Fostering Flourishing

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Many animals learn from experience. They learn where to forage, whom to flee, where to find mates. Some, such as wolves and lions, learn to work collectively to pursue their prey. Some, evidently, are taught. Lions apparently teach their cubs how to hunt. Humans do more. We learn not just from those nearby, but from people remote from us in time and space. We can do so because we have developed languages and other symbol systems that enable us to communicate our ideas, express our feelings, engage in cooperative enterprises, and rationally evaluate our own and one another's actions and ideas. We have developed technologies that enable us to preserve and transmit our ideas. We need to do all these things. Individual members of our species are ill-equipped to go it alone. Unlike zebras, who are ready to run and fend for themselves shortly after birth, we have an extended period of dependency. Indeed, one might argue that our dependency is lifelong. We live in communities and rely on one another to supply goods and services that we cannot provide for ourselves. Alone among the animals, we have and need a heritage – a constellation of evolving understandings, practices, institutions and techniques that we learn from past generations, then modify and transmit to future generations.

This means that education, broadly conceived, is as distinctively human as any activity. And it is vital. Without a suitable education, a human being probably could not survive. It does not follow that a human being could not survive without schools or homework or final exams. But we have to *learn*

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much of what we need to know. And we have to learn how to learn much of what we need to know. To a considerable extent, this requires being taught. Whether schools, homework, and final exams figure in the best way to teach such things remains to be seen. To develop and sustain an acceptable educational regime, we need to ask fundamental philosophical questions.

These questions are as old as philosophy. Plato asks in the *Republic*: What sort of life is worth living? And he recognizes that this question cannot be answered independently of determining what sort of education equips people with the abilities, desires, and motivations needed to live a good life.[2] Abilities alone are not enough. If people are to live a good life and a good life requires reading, then they need not only to be able to read, they also have to want to read and be inclined to read. Desire and motivation are crucial. If a good life requires contributing to the well-being of the community, then people need not only to know that they should contribute to the community's well-being, they should be motivated to do so. Moreover, the various skills, desires, and motivations must mesh. They must be suitably woven together so that they support rather than undermine one another.

Education, whether formal or informal, is an essentially reflective and reflexive enterprise. Unlike indoctrination, which might proceed smoothly without any consideration of what is being indoctrinated or why, education involves critical reflection on its own ends and means.[3] Education demands responsiveness to reasons. It should equip students to ask for reasons, to recognize reasons, to provide reasons for their beliefs and actions, and to be skeptical of claims when no adequate reasons are available.

At the heart of the philosophy of education is the question: What is the goal of education? There may be multiple answers. Perhaps education as a whole serves many ends. Or perhaps different spheres

[2]Plato, 'Republic' in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. New York: Bollingen, (1963) pp. 575-844.

[3]To be sure, indoctrinators may be critically aware of what they are indoctrinating and why, but even this is not necessary. The methods and content may be matters of tradition, where their original rationale is lost to history. This is not uncharacteristic of indoctrination in religion.

of education serve different ends. But if we do not seriously examine this cluster of questions, we will be at a loss to know how to design our educational practices, policies, and institutions. For different designs serve different ends.

John Dewey argues that universal public education is necessary for a democracy.[4] Having the right to vote will not do citizens much good if they lack the resources to decide for themselves who and what is worth voting for. They are vulnerable to rogues and charlatans if they do not have the ability or the incentive to assess issues and candidates for themselves. So in a liberal democratic society, there is a political justification for universal public education. Is this justification sufficient? Apparently not. First, it apparently applies only to democracies. Nothing seems to follow, at least directly, about whether there is any justification for universal public education in societies that are not and do not aspire to be democracies. Second, it seems to suggest that citizens in a democracy are entitled to only the level and breadth of education that they need to function well as citizens. Suppose, for example, that to function effectively as a citizen required no more than a 10th grade education. Would that mean that a society's obligation to educate its people would stop at grade 10? Or should a society provide its young with more? I will below suggest that Dewey is more concerned with what it takes to be *a participating member of a community* than what it takes to be an active citizen of a country *with a particular form of government.* But the issue here is that there seems to be something unduly narrow about assuming the full justification for education derives from enabling someone to function as a citizen.

Throughout the world it is held that the goal of education is to prepare students for the work force. If so, the skills and abilities that education should impart are those that will turn students into good workers. These may be contextually circumscribed. At different points in history, workers need different abilities. No doubt equipping students with marketable skills is worthwhile. But this goal too

[4]John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan (1916).

seems unduly limited.

People are more than just workers. They are members of families, of circles of friends, of communities, of cultures. They have interests and aspirations above and beyond those that figure in their jobs. If education is concerned exclusively or primarily with preparing people for the work force, it is apt to be narrow and skewed. It is likely to skirt the development of skills, orientations, and capacities whose value lies in other aspects of their lives. It will thus fail to equip students with the resources needed to be good parents, friends, citizens, amateur artists, athletes, and appreciators of the diverse ways humans can excel.

In any case, if preparing the populace for the work force is education's overarching objective, we face a daunting task. Once it was reasonable for educators to think that they knew how to do this. In the fourteenth century, if a man was a farmer, he could take it for granted that his sons would be farmers and that they would farm the land in much the way that he did. So he could teach his sons to farm, imparting his know-how, thereby equipping them for their place in the world of work. But today the world is changing rapidly. We have very little idea what specific skills and abilities the work force will need in twenty or thirty years, when current students will be workers in their prime. Thus insofar as we are preparing our students to be workers, we are preparing them to work at something we know not what. This involves identifying and imparting a quite different set of skills from those needed to farm or cook or fix cars or program computers as we do today. It requires that we equip our students with higher-order skills that enable and motivate them to learn how to learn, and to recognize when established ways of doing things are becoming outdated.

Aristotle contends that human beings are essentially rational.[5] If rationality is the human essence, then the end of education should be to enable each human being to function as a rational agent.

[5]Aristotle, 'Metaphysics' in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House 1941) pp. 698-712.

An educated person would be one who realises her essence and is able to perform her proper function.[6] This might require more or different skills, propensities, and orientations than those that are required to enable her to function as a citizen or as a member of the work force.

To see whether the Aristotelian position figures in a viable philosophy of education, we need to explicate and justify a conception of human flourishing, where to flourish is to function well as a rational animal. John Rawls suggests that flourishing involves satisfying what he calls the Aristotelian Principle:

> Other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities) and . . . this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized or the greater its complexity. A person takes pleasure in doing something as he becomes more proficient at it, and of two activities which he performs equally well, he prefers the one that calls upon the greater number of more subtle and intricate discriminations.[7]

He goes on to say, 'Presumably complex activities are more enjoyable because they satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention'.[8] Rawls does not, of course, think that flourishing requires relentless self-improvement in all aspects of life. He notes that it would be ridiculous if someone were to invoke the Aristotelian Principle as a reason to continually devise more complicated ways to tie his shoes[9] (although, I should note that some young people evidently take pleasure in devising ever more intricate ways to tie their shoes). Nevertheless, Rawls thinks that flourishing involves realizing the Aristotelian Principle in some important aspects of one's life. If this is right, and if enabling people to flourish is an aim of education, then we need to equip and motivate students to continually improve their performance in some significant areas of their

[6]Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics' in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House 1941) pp. 935-952,

[7]John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, (1971) p. 414.
[8]John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, (1971) p. 427.
[9]John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, (1971) pp. 430-431.

lives, and refine their abilities to make subtle and intricate discriminations.

We might wonder whether there is such a thing as human flourishing. I do not mean by this that we should wonder whether people flourish. Plainly some do. The question is whether flourishing is a single property that all those who flourish share. If so, all those who flourish are in an important respect alike. The ancient Greeks thought that this is so. Flourishing had to be characterized at a level of abstraction, so that the relevant features could plausibly be general. But there was a single good – the good for humans – that all aim for, and that all who were successful achieved.

The conviction that there is such a single good waned with the Enlightenment. Different people, it seems, quite reasonably value different things. They consider their lives to go well when they achieve different objectives. They do not all flourish in the same way.[10] So if the Aristotelian Principle holds, it must be interpreted in a way that recognises that different people seek to satisfy it in different domains.

This marks an important change that is highly consequential for education. For if there is value in people's living lives that *they themselves consider good*,[11] then rather than thinking that the educational establishment – society, or the ministry, or the family – should set the goals from the outside, education should enable and equip students to set their own goals. In Rawls's terms, education should enable people to determine their own conception of the good and equip them to pursue that good, their pursuit being limited by the rights of others not to be harmed and to have the same liberty to pursue their own conceptions of the good. A person's conception of the good is a scheme of ultimate ends that she reflectively endorses – one whose achievement is likely, barring catastrophe, to result in a life that she would consider well-lived.[12]

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[10]For a contemporary pluralistic view of flourishing see Tim Lomas and Tyler J. Vander Weele ‘The Garden and the Orchestra: Generative Metaphors for Conceptualizing the Complexities of Well-Being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 2022, 19 (21), 14544, doi:10.3390/ijerph192114544.

[11]This is not to suggest that whatever someone considers a good life is a good life, even for that person. It is, however, to say that thinking one’s life is going well is at least typically an important aspect of its going well.

[12]Rawls does not have a theory of education. Nor, for his purposes, does he think he needs one. Although I draw on his ideas, I use them to articulate my own position. There is no reason to think that he would agree with me. A philosophy of education is not entirely a branch of moral or political philosophy. It is concerned with, among other things,

Formulating and pursuing a conception of the good requires a variety of abilities that children, and some adults, lack – access to intelligible information, foresight, the capacity to rationally assess alternatives, and so forth. Rawls is sometimes criticised for overlooking this fact.[13] I do not think this criticism is sound, since he is attempting to characterize the moral features required of fully functioning members of a well ordered society. Children are not yet fully functioning members of society, and some people never will be. Still, the criticism points to a gap in Rawls' account of what it takes to form and have a conception of the good, and one that is significant for the philosophy of education. What more is needed?

Here it pays to turn to Amartya Sen.[14] He maintains that to be able to form what Rawls calls a conception of the good, people need a range of capabilities. Some are inborn, others are acquired. Among those that are acquired are the capability to recognize opportunities, frame alternatives for oneself, and imaginatively entertain the possibility of adopting different goods as one's own.[15] The opportunities must be live options, not just pipe dreams. So society must ensure that a reasonably wide range of options are available to its members. Because the opportunities in question must be, and be recognized as, genuinely available, exactly what capabilities students need to develop is keyed to circumstances.[16] Nevertheless, if a person's purview is too restricted, her ability to form a conception of the good will be stunted. She will be unaware of the range of opportunities actually open to her or of the reasons she might have to consider them desirable. If, although she can form a viable conception of the good, her resources are unduly limited, she is not equipped to pursue her conception of the good. As

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epistemic ends – knowledge and understand. The goods of reason are, in my view, genuine, irreducible goods. They are not merely instrumental. They are, moreover, goods that education should equip us to access.

[13]See Eva Kittay, *Love's Labour* (1999). New York: Routledge; Asha Bhandary, *Freedom to Care: Dependency, Care, and Culture.* New York: Routledge (2020).

[14]Amartya Sen, 'Equality of What?' in *Equal Freedom* ed. Stephen Darwall. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (1975) pp. 307-330.

[15]See Harry Brighouse. 'Education for a Flourishing Life' *Teachers College Record* 112 no. 13 (2008): 58-71.

[16]If circumstances unjustly restrict the opportunities of some and foster the opportunities of others, those circumstances must be changed, or at least seriously challenged.

Sen emphasizes, it is not enough that she is equipped to lead a life that she considers good simply because she is easily satisfied. Nor is it enough if, simply because her purview is restricted, she identifies as a good life what is merely the best of a bad lot when there are real options that, had she been aware of them, she would have preferred. She must be capable of surveying and entertaining a fairly wide range of genuinely available options.

To be sure, some limitations are inevitable. Regardless of our aspirations, we human beings cannot fly by flapping our arms. Others are inevitable for some people, but not for others. Unless their sight is restored, blind people cannot pilot commercial aircraft. That option is foreclosed to them. Yet others can be remedied by supplying absent resources. A young person, living at a distance, becomes able to attend school when she gets a bicycle; a member of a group barred from a trade gains the opportunity to pursue that trade when the labour laws are changed. Yet others – the ones that concern us – can be removed or ameliorated by education. Literacy and numeracy enable people to entertain, appreciate the value of, and pursue careers, hobbies, and activities that would otherwise be closed to them.

If individuals are to form their own conceptions of a good life and construct plans to pursue the goods they endorse, critical reasoning is mandatory. Individuals need to be both competent and motivated to identify and assess the reasons for and against the alternative attitudes and actions open to them. Not only must they be able to think for themselves, they must be able to think *critically* for themselves. That is, they must have and be disposed to use second-order skills that enable them to assess their own thinking. Autonomy requires responsiveness to reasons, where reasons are considerations that bear on whether an action, contention, choice, or stance is worthy of acceptance. Education should equip students to ask for reasons, to recognize reasons, to provide reasons for their beliefs and actions, and to be skeptical of claims when no adequate reasons are available.[17]

[17]See Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason.* New York: Routledge (1988).

Harvey Siegel emphasizes that an education that cultivates critical thinking displays respect for students. This needs spelling out. Like Immanuel Kant[18], Siegel holds that respect is tied to autonomy.[19] Persons are worthy of respect precisely because they are rational, autonomous agents. They are capable of setting ends for themselves. When Siegel integrates this into the philosophy of education, even Kantians might get a bit nervous. It's one thing to recognize that we should respect the choices of fully developed rational agents and do so because those choices are fruits of exercises of autonomy. But do we really believe that it is a good idea to let five-year-olds set their own ends? (Birthday cake for every meal!) Clearly not.

But Kant does not hold that respect for persons requires endorsing the pursuit of their every fancy. Here the distinction between autonomy and heteronomy comes in.[20] Respect for persons involves respect for their autonomous choices, not for their ill-advised or unconsidered whims. Rather, I suggest, Siegel's point about respect commits him to something similar. Since the ground for respect is autonomy, to treat students with respect is to foster their autonomy in and through education. It is to educate them to appreciate the importance of reasons and the value of being guided by reasons. Assessing thoughts and actions on the basis of reasons is what makes people *autonomous* agents. This is what makes them worthy of respect. Indeed, we might even hold that education is a directed developmental trajectory from heteronomy, where children assess items on the basis of their inclinations and desires, to autonomy, where they assess them on the basis of reasons that they justifiably take to support or undermine alternatives in question. Respect for children then involves equipping them with the resources they need to develop the capacity and motivation to think critically. It involves providing opportunities and incentives to exercise autonomy to the extent that they are capable of doing so.

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[18]Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.* Indianapolis: Hackett (1981).
[19]Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason.* New York: Routledge (1988).
[20]Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.* Indianapolis: Hackett (1981).

Sen's discussion of capabilities indicates that the scope of critical reasoning is greater than Siegel's discussion might suggest. First, it is not just about assessing the merits of the alternatives presented to us. We need to know how and when to seek out alternatives. Second, if autonomy requires that an individual choose among alternative life plans, she needs to be able to *imagine* what it would be like to lead a certain sort of life – to be, for example, a philosopher, or a long distance trucker, or an accountant. So she needs to be able to engage in critical hypothetical reasoning. She also needs to be able to rein in her hypothetical reasoning to scenarios that are, or could plausibly be, live options. She needs, moreover, to be willing and able to imagine what it would be like *for her* to lead a certain sort of life. She needs to know herself – her likes and dislikes, her character, her preferences, and so forth. To imagine what it would be like for her to live a certain sort of life, she needs to be able to adopt a currently alien (but not too alien) perspective, and assess how things look from there. She is not just asking herself whether the life of a long distance trucker would be a good life; she is asking whether it would be a good life for *her.* She also needs to be adept at critically reasoning about her choice of perspectives. She needs to be able to tell what favours evaluating alternatives from this perspective rather than that one, and why the evaluation from this particular perspective should dominate her thinking. Autonomy, a suitably wide range of capabilities, and the propensity to engage in critical reasoning and reflection are integral to flourishing, not alternatives to it.

Like Rawls and Sen, I have been speaking holistically – asking how a person ought to make choices that are consequential for the overall course of a life. But the same sorts of competencies and motivations are required for more modest autonomous choices – making plans for the weekend, deciding whether to take the word of a hesitant informant, choosing among options on a dinner menu. The stakes are lower, but the benefits of critical reflection remain.

Some reasons support a conclusion regardless of perspective; others do so only from within a perspective. These need not be less valid reasons; but they are reasons whose claim is restricted to

circumstances where certain constraints are in place. One value of literature is that it teaches us to adopt perspectives, reason within the constraints a given perspective provides, and recognize how the perspective occludes information that other perspectives provide. The capacity for critical thinking enables people to judiciously entertain and assess alternative conceptions of the good. Expanding one's imaginative range by broadening one's perspective enables one to recognise and appreciate the pros and cons of various options as though from the inside. Through imagination, a person can ask herself, not just what is good or bad about a particular way of life simpliciter, but what would be good or bad about that way of life *for her.* This is something engagement with literature and the other arts fosters.

There is, and shouldbe, no suggestion that the capabilities education fosters will lead all students to form the same conception of the good. Rather, they will enable students to survey and assess the options, and decide for themselves what goods they value most. Education should recognise that there is a diversity of lives that reasonable people consider good, and should equip students to formulate and pursue a life that they personally would consider well-lived.

It is likely that without some measure of civic engagement, some personally and financially rewarding career, and some sort of family life, most people would not consider their lives well-lived. So the familiar ends of education are apt to be interwoven into an individual's conception of the good. But because the weight they are given is apt to vary from person to person, it would be an error for education to emphasise any of them at the expense of the others.

It might seem that, like preparing students for citizenship or for the work force, preparing them to live lives that they consider well-lived sets education a distal objective.[21] Looking back in old age, each person can assess whether her education provided her with the capabilities she needed for such a life. This is so, and it may be that only by surveying one's complete life is it possible to tell whether that life as a whole has been well-lived. Nevertheless, this is only part of the story. For a person – even

[21]I thank Morwenna Griffiths for raising this worry.

a child – can at any time consider whether her life is currently going well. Do her experiences and accomplishments contribute to a life that right now she considers well-lived? Do her current capabilities provide her with the resources to promote such a life? A successful childhood is not just a prelude to a good life. It is an important part of a good life. So designing an education to equip students to live lives they consider good involves designing an education that equips them to live lives that they consider good while they are being educated. Even though their conception of the good is embryonic, it is an important aspect of how they experience their own lives.

Still, this may sound very individualistic, perhaps objectionably so. I do not think it is. For human beings are social animals. We form societies and create the institutions, practices, and norms that shape our collective life. To see how this modulates the Rawlsian/Senian/Siegelian conception, let us look back to Dewey.

Standardly, I suppose, we think of democracy as a form of government, one where the government rules by the consent of the governed, where the will of the majority settles (most) issues, where voting is the mechanism for making political decisions. Dewey does not deny that political democracy has these features. But he considers democracy not just – and not mainly – a form of government. For Dewey, democracy is primarily a way of life.[22] It is a form of association, an orientation toward joint enterprises, common and sometimes divergent aims, collective social life.

The model for Deweyan democracy is not the United States Senate, but a New England town meeting. A town meeting is a direct democracy. It is a form of government that was common in 19th century rural New England towns and still exists in vestigial form. Under such a government, the residents of a town meet together to decide what the town should do. All adult residents are eligible to participate, and have both a right and a duty to take part. All are, from a political point of view, free and equal. They are free to advocate for any course of action they favour, entitled to be heard, and have an

[22]John Dewey, *Democracy and Education.* New York: MacMillan (1916).

equal say in what is done and how things are done. What Dewey calls 'democratic deliberation' is a form of mutually respectful collective deliberation.

This form of deliberation is not peculiar to early American democratic institutions. Nelson Mandela describes similar meetings at the Great Court of the Xhosa tribe, which he attended as a boy.

> Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer. People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens. (Women, I am afraid, were deemed second-class citizens.) . . . The meetings would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity or not at all. Unanimity, however, might be an agreement to disagree, to wait for a more propitious time to propose a solution. Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people.[23]

The background assumptions in both the New England town meeting and the Xhosa Great Court are: first, that there are problems that the group needs collectively to solve. Deliberations are practical; they concern what to do – perhaps about schools, taxes, roads, law enforcement or public health. Second, not everyone agrees about what to do. Different people have different opinions about the desirability of different ends, their relative importance, the effectiveness and efficiency of different means to achieve various ends, and so on. To get the deliberators to adopt the policy a person favours, he must convince his fellow citizens of its desirability. This is fairly obvious.

In order to prevail, an agent should understand his opponents' points of view. If John knows why Mary objects to his favoured course of action, he is in a good position to rebut or deflect her objections. If he knows what she wants, he can endeavor to ensure that her desires do not conflict with or override the satisfaction of his. This is so even in purely adversarial proceedings. Any political operative would recommend coming to the table with such knowledge. But, Dewey believes,

[23]Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom.* New York: Little Brown (1994) pp. 20-21.

democratic deliberation is not adversarial. The goal of democratic deliberation is not to get others to do what one already wants. It is to reason together to achieve the common good. Although John and Mary have antecedently formulated ideas about the common good, the discussion is not a zero sum, winner-take-all contest to see which of those ideas will prevail. Their ideas are common fodder for deliberation. They do not argue in order to realise their own antecedently fixed objectives and to discredit those of their opponents. Their motive for informing themselves about each other's points of view is not to block, rebut, or co-opt them. Rather, if they understand one another's points of view, they learn what each other's interests and objectives are, and why each thinks that those interests and objectives are worth pursuing. They thus enrich their understanding of the problem situation, the ends that might be realised, the courses of action open to them. They enrich the store of reasons they can draw on. This may lead them to modify their own position, to modulate it into something that accommodates, reflects, or respects the positions of those with whom they initially disagree. They argue *from* initially disparate points of view in order to arrive at a common, mutually satisfactory solution.

By accessing the opinions of others and the reasons for those opinions, we augment our store of information. We gain insights into the available options and their desirability. So rather than seeing those who disagree with us as opponents, Dewey thinks, we should see them as allies who, by envisioning things differently, expand our epistemic range. Diversity of opinion on Dewey's view thus is not an impediment to deliberation, but a resource for it. It follows that undue deference is a vice. If a deliberator, out of deference to a colleague, fails to voice her opinions where they diverge from his, she deprives him and the rest of the community of her insights. This is a form of disrespect. And it is epistemically costly. It may prevent the community from coming to the best available decision. What Dewey calls democratic deliberation is not restricted to the political realm. It is collective deliberation that affords access to insights and approaches that may prove beneficial, but that no one person, on his

own, would ever have considered.

Dewey focuses on democratic deliberation in contexts where people seek to come to a consensus about the common good. But its contribution to such contexts does not exhaust its value. Because democratic deliberation expands an agent's epistemic range, it is equally valuable in contexts where a person is concerned exclusively with her own good. For from the fact that in such a context she is justifiably self-interested, it does not follow that she knows where her interests really lie. Suppose, for example, she needs to decide whether to undergo a risky medical procedure. The decision is hers alone and her situation is such that she need only consider what is best for her. Still, she would do well to consult others – not just medical experts, but also people who know her well and perhaps patients who have undergone the procedure. Even though she gets to decide, and only her interests need be consulted in making the decision, she may not know what to decide or how best to decide. She may lack information or insight that others could provide. By deliberating with others, she gains access to alternative points of view. These may reveal important features of her current situation or currently espoused end that she has overlooked. Through such deliberation she gains access to information and experiences beyond her immediate purview. She may, as a result, modulate her ends or means. Whether or not she does so, she will be on more solid ground, since her decision will have been subject to greater scrutiny.[24] It will be made by accessing and assessing a broader range of reasons.

As I have characterized it, democratic deliberation is a way that people should work together to solve personal or common problems and achieve individual or collective goods. But it is considerably more than this. For Dewey's democratic deliberation is *essentially educative*. It is a way – perhaps the best way – to learn from one another. By reasoning together in a context of mutual respect, deliberators draw on one another's insights to figure out what to think. By reasoning collectively about how to figure out such things, they collectively devise and revise methods of enquiry and standards of

[24]I am grateful to John White for prompting me to clarify this point.

acceptability. This has consequences for formal education. By participating in democratic deliberation, students learn from others. And by learning how to participate in such deliberations, they learn how best to learn from others. Since participation is mandatory, learners are not passive. They contribute to ongoing debates. Their ideas are fodder for those debates – they are insights that might be endorsed, modified, or rejected as impracticable, unfounded, or simply not as good as a rival proposal. Nor are the students mere proposers of ideas. They also function as critics of the ideas of others, and formulators of ideas that no one has yet entertained. So they learn how to take a critically reflective stance toward their own ideas and the ideas of others.

People need to have a particular set of skills to be able to contribute to and avail themselves of the resources democratic deliberation provides. Very roughly, deliberators need to be adept at giving, taking, and weighing reasons. This is something they need to learn to do. The process is iterative. Deliberators monitor the results of their procedures and modify their practice in light of those results. If, for example, they find that one approach leads to animosity, to endless debate, or to outcomes that on reflection they consider regrettable, they revise it in hopes of doing better. Gradually the standards of collective debate evolve, as they recognise that the reasons it makes sense to offer are the reasons their interlocutors should be expected to endorse or at least seriously entertain, and these depend on the diversity of opinions among those they are deliberating with. The evolution of the practice of collective discourse, and the rules and constraints deliberators consider it subject to, are accepted for the nonce, as reflective of what they currently think are the best ways to deliberate about their collective lives. This holds not only in deliberations about a common good, but also in deliberations about an individual's own good. When a group of people collectively deliberates about what one of them should do given her own conception of the good – whether, for example, she should enroll in a dangerous but promising clinical trial – they still avoid ad hominem arguments, unjustifiable appeals to authority, or adducing ad hoc considerations to avoid unpalatable consequences.

At the heart of Dewey's conception of democratic deliberation is a deep-seated mutual respect. Deliberators respect one another in taking each other's views seriously, and in taking responsibility for their own views, so that they are worthy of being taken seriously. Their deliberations display a critical reflectiveness about ends and means. The fact that a course of action accords with tradition is a point in its favour, since it is some evidence that that course of action has worked well in the past. But since deliberators need to look forward as well as back, they must consider whether circumstances have changed in such a way that what worked well in the past will not work so well in the future. This is not to deny that deliberators can appeal to experts. But if they do, they need to accompany their appeal with intersubjectively acceptable reasons for thinking that the chosen expert is, in this sort of case, trustworthy. Recognition of their fallibility is required as well. Deliberators must be willing to revisit previously accepted conclusions in light of their consequences, and to revise or reject them if things did not turn out as well as they hoped.

If democracy is a way of life, these virtues, which are at once cognitive and moral, should characterise our relations to one another, to our shared problems and our common world generally. Whenever we are deliberating together, we should display the virtues of democratic deliberators: mutual respect, answerability to the evidence, foresight about social and material consequences, fallibilism, and so on. Since, according to Dewey, all deliberation is public deliberation, these virtues should infuse our lives. And since democratic deliberation is essentially educative, education is a life-long process.

If, as Aristotle says, our overarching objective is to flourish or to live a life we consider valuable,[25] and as Enlightenment figures such as Jean Jacques Rousseau[26], Mary Wollstonecraft[27] and

[25]Aristotle,'Nicomachean Ethics' in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House 1941 pp. 927-1112.
[26]Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*. Amherst: Prometheus Books (2003).
[27]Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, New York: Norton (1988).

Immanuel Kant[28] insist, not everyone considers the same sort of life to be valuable, then as John Rawls[29] and Amartya Sen[30] maintain, education must equip individuals with the resources to form their own conception of the good and the capabilities to pursue that good, constrained always by the provision that an individual's pursuit cannot interfere with the equal liberty of others to pursue their own goods. And as Harvey Siegel[31] and Israel Scheffler[32] insist, it should both enable and motivate them to reason critically. The goal of education is not to enable people to realise some externally specified good, but rather to enable them, in a suitably unfettered and responsible way, to devise and pursue lives that they consider good. It should foster flourishing. Since people are different, there will be a diversity of viable conceptions of the good. Education should promote the recognition of that diversity and the appreciation of its value. Since human beings are social animals who can flourish only in communities, we need to be able, as Dewey argues, to form, critique, and modify our ever evolving conceptions of the good by appealing to the insights of others.[33] And we need to appreciate how tightly the realisation of our individual conception of the good is tied to the good of our society, hence to the goods sought by other members of our society. Rather than individualism being at odds with collectivism, individualism and collectivism are mutually reinforcing. The capacity to appreciate these insights and the motivation to realise a community that fosters them is, I contend a fundamental goal of education.

[28]Immanuel Kant, *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals,* Indianapolis: Hackett (1981)
[29]John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press (1971)
[30]Amartya Sen, 'Equality of What?' in *Equal Freedom* edited by Stephen Darwall, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, (1995), pp. 307-330.
[31]Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason*. New York: Routledge (1988),
[32]Israel Scheffler, *Reason and Teaching*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (1973).
[33]John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. New York: MacMillan,(1916).

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