

# Chapter 1

## The Ontology of Values and Values Education

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### 1 Introduction

At present there is enormous interest in values issues and in the question of how we may attempt to resolve our differences over them. Accounts and details of what Thomas Nagel (1979) called the great “mortal questions”, such as the rights and wrongs of euthanasia, genetic cloning, and the tensions and possibility of reconciliation between different ethnic and religious groups in our societies, appear on the front pages of our newspapers and on the television almost daily. It is inevitable that students in our educating institutions will want help in coming to decide what they ought to think about these and similar issues, how they ought to judge, which way they ought to behave in respect of these and those other values issues “of great pith and moment”, with which their lives, and that of their community and its future health, stability and progress, are increasingly beset.

Reflection on such matters is not a “one off” process, however: so many and substantial are the problems with which people have to deal, and so protean, complicated and almost intractable that some of them appear to be, that people generally will have to face the need to be constantly re-educating themselves, to address the multiplicity and intricacy of such issues again and again. Learning the skills of problem-solving while at school will provide no guarantee that such skills may be carried forward into times when the successors of such issues as the above, and ones increasingly dissimilar to them, so that members of society can address them as they used to in the past: they have to redevelop, extend and deploy their repertoires of knowledge and their approach to, and skills at, solving problems anew in increasingly challenging and difficult situations, throughout their lives.

Thus the premiums put upon the critical cognitive capacities of curiosity-driven enquiry, attack upon pressing practical problems in the real-life world, autonomy, individual initiative, team building and team participation, imagination and creativity, will remain more pressing the further into the lifespan we go, and will have to be constantly brought up to date. And this will clearly necessitate constant commitment to learning again and anew across the whole of the lifespan. These are the values implicit and called upon in the process of the learning we shall all have to do throughout our lives – and they are ones requiring both us and our fellow members of the community to be

constantly renewing, amending and examining their beliefs and behaviours, to see how well and how far they can conduce to the desiderata preoccupying all a community's adult members – supporting it by economic activity, participating in the institutions that make it a tolerable and rewarding place in which to live, and seeking out types and patterns of life-enriching activities and experiences, that will add value and benefit to our identities and places as members of such communities.

Learning what to believe and how to behave is no less easy for those of our students who belong to a particular community of race, culture or religion. For it is in such communities that these questions assume greatest importance; when confronted with issues that go to the very heart of their existence, each one of our students will know what it is like to pose and try to find answers for the question of those people – politicians and the press perhaps chief among them – who ask in these days: “What can we do to achieve a good life and establish regard for and the practice of the virtues of peace and concord?” This *cri de cœur* demands to be answered. It is perhaps nowhere more appropriate to be answered than in the framework and context of the commitments, undertakings and educational endeavours of those who seek in these days to pursue and promote the ideals and opportunities offered to them by the articulation and institution of the principles, policies and programmes of lifelong learning in our schools and all our various educating institutions. It is to engage in such a search that this chapter is directed.

## 2 The Idea of Education

Mary Warnock (1978) has defined education as an undertaking principally concerned with preparing our younger generation to face the challenges of the future. This involves at least three elements: preparation for the world of work; preparation for the life of imagination; and preparation for the life of virtue. I want to argue that each of these will have its typical excellence and that each of them can be addressed within the framework of the values inherent in programmes for quality, excellence and effectiveness in schooling and in preparing people for their need and desire to carry on their learning throughout life.

This chapter considers *inter alia* the values implicit in the idea of educating for excellence in the life of virtue. This relates to moral, political and personal values, particularly those obtaining in relations between others and ourselves. These values are perhaps best exemplified in the social principles and institutional practices embodied in modern forms of democracy and the part played by citizens in them.

## 3 Analysing Education and Values

I follow Aristotle in maintaining that the principal human excellence is that of rationality. Further, following Wittgenstein (1953), I see this rationality as embodied and deployed in all the various forms of human discourse, language and communication.

I claim that our understanding of values and use of the language of “ought” is as objective and cognitive an enterprise as any other form of rationality and communication. I believe that both can therefore be learnt; and that such learning can be subjected to appraisal, criticism and amendment throughout the rest of an individual’s life. In my view, to be a human being is necessarily to be committed to a life of reflection, deliberation, conclusion and action on the key questions of value that make us what we are – even if such questioning and deciding is not always overt.

As against holders of subjectivist doctrines of various kinds, I maintain that we can talk of excellence in matters of value, without countenancing any notion of values absolutism. I believe that values education and the notion of individual autonomy that it presupposes promote the encouraging of individual responsiveness, spontaneity, sensitivity – as well as imagination and creativity – in matters of culture and value. Yet this does not lead me to support the notion that values are subjective and idiosyncratic, such that no objective appraisal of them is possible. I hold that talk of values, being both objective and cognitive, is as intelligible as any other realm of human discourse. I contend that value matters and concerns are now so important for our community’s life that schools and the community’s learning and teaching institutions of all kinds have a responsibility to undertake and provide for the education of the community’s young and all its members in preparation for their engagement in those activities that play a pivotal and determinative part in their lives as private individuals and as citizens.

I therefore advocate values education as a proper subject for inclusion in any set of proposals, policies and programmes to redefine and to humanise the activities and curricula of educating institutions and to be a major feature in all educational activities offered in all kinds of programmes and processes opportunities for life-long learning. I believe that the objectivity and rationality of value discourse in general, and the critical importance of moral awareness, interpersonal understanding, responsible judgement and principled conduct in today’s communities require schools and other institutions to work out ways in which they can provide an effective education in this particular realm of human activities and relationships.

Schools, institutions and educators will best do this by showing how value concerns, and the political, social and moral relations in which those concerns are embodied and exercised, are expressions of larger-scale conceptions of life and value. The character of the individual judgements and activities in which we engage in discussions on matters of value and in our personal relationships is, as Best (1992) argues, determined at the level of the culture of a community – that network of language patterns, social practices and moral conventions that give human beings their most fundamental conceptions of the meaning and value of life.

It is therefore among the community’s most important educative concerns to engage in the moral enterprise of preparing the coming generation for a future better than that which we received from our forebears, and one that will allow greater access for all its members to sources of individual and social well-being, flourishing and advancement. Attention to this aspiration can be best developed in the relationships subsisting and operating between the community, the family and the individual student. The forum in which those relationships find expression is in the informal educational surroundings of the family and the formal educational enterprise

of the school and other community educating institutions. It is in the interplay between the families, the school and community institutions that opportunities for personal growth, democratic engagement and economic advancement – the three chief “pillars” of lifelong learning – can be found, offered and enjoyed.

## 4 Education for Democracy

This ethical impulse is clearly to be seen at work, with particular respect to the idea of values education and lifelong learning programmes preparing young people for life as a citizen, in the concept of democracy. The fundamental presuppositions and values of that model of government are almost entirely moral in character. Democracy is that form of life to which adults as autonomous moral agents are necessarily committed in the arrangement of their social relations, the institutionalisation of their political principles, and the construction of satisfying and enriching patterns of personal life choices.

Excellence in these matters, and the work of effective educating institutions, can contribute signally to the quality of life for all members of our community. Thus attention to values issues and concerns in the programmes of educating institutions is vital and indispensable. The dominant imperatives here are functions of the consequences that flow from our communities’ acceptance of the need for an education that will prepare generations of their young for meeting all the exigencies and opportunities of their future life as citizens. The obligations and opportunities of that life are manifested in the various institutions of this form of political arrangement. It is characteristic of democracy that a range of cooperative and competing individual and plural value concerns can be made available, balanced and allowed expression. Working towards such a balance, making such expression and such a balance possible, and promoting the institutionalisation of a range of values, is characteristic of, and necessarily presupposed by, the work of a modern representative, inclusive and participative democracy.

Values education is therefore concerned with the promotion of values – moral, social, political, aesthetic – as vital elements in programmes of education for future life; as well as economic agency and personal growth this also includes the values of the democratic form of life and for the development of autonomous individuals in society – a process that will necessarily last throughout an individual’s lifespan. I see this undertaking as crucial in a time when the major thrust of curriculum activity in many countries is driven in large part by economic imperatives, the demands of technocratic rationality, and mechanistic versions of school effectiveness. I believe that current preoccupations with such concerns, to the exclusion of many others, bids fair to threaten the equally if not more important values of moral awareness, interpersonal sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding.

I want to argue that the best forum for the promotion of such valued concerns is via the democratic form of life, to which I believe we are all necessarily bound, in virtue of our epistemic commitments and intellectual engagement in the pursuit of

knowledge and the growth of autonomy – the chief stock-in-trade of educating institutions in the modern liberal state. This commitment requires the induction of our young people into those modes of speech, realms of knowledge and networks of interpersonal relations that constitute our lives as human beings. These find especial expression in the various ways and means in which a community decides to institutionalise, organise and administer its educational systems, institutions and schools. It is within the democratic school that young people will receive the best possible preparation to take their place as mature and well-informed citizens of a participative democracy (see Chapman et al. 1995).

## 5 Versions of Value: Countering Separatist Doctrines

At this point we might find it useful to consider what might be meant by talk of a value, or a set of values. Perhaps I might begin by rejecting a number of these about facts and values. These include the supposed separation of discourses relating to matters of fact and value; of subjective and objective appraisals and judgments; of descriptive and normative uses of language; and of the separation of reason from feeling. I should also like to dispose of the positivist view that the logic of mathematics and of the natural sciences offers us paradigm examples of objectivity and verifiability, to the standards of which all educational undertakings and curriculum provision should conform if they are to enjoy intellectual respectability and educational acceptance. Counter-arguments to this thesis plausibly claim that there is no such distinction as that supposed to subsist between fact and value, reason and emotion as well as policy examination and policy formation. For Dewey (1907), Quine & Ullian (1970), Popper (1969, 1970), Wittgenstein (1953), Rorty (1979) and others, all thought, language and enquiry are inescapably theory-laden, shot through with values, and a mixture of both descriptive and normative elements. As Kovesi argues (1967), in all discourse and enquiry there is an unbroken continuum, at one end of which lies “fact” and the other end of which lies “value”: “Description” is merely one way of “evaluating” reality; “evaluation” of “describing” states of affairs. We need to lay aside the notion that the realms of “fact” and of “value” are absolutely different and distinct. To maintain that they are is nothing more than a dogma (see Quine 1971).

On this basis, then, we might perhaps begin our examination of the ontology of values by accepting that there are no such separate “things” as values: values are not independent entities, somehow existing as things or ends in themselves. Values, rather, are part of the world of human actions and relations. Values are inseparable from our lives as, at one and the same time, both solitary and social beings, whose communications, interactions, relationships and cultures are given meaning and value by the norms and conventions by means of which we define and structure them and that we have to observe if they are to “come off” and receive “positive uptake”. Thus in what follows I shall take the term “values” to refer to those ideas, conventions, principles, rules, objects, products, activities, practices, procedures or

judgements that people accept, agree to, treasure, cherish, prefer, incline towards, see as important and indeed act upon. Such things they make objects of admiration, high levels of aspiration, standards of judgement, prescriptions for action, norms of conduct or goals of endeavour in their lives seeing them as generally prescriptive in all their values reflection and decisions, and they commend them so to others.

This last point enables me to argue, against subjectivists and relativists of various persuasions, that value judgements are different logically from, and much more than, mere matters of taste and individual preference. I see values, and the judgements deriving from them, functioning as the rules, conventions or principles implicit in certain modes of communicating, forms of action and manners of proceeding, that furnish and act as a *standard of discrimination* (a criterion) against which other communications and procedures can be measured and assessed, and ranking high in a scale of comparison among objects of the same class. Their interpersonal significance we regard as commendatory, action guiding and generally prescriptive.

## 6 Different Kinds of Value?

An examination of value discourse seems to suggest that there is a number of different kinds of values: moral, religious, aesthetic, social, political, educational, technical, economic, and so on, though some of these (e.g. social, political, economic, educational) are claimed (by Aristotle, among others) to be subclasses of one prime value – the moral. It is right that we should raise the question of whether all these various species of value are indeed distinct and logically different (as ethical value is, for instance, clearly different from the aesthetic – or so it seems to me, at any rate) or whether all forms of value and value discourse do not all in the final analysis come down to being species of the one genus – the moral. There is also the further important question of how such judgements are to be justified – if indeed they can be and, if so, by what kinds of argument.

This last question we can leave for the time being. I might for the moment simply advance the view that, so far as the ideas of values education oriented towards *Values of Lifelong Learning* are concerned, for example, they seem to me to include a number of different elements – the social, political, economic and technical inter alia – but, above and beyond all these, to be primarily *moral* in character.

To typify the main features of moral discourse in programmes of values education, I should like to argue, following Anscombe (1958, 1969), Austin (1962) and Warnock (1978), that the moral life is one that follows from our engagement in human society, as moral agents that are, at one and the same time, both solitary and social; and that we are thus committed, throughout our lives, to be always working towards the amelioration of the welfare of our society and its constitutive communities, and seeking to attenuate or even eradicate any harm that might befall us and them. This means an education involving our induction and engagement in moral activities and practices. Our values education for such a society will thus be a part

of our moral agency throughout our lives, and this is a domain in which we are required to be constantly learning and trying to become better.

But such programmes involve more than preparing us for and engaging in patterns and practices of moral action. For such action presupposes that we know what we are about; can recognise and identify occasions where moral action is called for; can learn to appraise and balance the complexities involved; and can learn how to frame and then implement the judgements following from such appraisals. This means that we must first of all come to possess and to be able to take part in occasions of values discourse, using its categories, concepts and tests appropriately and being able to frame, form, and articulate the conclusions which we wish to express in appropriate forms of action. Now I should want to argue that the commitment of human beings to the various networks of obligation and patterns of individual and interpersonal meaning is best exemplified in our use of language and our development of individual and community relations in the institutional forms of various kinds in which our values and systems of value are exemplified. That commitment starts with our birth, increases as we come to maturity and is carried on for the rest of our lives. Being the creatures we are, and living as we have to under the limitations of the natural laws and the social conditions and constraints surrounding us, we could not possibly survive, much less flourish, without being able to observe and identify the occasions calling on our understanding and involvement; and then to learn, internalise and adopt and become enmeshed in and have to conform to the protocols, conventions and norms of the various valued institutions human beings have conceived, established and developed, in order to stabilise their identity, understand and control their environment, and endeavour to give some point, purpose and significance to their lives and to those of their neighbours in the communities they inhabit. An exemplary illustration of this would be the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The chief of these institutions is found in the various forms of communicative interchange that human beings have articulated, cultivated and refined as ways and means of rendering their common experience of the world they share intelligible and variously significant. It is in and through *this* institution above all that they have found it possible to form and give expression to their progressively deepening and increasingly sophisticated conceptions of their lives and all their main concerns. In this institution all the elements of meaning, value and intention combine, interact and coalesce in an inextricable enmeshment. These enmeshments are then played out at the level of the community and in the various forms of relationship, institutions and agencies, in and by means of which the life of that community is carried on, perpetuated and prolonged.

This encourages me to claim, as against some moral theorists such as Wilson (1990, 1970) and Hare (1973), that we do not simply choose to “accept” or to “play the game” of morality and that this “choosing” depends in turn upon our “acceptance” of the institutions in which morality is characteristically exercised. I argue instead that, in virtue of the kind of creatures we are and the characteristic form of life we share, and given the ways in which, as fellow constituents in it, we explicate it and elaborate upon it between ourselves, the presence, function and coercive imperatives

of sets of values and regulative principles are part and parcel of the language and institutions into which we, in our community, are gradually initiated. To change the metaphor, they are part of their whole warp and weft, of the inherited integuments and valued traditions of which we in turn become bearers and beneficiaries.

Values and values education, therefore, – and *a fortiori*, given that political and educational judgements are a function of our commitments to certain moral pre-conceptions and the moral and democratic institutions in which these best find expression, our interest in the opportunities of all kinds offered by programmes and activities coming under the rubric of “lifelong learning” – are all concerned with helping us to understand that human life is beset with obligations of one sort and another. As rational beings sharing with others in that particular form of social intercourse we call a community, human beings are bound up in these kinds of obligations and responsibilities and their observance of these requirements is exhibited in their enmeshments in, and observance of, the various rules and conventions governing all the occasions of social intercourse in which they are called upon, as *actors*, to participate. Nowhere is this more called for than in their responding to the calls of the duties and responsibilities that their role as citizens and members of communities of various kinds requires of them.

One of the aims of values education therefore will be to give us a knowledge of the rules which function in this locus and mode of relating to other people, and to seek to produce in us a grasp of its underlying principles, together with the ability to apply these rules intelligently, and to develop the settled disposition to do so (see Aspin 1975). For without such an education in values and for readiness for learning throughout the lifespan, we should all be significantly impoverished in our attempt to come to terms with the exigencies of our life as citizens and as individuals, and to exercise our informed choice in order to make that process manageable, tolerable and enjoyable. Certainly such an education will help to make us see that our life in the community we share with our fellow members of it is capable of being improved upon, and that just possibly the conjoint and continuing exercise of our intellectual resources, imagination and creativity throughout our lives can help to add quality to it and make it excellent.

## 7 Values, and Values Education: Concept and Conceptions

It is this last realisation that has an especial bearing upon the question of how we are to characterise values in the relationships people have, and the institutions in which they develop them, when it comes down to ways in which, as members of the community, we institutionalise our civil arrangements in that form of chosen self-governance called “democracy”. This is a difficult but vitally important task when such a democracy encompasses a plethora of cultures and values, not all of which sit easily side by side and between which there is often considerable tension, not to say confrontation. This is especially true, with respect to political values, in the case of the current contention between a range of different theories and policies

of economic development and direction, purporting to offer us access to and a guaranteed means of securing a “competitive edge” in the global marketplace that will establish and promote our national self-sufficiency, power and advancement.

I believe that it is possible to apply objective criteria of intelligibility to various public institutions and practices, of a kind to which a value can be attached, that transcends the private preoccupations, sectional interests, or hegemonic ambitions of those who are already on the inside of them and employ them instrumentally for their own purposes. Among, and indeed presupposed by such institutions, are those symbolic codes of intersubjective agreement, communication and significance in and by which the community can begin to form, develop and appraise its various modes of communicative interchange, cultural practices, and social relations. From among these a degree of consensus may be arrived at concerning those forms of life to which the community ascribes especial importance and with the provision and promotion of which the work of its educating agencies might most reasonably be thought to be concerned. In cooperation with other agencies and organisations in the community schools and the whole range of other educating institutions then make a selection of those preferred activities they all wish to select for inclusion in the content of their curricula and learning and teaching activities.

Perhaps chief among these, we may presume, are those modes of discourse and cognitive style that we discern as central to their identity, and that we observe as embodied in their use of the languages of science, technology, culture, arts, politics, morality or religion, and their typical beliefs, standards and conventions – all those matters of life and death in and by which their community’s character has been established and may now be comprehended, and its preferred patterns of culture and value articulated, confirmed and extended or amended. The community’s concerns for the perpetuation, protection and promotion of its citizens’ political responsibilities, opportunities for personal development, cultural and religious freedoms, and rights to individual and social justice will be disclosed, expressed, and given force in the various forms of communication, action and relationship for which its institutions have been established and developed, and to the work and success of which all its members are presumed to be committed.

One of these institutions – indeed perhaps the most important – is that of education (both formal and informal). For it is only in, by and through the institution of education that individuals and future citizens can learn to communicate with their fellow members of the community in discourse relevant to the understanding, appraisal and tentative resolution of problems they face and share, and the exploration, elaboration and exploitation of the possibilities of community action, improvement and individual enrichment they can envisage and for which they can plan.

The requirements this institution generates necessarily entail an education in all the various modes and styles of public discourse, in which these problems and possibilities can be communicated about, addressed, analysed and decided upon. Associated with this will be the attempt to impart an understanding of, and a willingness to accept and work with, all the various public institutions, to the continuance, standards and specifications of which they will also have to conform.

Such a wide spread of knowledge and understanding will be crucial to the life of us, members of society, inasmuch as all must be prepared to handle the paradox that it is public institutions, according to the requirements of which we have both to respond and be accountable, that both constrain us yet also civilise and liberate us. Our submission to and yet enjoyment of them serves to open innumerable avenues of opportunity to us and to the whole community of which we are a part. Learning to communicate and learning to conform and take advantage of our society's institutions will enable us, not only to manage our lives effectively, but will also give us the powers to take advantage of the opportunities offered by them and in that way to add untold increments of value and enrichment to them. And we all may realise that we wish to pursue such opportunities and seek to widen our access to and increasing enjoyment of them throughout our lives (see Chapman et al. 2006).

That all these forms of discourse – culture, arts, politics, religion, morality and justice – and the beliefs and values expressed in them have equal objectivity and significance with other forms of communication and cognition, such as mathematics and science, is a contention on which their claims to be included on the programmes and curricula of educating institutions may, at least in part, be based. In trying to elaborate a theory about the ontology of values, then, I wish to maintain that making and defending a value judgement – appraising an object artistically, for instance, or deciding whether to give to charity, or so approving of a particular political programme as to vote for its adoption – is quite as objective an undertaking as framing an hypothesis to explain an apparent anomaly in science, or developing a novel interpretation of some event in history, or deciding upon which form of statistics to employ in describing our current economic situation. All use different, though overlapping forms of description and evaluation; all call up some of our deepest and most cherished beliefs; all involve recourse to deeper values. And, above all, all of these have abiding and overriding importance at various points in our lives, for the different purposes and commitments for which we variously employ them. It is for these and other reasons that we realise we have to continue to seek them out, acquire them and employ them throughout our lives as human beings.

## 8 The Question of “Core Values”

The research done in the 1990s by Professor Chapman and myself (see Aspin & Chapman 1994) indicates a wide measure of agreement that in schooling and education generally there is a range of values that help to structure and define the direction and aiming points of educational policy and practice. Among these might be included the following:

- Schools should give their students access to, and the opportunity to acquire, practise and apply those bodies and kinds of knowledge, competences, and attitudes, that will prepare them for life in today's complex society.
- Schools should have a concern for, and promote the value of, excellence and high standards of individual and institutional aspiration, achievement and conduct in all aspects of its activities.

- Schools should be democratic, equitable and just.
- Schools should humanise our students and give them an introduction into and offer them opportunities for acquiring the values that will be crucial in their personal and social development.
- Schools should develop in students a sense of independence and of their own worth as human beings, having some confidence in their ability to contribute to the society of which they are a part, in appropriate social, political and moral ways.
- Schools should prepare future members of society and our future citizens to conduct their interpersonal relationships with each other, in ways that shall not be inimical to the health and stability of society or the individuals that comprise it.
- Schools should prepare students to have a concern for the cultural vitality, as well as the economic enrichment, of the community in which they will ultimately play a part, promoting the enjoyment of artistic and expressive experience in addition to the acquisition of knowledge and its employment.
- Schools should conjoin education for personal autonomy, education for community enmeshment and social contribution to its welfare, enabling each student to enrich the society of which he/she is to become a part as a giver, an enlarger and an enhancer, as well as being an inheritor and beneficiary.

From this list it is possible to conclude that what schools and other educating institutions are looking for these days is an approach to constructing and offering its curriculum, learning and teaching activities, that will concentrate, not merely upon vocational competence, economic capacity and management skills, but also, and much more, upon the *humane* values.

These comprise such concerns and principles as:

- Understanding and appreciating our society's history, cultural heritage and civic traditions
- Tolerating and having sympathy for and a willingness to work and live with other people of many different backgrounds, interests and lifestyles
- Developing respect for others, consideration for their interests and sensitivity in our interpersonal relations, communication and courtesy
- Taking an interest in the arts and cultures, and the opportunities they offer for imagination and creativity
- Appreciating the importance of ethics in business, sport and personal relations
- Accepting the search for meaning offered by religion, humanism and other valued life stances

We know that schools, colleges, universities and other post-compulsory educating institutions are as aware as anyone of the dangers posed to the values of humanity and individual worth by the depersonalising effects of large-scale and overbearing concern for the values of economic efficiency and effectiveness. What they want instead are educational policies that put economic necessities, and the vocational competences they require, into their proper place within a panoply of other concerns, the chief of which centre upon the values of personal growth and enrichment, human dignity, community harmony and social justice.

## 9 From Values Clarification to “Dispositions to Act”

The drive for such humane values goes further than merely ensuring that they are offered at various points in curriculum programmes and that our students are simply made aware of and given some limited exposure to them. We believe that the principal reason and motivating force behind our community’s increasing concern to see such things taught in our schools and other educating institutions incorporates a dual value emphasis. This is an emphasis that is especially pertinent to enquiries into the forms and goals of education in values of all kinds, and especially for the values implicit in programmes of lifelong learning. For many parents and other adult community members, it is not enough that value concerns be simply paraded before our students, so that they are in some way made familiar with them. Equally insufficient is the notion that students are encouraged to look at values with the aim of helping them be clear about them. “Values clarification” may be a necessary part of, but I do not believe that it is sufficient for, an education in values. It is important, then, that we say something about the place of values in schemes of curriculum, programmes of learning and teaching, and approaches to institutional organisation, administration and management, particularly with respect to the idea of and the approach called “values clarification”.

Let us agree that values – of whatever kind – are present throughout the curriculum and in all the work of educating people that schools do. This being so, schools need to be encouraged, as a first step, to identify the values that are already at work in education, and the ways in which institutions work to realise and present them. It is clearly important to pay overt attention to the place of values in the fabric of our schools’ work of educating their students, and this will involve *inter alia* being ready to get down to the hard work of identifying and clarifying them. Now, the skill of learning how to clarify values, to analyse policies and issues, to see what value considerations and issues are at work in our handling of curriculum content and methods of learning and teaching, and to judge whether the behavioural reality matches the moral rhetoric, is certainly a vital and indispensable feature of our lives as educators having a moral responsibility (see Daveney 1973) and it is important that all our colleagues in education – teachers and learners – should acquire it.

In my view, however, (see also Aspin 1999) values clarification will only take us part of the way. It misses out on the crucial element of values education: for that enterprise to do its real work, it is not sufficient for people merely to clarify the things they value and approve of, to desire those things, to accept them, to prefer them, to incline towards them, perhaps even to seek to emulate them. People have also to *accept them as binding* – as committing them to the adoption and implementation of particular modes of conduct, types of judgement or kinds of choice, and then to commending them to other people. One has to show that their values are generalisable and action guiding.

Thus for us it is not sufficient merely to analyse, to identify or to clarify values. There has to be an action consequence arising from such an enterprise that makes

a difference to us and to everyone else. It is not enough to tell people about the avoidance of risk-taking behaviours or the arrival of an exhibition of great paintings: we have also got to try to alter their behaviour to make them shun the one and visit the other. That is the educational *qua* moral point of this whole approach to such matters. School leaders, subject teachers, educational policymakers in our community have the responsibility and task, not only to get their students to become a part of a particular community – in this case, that of the arts – and to come to hold certain beliefs, to adopt certain attitudes, to commit themselves to certain values: they have to secure that commitment in students' actions and conduct as well. This means that a vital part of their educational endeavours will be to act as models and exemplars of those dispositions, beliefs, values, attitudes and modes of conduct, kinds of judgement, and forms of choice, that we wish our students to come to take up for themselves.

This means that the work in values we do in our educating institutions must be more than an injunction to *reflection*; we would prefer that students come to be able to engage in the activities of *making judgements*, *forming conclusions*, or *making plans for action*. Students need to be encouraged to learn how to demonstrate their affirmations, understandings, and reflections in public forms of action, that will indicate, not only that they have understood the value concerns and issues we raise with them but they have also drawn the appropriate conclusions for their future behaviour, beliefs and commitments. Values education is, in the final analysis, about helping students develop *dispositions to act* in various ways.

An example of the importance of students developing such dispositions, as a preliminary stage in their growth towards being prepared to act in various ways, is the concern expressed in many subjects for helping students develop the ability to clarify and “reflect on the beliefs, values and attitudes of others and how they may differ from their own”. In a multicultural society it is certainly important that students can reflect on and get clear about the differences between themselves and others in such matters. Reflection on such differences may make them better informed in developing their own values and being able to have some understanding of the causes and reasons behind different values adopted, held or exhibited by other people.

To advocate only so much, however, is to advocate very little. The important thing is that we go on to ask, what *difference* is such reflection supposed to make? Are students *not* to be encouraged to make judgements in such matters? Is there to be no place for students to reflect on the possibility that the beliefs, values and attitudes of others might just be mistaken, deficient, wanting, banal, superficial, discriminatory, divisive, inflammatory and so on? Are they simply to learn the virtues of tolerance in the sense of simply learning to have to “put up with” other people's different activities and values? Must students be aware of, contemplate and reflect on, the exhibition in public of the painting “Piss Christ”, for example, or someone's predilection for bullfighting as the highest form of dramatic art, or someone's praise for a film production that betrays all the evidence of an inclination towards the artistic violence of a “Snuff” movie, *without it making any difference* to their (and to other people's) lives and artistic, aesthetic and cultural concerns?

Such a view seems to me to be contrary to common sense. In such cases and indeed in values matters generally, I believe, people are justified in applying such evaluative terms as “bad”, “wrong”, “worthless”, or “vicious” – and in expecting the teachers of their children, not only *not* to expose their students to such models but consciously and deliberately, and by teaching them about the existence and applicability of appropriate criteria, to steer them away from them. They may of course be less likely to take this option if they believe, as many these days still seem to do, that all values are personal, subjective and idiosyncratic, and that trying to steer young people away from an interest in the banal, the trivial, the shoddy and the second-rate – to say nothing of the nasty, the brutish and the degenerate – is a species of “moral fascism”. An area of the curriculum that illustrates and maybe even exemplifies this tension is that devoted to language and literature, where some proponents of postmodernist approaches to the selection of texts for analysis argue that there is no difference, from the point of view of any intrinsic values such works might have, between the *oeuvres* of Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot, and that of the writers of comics or television scripts. To such people all such works are of equal value – if indeed any such question can be raised about them. The same probably holds with respect to issues of belief and interpersonal behaviour.

Thus the more substantive and objective approach in value matters is bound to lead, on occasion, to tensions, if not outright contradictions. We may note the tension between advocating respect for other people’s values, on the one hand, and the clear commitment to particular values, such as those of tolerance, open-mindedness and the concern for social justice, on the other. While we may share the predilection of many people in our supposedly tolerant and liberal society for such moral norms, we cannot in conscience avoid noticing that there might well be people living in our community who would not agree with us on such matters. Their values may well be substantially different from ours but this does not mean that they are necessarily better or that we should automatically defer to them as in some way “equivalent” with our own.

For my part I believe that the principal reason and motivating force behind our community’s increasing concern to see issues of value raised and their students taught about them and how to handle them in our schools is a matter of far greater moment than just getting their ideas clear about these things. For values education incorporates a dual emphasis, one that is especially pertinent to any enquiry into the forms and goals of education in values for lifelong learning.

## **10 A Dual Stress in Values Education: Autonomy and Substantive Commitments**

One part of the emphasis in schemes and programmes of values education concerns the importance of the development of autonomous individuals, with their own powers of independent judgement and the capacity to be self-motivated and self-starting in action. This in turn implies practice and engagement in appropriate

sets of activities. The other part is the realisation that such autonomous agents are also necessarily involved in patterns and networks of mutual interrelation with other individuals and with the whole community, in all its economic, political and social aspects. Such interrelationships form and structure the set of agreements and conventions about an inner core of values (some might say, a value system) that then, in their totality and interdependence, function to provide us with the various kinds of insight, capacities and strengths needed to deal with the difficulties, problems, tensions and controversies that so beset the field.

This helps us appreciate that the problems relating to the investigation of the concept of values in education – and one that will be effective in giving us a good preparation for learning throughout the rest of our lives – are not only of a meta-philosophical kind. They also require discussion and agreement at the substantive level. For discussion about autonomy and mutuality translated into the social setting immediately involves reference to questions concerning the ways in which we wish individuals to be, and which form of society we consider will best facilitate their development.

For example, discussions between proponents of social justice, viewed as equality of treatment or of opportunity, *and* advocates of individual excellence, resting on and incorporating a requirement of complete personal freedom, embody a difference of value judgements of a markedly substantive kind. These differences are most obviously articulated and then transposed into a highly contentious but binding political reality that gets its most powerful point of purchase when we come, for instance, to adjudicate upon the claims of political parties whose programmes are calculated best to express those differences and translate them into social operation.

The key questions in values education and its implications for policies and programmes of lifelong learning, therefore, are ones not merely of meta-ethics but also concern the form and content of our normative systems of values, codes of ethics and standards of conduct, that need to be translated into particular educational policies and become normative for individuals and society. In our debates about the future of education these questions should be of central concern. We shall start to work out our answers to them in the course of our discussions about key but also day-to-day matters of educational import, such as, for instance, whether our administrative structures and financial arrangements shall be decentralised, delegated and devolved to management at the local school or institutional site. Our agreements about the substance of the values and agenda, that are to frame and underpin our norms, conventions and arrangements, will develop along with and in the course of discussion of the ways and means of their realisation in educational institutions and settings.

The explanation for the view that values will develop in education *pari passu* in and by means of discussions and decision-making about matters of educational policy and the provision of effective programmes is that people come to and engage in discussion on such matters with certain value commitments already “on board” and in operation. These have to do with the commitments people have to a set of beliefs regarding the nature of human beings, the most desirable form of society, and the ways in which they can best arrange and institutionalise their relationships for the various purposes they have in mind. Such differences of vision and perspective

are fundamental to our conceptions of an education for excellence; the relationship between individual and community; the idea of education as a “transforming power” or a “privileged possession”, as a “Commodity” or a “Public Service”; the provision, resourcing and management of educational institutions, goods and services; and our response to questions associated with the restructuring of education and the devolution of decision-making to schools and other institutions.

## 11 Values, Education and the Community: Individuality and Mutuality

In addressing such questions we might note that the social world is much more than a complex conjunction of aggregations of individual human beings. The coalescence and increasing interactions of such beings evolve into an entity of an organic and dynamic character, the totality of which is much greater and much more transformative than merely being the sum of its parts. As opposed to the well-known aphorism alleged to have been uttered by a certain politician in the United Kingdom (“There is no such thing as society: there are individuals, and there are families”), we can reasonably and justifiably argue that there *is* such a thing as society, and that it is a heterogeneously evolving organism, the continuing life of which is necessary for the life of its constituent elements. We do not live, in fact we could not start our existence or survive, if we lived on desert islands, or we were just individuals or families.

Indeed the meanings and values of personal freedom and individual choice, so prized and exalted by exponents of the market philosophy, only become possible as an outgrowth of the knowledge and powers that other members of society have opened up to us and made available. It is these that give us an intimation of the complex range and balance of the choices that are accessible to us, and what choosing, and the calculation of its consequences, might mean. For all of us this comes about through interaction with other members of our community; for most of us this means that the full range of information and structured leading towards the concept of autonomous decision-making has first been made available through our educational experience.

It is a paradox of our existence that our autonomy requires the work of other persons. It is given to us and increased by our education; and that requires the learning of language and the transmission of knowledge. Both of these are social activities and public enterprises in which at least two people must engage in an interaction predicated upon the assumption of the values of mutual acceptance, tolerance and respect, embodied in the institutions of society. Without the one, there cannot be the other; and without that key institution called education, there can be neither. Autonomy is the flower that grows out of seeds planted and tended by heteronomous hands.

It is part of our argument, therefore, that, just as there can be no such creature as a completely independent person, so, in a public system of education, there can be no such thing as a completely autonomous or independent self-governing educational

institution. To be sure, a certain amount of autonomy may be readily countenanced in certain areas of decision-making. But that autonomy can only be rendered intelligible and made to work within the confines of a relationship with the system, the community, and its educating agencies generally, based on a mutuality of regard and benefit.

Schools and educating institutions thus conceived enjoy a mutual relationship with the system and the community of which they are a part. The system values and ensures the basic protection of rights for all teachers, students and schools; at the same time schools enjoy a mutual relationship with the community, in which parents, local authorities, employers, profession and trade agencies and organisations and other significant groups are able to have their voices heard in regard to matters of fundamental value and goals. There is also a mutual relationship within the school among school-based personnel, as decision-making is shared, owned and supported. In return the school enjoys a greater degree of autonomy in selection of community-related goals and the fitting of resources to meet those goals. It also enjoys a greater sense of its own value and standing in providing community leadership, in promoting the importance of education among all its stakeholders, and in this way promoting the idea of the learning community and the values of lifelong learning.

In sum the model of the relationships between schools, educating institutions, the system and the community should mirror those of the strong, robust autonomous individual in mutual relationship with the society of which he/she is part, and in partnership with all its elements and agencies that make it possible for both of them to realise the values in those interests that define and structure their identities and enable them to find a forum for the discussion of possibilities and to give expression to their choices.

All this, at rock bottom, is what the negotiation of public policy and the payment of taxes in a participative democracy are for. Those of us with differential levels of resources contribute to the exchequer differentially as a result and in proportion; it is that contribution that grants us licence to access those good things that society wishes to be available for enjoyment by all its members. The notion of that contribution brings out the very mutuality and interdependence of our economic arrangements for funding and running our society and providing appropriate levels and kinds of service for the benefit of all its constituents. This includes those, who because of history, handicap, some form of weakness or sheer misfortune, social dysfunctions of various kinds, the structures and institutions of society and economy, etc., may not be able to contribute much to it at the moment but still need the support of their society and/or community if they are ever to realise their chances of ever doing so.

This makes of society and its various institutions, especially schools and other learning institutions, the very site and forum for two value enterprises. One part of these relates to the ways in which individuals are enabled further to develop their pattern of preferred life options, and so increase their autonomy. The other relates to the ways in which the younger generation learns to become members of society at large, in mutual association with other members of their school community and representatives of the community more broadly conceived, in a form of interaction

in which all sections of the community cooperate mutually for the benefit of the societal whole. Both are indispensable parts of a process of learning to participate in a democratic form of life.

There are thus two parts to making this interaction positive, fruitful and productive. The first raises questions concerning the *quanta* of knowledge and skill that are indispensable preconditions for and parts of the attempt to establish, run and correct the institutions necessary for the stability, security, continuation and welfare of the whole community. The other is the awareness and imagination that are vital to the envisioning, provision and extension of opportunities for individual development and enrichment within it. It is these considerations that make it possible to characterise, flesh out and give opportunity for the institutional expression and individual realisation of the values of autonomy and mutuality.

The first part of this formula stresses the importance of the values of partnership and mutuality in the preparation and involvement of students in programmes of values education and education for lifelong learning in our present and future society, and in all its various communities in which we necessarily have to engage or which we may choose to join. It thereby underlines the need for their introduction to, and immersion in, the whole range of cognitive requirements for full and effective participation in all of these. The second stresses the immense variety, scope and complexity of activities and engagements having the potential to open up avenues of personal development and enrichment that will enable individuals to enlarge their horizons and uplift and enrich the quality of their life. It thereby draws attention to the range and proliferation of the cognitive repertoires necessary for an informed selection of those activities upon which individuals will think it worthwhile spending their time, energy and resources, both formally in school and afterwards elsewhere.

In both of these fields of value, there will have to be, in the learning activities engaged in, a sufficient degree of depth to ensure that the judgements made and the commitments entered into are outcomes of and based upon appropriate footings of understanding and insight. Between the two, there will have to be at least some minimal balance. For our stress on the correlative importance of autonomy and mutuality requires education for and involvement in a balanced mix of activities leading to effective partnerships between all members of the community *and* individual autonomy in the selection and working out of a pattern of satisfying life choices.

We should also, I suspect, see it as an educational *desideratum* that there should be some balance in the latter set of activities and outcomes as well. We should not, I think, be inclined to regard those who chose to spend *all* their time learning a language, playing the trumpet, practising politics, or even doing philosophy as showing the benefits of being educated to have some grasp and appreciation of the nature, scope and potential value of all the opportunities offered by access to a wide-ranging and “balanced” curriculum. Thus “balance” becomes as much a value as “depth” in characterising the relationship between autonomy and mutuality.

## 12 Conclusion

In all this the final analysis thus comes down to the fundamental question, and particularly to the question of providing the future members of our society with “the right start” in acquiring the disposition, interest and drive to engage in learning after the end of the formal stages: what are our schools educating for? What are our children at school to become? What is the right relationship between school and school system, student and state? What types of cognition and conduct shall the state’s future citizens need to draw upon, in order to exercise their roles, rights and responsibilities as citizens of a participative democracy? And finally how can the education system give them the skills, knowledge and values that they need for all these things? The question of *values* in education is critical. But they are not definable as though they were an autonomous element in any institution or setting: they permeate everything that we do.

It would of course be perverse to deny that parents send their children to schools in order for them to acquire knowledge or that schools do not see themselves as being under some sort of obligation so to transmit it. But it is at least open to question whether the transmission of knowledge should be the central concern of schools as educating institutions. There are other aims of education and to concentrate emphasis upon this one only is to risk falling into the fallacy of mistaking the part for the whole. As Laura (1978, p. 316) commented, it might be thought at least as important an aim for educational undertakings to suggest that the fabric of society could well be improved by doing far less to ensure initiation into the so-called domains of knowledge and far more by way of instructing children in the art of living with themselves and with each other.

This helps us appreciate that the role and function of educating institutions, and indeed the mark of education, does not solely reside in their success in the transmission of valued knowledge. There is much more to education than that. Laura’s injunction helps us remember that one of our community’s main concerns is to see, not merely its cognitive capital and modes of operation taken up by its next generation, but that its very identity, its culture and its principal values, enshrined in its institutions, customs and traditions, be bequeathed as an inheritance and passed on intact to its successors.

The point of this is so that they may, with the greater awareness and insight offered to them by their education in them, be able further to refine, embellish and improve upon the most fundamental conceptions of meaning and significance that characterise and define the form of life, in which that community has had its being and from which it has drawn its life force and inspiration. That is why the debate about values in education and the best form in which citizens can be educated for life in a modern participative democracy is of such critical moment now. It is about nothing less than the ways in which future generations of citizens may come to understand the past, conceive of the present, and envision the future of and for their society, their community and all the values by which they are constituted and characterised, and their own place in them. This will, educators must hope, encourage

them to make a start on appreciating and gaining knowledge and awareness of how to secure access to all the opportunities for advancement and growth that they offer, and then to start to learn and become skilled at how to act accordingly.

Perhaps this is where this preliminary discussion of the problems of values education should come to an end – with the realisation that there will always be debate, discussion and maybe even dissension in a lively and vigorous democracy about what its citizens believe matters most. For that is an indication of how vitally important such conceptions and values are to it and to our ideas of individual significance and community character and significance. Such values and practices are crucial in creating the necessary climate for a sound community, in which the demands and opportunities offered by our search for autonomy and mutuality can be given best and most profound and widespread expression.

It is at such a point, and in such a climate of openness and contention, that the search for answers to questions as to which are the most important values in our society and in its educating institutions must now begin and go on. Such a search is part of the whole process and agenda of learning across the lifespan for all members of our communities, national and international. For there is a sense in which there is nothing more important for all our futures.

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