreciation into their curriculum. The same can be said for most cinema, photography, sculpture and drawing. The various proscriptions are based on literal readings of the *Qur'ān* concerning verses that speak to those who craft objects "in competition with God." Moderate interpreters maintain that these references regard idol worship. Either way, much of Islamic aesthetics, for centuries, has been limited to architecture and calligraphy.

    Or take the example of the *hijāb*. While perhaps the most conspicuous expression of religious piety for Muslims, the *hijāb* nevertheless proffers more than one symbolic meaning; indeed, it may be seen as a "contested signifier"

par excellence. To many Westerners it suggests nothing more than a kind of hypercontrol of women or, worse, a suppression or effacement of female sexuality. In mainstream Islam, however, the *hijāb* gives evidence of a pious girl or woman who embodies integrity and modesty. Yet, now more than ever, one hears many Muslim girls and women, especially since 9/11, describe their headscarves as a symbol of emancipation and mobility. These women often position themselves opposite a culture that has excluded them from full participation, either through racialized discourse or through some form of religious discrimination. Emancipation is not, of course, the meaning ascribed to the *hijāb* in dominant Islamic cultural and religious discourse, and it is dubious whether its liberating significance will manage to resist the prevailing patriarchal meaning (Dwyer 1999; Abou El Fadl 2001). Either way, religious or cultural symbols cannot be defined and compared in the abstract. This, Bhikhu Parekh (2000) explains, is both "because they rarely have exactly equivalent significance and because they acquire different meanings in different contexts and historical periods and might sometimes even cease to be religious in nature" (p. 251).

Reasons for wearing the headscarf vary widely; indeed, "headscarves [may] be worn strategically to negotiate different spaces" (Dwyer 1999, p. 18). In Germany, for example, wearing the headscarf by Sunni Muslims "can be understood as a symbolic resistance to both the secular Turkish government and [simultaneously] their alienation within German society" (ibid, p. 8). Ethnographers in Dearborn, Michigan, have also noted that "the Arabic girl has different ways to express her Arabic culture. Instead of a tattoo, her emblem is likely to be the 'cover,' the local name for the *hijāb.* It is as much a fashion statement as it is a religious one. Traditionally, the *hijāb* is supposed to be a display of modesty in one's appearance. However, in the hands of the Arabic female, it becomes something else" (David & Ayouby 2002, p. 140).

It has also been observed that Muslim girls and women from higher-class backgrounds are given the luxury of challenging dichotomous constructions that set in opposition Muslim piety with secularism. On the other hand, working-class Muslim women in the UK, Claire Dwyer (1999) reports, "must constantly guard against accusations of sexual impropriety" (Dwyer 1999, p. 20; cf. Schmidt 2004b, p. 131). Whatever one may think, thoughtful discussions within Islamic schools may contribute to informed opinions concerning the complex process of negotiation and compromise that their presence entails. These issues are even more urgent if Islamic schools remain embroiled within *masjid* politics. If structural and administrative independence is established in relation to the mosque authorities, Islamic schools stand a much better chance of exercising the sort of critical role I have called for in this chapter.

23. A number of Muslim educators confide privately that they desire reform within their communities but that they fear the wrath and misunderstanding of parents and community leaders. Yet if more Muslim educators were prepared to raise various issues (in all of their complexity) facing Islamic schools as topics of genuine debate, the outcome could be immensely important to the Muslim

community in the West, particularly as there remains a wide range of opinion concerning their purpose and function. Discussions concerning the *hijāb*, for example, could be linked to broader historical questions of Muslim female equality in matters of education, employment, or the right to practice exegesis in the *Qur'ān*. Likewise, the enjoyment of music could be discussed as an aspect of Muslim worship (*ibadāh*), calling to mind the *hadīth*, "God is beautiful and He loves beauty." Opportunities currently abound for Muslim educators to broach these issues. To decline from engaging Muslim pupils on issues essential to their becoming effective interlocutors with their culture is to allow only the most conservative Muslim voices to exploit these issues in ways that abandon Muslim children to traditional thinking in the worst sense of the term.

24. Of particular concern is the *Qur'ānic* verse (4:34) that gives husbands permission to "beat" their wives if they fail to measure up to conjugal expectations. A great deal of debate surrounds the interpretation of this verse.
25. Cultural and denominational divisions can run so deep that many Muslims would rather allow their children marry a Christian or Jew than a Muslim of a different cultural or denominational background.
26. *Tarbiyah* according to the Sufis is concerned primarily with an individual's inner excellence.
27. This continues to be a problem within individual Islamic schools. Schools with, say, a majority of Palestinian or Pakistani students will, in all likelihood, cater to the cultural and political concerns of those respective groups. Consequently, the cultural and political concerns of, say, the Bosnian, or the African American students are often ignored or neglected.
28. Certainly material prosperity within religious traditions has many precedents. Within Protestantism, the Calvinist work ethic gave credence to the idea that material gain was a sign of God's blessing. "Health and wealth" strains of Pentecostalism exploit this further. Examples can also be found in the Jewish scriptures, high-caste Hinduism, and various schools of Buddhism (e.g., Sokka Gakkai).
29. *Qur'ānic* pronouncements, on this understanding, can be read in light of different social and political realities that abandon previous interpretations to lapsed historical periods. Each interpretation "expresses the socio-political commitment of the interpreter" (Kurzman 1999, p. 41; cf. Malik 2004, p. 81) and therefore any absolutely uniform interpretation is both undesirable and unthinkable (Rahman 1982, p. 144). Without such an approach to Islamic education, one can only expect—apart from hurtful polemics and exegetical wars—one or two different outcomes: (a) either students will end up dismissing the judgments of the *Qur'ān* on the mistaken understanding that only one possible interpretation exists, or (b) students will continue to invoke *ahistorical* readings of texts to which, it is believed, religious communities are bound. Yet it should be possible, for example, to argue that Muslims should only be bound by the Mecca verses in the *Qur'ān*, which have no political commitments (Bilgrami 1992). Muslims, too, need to interpret in light of changing contexts

(Waghid 1996), including continued legal reasoning (*ijtihād*) by way of analogy in which Muslim students work hard to harmonize "the modern civil law of Western derivation with the principles of Muslim jurisprudence," including appeals to pre-Islamic customary law (Albertini 2003, pp. 462–463). This process must not be left to the expert jurists (*mujtahidīn*) alone but must take account of the lived experiences of all community members. Tariq Ramadan (1999) adds:

> The participation of the youth in this process is, without doubt, of great importance and, armed with their experience and comprehension of the European environment from within, they ought to formulate appropriate questions so as to permit the *ulama*' to give more accurate responses. More than any other group they should think through the different steps of a genuine application of Islamic teaching in view of the Western context and elaborate the content of an overall Islamic education which fits their original situation. Thus, the contribution of Muslims living in the West, especially our youth, is without comparison.
>
> (p. 116)

This already appears to be the prevailing view of Muslims in the West (CAIR study 2001; Malik 2001, 2004; Merry 2004), though in neither Europe nor America does the dialogue Ramadan calls for appear to be occurring to a significant degree. That there are only marginal voices within the Islamic fold who may speak openly from their experiences as Muslims should not translate as a compromised or diluted Muslim identity. Rather, it may suggest that Muslim scholarship has remained indolent where there is room for Islam to expand its conception with ever-increasing knowledge and experience. Yedullah Kazmi (2003) speaks directly to this challenge facing Muslims:

> [The] existence of several conversations in a tradition is a source and proof of a tradition's health and depth and range of meanings it encompasses. It is, therefore, wrong to classify and judge an entire tradition by the conversation that may be dominant for a period of time . . . In short, it is wrong to assume that a tradition is a monolithic structure that habours just one conversation and always speaks with one voice. Voices of dissent and rebellion and voices of alternative conversations are, if one cares to listen, audible just below the noise of the dominant conversation.
>
> (p. 279)

This would mean, for example, that being a Muslim is *not* in conflict with being open to new ways to read the *Qur'ān*, inviting the contributions and testimony of those who live as outsiders within their own communities and possibly still in the society at large. Indeed, it might point to the opportunity for Muslim educators to engage with broader understandings of human experience. Ataullah Siddiqui (1997) asserts that many Muslim scholars trained in *madrassahs* and seminaries are "out of touch with developments in the field of science, technology and even other areas of thought and society" (p. 426).

30. This practice, *usūl al-fiqh*, continues to be contested. Most Muslims believe that only those with a sophisticated knowledge of the Sunna, and the Arabic language can qualify as a *mujtahid*, that is, an individual capable of rendering prudent interpretations of the sources to issue sound advice or rulings (*fatāwā*). While this opinion has the most defenders and is wise (considering the spurious claims to authority in issuing *fatāwā* (witness Khomeini's *fatawā* against Rushdie or bin Laden's *fatāwā* against American civilians, both of which were denounced by Muslim jurists), *usūl al-fiqh* remains problematic inasmuch as others, wishing to challenge traditional readings of the sources, are dismissed as amateurs and unable to understand the sources in their "true intent." The same line of argument was used by the Catholic hierarchy against the laity for centuries. Only in the mid-twentieth century were Catholic biblical scholars allowed to openly contest traditional readings of the Christian sources (patristic, liturgical and biblical) though many did so at great risk to their careers in the Church. Even so, few could question their knowledge of the Greek and Latin sources. Slowly, the same debate is beginning to unfold among Muslims.
31. The hidden curriculum, for my purposes here, will refer to the *implicit* messages conveyed to school children through the attitudes and actions of school staff, one's peers, and materials used in classrooms.
32. In a comparison with Irish Catholics and Ashkenazi Jews, Mustafa Malik (2004) argues that secularization in both groups was inevitable owing to (a) interaction with co-workers and neighbors, thus eroding their sense of religious certainty, and (b) the rise of industrialization and technology, thus permitting them to rationalize the outcome of human actions (p. 75).

Chapter 4

1. I elaborated my interpretation of autonomy in Chapter 1. John White says that an autonomous person is one who determines how to live according to one's own, unpressured picture of a worthwhile life. However, liberals will insist that autonomy must be weighed against other goods, including a consideration for the pursuits of others, honesty, and a sympathetic concern for others. See White (2003), pp. 147–148.
2. Mahatma Gandhi did this in 1948, claiming that Hinduism's viability as a religion was contingent on its reforming the caste system. Hinduism has historically been a religion that has rationalized and defended the castes—privileging the Brahmins and discriminating against the *shudras* or "untouchables"—as a religiously sanctioned cultural practice. Some might consider the case of Russian Orthodoxy outlasting seventy-four years of militant atheism as a resilient instance of religion that was not sustained by culture; in fact it was the political leaders and their policies and not the culture per se that aimed to root out religion. Similar examples can be drawn from Buddhism in China and Catholicism in various South American countries during the communist rule.
3. I have opted for "culturalist" owing to the slipperiness of terms such as communitarian and multiculturalist. I am aware that culturalist is hardly better, and

may even be worse, but it is offered without the trappings of the other two labels and is meant to capture those who would prioritize cultural identity as a primary good. For an interesting discussion of communitarianism and its inherent ambiguity, see David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 97–109. For one concerning the ambiguities of multiculturalism, see Carlos Torres. *Democracy, Education and Multiculturalism.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowland & Littlefield, 1998, pp. 175–222.

4. The authors continue: "Looked at from the culturalist position, behavior follows cultural principles; it falls in line with heartfelt moral precepts that transcend the actual people with whom one interacts and the actual situations surrounding those interactions. From the constructivist position, behavior instead is the acting out (or refusal) of subject positions; it is pushed into line by relations of power and influence that obtain in the venues where, and among the particular people with whom, one interacts" (D. Holland et al. 1998, p. 14).
5. Having said that, with the possible exception of orphans and children who suffer extreme neglect, there is arguably no one who develops and matures as a child bereft of *some* commitments. Many of these commitments are consciously passed on, while others are not.
6. This is not always true, of course, but even in adopted children and those who suffer extreme neglect, there is, sometimes insatiably, a need to know, understand, and even identify with one's natural parents. It is commonplace, for instance, to hear of children who cannot repress the urge to seek out a parent who abandoned them when they were young and to want to cultivate relationships with them.
7. Claire Dwyer is astute to point out that hybridity as a concept is problematic inasmuch as it assumes the fusion of two distinct cultures, ignoring the extent to which the fusion has been continuous as well as the fact that there is no such thing as a pristine culture or identity prior to the fusion. See Dwyer (1999), p. 22, n. 3.
8. It is perhaps necessary to say that cultural coherence is not synonymous with multiculturalism. Cultural coherence operates in many ways different from what those who strive for a multicultural curriculum hope. Multiculturalists certainly wish to respect the distinctive needs of each child according to his or her cultural orientation; similarly, they wish to respect differences, yet promote equal opportunities. This includes incorporating curricular perspectives absent from the Western canon, as well as attuning students to the underlying assumptions and biases that inform knowledge constructions. Yet a multicultural curriculum also is committed to the *equality* of all cultures, to gaining greater self-understanding by viewing one's own culture from the perspective of others, as well as learning mutual respect. Through a process of broad exposure to other ways of life, multiculturalists hope to minimize feelings of alienation from the dominant cultural model, provide the skills necessary to living in a multicultural society, and offer cultural alternatives to students (Diaz 2001; Banks 2001, 2002; Ooka Pang 2001; Manning & Baruth 2004).

There have been a number of criticisms offered against multicultural education (and its European equivalent, intercultural education). While most educators are in agreement with the noble aims of multiculturalism, many broach serious objections concerning the manner in which multicultural curricula often resort to stereotypical and reductionist depictions of non-European cultures and ways of life (Banks 2001; Driessen 1996). Specific cultural depictions that are instructive guides for those educators eager to appreciate different cultural norms is one thing; yet, to the extent that cultural identities are presumed to affect and possibly even determine the learning process of students—including how one thinks, believes, and behaves—one has reasons to worry (Reich 2002; Delpit 1995). That is to say, unless children learn to negotiate the culture of the dominant group these depictions will likely only increase—or at the very least, solidify—the inequalities suffered by ethnic and cultural minorities whose interests multicultural lessons are meant to promote. Some have also argued that in the case of immigrant children, the orientation of the parents to the country of origin weighs negatively on the school achievements of their offspring (Zeroulou 1985), who are recipients of a kind of apartheid education. Other critics, while in favor of expanding the curriculum to include other voices, point out that a pluralistic, tolerant curriculum is still not likely to mitigate xenophobia and nationalism (Coulby 1997). As a result of some of these criticisms, multiculturalists are now less convinced that students operate merely according to one *primary* cultural identity; there is the recognition that many individuals are deeply ambivalent about the identities their communities—not to mention, societies—assign to them. So while it is important to see that multiculturalism and a pedagogy supporting cultural coherence are different, some of the same challenges surface on both counts.

9. Thus, one may find that Pure Land Buddhism, though not a part of one's cultural background, *becomes* so when knowledge of it is gained and interest and opportunity wed to make it a real possibility. Culturalists are less friendly to this view, believing that an individual's inherited identity is the *core* identity.
10. If peer pressure is even half as intense as many of us remember it, and Erikson reminds us that young people can be incredibly "clannish, intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others," one can partly sympathize with this view. It is now recognized that a great deal of mistrust, sometimes even expressed as rebellion against sanctioned norms, is often a concealment of fear and worry of rejection or ridicule. To be sure, the forming of cliques in middle and high school is one way that adolescents attempt to shore up a sense of identity loss (Erikson 1968, p. 133). For these and many other reasons, some parents will opt for their children to attend religious schools from the primary grades to the college level.
11. Though controversial, the following assertion has been repeatedly made: engaging children in critical thinking exercises at too early an age is both unsuitable and beyond their cognitive grasp (Piaget 1950, 1952, 1970; Bugelski 1956; Ausubel 1968; Hergenhahn 1982). Younger children, approximately from ages

seven to eleven or twelve, are said to learn using concrete operations that are extremely dependent on concrete imagery and physical presence of objects. Typical of children of this age is the diffuseness of their thinking, low tolerance for frustration, reluctance to accept the immutable givens of a problem, and their ability to manage only one problem at a time (Ausubel 1968, p. 544). Many believe that younger children do not easily process abstract symbols or higher-order concepts and are less capable of articulating the principles of problem solving. To question children's core assumptions—those that typically correspond to their parents—so that they might "freely" choose among options made available to them, is widely believed to be unhealthy for their psychological development and emotional stability. Of course, the problem with this is that there is not a maturity threshold that applies to all children. It is therefore not possible to say when exactly children are capable, let alone whether they ought, to practice mild forms of detachment from borrowed or inherited beliefs and values.

12. These are not entirely new arguments, of course; gender-segregated education, for example, has its champions in both secular and religious education (Stabiner 2002; Lee & Bryk 1986). The nearly total gender uniformity of segregated schools and the absence of distractions where the opposite sex is concerned are widely thought to lessen the sorts of problems associated with coed schooling and to enhance student performance. Of course it could be argued that while girls fare far better in single-sex educational environments, boys are far less well served because they do not learn to tame certain chauvinist behaviors that degrade women. However, provided that boys are supplied with the appropriate role models there is no reason to think that boys will turn out to be more chauvinist than in coed schools.
13. I would argue that servility includes having to justify one's thoughts and beliefs on sacred texts on pains of being condemned as an infidel or an apostate. Burtt would, conversely, appear to hold the belief that the children who are given "intellectual tools" to distinguish true doctrines from false ones are also being equipped for "independent critical thought." I believe Burtt is wrong here. She does insightfully note that reflective questions can be asked concerning what counts as a good life for oneself "without requiring extensive familiarity with how very different sorts of people from very different circumstances choose to live their lives" (p. 202). Even so, this can hardly be considered *critical* reflection if the answers to life's important questions (e.g., what goods ought to compel my allegiance?) are narrowly circumscribed by various dogma and supernatural explanations. Finally, while there is considerable merit to Burtt's argument that "parents [be] allowed, indeed encouraged, to structure their children's educational experience in conformity with their religious beliefs" (1994, p. 55), the deference she accords to parents in choosing the kind of education they will receive leaves us with unsettling challenges, ones that I will discuss in Chapter 5.
14. Denis Phillips offers his requirements for autonomy in this way: "A child would have to analyze her own intended actions, and sort out which other people

would be likely to be impacted by this action; then she would have to be able to determine, again by analysis, if there is a prima facie case that any of the rights of these people ought to be respected in the situation in which she is about to act. Furthermore, to do this she would need to have a reasoned grasp of the concept of a right" (Denis Phillips 1989, pp. 348–349).

15. This rationale was articulated in the ruling, *Bob Jones University v. United States*, 461 U.S. 574 (1983), where the Supreme Court ruled that the school's laws against interracial dating would have to be dissembled if the university's tax-exempt status were to remain in place on the grounds that the Court had an "overriding interest" in desegregation. Even so, this overriding interest has not prevented some groups (e.g., the Old Order Amish) from being exempted from certain societal constraints (e.g., jury duty, secondary schooling) imposed upon the rest of the citizenry.
16. It is important to note that Chandran Kukathas (1992), another strong defender of individual rights to culture, does not take matters this far. While he recognizes the centrality of culture to an individual's identity, he does not attempt to justify special legal provisions for cultures. He does insist, however, that tolerance is paramount to a well-functioning liberal state. Kukathas does not defend cultural rights per se; to the contrary, cultures can only be defended, he says, for as long as its members support and maintain them. Yet special state-sanctioned cultural rights will only ensure that those wielding power within these groups will lord it over their subordinate members. Kukathas differs from Margalit and Halbertal's position that states ought to offer minority cultures special protection. Notwithstanding his concerns about abuse and oppression within groups, Kukathas maintains that states cannot manifest counteroppression by imposing liberal notions of good onto these groups. A state may not impose its own notions of good on communities that feel differently. Moreover, Kukathas argues that the liberal state may not interfere, except in cases of extreme abuse (e.g., starvation, limb removal) with the cultural practices of cultural groups. Indeed, it must tolerate many cultural practices (e.g., scarring, genital mutilation) that it finds abhorrent from a liberal point of view. Groups also must be allowed to maintain their own set of rules for governance; this right determines who is able to enter a community, but this right also portends unfeasible prospects for exiting specific cultural communities.
17. Defenders of illiberal cultures do not deny the coercive role that culture may play in the life of the individual, particularly the way that it "institutionalizes, exercises and distributes power." Yet they insist that no one is so irrevocably constituted by culture that they cannot criticize, question, or refuse the pressure to unthinkingly conform. To love one's culture, Bhikhu Parekh (2000) says, is to wish it well, and "that involves criticizing and removing its blemishes." Cultural values often acquire their dominant position "through a prolonged process of indoctrination and coercion, and continue to be actively or passively contested by marginalized groups" (p. 268). Still, internal criticism *is* possible. Parekh's resolve is that individuals ought to feel *loyalty* to one's culture "because of its

profound contribution to our lives and also perhaps because of its universal value" (p. 160). However, he does not explain how being self-critical and aware of the coercive elements of one's culture compromises one's identity. Parekh concedes that one's cultural loyalty may be overridden if the judgment of the culture is overwhelmingly negative, but this seems a passing notion he gives no serious thought to. Indeed, loyalty to one's culture is paramount to the point of it being a *duty.* This is because, he alleges, we are "deeply shaped by our cultural communities and derive our values and ideals from them" (p. 160). For a critique of Parekh, see Merry 2005c.

18. Kymlicka argues that immigrant minorities have forfeited claims to their original culture by virtue of voluntarily coming to another country with different cultural and political norms. Their goal, he claims, must be one of *integration.* Parekh disagrees with Kymlicka, correctly I think, on whether the distinction between national minorities and immigrant minorities matters so much, especially in light of Kymlicka's contention that culture is central to a person's well-being. See Parekh (2000), p. 103.
19. Unpublished manuscript draft.
20. Margalit and Haberthal, on the other hand, would insist that measures be taken to preserve the *culture* irrespective of the benefit or harm it may cause its members.
21. Indeed, some (Kukathas 1992, 1996; Tomasi 1995; O'Neill 1999) believe that his defense of cultural rights is merely *instrumental*; that is to say, Kymlicka defends cultures with the ulterior aim of liberalizing them. Though couched in the language of cultural equality, Kymlicka nevertheless imposes the requirement that cultures evince liberal characteristics. This, his critics claim, is paradoxical and even contradictory, for a defense of cultural rights for groups that do not operate according to liberal principles ignores the very basis of the way cultures usually operate, and dismisses the possibility of living well in nonautonomous ways. Absent of the tolerance that must be central to cultural equality, Kymlicka's view seems coercive, that is, illiberal.
22. This is the point of films such as *East is East* and *Bend it like Beckham*, in which the children of Muslim and Sikh immigrants struggle to find their own identities and pursue their own interests, though familial pressures to conform to cultural expectations remain intense. This reality can also be turned on its head, when children are led to believe that their parents are too influenced by folk culture and are not serious enough about religion. This tension is disturbingly captured in the film, *My Son, the Fanatic.*
23. Thus while it seems true that the desire to remain affiliated to a culture usually remains strong, it is not clear that a person *needs* culture to make meaningful decisions, or that culture plays an "ontological role" (Etzioni 1996). The point, finally, is not whether most leave the cultures into which they were born, but simply that some do, and many more move back and forth between two or more cultural milieus. One sees this repeatedly in immigrant communities, where cultural competence is a skill set to be utilized according to different rules in varying contexts. Yet "cultural belonging" is particularly problematic for those

who wrestle with intergenerational conflict where ethnicity and religion do not resonate with the youth. Unless all citizenship opportunities are denied to them, few are prepared to believe that all Vietnamese-American or Lebanese-Canadian citizens feel irretrievably constituted by their cultures of origin or, for that matter, the cultures of their parents (Sarroub 2005; Gibson 1988). Culturalists leave little room for those who simply do not identify with their inherited culture and desire little if anything from it. *Some* individuals appear not to exist, think, act, or relate to others independent of their inherited cultural context, but culturalists overstate their case when they extend this to everyone. See Merry (2005c).

24. In a cultural rights view, the interests of children are seldom taken into consideration. Yet the children's best interests and equality of opportunity cannot be dispensed with so that cultural survival may be ensured. Inadequate information to weigh one's viable options—to say nothing of coercion, betrayal, or threats—may account for the number of people who remain, against all sound judgment, in less than favorable conditions. See Mason (2000).
25. While Okin is able to appreciate the liberal strengths of Kymlicka's position, including the requirement that minority groups conduct their internal affairs according to liberal principles, she is justifiably perplexed over Kymlicka's stand that national minorities ought to be absolved from liberal internal safeguards. Notwithstanding the fact that Kymlicka calls for liberal safeguards within minority groups, Okin is correct to point out that very few group rights will appear defensible on these conditions, particularly when sexual discrimination is rarely overt. "Virtually no culture in the world today, whether minority or majority, could pass Kymlicka's 'no sex discrimination' test if it were applied in the private sphere," she writes (1998, p. 679). Things become even more complicated when one considers that older women in some of these communities are the most adamant defenders of fixed gender roles, even roles that manifestly discriminate against them. Okin explains that many cultural minority girls often feel they must choose between respecting their parents—which may entail arranged marriages, strictly monitored domestic work, and having several children—and "furthering their educations and developing work skills so as to retain more control over their own lives" (p. 682). The repercussions for failing to comply with family and communal expectations can indeed be very exacting for girls and women. Of course, families do not always have options. Where mobility and disposable income allow some families to move (or commute) to better schools, many poor families are unable to do so. This does not minimize the point that several factors must be present in order for girls to enjoy the freedom to succeed, chiefly the attitude and acceptance of one's parents. Concerning Belgian girls of Moroccan descent, Cammaert (1992) mentions the following: encouragement by other people, parents' opinion, special tutoring, de-identification, birth order, financial situation of the family, access to information, material conditions of the environment, peer group, time perspective, and the unpredictable individual decision-making process. Also see Aswad & Bilgé (1996) for American examples.

26. On the question of what constitutes a human preference, there is some debate. There have been views that suggest that a preference is indistinguishable from an action, such that any behavior observed could reveal exactly what the preferences were. But empirical observations such as these cannot, with any degree of reliability, probe into the intentions behind my actions or the freedoms available to them. Nor can they, a fortiori, ascertain what preferences lie behind behaviors. Other, more credible, views point to a psychological reality that exists *behind* choices that are made, which may or may not coincide with actions taken. These views take seriously the socialization factors (e.g., education, susceptibility to illness, addiction, home environment, incomes) that profoundly shape one's actions and no less one's preferences.
27. Callan argues that autonomy—in some character-neutral sense—will not suffice to loosen the habits that have taken root long ago in an individual's psyche and may have resulted in one's "vulnerability to abuse." Neither may it be expected that a once servile person, having acquired a certain measure of reasonableness and autonomy, will avoid being "indifferent to the rights that others could claim as her equal" (Callan 1997, p. 148).
28. One often hears from immigrant parents and grandparents, for example, that their children no longer respect their elders (Bartels 2000; Schmidt 2004a). Therefore, when Muslim parents express dissatisfaction with the education their children are receiving, it may have precious little to do with Islam, and more to do with the fact that their children are not receiving moral instruction, or perhaps the role of various cultures (e.g., Arab, Turkish) in shaping Western ideas and development is being ignored. This is important to emphasize because most Muslim immigrant parents would likely be satisfied to have schools pay more attention to their native geography and history. Unfortunately, efforts to promote intercultural/multicultural education have resulted in little more than tokenism for Muslims (Eugene Roosens & Philip Hermans, personal communication, Leuven, Belgium, August 2003).
29. September 11 has impacted this assessment in the past few years but it is unclear to what degree.
30. This is a contentious area, to be sure, but I have in mind basic human rights and not attitudes or moral convictions on controversial subjects. However, there are two problems here. First, liberal societies have themselves been highly inconsistent in this area. Second, private convictions and public reasonableness are closely related. In particular, the inculcation of values that promote a lack of toleration will likely lead some (in acts of militantism) to act upon those convictions by transgressing the fundamental human rights of others.
31. This is why I believe Burtt is mistaken to claim that people are "irrevocably constituted" (though elsewhere she appears to give the nod to Callan's phrase, "revocably encumbered") by the cultures of their parents. Moreover, she is presumptuous to claim that because some people are able to leave communities into which they were born, we have sufficient evidence for the freedom to exit. Burtt is correct, however, to say that consistent messages are conducive to at least

one understanding of the psychological health of children and that autonomy can be cultivated from within schools that promote cultural coherence. I believe she is also correct to discern the "three goods" to come of an education for cultural coherence, viz., moral courage, character pluralism, and the ability to identify with a set of beliefs from the inside.

Chapter 5

1. One could mention a small number of Sikh or Greek Orthodox schools, for instance. However, outside the United Kingdom in neither case do these groups represent comparably large immigrant populations, nor is one likely to find political opposition nearly as strident as it is in the case of Islamic schools. See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of political opposition to Islamic schools in the Netherlands.
2. Of course not *all* parents of children in Islamic schools are recent immigrants (many parents are converts, for example, and a very tiny fraction in North America are non-Muslim), but typically this is a crucial feature.
3. I have selected Amy Gutmann's work not because she is the sole representative and proponent of the education-toward-civic-mindedness view, but because her oeuvre is representative of the concerns many liberals take up relevant to an education for civic participation. Though many dispute her unremitting stress on the social and political purposes that education ought to serve, few question the value of her seminal work, *Democratic Education*, which is an admirably sustained attempt to provide the philosophical basis for public schooling as the means, par excellence, of promoting civic virtue.
4. Indeed, Lomasky sees any challenges to the family as antagonism to liberal diversity itself, and he is not reticent to say, "In the absence of the family as a nucleus of recognition patterns, it is unlikely that there is much hope for a right-respecting moral community" (1987, p. 169). To opponents of this view, folks such as Lomasky are likely to respond that parents' obligations toward children may extend to the larger community but parents are nevertheless bestowed with particular rights over the life projects of their children, and these will typically not conceive of individuals in terms of a greater, impersonal collective good.
5. Of course this does not mean that they are better placed to know what is true or correct. See Archard 2002, p. 146.
6. I will not explore the important debates taken up in bioethical discourse, particularly the moral status of a fetus, a neonate, or a person in a permanent vegetative state. I am simply working from the common sense presumption that all people deserve some basic level of welfare protection and provision and basic human rights as outlined in the charter of the United Nations. Obviously this principle does not speak to the difficulties of implementation necessary to ensure the efficient distribution of welfare protections.
7. The same can be said of many elderly people, as well as adults whose physical or mental impairments preclude competent functioning.

8. This has always been a nebulously defined age. The "age of reason", as referred to in Plato (*Republic*, Book IX 950e) and Aristotle (*Politics* I.13) was picked up by Thomas Aquinas and later, John Locke and John Stuart Mill. For some this age was seven, for others ten, and still others, twelve.
9. All of this assumes, of course, a certain cognitive-development schema. What one teaches depends entirely on the emotional and intellectual capabilities a child may possess. Certain kinds of autonomy would be, then, wholly inappropriate at certain ages given the lack of experience or maturity in handling the complexity, ambiguity, and moral import of certain knowledge. Hence the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) declares, "[The] views of the child [are to be given] due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (art. 12; 14).
10. Of course there are certain laws that operate according to a form of paternalism that apply to everyone equally. Thus in certain states there are seatbelt and helmet laws that have been ratified to promote public safety. One may disregard these laws on pains of incurring a penalty or punishment, including being denied the right to operate a motor vehicle.
11. This is the interesting logic behind the medical practice of informed consent. Yet reasoning capacities, specifically the ability to weigh the pros and cons of, say, an invasive operational procedure, can be witnessed in many twelve-year-olds and not, for instance, in many forty-year-olds.
12. It is true that some teachers, social workers, or even older siblings perform similar functions and care unreservedly for some children with as much tenderness and sincerity as any parent would. Yet no one *expects* a social worker or a teacher to care to the same degree or to perform certain tasks that parents routinely perform unless children have *already* been consigned to state care (e.g., in a state orphanage, hospital, or juvenile detention center).
13. By the same token, neither can the state do these things. An overbearing state is also capable of suppressing essential liberties and individual discretion. Furthermore, communities and associations that conduct their internal affairs "in a manner contrary to core public purposes" can be justifiably pressured to stop, and in some instances even prohibited. But there are other forms of social pressure ("despotism" in the parlance of Galston) that philosophers of civic education rarely question, including a culture infused with peer pressure, popular media, and advertising that few children *or* adults fully understand or attempt to resist.
14. In the final analysis, however, the rate of defection will tell us very little for it will hardly suffice to explain the conditions under which children remain within communities or opt not to. Indeed, there are important internal constraints on freedom of choice and opportunity that may argue against ostensibly self-evident truths. This means that both permeable and nonpermeable communities may experience high rates of defection or retention for entirely different reasons.
15. Samuel Scheffler (1997) refers to these as "presumptively decisive reasons for action" owing to the quality of the relationship one has with another. Though

there is bound to be something controversial about these partial claims, Scheffler maintains that these relationships ought to have recognizably "socially salient connections" (pp. 196–198).

16. However, Gutmann does point out the following: "It is not a coincidence that the political skills and virtues of liberal democracy resemble the personal skills and virtues of a self-directing or autonomous life" (1995, p. 576).
17. The state *already* reserves the right to withhold parental privileges if and when there is evidence of harm or neglect, including inadequate food, shelter, and education.
18. Lomasky is led, by his own logic, to question state-mandated primary school as "improper encroachment."
19. Political liberalism, as defined by John Rawls (1993), is the ideal system for preventing unwarranted interference by the state into discretionary religious beliefs, and, at the same time, it refuses to allow religious discourse to swallow up proceedings in the public domain.
20. I elicited these reasons time and again in my interviews both in the United States and Europe. Also see Hewer (2001) and Driessen & Bezemer (1999). Other sources suggest that the ordering is slightly different: (a) Islamic environment, (b) religious education, and (c) preservation of cultural identity (Badawi 2006, p. 19).
21. There is reason to believe that children will feel more at ease—and thus perform better—in a schooling atmosphere in which they have a profound sense of belonging; what's more, academic outcomes are likely to be higher. See Merry & New, forthcoming.
22. Even so, almost every school I visited hosted far more girls than boys by as much as a 2 to 1 ratio beyond kindergarten and the early primary grades.
23. Thus at one school I visited with an enrollment of 360 students, one could expect to see an additional 100 in Saturday school for Urdu instruction and an additional 250 in Sunday school for Arabic, Religious Education, and Islamic history classes.
24. Finally, the psychological health of a Muslim child cannot be taken for granted where Islamic schools are concerned. When a child, boy or girl, has been attending another school before a parent places him or her in an Islamic school, the adjustment can be difficult. In some cases, the school staff intervenes to help facilitate the transition, but a few school staff privately admit that some of their students would be better served in a public school.
25. I say *require* because parents share with the state an obligation to provide a quality education for their children, and in many instances the alternatives are far worse. Adam Swift discusses this at length in *How Not to Be a Hypocrite* (2003).
26. However, given the various ways in which most parents relate to, provide for, and unconditionally love their *own* children, it seems intuitively wildly unrealistic that parents would assume the same level of responsibility for children other than their own. Furthermore, even if the state were to demonstrate that it values the education of all pupils equally by funding public and religious

schools equitably—as it does in most European countries—there is little reason to suppose that parental choice will not work strenuously against these regulations. In every Western country, there are schools which enjoy a strong academic reputation than other schools. Such reputations are spread by word of mouth and by the posting of league tables, which report school testing scores. Parents with the savoir faire to place their children in schools they find desirable (and this often translates as schools with as few minorities as possible) will find a way to do so, even if it means moving to an entirely different school district. "White flight" is a phenomenon known to all Western countries, and it is difficult to conceive of a more stringent regulatory agency stopping this i.e., determining where people live—though it may make such actions more inconvenient than they already are.

27. But much evidence goes against the claim that Muslim children *need* to be socialized into the cultural and religious values of their parents in order for them to enjoy the said bonds of kinship or identity coherence. For example, it is questionable to assert that cultural values will die out or vanish if children are not raised in the value systems of their parents; cultural extinction, after all, rarely occurs in one generation. Indeed, all that is usually needed for a secure personal identity (which in any case is likely to be hybridic) and self-respect is (a) a stable, enduring cultural context (which need not be that of one's parents), and (b) the freedom of individuals to associate with whomever they please without interference from outsiders, though this typically is one's own family and group members. Dwyer is correct, I believe, to say that as long as these basic conditions are met, anyone "can continue to enjoy a social context for expression and reinforcement of their culturally embedded identity" (Dwyer 1998, p. 113).
28. This fact calls into question the charge that religious schools constitute "a monopoly on the process that will shape [a] child's world view" (Feinberg 2000, p. 854), considering that many religious schools aim not to replicate the parents' culture but to internalize a religious outlook that will enable children to challenge the values of the larger society. Indeed, the religious orientation of many religious schools enables students not only to impugn unfettered competition and market values but many of the cultural assumptions of religious parents as well (Grace 2002; Keyworth 2002). Provided that religious schools maintain a distinctively religious character—on the understanding that this character is sufficiently informed by differing views and does not deride those views as irredeemably wrong simply *because* they are different—the more one can expect to see this continue.

Chapter 6

1. *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* 268 U.S. 510 (1925). The case was brought before the Oregon Supreme Court by a religious organization, the Society of Sisters, devoted to the education and care of orphaned children in response to the Compulsory Education Act of 1922. Reactionary groups opposed to immigration

and non-Protestant minorities had promoted the act on the grounds that sectarianism would abound and disrupt the assimilation process. While the court unanimously struck down the act, it nevertheless shared with the framers of the act a broadly assimilationist ethic and took a dim view of nonnaturalized persons, making various references to "poor, ignorant foreigners."

2 This attenuation would lead to the First Amendment ban on governmental interference with respect to the free exercise of religion.

3. Religious schools throughout the United States do not receive any federal or state money *directly*, though most enjoy tax exemption and many receive indirect funds through tax credit options, diagnostic services, transportation services textbook subsidies, and, in some locations, vouchers. The idea seems to be that state aid may be allowed provided that it is "neutral," i.e., it does not advance religious causes. It is not always clear, however, when—if ever—a religious organization ceases to operate according to its religious imperatives.
4. A strong federalist position is implied here, but I am not committed absolutely to it. For example, I can envision a coalition of federal and individual state oversight, with individual states playing the central regulatory role.
5. I do not mean to say that every subject taught in school is necessarily in the public interest. Some religion classes may be included, and also many other subjects.
6. I acknowledge that there are other values by which one may decide to live, and certainly a generous conception of human flourishing must include ways of life that do not value autonomy and reasonableness. Nevertheless, autonomy plays an important enabling role in facilitating lives that matter to persons according to different conceptions of the good. That is, autonomy either enables one to identify in important ways with interests and pursuits central to a meaningful and flourishing life or to quit those pursuits and choose another one should it come to that. Thus, while autonomy per se may be of little apparent use to some individuals, the *capacity* for autonomy seems to me to be a sufficiently important aim to warrant its place at the center of my argument vis-à-vis desirable educational aims.
7. Thus, while I will argue in favor of state funding and oversight of religious schools, I am not naïve concerning the implications for church/state jurisprudence. Nor am I naïve concerning the negative implications for those who would see the character and administrative freedoms of their schools significantly curtailed.
8. Rawls (2001) continues, "What would a just democratic society be like under reasonably favorable but still possible historical conditions, conditions allowed by the laws and tendencies of the social world? What ideals and principles would such a society try to realize given the circumstances of justice in a democratic culture as we know them?" (p. 4). Many of the ideas contained in this chapter are written in this spirit.
9. I am even inclined to agree that a school that places an immoderate emphasis on "non-transferable goods" (e.g., scripture study, prayer, ritual observances) is potentially detrimental to the intellectual development of children. Moreover, what may be said of extremely insular community environments may also be said of certain forms of homeschooling that are hostile to difference or that aim to

control the exposure of children to different perspectives (Spinner-Halev 2000; Reich 2002; Barry 2001). Indeed, an education of this kind may actively neglect the facilitation of autonomy and reasonableness in children by undervaluing rational, critical reflection, while choosing instead to rely on inerrant doctrine and nonrational means of persuasion.

10. I am aware that one cannot be too careful when generalizing about a variegated category of schools; however, the following is entirely consistent with the manner in which religious schools are discussed in the philosophical literature.
11. A very small number of longitudinal studies are available in the Netherlands, but little if anything can be extrapolated from these studies to other countries; indeed, the conclusions are even tentative as they apply to the Netherlands.
12. Since 1974, studies have shown evangelicals to be *more* politically active than other Americans, by as much as three to five times. Nevertheless, Putnam's studies show that the social capital of evangelicals "is invested at home more than in the wider community." Thus for evangelicals, at least, religious participation "is *not* correlated with membership in community organizations . . . Most evangelical volunteering [supports] the religious life of the congregation itself" (Putnam 2000, pp. 67, 77–78, 162).
13. Civic engagement for some religious groups centers on welfare reform, peace initiatives, racial reconciliation, environmental conservation, and a fair living wage, while more conservative religious groups tend to focus on highly controversial public policy issues (e.g., abortion, gay marriage) that reflect doctrinal positions.
14. While it will be difficult to assign an exact percentage of citizens necessary to satisfy the requirement, it will still be important to have a critical mass of active citizens who value the virtues of citizenship enough to maintain a healthy democratic state. There is no reason why civic engagement ought to be demanded of all citizens. Indeed, there are myriad reasons why one may choose to resist the monopolizing effects of a civic education that might trump the values and pursuits of families and their communities. Any liberal democracy that celebrates diversity must also respect the variety of choices that reflect different aims among citizens. Human interests may not be related to democracy in any obvious sense, and many interests are not evidently subject to democratic authority, though they remain unquestionably central to many persons' conception of the good. It is wholly unsurprising, then, that William Galston (2002) accords a great deal of weight to the liberal virtue of tolerance, and correspondingly, he defers to the prerogatives of parents and their cultural values: "The free exercise of independent and group choice within the framework of liberal democratic judgment generates a zone of diverse ways of life that are permissible and safeguarded from external intervention, even when we could not imagine choosing them for ourselves" (p. 95).
15. A few have claimed that religious children who are unable to attend religious schools suffer adverse mental health on account of the lack of psychological coherence and support in public schools (see, e.g., Conroy 2003). Whether this is so is an empirical matter for which there is scant evidence.

16. It is interesting to note that even the strongest critics of religious schools (e.g., Hand 2003, 2004) who argue for their abolition grant that (a) few religious persons describe their faith in purely fideistic terms, (b) few teachers set out to indoctrinate pupils in religious schools, and (c) most teachers in religious schools desire that their pupils come to faith *only if* it is grounded in relevant evidence and sound argument. Even so, Hand makes entirely too much of what he calls "rationally decisive evidence" for grounding any epistemological claim.
17. A film like *Devil's Playground*, which explores the decisions that Old Order Amish youths make, gives the impression that these teens are well informed about options outside their communities. But this is misleading. Not only do these youths—like most teenagers—underestimate the range of options available to them, but the alternative lifestyles most of them associate with the "English world" amount to little more than heavy alcohol consumption, promiscuity, and living apart from one's parents. This hardly paints a balanced picture where options are concerned, and it certainly does little to critically examine the tremendous psychological costs that these youths pay should they decide—on pains of ostracism from family and friends—to leave their communities.
18. This does not, however, remove the worry that while some sectarian religious communities may know more about groups outside their cloistered walls, the *manner* in which this knowledge is studied and purveyed to children is far from evenhanded. Many sects, for example, rigorously study other religious and secular groups so that they may *refute* them or simply dismiss them as damnable and erred in their ways. Others, not given to theological quarrels and constituted by a more charitable disposition, merely study other groups in order to have a better, more secure appreciation of the views that they already possess. Few if any sectarian religious communities encourage their members to study other ways of life for the truths that may be gained from them.
19. Drawing heavily on other studies, Short (2002) compellingly shows that certain conditions need to exist in order for prejudice to be lessened: (1) potential for real (and not artificial) acquaintance, (2) social norms that favor group equality, (3) avoidance of stereotyping at all costs, (4) equal status among participating groups, and finally (5) a mutually dependent relationship (p. 568). Additionally, effective curriculum and instruction that seeks to counter stereotyping and intolerance will attempt to critically examine the attitudes and cultural mores that allow prejudice to thrive. Not only are many public schools currently inadequate to the task of providing these conditions—indeed, they work combatively against them for many minority groups—but religious schools seem just as capable of meeting these goals.
20. It is worth mentioning that tolerance is a civic virtue that several researchers have found to be morally inept. They claim that veritable fragmentation of values prevails in most American high schools that can provide, at best, a kind of vapid neutrality. Several researchers have found that even the notion of communality in many public schools passes as little more than an absence of conflict (Powell et al. 1985, pp. 54–58). The authors further remark that sexist comments were still rife

during the period of their study (p. 339n4), and I would add from my repeated observations in dozens of schools in two large Midwestern school districts during 2002–2005 that homophobic and ethnic slurs continue to be equally pervasive.

21. Short (2002) comments, "Research shows that generalization does not occur. In fact, there is no reason to believe that inter-racial contact, even under the most propitious circumstances would ever achieve what was claimed on its behalf. For if people who are prejudiced against a particular group find themselves, somewhat incongruously, enjoying the company of individual members of that group, it would be quite illogical for them to conclude that the company of other (unknown) members of the group would be just as congenial" (p. 569).
22. Here the idea is that the state should not doubly burden parents who wish to avail themselves of religious schools by taxing them for schools that they do not use. Of course, an argument like this quickly implodes, for then we might ask whether childless couples or single people (or the elderly for that matter) ought to be exempted from supporting public education.
23. This assumes, of course, that worthwhile opportunities are available in the first place. However, what counts as worthwhile will vary considerably according to time and place. Determining what counts as a worthwhile pursuit will not be "obvious" in the same way as determining what counts as robust health.
24. A number of philosophers of education have argued that public schools ought to provide "equal time" for religious beliefs on the grounds of fairness (Fraser 1999; Nord 1995). Yet, given the agendas behind many advancing these proposals, such "balancing acts" would need to be carefully monitored, and some views (e.g., claims that some ethnic groups possess different intellectual traits) could be disallowed on the grounds of bad science as well as hatred or intolerance. There are all sorts of difficulties in implementing this approach, especially in light of the Establishment Clause, but some efforts by the state to collaborate with religious parents and organizations—allowing, as is already widely done, exemptions from school pledges, sex education, and even scientific units that discuss Darwinian natural selection—would seem to further a schooling arrangement that enjoyed greater legitimacy than one that did not. Further, if public schools did a better job at including discussions on religious points of view (with the aim to inform and not persuade), I would wager that fewer religious parents would be inclined to exit public schools.
25. Indeed, a complete consensus is the stuff of utopia. Some groups implacably opposed to interference, will remain unreasonable, opposing any reasons on offer and inveighing against the godless state and its dominions.
26. Here the state threatened to rescind the tax-exempt status of the school if it did not change its policy of not admitting black students, but also its dating policy, which forbade interracial relationships on "biblical grounds." In cases like these, the state is able to demonstrate a "compelling government interest" by imposing its antisegregationist agenda on a school set against it.
27. I am aware that matters quickly become complicated when it is recognized that religious institutions may enjoy important exemptions from religious discrimination

claims under civil rights laws. The relevant passage (42 U.S.C. Sec. 2000e-2(e)[2]) under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 allows an employer to discriminate on religious grounds if the educational institution "in whole or in substantial part, [is] owned, supported, controlled, or managed by a particular religion or a particular religious organization, or if the curriculum of the institution is directed toward the propagation of a particular religion."

28. Of course this will not remove the problem of *principled* objection to certain beliefs or behaviors. Each incident must be considered on a case-by-case basis.
29. This has happened in the United Kingdom, for instance, where certain all-girl Islamic schools were shown to be offering a horribly substandard education and girls were being taught to expect only a life of mothering.
30. It is unclear to me why parents would be less suited to pass along these basic outlooks.
31. A few random quotes from Denise Pope's (2001) work, in which she examines some of America's *best* schools, will suffice to sustain this finding: "Instead of fostering in its students traits such as honesty, integrity, cooperation, and respect, the school may be promoting deception, hostility, and anxiety" (p. 150). "They, too, seemed trapped by the realities of an overcrowded, impersonal, bureaucratic, and competitive school system" (p. 161). "Individual student achievement is promoted over the value of cooperation and group success" (p. 165). Alex Molnar (1996) adds, "In the United States, every available surface, from shopping carts to buses to computer Web pages to public schools, is now blanketed with commercials. Children are sold to advertisers from the time they are born, taught that possessions define their value, and blessed with lived filled with pseudo-events, pseudo-emotions, and pseudo-knowledge provided by marketers" (p. 184). The point is this: while religious critics of public schooling are wrong to say that public schooling fosters a "secular humanist counter-religion," they are correct to say that a great number of public schools embody and foster a distinct and sectarian set of values and worldviews.
32. Briefly, there are at least two problems with the private/public distinction. One is to see them as irremediably opposed. I believe this distinction is unnatural, for it supposes that public agencies are in the business of providing services (e.g., job training, child care, drug counseling) that the private sector is not. The other mistake is to suppose that the private is invariably an improvement on the public. The latter view is erroneous because often—but not always—privatization schemes (and the efficiency arguments invoked to defend them) are tilted in favor of those able to pay. Indeed, to privatize education (or health care, social security, water provision, and dozens of other basic services) is to sanction the widening gap between rich and poor and to countenance the dastardly result of tens of millions doing *without* an education. Efficiency does not trump educational concerns for fairness and equal opportunity.
33. At first glance it may appear that homeschooling falls outside this argument. Yet this does not follow, for if states license parents to educate their children at home, this is no argument for abdicating the responsibility to ensure a quality

education. Rather, it is further justification for regulating what homeschoolers are allowed to do.

34. It is well known that a large number of religious schools play host to a variegated pupil population and promote autonomy in their students. However, I feel that it would be wrong to assume that students manifested more authenticity of belief, i.e., their beliefs reflected the free exercise of reason, by virtue of being in a religious school. The fact simply is that most historically privileged religious schools in European countries have lost much of what once made them religiously distinct, including the fact that relatively few staff and students are sincerely devout. This raises a number of important issues, but the point of having objections to religious schools need not turn on their being sectarian religious schools per se.
35. Also see Brighouse (2007) for a somewhat different articulation and Gutmann (1999, pp. 117–121) for an illuminating discussion on a "mixed system" that accommodates religious schools (thus requiring the state to show some restraint) yet holds them to educational standards that develop democratic character.
36. Even with the generous funding allocations for disadvantaged students in the Low Countries whose parents are either poor, nonnative Dutch speakers or from a particular ethnic group, the persistence of low academic outcomes for (mainly Muslim) children means that opportunities continue to be limited. (See Mulder & Van der Werf 1997). Similarly, the achievement gap between Asian and White students and Blacks and Latinos in the United States, exists *independent* of whether or not the school is suburban, amply funded, and well staffed (See Ogbu 2003). Some programs (e.g., Milwaukee's Chapter 220) have supplied money necessary for disadvantaged children to be educated in better-funded public schools outside the Milwaukee School District. These schools often have many more course offerings unavailable in urban school districts, but Chapter 220 is currently facing extinction. See "Integration Program at Risk," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (May 31, 2005), 1A, 14A.
37. Historically, the federal government cannot involve itself in direct funding to religious schools without being complicit in the practices that violate the Establishment Clause, and debate continues to rage around this contestable clause. Noteworthy here is the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* 403 U.S. 602 (1971) decision, in which the court decided that it was unconstitutional to have public school teachers being paid to teach secular subjects in religious schools on the grounds that there was "excessive entanglement" of the state with a religious institution. Several exceptions, however, should be noted. Examples include the following: allowing public funds to help religious schools pay for computers, instructional materials, and library books (*Mitchell v. Helms* 120 S. Ct. 2530 [2000]); using public funds to supply interpreters for the hard of hearing in religious schools (*Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills Sch. Dist.*, 509 U.S. 1 [1993]); or, using common school teachers to tutor private school pupils (*Agostini v. Felton*, 521 U.S. 203 [1997]). Nevertheless, First Amendment jurisprudence has been reluctant, to say the very least, to allocate funding toward explicitly religious purposes.

There is a strange incongruity here when one considers that tax dollars are routinely used for purposes for which the taxpayer may disapprove (e.g., waging war, embryonic stem cell research, offensive art exhibitions). Apparently the funding of religion is deemed particularly intrusive, though the state funding of religious organizations is nothing new provided that these organizations do not appropriate state funds for explicitly religious purposes. Still, as Laura Underkuffler (2001) argues, "the idea that religious and secular functions can be separated—with state aid used only for the latter—is likely a completely unrealistic one" (p. 582). This is especially true under the Bush administration's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which has expanded the compass of organizations suitable to receive federal dollars, including those whose primary aim is—often coercive—conversion of those to whom it provides assistance.

38. Sixty-six percent of those polled responded affirmatively to a *New York Times*/CBS News poll on the role of the federal government in providing direct aid to religious organizations that provide important social services. The figure fell sharply to 29 percent when more marginal religious groups were included in the provisions (cited in Underkuffler 2001, p. 585). It has been reported that 1.17 billion dollars was given to faith-based groups in 2003, which counts for about 8 percent of the 14.5 billion that the federal government spent on social programs that qualify for faith-based grants in five federal departments. Many recipients are well-established, large social service providers that have received federal money for decades. More than 80 percent of recipients of Health and Human Services (HHS) had received federal money before, while at Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the figure was 93 percent. Two programs account for half of the 1.17 billion: Section 202, an HUD program that builds housing for the poor and homeless, and Head Start, a large preschool program for poor children. See "$1.17 Billion to Faith-Based Groups in '03," *Capital Times* (January 3, 2005), 3A.
39. Of course, many public magnet and charter schools also enjoy a great deal of curricular freedom.
40. The Wisconsin case was upheld by the state supreme court (*Jackson v. Benson* 213 Wis. 2d 1 [1998]), which permitted the extension to include a limited number of participating religious schools. The Supreme Court ruling in the Cleveland case (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 [2002] 234 F. 3d 945) upheld an Ohio federal appellate court (cf. *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 347 U.S. [6th Cir. 2000]) and was limited to schools that would not "discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background; advocate or foster unlawful behavior; or teach hatred of any person or group on account of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion." The Supreme Court found that the Cleveland program "is entirely neutral with respect to religion. It provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence." The decision was concluded thus: "The program is therefore a program of true private choice and does not offend the Establishment Clause of the Constitution." Dissenting Justice Stevens offered a different point of view: ". . . the vast majority of the

voucher recipients who have entirely rejected public education receive religious indoctrination at state expense . . .” Stevens's view was propounded on the belief that such a decision will “increase the risk of religious strife.” Justice Breyer concurred. Dissenting Justice Souter noted that the neutrality of a program “should be gauged not by the opportunities it presents but rather by its effects.” Justice O'Connor, however, stressed that public schools, including community schools (of which there were 10 in Cleveland at that time) and magnet schools (of which there were 24), were able to compete with nonreligious and religious private schools.

41. Naturally individual states do not want the federal government usurping states' rights and trampling the benefits of localism, viz., the ability of county or municipal governments and local school boards to make decisions that reflect the interests of their constituents. However, the federal government—at least since the mid-1960s—has played an important mitigating role in combating various forms of discrimination. I am not claiming that the federal government always has the best interests of its citizens at heart: witness the recent FEMA debacle or Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez's defense of the Office of Homeland Security spying on American citizens. There will probably always be abuses such as these. But notice that critics of FEMA or Homeland Security are not calling for the removal of state oversight, but rather its *reform.*
42. One sees this vividly in France, where *laïcité*—however one wishes to translate it—is being used to repress religious expression, invigorating a massive resistance of extremism, some of which is violent and seditious. The French Council of Muslim Faith, established by finance minister Nicolas Sarkozy, has seen most of its regional branches and governing council electing extremists. French law is notoriously harsh in dealing with suspected radicals, and deportations are common. See “After Van Gogh: Europeans Ponder How the Tolerant Can Best Deal with the Intolerant,” *Economist* (November 13, 2004).
43. See Thiemann (2000, p. 79) and Wolfe (2000, p. 35).
44. Of course it may have the opposite effect as well. Religious parents are often as averse to discussions of religion in public schools as secular parents. Broaching themes of religion, by providing, say, sex education, is believed by many religious parents to be their prerogative and not the school's.
45. I do not hold to the view that the inevitable changes to come about from greater inclusion will signal the demise of that religion. Some liberals have argued that certain “restrictive” practices (e.g., eligibility to become a rabbi or a priest) are so central to a religious system that to change them would be the undoing of those religions. From my point of view, these changes—major though some of them certainly are—do not herald the demise of a religion, but its *reform.*
46. I confess that if the U.S. government decided to place religious schools in the public domain by funding them and holding them more accountable than it currently does, there would be considerable difficulty in achieving legitimacy. This seems true not only for parents of private religious schools, who may cherish the influence they are able to exercise over “their” schools but also for public school districts throughout the United States, which exercise a great deal

of local control. This influence includes the ability to alter curricula in public schools (sometimes with charters, sometimes not) to reflect the concerns of the local community. For one school this may be an African-centered curriculum, while for another it may mean two-way bilingual instruction. It does not stop there. Increasingly, individual states are turning away federal dollars so as not to answer to the U.S. Department of Education. Elsewhere and conversely, several school districts are capitulating to the pressures of parents and religious groups who insist that creationism receive equal attention in science instruction. Supposing that a system of accountability that incorporated religious schools into its ambit were adopted, it remains a conundrum how such a system would address the abiding suspicion in the United States toward a strong centralized authority (See Tyack 2003).

47. Although I have not given attention to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in this study, it is well known that "standards," even under NCLB, vary considerably from state to state, which raises serious questions about its effectiveness as a national accountability scheme. But a poorly implemented federal inducement scheme is no argument against strong accountability. As I have tried to argue in this chapter, I believe it is long overdue that the federal government play a much stronger role in the funding and oversight of American education. However, the difficulty remains, as mutiny from states such as Utah and Connecticut recently indicated, that the state's rights and local control of schools remain firmly entrenched in American education.

Chapter 7

1. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century there was no global economy and no international Islamist movements, and it was not the majority view that public schools are uniquely instrumental in promoting the common good.
2. These include the views that religious schools work against the autonomy of children, pander more than they should to the cultural demands of parents, and are socially divisive.
3. Concerning the republican virtues enlisted to support public schooling, one noted historian writes, "The coherence of native Protestant ideology gave it much persuasive force. If you assented to one or more of the propositions, it followed that you should be for any one of the others . . . Conversely, if you assaulted one of the beliefs, you could be portrayed as assaulting the entire belief system, because the beliefs were interdependent" (Kaestle 1983, p. 101).
4. Catholic and other private schools received funding briefly in 1816 in New York City. See Fraser 1999, pp. 51–52.
5. Having attended to the sorts of incongruities that sometimes arise in multivariate analyses in which some unmeasured aspect of a student's background may account for different achievement outcomes, Coleman et al. (1982) write, "Catholic schools more nearly approximate the 'common school' ideal of American education than do common schools, in that the achievement levels

of students from different parental educational backgrounds, of black and white students, and of Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students are more nearly alike in Catholic schools than in common schools. In addition, the educational aspirations of students from different parental educational backgrounds are more alike in Catholic than in public schools" (p. 185; cf. pp. 136–144). Catholic schools lag far behind public schools in the following areas: career preparatory experience programs, athletic and extracurricular options, and resources for children with special needs (Coleman et al. 1982).

6. Criticisms against these findings usually focus on the habit of comparing apples and oranges. Catholic schools require fees, and these fees alone will change the constituency of their pupil bodies from public schools, which do not. Like private schools, public schools must also deal with internal conflict, but they will often bend to public pressure, whereas private schools are quicker to expel students (rather than terminate teachers) who do not conform to the school culture. Private school staff may actively encourage parents to look elsewhere for a package of educational commodities they do not wish to provide. Thus, many private schools may in fact be *less* responsive to parental concerns if those concerns conflict with the mission of the school. Finally, while it may be true that many private schools offer a unique set of relations and shared values among both school professionals and the parents who select these schools for their children, the same, of course, can be said of some communities and their respective public schools. See, for example, Benveniste et al. (2003), pp. 176 ff. Conversely, Greeley argues that there appears to be a "school effect" and not simply an "intake" issue in explaining the success of poor and disadvantaged children. Between the tenth and twelfth grades in high school, the correlation coefficient between social class and achievement "is three times stronger in public schools than in Catholic schools" (Greeley 1982, p. 81).
7. Many changes were already well afoot prior to the council, so it is important not to exaggerate the liberalization of the Catholic Church occasioned by Vatican II. There are growing trends within American Catholicism, for example, that point to a new conservatism. See "Bible Belt Catholics," *Time* (February 14, 2005), pp. 44–46. The television program *60 Minutes* (April 3, 2005) also recently highlighted the resurgence of conservatism among American Catholic young people owing to the charisma of Pope John Paul II. Presently, Pope Benedict (formerly Cardial Josef Ratzinger) represents a strong continuation of John Paul II's conservative legacy.
8. This includes a mission statement that discourages school administrators from admitting children solely on the basis of religious adherence.
9. These generous subsidies are extended to Catholic hospitals, insurance companies, universities, etc.
10. In the United States the alarming rate at which Catholic schools, particularly in the inner cities, are closing down because of declining enrollments—and in some cases, poor performance—has led some Catholics to call upon the church hierarchy to commit more financial support to Catholic schools. An obvious reason

why these urban schools close is that middle-class families move away as they become wealthier. Further, since the mid-1960s, there has also been a precipitous decline in the number of available Catholics in orders committed to teaching in Catholic schools.

11. Indeed, one of the reasons that Bryk et al. (1993) attribute relative success to Catholic schools has to do with their high level of independence from public school bureaucracies, which gives the staff time to engage in more teaching and relationship building with students.
12. I am aware that there may be other decisive factors concerning whether non-Muslims would desire their children to enroll, including academic reputation, an ethos of inclusiveness, etc.
13. In the United States this information is usually self-reported, although in the United Kingdom a growing number of Islamic schools—including a number of all-girl schools—have performed well in the academic league tables, leading many to apply for state funding. See Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005), p. 174.
14. A number of teachers—many of them non-Muslims—opt to teach in Islamic schools, even for considerably lower pays, because of the benefits of working in a highly structured learning environment in which there is greater cooperation among administration, teachers, and parents.
15. Hence the charge of social divisiveness *does* stick for some, however, including African American and Muslim converts, for whom the immigrant communities are often tribalist enclaves emotionally linked to their countries of origin. Not only is an air of elitism assumed among many foreign-born Muslims toward their "non-ethnic" counterparts as it concerns ideas of what constitutes "true" Islam, but humanitarian efforts to counter social injustice are almost exclusively focused on the countries of origin, conveniently overlooking the poverty and injustice in their own neighborhoods (Dannin 1998).
16. In order for there to be autonomy, these habits will require both an absence of coercion and some critical reflection upon them. They may be performed, of course, *without* much critical attention to alternatives.
17. Of course, neither does being a student in a public school. See De Ruyter & Merry, 2009. And, if we apply the criteria for autonomy to students in "progressive" schools (e.g., Waldorf, Friends, etc.), we can expect just as many children to reflect the views of their parents as those in a religious school. See Levinson & Levinson (2003), passim.

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