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2. A PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOL FOR OUR TIME

Thinking with Plato after Dewey

Why indeed *do* we have schools? This perennial question has taken on new urgency in our era. As has been widely shown in the scholarly literature, governments the world over have been using educational policy to render schools ever more tightly into instruments of economic, nationalistic, and often xenophobic competitiveness. These policies shunt aside long-standing educational aims such as the cultivation of engaged citizens, of human beings infused with aesthetic and artistic sensibility, of persons dedicated to an ethical life in close association with others, of people who treat their lives as vocations, and more. In the place of such values, we bear witness today to top-down accountability measures that do not invite educators to give an *account* of their work, but which instead *audit* their doings through a narrow range of quantitative measures whose epistemic worth has been seriously challenged, including by statisticians themselves (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; McNeil, 2000; Popham, 2001; Porter, 1996; Ravitch, 2010; Sockett, 2012). Policy-making today appears to exclude testimony and wisdom from the very people who actually perform educational work rather than talk about it. The policy-making community sometimes seems to engage in nothing but talk, and it is often monological. It is not guided by serious listening to educators who understand that education is a profoundly value-laden endeavor.

These circumstances render the title of our chapter, at first glance, rather fantastic – literally, driven by fantasy. A “philosophical” school: how could philosophy have any place in schools today? Plato and Dewey: how can their educational perspectives possibly find a place in a policy zeitgeist dominated by a narrow strand of quantitative methodology? Dewey (1985b) poses these questions in his own distinctive, hard-hitting manner. “Is it possible,” he asks, “for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?” (p. 104). By “full social ends,” we take Dewey to mean that education *can* cultivate the values touched on above: civic engagement viewed through a cosmopolitan rather than nationalistic lens, ethical and aesthetic involvement in all the facets of one’s life, and building and supporting lives of purpose and meaning for all people. Dewey was concerned that nation states too often construct educational policies that “restrict, constrain, and corrupt” these deeply humane values.

Plato had comparable concerns about the relationship between the polis and education. A reading of his dialogues suggests, to us, that he conceived education as something distinct from socialization and tradition. He does pay custom and convention their due. He is not a revolutionary, any more than is Dewey. Plato understands that a stable community will necessarily rely on shared values and assumptions informed by past practices – what Dewey (1985b, pp. 7–35) later terms “like-mindedness” (not to be confused with ‘identical-mindedness’). But the past does not *determine* the present or future. Plato makes plain (*Republic* 518c–d) that true education entails a “turning of the soul” away from merely traditional forms of life and toward a mode that includes elements of tradition aligned with critical reflection, inquiry, dialogue, and above all wonder. We mean wonder at the fact we humans are here in the first place; wonder that we are actually capable of conceiving justice and of enacting it (with justice understood as morality rather than as mores); wonder that we actually have a sense of beauty and of goodness; and what might be called critical wonder at how “restricted, constrained, and corrupted” – to recall Dewey’s words – a state’s educational policy can become. In *The Apology* and elsewhere in his oeuvre, Plato shows Socrates relentlessly criticizing the Athenians for not being serious about education. He charges them with caring only for their own narrow, short-term interests of power, prestige, and profit. In a wrenching, unforgettable manner, Plato demonstrates the power of such interests by dramatizing how they led to Socrates’ execution at the hands of the state.

Plato and Dewey were keenly aware of how difficult or even impossible it can seem to bring philosophy into education – as well as education into philosophy, since both writers were also concerned about philosophy’s tendency to leave practical, formative human matters behind. Both Plato and Dewey, each in his own way, ventured a philosophical school. Plato created the Academy just outside the walls of Athens, and Dewey conceived the Laboratory School on the south side of Chicago. Both institutions were places where philosophy and action met at a dynamic crossroads of dialogue, testing of ideas, and drawing in evidence from the world. Both were places for high theory, though not directly or systematically so in the Laboratory School. There the process was more indirect, in that what unfolded on a day by day basis triggered numerous philosophical lines of inquiry, especially on the part of Dewey but not restricted to him (Tanner, 1997). Both were places where thought and action had a bearing on the world outside the institution. Many visitors to Plato’s Academy came to discuss ways of instantiating political principles in actual constitution-making back in their city-states (Reeve, 1992, p. xiii). The Laboratory School’s overt policy was to engage teachers and students in perceiving connections between their activities, and the outcomes of such activities, with the larger world of which they were all a part.

We take inspiration from the powerful sense of realism both Plato and Dewey embodied. We also take heart from their equally powerful sense of idealism. They show why it is never fantastical to address the idea and the prospect of a philosophical

school. The task is ever-important and ever-timely. In what follows, we sketch a conception of such a school. We will draw particularly upon several of Plato's ideas as elaborated in his *Republic*. We do so in light of our sense of Dewey's educational arguments as expressed in particular in his *Democracy and Education* (a book whose 100th year anniversary is in 2016). Thus we read Plato as if he came "after" Dewey. Our view of a philosophical school will not be a prescriptive blueprint but, to use a term of art from Plato, a model we hope will be worthy of examination.

WHY PLATO IS A CONTEMPORARY WHO SPEAKS TO THE MEANING
OF SCHOOL

Jean-Luc Nancy (1996) writes: "A contemporary is not always someone who lives at the same time, nor someone who speaks of overtly 'current' questions. But it is someone in whom we recognize a voice or gesture which reaches us from a hitherto unknown but immediately familiar place, something which we discover we have been waiting for, or rather which has been waiting for us, something which was there, imminent" (pp. 107–108). In this chapter, we read Plato as a contemporary in the many-sided sense that Nancy evokes. For us, Plato *writes*; it is not merely the case that he *wrote*.

We appreciate the challenges in adopting this posture. For one thing, we cannot help but read the book through the lens of our own concerns, which unavoidably shape what we are in a position to see in the text. We acknowledge there is much we doubtless do not see, and that we will not see until we undergo further intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical change as persons. Even then, there is no guarantee that our vision will be able to take in the full horizon of Plato's thought on education.

For another thing, it would be impossible to summarize the criticism scholars have heaped upon Plato's *Republic* since he first introduced it in his Academy sometime in the 370s BCE. (The exact dates of the book's composition are unknown.) Commentators have characterized the *Republic* as the fountainhead of all subsequent philosophy, as a totalitarian blueprint, as a beautiful evocation of the just life, as an elitist view of education and society that excludes women, children, non-aristocrats, and non-Greeks, as a moving portrait of Socrates and his educational effect on others, and as much more. In our own experience, the book constitutes an endlessly provocative invitation *to think education* (cf. Hansen, 2015): that is, to imagine as best as possible how education can enhance the human condition, by which we mean the well-being of individuals and communities alike. The book serves as a dramatic mirror to the constitution of one's own being, or soul. Serious readers of the book, who make their way through it with care and patience, will learn much about themselves. They will perceive much better than before what their underlying social and educational values are. They will have fresh insight into their hopes, concerns, and fears about the world. They will learn, not always in a comfortable manner, about their intellectual and ethical blind spots.

We adhere to no particular “camp” of interpretation with respect to Plato’s view of education, justice, and society. We take to heart Gilbert Ryle’s (1966) wise and witty perspective:

Although philosophers are and ought to be highly critical persons, their wrangles are not the by-products of loyalty to a party or a school of thought. There do, of course, exist in our midst and inside our skins plenty of disciples, heresy-hunters and electioneers; only these are not philosophers but something else that goes by the same long-suffering name. Karl Marx was sapient enough to deny the impeachment that he was a Marxist. So too Plato was, in my view, a very unreliable Platonist. He was too much of a philosopher to think that anything that he had said was the last word. It was left to his disciples to identify his footmarks with his destination. (p. 14)

It is precisely Plato’s openness to thought, to questioning, to inquiry, and to doubt, that we see as constitutive of a philosophically-minded school. The commitment to openness which we take to be characteristic of philosophy, and which Plato exemplifies, is grounded in assumptions about educative possibilities. For Plato, these educative possibilities are rooted in his position on truth and our relationship to it. For Plato, we humans do not possess ‘the’ truth about who or what we are as beings. He takes pains in the *Republic* to show that Socrates is often quite unsure of himself and of the arguments he is putting forward (394d, *passim*). However, as Socrates also shows us, we can move closer rather than farther away from truth – and it matters that we strive to do so, for the sake of both justice and its correlate, education.

Moreover, not only is inquiry and wonder the preferred pedagogical orientation that can be inferred from Plato’s works, but poetry, music, and physical education – what we might call *the embodied arts* – are also indispensable for cultivating the fullness of each individual’s activity as a participant in the just city (*kallipolis*) that Plato conceives in the book. By drawing on Plato’s *Republic* with its rich metaphorical and allegorical language, we hope to foreground the art of inquiry and to keep Plato’s thought alive – as our contemporary – in our conceptualization of a philosophical school.

In what follows, we elucidate our core terms by walking with Socrates out of the ancient Athenian agora and into the terrain of today’s educational world. Like Dewey, we are concerned to portray a school that would serve public rather than merely private ends. We understand the term “public” as a communicative ethos that is generated through open, unfettered dialogue and inquiry with respect to a given set of concerns. We take unfettered dialogue and inquiry to involve listening with care to others, speaking with care to them, and remaining open-minded and open-hearted even in the face of contrasting views. Within this disciplined but unbounded dialogue and inquiry, people are able to step outside their private worlds and into a critical mode of talking, thinking, planning, and doing (Dewey, 1988). We are mindful of Dewey’s (1991) argument that not only are education, justice, and

democracy creative, ever-unfinished tasks, but that the very structure of the self is similarly fluid. These views clash with the perception that Plato held a 'fixed' notion of self and society. However, we will explore how Plato's conception of education can not only be revitalized by the Deweyan notion of plasticity, which denotes the potential to *change*, but can be seen as offering an argument on its behalf. We wish to show that if we read Plato after Dewey, the former's apparent constraints take on a new coloring, and help us to invoke an image of a philosophically-minded, public school.

THE SCHOOL AS A PLACE OF AND FOR THOUGHT

The methods of inquiry demonstrated by Socrates in Plato's dialogues mirror what we can observe in the classrooms of many good teachers today. These teachers challenge students to think. They treat students as capable of dealing with confusion and uncertainty – within limits – because they grasp that what the Greeks called *aporia*, or what Anne Carson (1999) calls *the experience of error*, is constitutive of genuine learning as contrasted with the mere acquisition of facts. Mistakes, errors in understanding, faulty judgments, misguided actions: machines might be able to avoid such experiences, but human beings need them to become educated.

People sometimes assume that philosophy is useless in pursuit of this pedagogical approach – namely because it focuses (supposedly) on pure abstractions and on questions that are unanswerable, rather than addressing real-world problems. Indeed, Socrates is famous for his suggestion that all he knows is that he does not know. Could a school today be constructed on such an epistemological and ethical premise?

To speak in paradoxical terms, a good public school is certain about the values in dealing with uncertainty. Uncertainty and 'unknowing' are central conditions for inquiry. In their absence there is no motivation to look into things. Uncertainty is also at the heart of the human condition. We are not divine but are fallible and vulnerable beings. Philosophical skepticism implores us to respond to uncertainty rather than to react to it uncritically or flee from it unthinkingly. As such, uncertainty triggers some of the deepest creativity of which human beings are capable. We take these claims as illustrative of why the 'Socratic method' – itself embodied in the very structure of Plato's dialogical mode of writing – continues to animate classroom practices around the world wherein teachers and students engage in thoughtful, inquiry-centered discussion. The longevity of this approach mirrors the widespread educational aspiration, articulated in depth by Dewey, to teach the scientific method to young people so that they can engage in inquiry self-consciously while learning how to approach public claims in a reflective rather than an unmindful, dogmatic, or idolatrous spirit.

Plato's and Dewey's respective commitments to their ideas about inquiry run deep. They express a firm belief in the efficacy of rational, open-ended discourse. Both thinkers conceive 'rationality' as a holistic concept. It encompasses familiar notions of

reasoning, but also embodies aesthetic, ethical, and emotional components. In Plato's still provocative picture of the tripartite rational soul, reason does not dominate or exercise hegemony over spirit and appetitive desire. Rather it guides them, keeping them in harmony so that the soul constitutes a unity. Dewey also painted rationality in broad strokes, centering it around and in the arts of communication. He rooted the idea in much more than problem-solving – a recurring human task with which his thought is often associated – but also in human responsiveness to other people and to the events of life itself. Neither Dewey nor Plato put rational discourse in service solely to specific, a priori outcomes. Such a move would contradict the very integrity of inquiry. Both thinkers urge us to nurture rational dialogue and inquiry because they see in them a space for humans to thrive educationally as the social creatures they are.

In this light, a philosophically-minded school would draw teachers and students into dialogue and inquiry that have no fixed external end or purpose. This philosophical discourse would run through the curriculum (see below). It would accompany instructional moments when students are concentrating on learning to read various kinds of texts, to write good sentences and paragraphs, to numerate and solve mathematical problems, to manipulate a paint brush or potter's wheel, to hold a basketball in order to shoot accurately, and so forth. The philosophical dimensions of their activities would constantly trigger inquiry, wonder, and curiosity, even as they also help cultivate arts of listening, of speaking, and of working cooperatively with others.

A school that takes philosophy seriously is thus not designed to serve merely the economic ends of society. The school's administrators and teachers would not yield passively to externally imposed auditing mechanisms and the standards to which they are attached. They would certainly respect the rule of law, and would take such standards seriously. But they would put them in service of pedagogy rather than the other way around. They would embed curricular standards in a larger vision of educational purpose and practice, thereby transforming them from externally imposed fixed standards into internally shaped, dynamic standards. The latter would function as what Dewey calls "ends in view" (Dewey, 1985b, pp. 35–112, pp. 115–152). For Dewey, *all* educational ends, or aims, should be seen as steps along a path rather than as terminal destinations. In this light, all members of the school would have the ongoing opportunity to *participate* in the setting of educational standards to which they will adhere. Put another way, they will be positioned to offer an *account* of their learning (*Republic*, 498a, 531e, 533b–534d). Teachers and administrators will support students to learn to ask questions, to articulate their beliefs, and to put their judgments on the table for rational scrutiny. It is by participating in this living, breathing, and thinking practice that the purpose of a philosophical school is realized.

Plato's dialogical method constitutes a kind of purposeful openness, and reflects his conception of thinking. For Plato, thinking is not 'applied' to the world. It is undertaken *in* the world through dialogue with others, and through inquiry into the things that we sense and the things that surround us. Plato pictures study as, ultimately,

leading people to approach what he poetically terms “the Good.” We take this term of art to denote, among other things, the conviction that we humans are capable of unfathomably artful lives – of aesthetically and ethically rich lives – if we picture ourselves as more than merely economic producers and consumers dwelling in an atomistic, individualistic world. The sense of the Good helps us in “summoning the understanding” (*Republic* 526e). Put another way, deep questions of purpose and of value “summon” or awaken thought and understanding. They oblige us to make clear distinctions as we examine the contours of our own thinking (*Republic* 524e–525d). Plato inaugurates a particular way of thinking – “dialectics” – which conduces, as he puts it, to the “ascent to problems” – i.e. to realizing that the social and natural world around us can be questioned rather than treated merely as a backdrop. When teachers and students pose questions about their very ‘Being’ – about who and what they are, and indeed *why* they are – and when they perceive contradictions and tensions in the human-made world they inhabit, they are “summoned” to problematize and thus to inquire into that world (*Republic* 530b, 531c, 534d, 538d). For Plato, dialectics ultimately can lead to seeing a unified (though not uniform) prospect of social harmony (*Republic* 537c), just as science for Dewey can lead to social amelioration.

A philosophically-minded school becomes a place *of* and *for* thought. It urges its members to contemplate and discuss the very questions which so often leave people feeling uncertain, perplexed, and unsettled. The school does not exist to proffer solutions to these questions, so many of which have no terminal answer. Rather, the questions become a spur to careful inquiry, considered judgment, and dedicated communication. Nobody is left isolated or abandoned in their questioning. Rather, the school becomes an agora where anyone’s doubts, puzzlement, and fundamental curiosity can gain a hearing.

AN EDUCATION IN THE EMBODIED ARTS

We referred previously to Plato’s extensive discussion of the educational values in poetry, music, and physical education in the forming of the *kallipolis*, or “just city” that he conceives in *The Republic*. Here, we discuss how Plato has in mind the education of *all* members of the city, not just those destined to become what he calls guardians or philosopher-kings and -queens. We recall here the isomorphism (Lear, 1992) that Plato conjures between the ‘soul’ of the just city and that of a just human being. He refers to three groups of people: (1) the largest number are those who carry out the work of the city in every relevant cultural, economic, and social domain; (2) the guardians are those who protect the city from external enemies (war was endemic in Ancient Greece when Plato penned his book); and (3) the small number of philosopher-kings and -queens would serve as guides (though not autocratic decision-makers) during debates over policy, as adjudicators of disputes, and as public enactors of revered cultural values. These groups correspond, respectively, to the three parts of the human soul: (1) the appetitive part, (2) the spirited part, and (3) the reasoning part. As mentioned previously, a rational soul – and a rational

city – feature a harmony of the parts in which each functions well on its respective platform without overriding the functions of the other parts.

While the *Republic* culminates in a lengthy inquiry into the proper education of the philosopher-kings and -queens, it also portrays what Plato takes to be the right sort of education for children and youth in a just polity. All youth in the kallipolis ought to hear not just any myths and any poetry, but only those that inculcate virtues such as moderation (*Republic* 389d–391c), grace, harmony, and rhythm (*Republic* 400c–e). To cultivate the kind of love of the Good, or love of Beauty, that Socrates was in search of, Plato ‘paints a picture’ of exactly how artistic forms such as painting, singing, and the like can indeed leave an imprint on a person’s aesthetic and moral sense – for indeed, the aesthetic and what we call the moral fuse in his outlook. Education in music and poetry, Plato argues, is “most important” because the rhythm and harmony of its tempos leave a potentially lasting mark on the soul, “bringing it into grace” (*Republic* 401d). Moreover, Plato contends that this kind of ‘metered’ education eventually positions students to detect when things, across the affairs of life, are disharmonious – that is, either are missing (such as justice – see below) or are in excess (such as wealth or concentrated power). Because heavy exposure to music and poetry encourages people to see the unity in temporal space – every pause anticipating the next note or word – they can also come to see unity and holism in nature (*Republic* 401e–402a).

Plato suggests that a pedagogy that engages children systematically in the arts would put them on the road to becoming ethical persons who strive for harmony, who love beauty and the order in a soul that has been transformed through an aesthetic sensibility (*Republic* 403a). At the same time, taking another cue from Plato, a ‘balanced’ soul emerges through a fusion of the arts of poetry and music with those of physical education. Plato advocates systematic exercise for children so as to discipline or ‘direct’ the spirited part of their natures, even as they develop moderation with respect to foods and the uses of medicine (*Republic* 410b–412a).

As we interpret Plato, the grounding education in the embodied arts that he elucidates would be provided to everyone in the just city – not solely to the small roster of guardians and philosopher-kings and –queens, but to farmers, cobblers, homemakers, tailors, merchants, sailors, doctors, and all the rest. This shared grounding seems crucial to Plato because it appears the good city can only come into being and endure if everyone has a deep commitment to it, expressed in part through their dedication to what they are most suited to do. Here again he draws upon the isomorphism of city and individual soul. Just as the singular human soul will prosper if each constituent of the soul plays its distinctive role in harmony with others, so the soul of the city will be healthy if everyone in the three groups of citizens, guardians, and philosophers share the same rational commitment to justice. Justice (*dikaisune*), for Plato, fundamentally entails doing no harm to others. It encompasses the idea of moderation, by which he means a respect for one’s own particular activity fused with respect for others’ autonomy in their activities. He regards *pleonexia*, which can be translated as “outdoing others” or “wanting more” than what necessity dictates, as

the greatest threat to justice in both the city and the individual soul. This *pleonexia* points not just to what we familiarly call greed, but can include trying to take over, or destroy, other peoples' practices.

As touched on previously, an education in music, poetry, and physical education puts the constituents of an individual soul in harmony. Importantly, this outcome means that the soul becomes its own best 'guardian': the soul learns how to preserve itself. Internally, the three elements will work cooperatively. For example, appetite will not overwhelm reason, but nor will reason thwart the functions of appetite as contrasted with keeping them in balance. Correspondingly, each person in the city will strive to remain in harmony with others. The cobbler will not try to take over ship-building; the farmer will not try to elbow aside the tailor and take over his craft; the philosopher-queen will not push aside the teacher of music and take over that art. In this way, as Plato pictures it, each person will be, in his or her singular way, a preserver of the harmony in the just city.

A familiar critique of this picture is that Plato seems to lock individuals in the just city into a single life-long role, with no lateral freedom of choice. We see some truth in the critique. Plato does seem to believe that every person has a natural inclination and equipment to perform one or another social function well. He pictures early education as a process in which persons come to realize, or discover, their distinctive bent and thereafter pursue it in cooperation with other people pursuing their particular talents. Dewey expresses great appreciation for Plato's insight that both internal psychological harmony, and external social harmony, will most likely prevail if each person is doing what they can truly do best. However, Dewey criticizes Plato for apparently presupposing a small number of social classes – to wit, workers, guardians, and philosophers – into which persons are born and from which there is no escape.

We think Dewey overlooked an important aspect of Plato's discussion – namely, Plato's sense that every activity, or what he calls 'craft', in the city can constitute a genuine vocation rather than merely a 'job' or 'occupation'. The philosopher-kings and -queens do require an unusually long education – they will not take office until what appears to be their late 40s or 50s – because of the highly complex and delicate leadership functions they will have in the just city. However, every person will learn his or her craft throughout life, for Plato suggests that *there is much to learn, continuously*, about every undertaking (*Republic*, 374b). Thus, to indicate that an individual would be 'fixed' into a particular position or craft does not mean that person's learning or development would be 'fixed' or predetermined.

Plato holds out an image of every individual becoming a true artist of their work. The farmer becomes more than 'just' a tiller of the soil, but someone who develops a profound, intimate expertise in soil, seeds, plants, timing with respect to what and when to plant, weather, and all the rest. The cobbler becomes an increasingly artful expert in leathers and other materials, simultaneously developing an aesthetic as well as practical expertise in the unfathomable range of human ideas about 'good shoes'. The music teacher cultivates an ever-deepening insight into child psychology even

while learning continuously about the dynamic constitution of music itself. In this light, Plato anticipates Karl Marx's later critique of capitalism as having destroyed the sense of craft for individuals as they become craft-less hired hands in factories (it is uncountable how many persons in today's global capitalist order do not have the opportunity to *experience* their work as a craft). Plato also anticipates Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1983, pp. 53–54, *passim*) picture of democracy in which each individual not only engages in a craft they know well but embodies the full dignity of that craft – each person becoming a living, dynamic role model to others in the polity in how to lead a truly artful life, whatever the person's vocation may be. It remains true that Plato seems to have had no conception of a cobbler one day becoming a music teacher, or vice versa. Our own sensibilities, like those of readers (we imagine), recoil at this thought. 'A cobbler forever!' 'A music teacher forever!' All the same, it bears emphasizing that Plato does not *reduce* individuals to their supposedly limited roles. Rather he pictures every person as a genuine, irreplaceable part of the *body politic*, and this conviction accounts, in part, for why he pictures education as a process of each person finding out what their purpose in the community can be.

It is typical to think of schools as instrumental in equipping students with the skills and abilities to choose and qualify for their careers post-graduation, with the goal of also choosing their lifestyles, places of residence, etc. In this sense, one could say that schools exist to promote *conditions for choice*, valuing the freedom to pick and choose. Plato seems to be looking at things from the other side. He is interested in *conditions for discovery* (cf. Sandel, 1982). He is looking not so much at the freedom to choose, but rather the freedom to truly discover what one can do well and to develop that craft in depth. This outlook is provocative and controversial, and we should press Plato hard with questions. But it is equally important to let him question *us* by asking us to examine our often unquestioned assumptions about freedom. It is not evident to us that today's shopping mall market of 'choices' supports a depth experience of a craft, not to mention of life itself. Moreover, we know that socioeconomic inequities severely limit the choices of some, so there is hardly a level playing field with which to begin. It is noteworthy that in Plato's just city public policy would ensure that there would be neither the poverty nor the excessive wealth discernible everywhere in the world today (*Republic* 421c–423a). In the just city, equality of opportunity obtains in the form we have sketched here – namely, that a person be 'equal to', or commensurate with in terms of disposition and ability, the craft in which they engage. Every person should have an education in poetry, music, and physical education through which they can discover their bent.

A lesson we draw from Plato's sometimes shocking account is that the issues he raises merit sustained discussion and inquiry in a philosophically-minded school. The relation between the individual and society; the meaning of 'harmony' in a person's individual constitution and that of a society; conceptions of justice; choice and discovery; opportunity and how to judge the worth of opportunities; inequities in the conditions for either choice *or* discovery – all of these issues, and more, can

help constitute the curriculum across the discrete subjects of literature, history, mathematics, science, and the like.

At the same time, we envision a renewed place in the school for the embodied arts of poetry, music, and physical education, all of which have been marginalized (for example, in the United States and in China) as schooling becomes increasingly a mechanistic process of preparing for and sitting standardized examinations. Dewey would describe the marginalization of these arts as the marginalization of the human factor in education. He is well-known for his systematic critiques of rote training, and for championing a holistic curriculum featuring wide-ranging modes of discussion, interaction, inquiry, and experimentation. Dewey pictures this pedagogy as walking hand-in-hand with the overall life of the school, which he describes on numerous occasions as a ‘miniature society’. Moreover, he learned first-hand that such a school environment can be a practical reality (Dewey, 1985a; Tanner, 1997).

In a philosophically-minded school, students will continue to learn mathematics, literature, science, the arts, languages, and other familiar subjects. But all these will be taught not solely for instrumental purposes – to acquire the knowledge and skills to function in the world – but to cultivate a sense for craft and vocation – that is, a sense of what it can mean to *inhabit* life fully rather than as a superficial consumer of experiences. Moreover, such an ethos supports teachers and students in being mindful of truly ethical purposes, in the sense that they can come to treat the school as a shared world in which to cultivate themselves as thinkers guided by a sense of deep wonder and love for justice and how to render it *manifest* in the world of human words and deeds. In this way, instrumental learning will occur against a backdrop of visible, dialogically emergent human values which are at once ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and social.

As we gather from Plato, Dewey, and numerous other scholars, ‘philosophizing’ is a term of art for reflective method, or for method when fused with thinking. As we have suggested, philosophizing will be an ongoing element in each and every subject in the school, in each and every classroom. It will be an ongoing element in all the communications that take place in school, and between the school and related communities whether near (e.g., parents) or far (e.g., virtual dialogues with teachers and students in schools on the other side of the globe). Philosophizing will itself be a topic of discussion and inquiry. And, as mentioned previously, because the school will be consciously formed mindful of Plato’s pioneering educational proposals, the very elements in the latter will be taken up in timely, judicious ways. For example, the question *Is there a human nature? Can be an explicit topic in every classroom. Every teacher and student can raise the issue in conjunction with underlying convictions, assumptions, and forms of inquiry in a given subject (including physical education).*

Plato and Dewey elucidate the hopeful possibilities that can issue from what they picture as the humanity of reason and the reasonableness of humanity. The ability to reason positions human beings to weigh what they *ought* to do, even as it constitutes a living mechanism for criticizing poor reasoning, or its very absence, in the vicissitudes of societal life. The capacity to be reasonable points to arts of listening,

patience, self-criticism, and more. To illustrate these points, and to conclude this portion of the discussion, consider an imaginary scenario in an ideal school seen, first, through the lens of contemporary practice, and then through a lens informed by our reading of the *Republic*.

In many schools today, administrators expel students for breaking various institutional rules (Kafka, 2011). In some cases, the offenders are left to fend for themselves; in other cases, they transfer to other schools. This approach to infractions is understandable, and it seems reasonable especially when a student may have injured other parties. The practice of ‘exile’ is certainly common to many social groups. Indeed, the Athenians put forward this very option to Socrates, as a punishment for his conviction on charges of corrupting the youth and slandering the gods. If not in so many words, the prosecutors said to him: ‘Go and live somewhere else, and we will leave you alone. Practice your impiety and corruption of youth elsewhere!’ As we know, Socrates rejected the option. He chose to die rather than to leave his social group, believing himself innocent and yet remaining loyal to his polity.

The philosophical school assumes that the persons who come through its doors are capable of reasoning and being reasonable. Accordingly, school leaders ought as far as possible to give people the benefit of the doubt and retain them in the community (Ayers et al., 2001; Kafka, 2011; Kohn, 1996). Indeed, if schools do not keep students around simply because they have views and reasons different from the presumed norm, there is a sense in which school people are failing to face the fundamental reasons for *having* a school in the first place. What Plato conceives as the humanity of reason means that we value our human capacity to set ends based on reasons, and that we acknowledge this ability in other people. We respect each person as an agent who can set his or her ends. People may and do fall short in this regard. Every teacher and school administrator can doubtless point to students who err in their judgment, act in irrational ways, are hamstrung by illness or other difficult circumstances, and the like. If a student is clearly out of control and in danger of harming others (or him- or herself), then reasonable constraint is essential. However, the philosophical baseline of the school is to treat every member as a reasoning being, a being whose reasons may at first be hard to discern, and indeed hard for the individual to articulate. Israel Scheffler (1973) argued several decades ago that teachers and administrators need to engage students as reasoning beings, and to provide them reasonable explanations for their own actions as adults. He pictured this as a core ethical norm constitutive of the school as a community. In our view, it is vital to take the time, which may mean to *make* the time, to give every person in the school a patient, open floor for thinking, reasoning, debating, and deciding.

CONCLUSION: SOCRATES GOES TO SCHOOL

Public schools and the educators who work within them have always been under pressure to justify themselves on instrumental grounds rather than, by way of

contrast, on the aesthetic, moral, and reflective grounds associated with the liberal arts. This pressure appears to have intensified in recent years as economic considerations increasingly elbow aside time-honored educational aims and values. Many have criticized what they see as an over-reliance on standardized testing, which to them suggests an excess in the assessment *of* learning rather than balancing it with assessment *for* learning (Shepard, 2000, 2005).

Plato would aver that we are in danger of becoming enslaved to this narrow, top-down auditing system. Like other contemporary critics, he would warn of its troubling resemblance to a larger, globalizing ethos of harsh, unyielding competition that has generated frightful socioeconomic and political inequalities, and with all these developments coming on top of a steady dissolution of a craft-consciousness in many fields of work. For Plato, mindless subservience and excess are symptoms of imbalance, i.e. of a sick society. Plato envisioned education as a cure for this illness. Education can actively shape cultural narratives and associated sets of norms. It can do so, in part, through foregrounding philosophical discourse in which people learn to reason and to think publicly – the very circumstances of the school, at least potentially, as a social space.

When we read Plato after Dewey, we recognize that the human potential and plasticity that Dewey works hard to preserve in his educational ideal is a value that works symbiotically with a specific kind of social life. That is, freedom isn't prized for its own sake and at any cost, but instead is a kind of measure for the exercise for our humanity, both in material and in intellectual terms. Human beings are characterized by their ability to choose – an ability they can perform rationally (that is, aesthetically, morally and reflectively) – and this ability to choose rationally would constitute an aim of a philosophically-minded school. This mode of choice, precisely through the use of critical reflection and dialogue, can fuse with what we earlier called conditions for discovery. The school can assist students to come to grips with what Jonathan Lear (1992) calls their constitution as “finite erotic beings.” They are finite because they are mortal and are always limited in their self-understanding and understanding of others. They are erotic – in the rich Greek sense of *eros* – not just because they have desires but because they can *educate* and *transform* them. With the provocation of a curriculum and pedagogy described in this chapter, they (and their teachers, we might add) can learn to desire not just what their appetites (and the advertising onslaught that fuels them) put on the table. Rather they can learn to think about what goals, purposes, values, and wants are *worthy*. They can learn to assess the options that, if they are fortunate, the world will present to them – seeing, perhaps, the difference between craft and vocation, on the one hand, and work that pays but *only* pays, on the other hand.

Plato insists that human beings are here by necessity: there is a reason, a purpose, for each person's existence. As we have suggested, he believes that for every person to realize their purpose, a ‘balance of power’ between reason, appetite, and spirit is required. An early education in music, poetry, and physical education is invaluable in support of this aim. Ultimately, as both he and Dewey contend, no one should

be telling another person what his or her purpose is for being in the world. Dewey remarks: “Plato defined a slave as one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct” (1985b, p. 90). Every person merits the experience of *arriving* intellectually at their purpose. When Socrates (figuratively speaking) walks through the doors of the philosophically-minded school we envision, he would see teachers and students engaged in inquiry into purpose. He would witness people focused on the academic subjects that embody human striving across the millennia, and engaging them in a spirit of grasping what they themselves discover is worth striving for and becoming.

To read Plato after Dewey is to position ourselves to philosophize with both of them, and to see, *pace* our earlier quote from Ryle, that it is we who harden their thought, not the texts themselves. Similarly, it is we who often accept hardened (or cynical) notions of what a school is and what it can be. We have argued in this chapter that school can be – as indeed it already is in some cases, or at least is at moments – a place for philosophizing deeply and systematically about things that matter. School can be a place to learn how to conduct oneself in what Plato calls the light of the Good, i.e. in light of that compelling, inextinguishable conviction people have in their bones that justice is *real* rather than a chimera. Plato and Dewey remind us that we do not need to “audit” our merit as participants in humanity. Schools are not places where teachers and students have to earn a place in the social balance. Schools are a platform upon which students and teachers can give an account of their dynamic place in that social balance. Through reasoned and reasonable discourse about the important things in life, school members discover, exercise, and come to love what resides at the heart of philosophy itself: wisdom.

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