Chapter 5
Subjectificating Socialisation for the Common Good: The Case for a Democratic Offensive in Upbringing and Education

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Introduction

In a well-known collection of essays edited by Kessel and Siegel, *The Child and other Cultural Inventions* (1983), the Swedish developmental psychologist Rita Liljeström suggested that the traditional 'child of the family' in the Western world has gradually had to give way to two new types of child: the public child and the commercial child (Liljeström 1983). The author is here alluding to the fact that, over the course of Western history, the family has lost considerable ground as a source of influence and values in children's upbringing, while two other spheres of influence have become much more significant: firstly, the government and professional institutions, which have increasingly assumed responsibility for the welfare and education of children, and secondly, the market economy which, in the author's opinion, has succeeded to a remarkable degree in filling the moral and emotional vacuum in which children grow up. According to Liljeström, these two influences have combined in a disturbing way to undermine parenthood and responsible citizenship.

Whether this diagnosis is correct is still difficult to say. Nevertheless, the fact is that some 20 years later, the call heard on all sides is for a greater sense of responsibility from citizens – and from parents in particular. The currently dominant ideology is that citizens in general have become too dependent on government and professionals. The market is no longer a threat to independence, but has become celebrated as an ideal that is supposed to liberate citizens and parents from their alleged inertia. The idealised parent of today chooses – whether it is a childcare centre, or some product in the field of child nurture, or a series of childcare modules – on the basis of a comparative quality analysis. Governments are increasingly withdrawing and want to lay more responsibility at the feet of the caretakers, but

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when it comes to combating such social problems as juvenile criminality and the rise of radicalisation, there is no question of government withdrawal. On the contrary, the credo is 'not withdrawal, but action'. This remarkable scissor movement – on the one hand greater aloofness, on the other, ever more forceful interference – fits seamlessly into the neo-conservative outlook that the government's concern should lie with matters of public order and security. Socialisation, that is, the parenting and upbringing of children to become constructive citizens in society, thus becomes increasingly a private affair and a task for the social middle ground of schools and institutions which, in turn, are more and more governed by the laws of market forces. The question is thus whether the public child does not lose out, through neglect, to the private and the commercial child.

In this chapter, I want to draw attention to the public, general good that is at stake in children's upbringing. That this general good is an important goal of child raising has, in my view, been sadly neglected. Under the influence of various social developments, child nurture, education and youth policy have become almost exclusively focused on the personal interests of young people themselves. This emphasis on the individual finds expression in the objectives of modern child-rearing and child psychology, such as discovering one's own identity, functional autonomy, being happy, developing your talents, making a career and physical and mental health. These all reflect the emancipation of the child, which can rightly be considered an enormous historical and social achievement. We see the child as not so much as a means to a higher end, but as a person, which is not only good for the child but also for society.

Indisputably, achieving these individual goals (sometimes referred to as 'developmental tasks') not only benefits the person and his or her social network but also to some extent the society as a whole, yet the lack of any reference to 'the general good' is a conspicuous omission. After all, no society in the world can function well if it consists purely of unquestioning citizens who see themselves simply and correctly having fulfilled their individual developmental tasks. Surely such citizens must also, at the very least, want to raise among themselves about the way they should live together. They must, for instance, be prepared to find consensus over ways of dealing with each other in their personal and social lives, about justice, solidarity and how to deal with social norms. Such social engagement does not automatically come into being by itself: it has to be actively formed, and for this reason, the nurturing and education of new generations of young people directly involves the general good of society; we have to think in terms of the 'societal upbringing of children' (De Winter 2000). Naturally, this does not mean putting knowledge, skills and attitudes about citizenship into young people's heads. Societal upbringing in my view is at least a two-way process. Children, for example, need to learn from adults what democracy is or could be, how it can be practiced in different ways, what the alternatives are, etc. But the fostering of democratic values will only be successful if children grow up in educative contexts that indeed allow and invite them to put democracy into practice and to reflect on it. In terms of Biesta's distinction (see Chapter 1) between 'socialisation' (i.e. telling citizens that they need to learn more in order to become better citizens') and 'subjectification' (creating spaces where the experiment of democracy can be conducted), I would rather consider societal upbringing as 'subjectificating socialisation'.

The Common Good as the Goal of Child Upbringing

What precisely should be understood by the 'general good' very much depends on the type of society one is referring to. For Western societies it may be defined as the maintenance and development of democracy, based on the assumption that most citizens prefer this system to a dictatorship and is thus the greatest common denominator of interests. It should at once be added that it is not only a question of the formal aspects of democracy, such as those laid down in the constitution and in human rights treaties. Democracy is also – and predominantly – characterised by a social ethic, or as the American philosopher John Dewey called it, 'a democratic way of life', whose core lies in the recognition of shared interests of individuals and groups, in the way in which people associate, consult, discuss and debate their experience and participate in communal practices (Dewey 1923; Berding 1999, p. 166). Such a democratic way of living together assumes, for example, that citizens are prepared to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, if necessary through the mediation of the law, but in any case not through the resort to violence. More succinctly perhaps, democracy could be described as a form of living together designed to resolve conflicts between individuals and/or groups in a humane, orderly and peaceful manner (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; White 1999).

Apart from conflict resolution, in a democratic ethos, there are also issues of equality and parity, social responsibility, rights and obligations, the proscription of discrimination on the grounds of belief, background or disposition, etc. The guiding principle is that a democratic state is the only form of society that allows the peaceful, orderly coexistence of different forms of, for example, religious, cultural or political conviction. This also implies the protection of minorities against the rule of the strongest containment of the power of fanatics, while the use of violence is the preserve of government and the freedom of the individual is constrained by the freedom of others. The great force of democratic states, according to Holmes (1995), is that so far they seem to have succeeded in solving the problems of both anarchy *and* tyranny in a single coherent regulatory system. At the same time, this democracy is highly vulnerable, both as a political system and as a form of society: it is always open to threat from lack of interest, from the assumption that it is the obvious, natural form life that goes without saying (or effort), and from the concerted attacks of those who would forcibly impose on everyone their own totalitarian values.

Children's Upbringing as Essential Interest of Society

The fact that the *general good* features nowhere as a principle for the orientation of children's upbringing and education is not only remarkable, it is above all cause for concern. In the first place, children are not just the product or possession of their parents; they are also the future citizens of a free society. This means that the citizens as a whole – and that includes the children themselves – will either profit or suffer from the success or failure of their upbringing. Whether one wants it or not,

upbringing by definition has consequences for others. In the second place, child upbringing and socialisation are inextricably linked with the conscious reproduction of the democratic state (Gutmann 1987; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). This kind of constitutional state can only function when there is sufficient willingness and capacity on the part of its citizens to support and reproduce this form of society.

There are various signals indicating that the democratic outlook can easily lose its hegemony as the self-evident form of social organisation. There are various reasons for this. Increasing emphasis on individual interests, calculating citizenship, migration from other countries whose regimes and culture are far less democratic, lack of identification with the common good, the rise of fundamentalism and political apathy all play a part. Some even predict the end of democracy as a consequence of internationalisation and globalisation (Guéhenno 1993).

It is precisely in a period of individualisation, fragmentation and increasing diversity that the general interest, the common good, needs to regain a more central position in our thinking and policymaking about the upbringing and education of children. If we are to prevent an implosion as a result of negligence or an explosion through direct attacks, democracy and its associated forms of social life must be much more strongly foregrounded and actively cultivated. Unlike a dictatorship, a democracy cannot enforce its basic principles by decree: it can only try to instil them by persuasion (e.g. Frimannsson 2001). And for this reason it should be obvious that the aim of socialisation is the formation of democratic personalities for whom, to refer to Dewey again, seeking a balance between individual and social needs is second nature: 'If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life' (Dewey as cited in Berding 1999, p. 162).

'Democrats Are Made, Not Born'

Too few people have much idea of exactly what democracy is. To be able to appreciate this democracy, you must at least be aware of the alternatives. What it comes down to is the opposition between self-governance by citizens on the one hand and either anarchy or dictatorship on the other. Unless one understands that historically such a system has usually been gained only through hard struggle, one is likely to find it difficult to identify with it – let alone take up arms to defend it. There is therefore every reason to look critically at the ground support for democracy. The steadily diminishing turnout for elections in various Western countries is often seen as a sign of the erosion of the vitality of a democracy (see Kymlicka and Norman 1994). In particular, observers have remarked that the zest for democracy is weak among young people. A comparative study conducted in 24 countries shows that civic education almost everywhere is accorded low status and priority and that there is similarly little interest in the subject from students (Torney-Purta et al. 1999). One of the conclusions of this study is that many students in secondary education do not meet

the criteria of 'good enough democratic citizenship', that is, the criteria of support for democracy, being well informed about politics, having a political preference and being prepared to go out and vote (Dekker 1999).

A lack of knowledge of and involvement in democracy makes democracy extremely vulnerable. If too many citizens lack any interest in it, the democratic structure and rules themselves eventually have no basis, claims the American political scientist Meira Levinson. The 'liberal state' is a communal good that has to be maintained communally by the citizens: 'It depends for its stability and preservation on there being a sufficiently high percentage of citizens who behave in public and private in ways that advance democracy, toleration and non-discrimination' (Levinson 1999, p. 43). Every democratic state is seriously weakened if it remains underused – which is to say, if too many people adopt a passive or sceptical attitude toward the political process and each other. In that case, the sociopolitical order can very quickly develop in a direction antithetical to freedom, where a small, fanatical minority can make all the running (Levinson, ibid.). The best way of combating underuse and neglect is to ensure that there are a growing number of citizens who take democracy seriously and for whom involvement is a habit. The essential remedy, therefore, lies with the upbringing and education of children. At the same time, although the transfer of knowledge is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition. Future democrats must be certain kinds of person, according to Patricia White – to whom, in fact, the heading of this section refers (White 1999). Knowledge and skills can be learned, assuming that someone is prepared to learn. Motivation and openness to the views and needs of others are therefore an important point to attend to.

Moralising or Democratising

Some behaviours and utterances on the part of youth arouse disquiet and indignation in Western societies: anti-Semitism, discrimination against homosexuals, provocative ostentatious religious utterances and manifestations, violence, etc. These expressions are sometimes seen as merely adolescent provocation by young people in search of their own identity but also sometimes as expressions of fundamentalism or cultural backwardness that have to be taken seriously. In any case, they can count on little sympathy.

These days it has become rather popular (though actually tautological) to apply psychological labels: someone who behaves in an antisocial manner is almost automatically suffering from an 'antisocial personality' disorder. In certain situations, of course, this kind of 'explanation' may be valid for certain youths. But when we choose the basic principles and forms of conduct of democracy as our frame of reference for judging such expressions and behaviours, perhaps we should rather speak of a *democratic deficit*. When this kind of deficiency is manifest in the behaviour of young people, of course, they bear their own responsibility for it, but it has to be stressed that it is also a failure of the socialising persons and institutions and indeed of the functioning of democracy itself. According to Biesta, the

decline of the public sphere should not so much be seen as the *result* of a lack of good citizenship, but rather, he argues, the cause. Instead of blaming 'individuals for an apparent lack of citizenship and civic spirit, we should start at the other end by asking about the actual opportunities for the enactment of the experiment of democracy that are available in our societies, on the assumption that participation in such practices can engender meaningful forms of citizenship and democratic agency' (Biesta 2011, p. 8).

As is well known, alarm over the behaviour and moral outlook of the younger generation is not limited to Europe or even to the present time. In the United States, one of the forms taken by this disquiet is the movement of 'Character Education', whose basic idea is that 'good' character (defined by such virtues as honesty, sense of justice, care for others, self-discipline etc.) is necessary to become fully human and to realise a moral society. This is a clearly normative, moralising approach which deviates from the dominant model of psychosocial health, according to which any judgement of behaviour takes average scores in the population as its point of reference.

The problem with concepts like 'character' and 'virtues', however, is that they – to put it euphemistically – are rather open to multiple interpretation. Many virtues or descriptions of 'good character' would seem to be universal: they are found in Aristotle, the Ten Commandments, the Koran or even in manifestos of the Komsomol, but in their more specific interpretations, they turn out to be highly ideological (Nikandrov 1999). In any case, the question of which virtues should be taught and in what manner arouses strong differences of opinion. There is a clearly discernible conflict over the essence of virtue between neo-conservative schools of thought on the one hand and the progressive liberals on the other. In neo-conservative thinking, it is essentially a question of the transfer of religious and family values, national pride and love of fatherland (Bennett 1993; Wynn 1992), while for the progressives, the meaning of virtue lies in social values such as care, reciprocal regard for others, solidarity and tolerance (Steutel and Spiecker 2000). Whereas the neo-conservatives have, as one would expect, a strong preference for authoritative methods of instruction, for rules and group pressure, the liberal ethics tend toward methods more in keeping with their content, viz. methods based on mutual regard and responsibility. It is striking, however, that from whichever position on the ideological spectrum, there is almost always a reference to democracy. On the importance of this, there is a remarkable degree of consensus.

Writing about the need to inculcate values for citizenship, White says: 'There is no need to search around for a basic framework for citizenship education, still less to attempt to find an insecurely based consensus on values. There exists a framework of values given by the democratic values which are embodied more or less successfully and full heartedly in the institutions of our society' (White 1999, p. 60).

The best evidence for this proposition is in fact the struggle itself between the various champions of morality competing with each other. The evidently still sufficiently shared values of the democratic state make it possible for the competing parties to hold fundamentally different views over the desired morality without this turning into religious strife. In my own view, the cultivation and maintenance of

democracy is therefore more fundamentally important than finding consensus over morality. The focus on morality leads to an amplification of difference and to ethnocentrism, which in turn promotes further discrimination and injustice (Puka 2000, p. 133). A democratic ethic, on the contrary, is characterised by the acknowledgement of mutual interests, by the recognition of difference and by 'the interaction of as many individuals and groups as possible, as intensively and with as few barriers as possible' (Berding 1999, p. 165).

Giving shape to an educative upbringing out of the general interest demands no less than a reversal of cultural attitudes toward child raising. To achieve anything like this will require new socialising arrangements, for example, in order to give a structural place to the active participation of youth and to promote the sharing of responsibility for child upbringing (e.g. between parents and schools). I limit myself here to the discussion of consequences for family upbringing. The implications for education and youth policy will be briefly dealt with at the end of this chapter.

Family Upbringing and Democracy

Over recent decades a considerable amount of research has been devoted to the question of democracy within the family. Under the influence of general processes of democratisation in society, the Western family has also undergone a modernisation process of its own: power differentials have been reduced, both between parents and between parents and children. Personal development and the emancipation of family members have become more important; there has been more room for the expression of feelings, and the running of the household has changed altogether from a command economy to one of negotiation (De Swaan 1979; Torrance 1998). Children have increasingly been allowed to have their say over more issues, which has been interpreted by some commentators as an incapacitation of parents, making it impossible for them to run the family and cited as a possible cause of various behavioural problems (Lodewijcks-Frencken 1989; De Winter 1995; Schöttelndreier 1996). In the Netherlands and many other Western countries, the negotiating family seems to have become more or less the norm. Of course, there are still many families, both immigrant and indigenous, where manners and authority are more traditionally maintained, but even there, one observes changes (Kagitcibasi 2001; Nijsten and Pels 2000). If the nature of the family has become more democratic, does this mean that democracy itself has become a more important objective of family upbringing? Or in other words, do parents have 'democratic virtues' in mind when they describe the aims underlying the way they bring up their children?

Research on upbringing in the Netherlands reveals that most indigenous parents score highly for autonomy and social awareness (Rispens et al. 1996). Large groups of immigrant parents also increasingly give priority to such aims. The greater importance they attach to conformity, obedience and performance gradually becomes mixed with the realisation that personal development can enhance their children's chances of social success in a Western society. The goals of upbringing

are found to be closely linked (among other factors) to economic background, social provision, level of education and work, migration, culture and custom (Kohn 1977; Kagitcibasi 2001; Nijsten and Pels 2000). Thus, although parents raise their children to help them become independent, socially aware and concerned adults, so far this research has found nothing like 'the common good' or a 'democratic attitude' mentioned by parents as an ideal or objective of upbringing. It is impossible to say whether this is due to the parents' answers or perhaps to a blind spot of the researchers themselves.

Because the attitude and behaviour of certain groups of children and youths give rise to public alarm, one increasingly hears criticism of the parents. Do they instil the right norms and values in their children? Does their upbringing adequately meet the demands of modern society? Do they sufficiently keep an eye on what their children are doing, who they associate with and what they get up to at school and in their free time?

There is no debate about the fact that parents play an important and, in certain respects, a decisive role in their children's upbringing, but the extent of that role and its influence is indeed open to question (Harris 1998). That a so-called authoritative style of parenting, measured against the demands of modern Western society, leads to the best developmental outcome for the children living in such a society is even more open to doubt (see, e.g. Baumrind 1971; Maccoby 1980; Hoffman 2000). After all, excessively authoritarian parenting allows insufficient possibilities for adolescents to develop their own identity and sense of responsibility, whereas an all-too-permissive attitude means an absence of boundaries and leads to uncertainty. On the other hand, the authoritative style, that is, a well-balanced mix of support and monitoring, when combined with a less explicit way of correcting, leads to an optimal fulfilment of developmental tasks (again, in the context of a modern Western society).

The authoritative style of parenting is associated with an image of the family as a mini-democracy. Although the 'results' of this style are almost always measured in terms of personal development and individual psychosocial health (and therefore not in terms of social objectives, e.g. democratic citizenship), these certainly include character traits relevant to social functioning. Important democratic faculties like the will and the ability to reach consensus are in the first place learned by many children within the family. As a civic virtue that can be applied in a wider context, suggests Frimannsson (2001), this should be practised and extended later in education. But it is the family context which is supremely appropriate for the transmission of these so-called hot cognitions (i.e. affectively charged cognitions), because of the enduring and intimate affective relations between parents and children.

It is known from the well-known study by Oliner and Oliner (1989) of the motives and backgrounds of persons who saved Jews during the Second World War that the vast majority of these individuals came from warm, close-knit families that placed high demands on individual responsibility and moral behaviour. They were people who were conspicuous for their many and firm relationships with others. But the characteristic the authors singled out by as playing an especially important role was their moral commitment to the values of care for others, justice and humanity.

On the basis of the available empirical literature, Berkowitz and Grych (1998) identify five strategic principles that parents can implement to promote morality in their children:

– Induction
– Considerateness and support
– Making demands and setting boundaries
– Providing a living example of social-moral behaviour
– Open democratic discussions and conflict resolution

What morality actually entails, however, is left rather unspecified here and thus the principles can be applied in various directions. It is therefore important, as Hoffman says, to ensure that a clear content, a *moral ethic*, is communicated. Just as in a pluralistic democratic society, it is important that parents and other moral educators make children aware of the similarities between people, for instance in their emotional reactions, their reactions to unfair treatment or in their reactions to major life events such as divorce, loss and becoming a parent (Hoffman 2000).

Democracy and Education in Parent Education

Family upbringing is of great influence on the development of values and morality. Research has shown unequivocally that, in the context of Western democratic societies at least, a democratic, authoritative style of parenting leads to the best developmental results. The term 'authoritative parenting' primarily refers to a style, to the character of the process of parenting; no moral content is determined by it. One principle of moral content, however, is inextricably linked to this style, and that is democracy itself. Anyone wanting to transmit anti-democratic values to his children is, after all, unlikely to employ an authoritative style of parenting. On the other hand, anyone who wants to pass on democracy and inspire by example can hardly do so by *authoritarian* means.

The implication of all this is that the general interest – defined in terms of a democratic state – is best served with as many parents as possible, raising their children in an authoritative manner. In all probability, they play a crucial role in establishing a democratic habit in the young. In the context of the 'conscious social reproduction of democracy', therefore, we should be thinking of different ways in which the relation between parenting and democracy can be given far greater prominence – whether through counselling and advice, parental education, media attention, courses in citizenship, etc.

Parental support these days is mainly concerned with the recognition and remedying of problems; normative discussions over the goals of parenting are mostly avoided. Research, however, shows that parental support becomes much more effective when it is focused much more strongly on these objectives – in fact, by adopting a goal-based approach. Bettler and Burns (2003) point to three specific gains:

– Reflection on the goals of parenting lays a foundation for parenting methods that one learns.

– This way of working dispenses with the 'deficit approach' that has so long characterised parental assistance.
– It offers more possibility to do justice to the cultural and social diversity of the goals of parenting.

To this one should add that the avoidance of normative discussions in parental support misses out on many opportunities to promote involvement and integration in society. Firm discussions of the direction of upbringing can help to break down isolation, apathy and a culture of aloofness. For parents, who naturally want to create the best possible chances for their children in today's society, it is enormously important to learn how they can advance those opportunities. In that light I want to argue the case for a consultative approach, oriented toward dialogue, whereby the specific demands that living in a democratic state places on children (and thus also on parents) are discussed with parents in a pragmatic fashion. Because such knowledge is part of the basic equipment that parents need to be able to bring up their children successfully in a democratic society, it would seem an obvious move to expand the standard advice offered by child-health clinics for parents of infants and toddlers with courses on authoritative parenting.

The Public Child and the 'Socialisation Gap'

In earlier publications, I devoted considerable attention to the holes that have appeared over recent years in the layers of necessary provisions and activities aimed at the raising and education of youth, in other words in the infrastructure for socialisation and education (see, e.g. De Winter 2000; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling 2001). Among other things, these gaps relate to the decay of the traditional continuity between the different contexts in which children and adolescents are brought up. It would appear that family, neighbourhood, school, church and the clubs no longer play the same significant role as parts of the infrastructure for socialisation and education that they once did. At the same time, they are far less coherently attuned to each other. We know, for example, that many youths from deprived areas often feel themselves to be merely a cipher at school, unsafe in their own neighbourhood as well as unwelcome in and superfluous in society. Their description of the world they lived in evokes an image of a social no man's land in which, apart from parents and friends, there were few people who actually bothered with them. An ideal breeding ground for various possible kinds of derailment, which these youths themselves also thought, all the more so when problems they encountered in the one domain (e.g. on the streets), tended to extend to other domains, such as the family and school (De Winter and Kroneman 1998).

In fact, what these youths complained of was an inadequate public upbringing or education. When they receive insufficient support or any counterbalance from adults in public life, they take this as an invitation to educate themselves. In this way the so-called street code very quickly takes over (Anderson 1999; De Winter 2005).

Anyone in society who feels insufficiently respected or valued, who sees little prospect at work and minimal social status, is going to take his sense of self-esteem from the degree to which he can command respect from the world he inhabits daily. You get respect on the street through your capacity and willingness to use violence. American research on young people growing up in large inner city ghettoes shows that children learn to be 'tough' from a very early age. The first lesson of the street is that survival is never a matter of course. Children must (also literally) learn to fight for their place in the world and that happens by commanding respect, whether by verbal or physical means (Brezina et al. 2004). Anyone who does not succeed runs the constant danger of being humiliated in public, molested or worse. Anderson (1999) explains this hard social reality by the enormous gulf that even young ghetto dwellers experience between themselves and the rest of society. He considers the street code as a cultural adaptation to a deep-rooted lack of confidence in the democratic state and its institutions.

Against this stubborn reality stands the increasing quantity of hard data that tell exactly what such a socialising and educative infrastructure would have to look like to offer these young people a better chance of individual and social development. In the so-called developmental assets approach, for example, some 40 factors are listed, all empirically established as contributing to the healthy social development of children and adolescents. Families, neighbourhoods and schools should provide, among other things, adequate care, support, involvement and clear boundaries. Young people should be appealed to for the constructive contributions that they can make to society, rather than being seen in advance as a potential source of problems (Benson 2003). Such data mean that investing in a high-quality, principled *social-pedagogical* infrastructure is in the direct interests of society. A youth policy that neglects the upbringing of children in the public domain (as we now have, for instance, aimed at a one-sided repression of undesirable behaviour) is damaging the future of the democratic and, of course, the possibilities of individual development for the young people directly concerned.

Traditionally, education also played an important part in the public upbringing of young people. But as a consequence of individualisation and the growing influence of the market, this sector threatens to lose sight of that public interest. Schools are forced to concentrate more on their image and 'customer pool' and their work is increasingly 'demand-oriented', that is, the individual 'customer' is king and the interests of society are shoed to the background. For example, anyone looking in the present-day educational curriculum for a systematic approach to democratic education will be generally disappointed. On the question of how you can impart to children from a young age the knowledge, attitude and skills that they will need to be able to participate as democratic citizens in society, there is very little consensus in the land of education. Of course, there is the odd school that has a course on conflict management, another teaches social skills and yet another has a project running on European elections. But in countries like the Netherlands which have no national curriculum, schools have a large degree of autonomy, certainly when it comes to the 'soft' subjects like civic knowledge. And there the risk is that, because they are free to give almost any interpretation they like to this subject, schools can teach ideas of

citizenship that are at odds with the principles of the democratic state – such as, for example, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or religion. In my own view, there should be a clear limit to the autonomy of the school. For the future of democracy and the 'democratic way of life', it is necessary to transmit to children via education the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need. This, I believe, should be a firm requirement of all schools, whether public or private.

The Need for a Democratic Offensive in Upbringing and Education

> The price of liberty may once have been eternal vigilance; the splendid thing about Civil Society is that even the absent-minded, or those preoccupied with their private concerns or for any other reason ill-suited to the exercise of eternal and intimidating vigilance, can look forward to enjoying liberty. Civil Society bestows liberty even on the non-vigilant. (Gellner 1996)

The picture sketched here by Ernest Gellner is a reassuring one. Civil society with its active, involved citizens, its social networks and organisations has more than adequate consistency to maintain democratic values, even though there are many citizens who never involve themselves in the active propagation of those values. But I mentioned two cases which serve to undermine somewhat this image: an implosion of democracy through an increasing fixation on one's own interests coupled with a lack of interest in public affairs and an explosion through the growth of anti-democratic sentiments, possibly accompanied by a deliberate undermining of the state. In this context, Bauman (1999, p. 156) also refers to the danger of complacent or ideologically driven government constantly giving ground to the market: the further this process advances, the more the citizen changes into a consumer. This may be good for the economy, but it leads inexorably to fewer and fewer citizens prepared to contribute actively to the functioning of democracy. It becomes a sport to outwit the government while rules and regulations are seen as mainly applicable to others.

Of course, the first line of defence against implosion or explosion is a good system setting laws and regulations plus a willingness to maintain them. But ground-level support from the citizenry is need for this, and that is not self-evidently present. A democratic society must therefore consciously engage in its own reproduction and renewal, through socialisation or, amending Gert Biesta's theoretical distinction, through subjectificating socialisation. For various social and historical reasons, there is a great resistance among Western citizens to looking at the upbringing and education of children from the viewpoint of the social interest. Discussions over family upbringing almost immediately run up against objections to the invasion of privacy and parents' right to determine for themselves how they will bring up their children.

The fear that the state might control the upbringing of children is apparently so great in many countries that it threatens to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

This fear – or rejection – has long prevented Western society from strengthening its defence of a common interest in a democratic state through the education of the young. And perhaps this has not for a long time been seen as a matter of urgency. The collective abhorrence of violent dictatorship after the Second World War was probably sufficient in itself to maintain a sufficient degree of commitment to democracy. But now that those experiences are gradually disappearing from the collective memory, the foundations of the democratic state need to be renewed and strengthened. Individual freedoms can only be gained through the collective efforts of citizens. This is why I argue for (what I call) a democratic offensive in upbringing and education. This does not mean child raising by the state but a conscious effort by citizens, organisations and government – not a one-off effort: socialisation is a longitudinal process that has to be exercised and maintained from different domains, both private and public. Such a democratic upbringing by citizens implies the transfer of knowledge, attitude and skills and is essential for a well-functioning democracy. But because democracy is a process and not static and therefore has constantly to be reinvented, it is of essential importance that children and adolescents get sufficient opportunity to experience democracy personally and actively participate, in situations that have meaning for them. There is probably no better way to inspire new generations with enthusiasm for democracy than letting them see from an early age that active engagement in the common life of the society is worth the effort. You can be heard; you are part of a joint venture. But such engagement does not happen by itself. To harmonise your needs and actions with those of others, you must, according to Marquand, have command of 'a certain discipline' and 'a certain self-restraint' that does not come by itself. 'It has to be learned and then internalized, sometimes painfully' (Marquand 2004, p. 57, cit. Biesta 2011).

The genre of 'subjectificating socialisation' is not just a semantic solution for the theoretical distinction that Gert Biesta has rightfully presented. In different 'experiments' we have put this bridging concept into practice, without – admittedly – using this phrase. Particularly both the so-called *Peaceful School*[1] and the *Peaceful Neighbourhood* programmes explicitly integrate both educative genres. The main purpose of these programmes is to try to change schools and neighbourhoods into democratic communities where children and youngsters are being inspired to participate in different ways of democratic decision-making, together with parents, teachers and other involved professionals (de Winter 2012). As many children come from families where democratic values and practices are uncommon, programmes such as these necessarily include the teaching through practice of basic democratic competencies such as critical thinking, dealing with conflicts, dealing with diversity and democratic literacy (Verhoeven 2012). Moreover, not all children understand by nature that 'plurality and difference are seen as the very raison d'être of democratic processes and practices' (Biesta, Chapter 1 this book). Therefore, the peaceful programmes create subjectificating contexts – such as the 'peaceful children's farm' where children and adults negotiate solutions for conflicts that sometimes accompany plurality and diversity. Mediation, for example,

[1] See, for example, http://www.pointofview.nl/vreedzameschool/

can be such a solution and is indeed practiced by child mediators when different groups of parents and children appear to have very different views of animal rights and of ways to handle pets. On the other hand, socialisation and instruction are indispensable for this process: children, for example, need to learn that not only they themselves have rights, but animals too. Or through teaching (local) social history, children can learn how and why our ancestors failed or succeeded in finding democratic solutions for social problems and conflicts of their time. Integrating socialisation and subjectification in my view fertilises the ground on which new democratic practices – or as I call it, an educative civil society – can be built and reinvented.

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