https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

AGAINST CIVIC SCHOOLING*

By James Bernard Murphy

I. Introduction: What Is Civic Education?

A fierce debate about civic education in American public schools has erupted in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Many liberals and conservatives, though they disagree strongly about which civic virtues to teach, share the assumption that such education is an appropriate responsibility for public schools. They are wrong. Civic education aimed at civic virtue is at best ineffective; worse, it is often subversive of the moral purpose of schooling. Moreover, the attempt to impose these partisan conceptions of civic virtue on America's students violates the civic trust that underpins vibrant public schools.

Here is how the recent debate has unfolded and what we might learn from it. In response to demands from teachers about how to deal with the messy emotional, racial, religious, and political issues occasioned by the September 11 attack and its aftermath, the National Education Association (NEA) offers a Web site titled "Remember September 11." The site is full of materials about how to counsel distressed students; how to place September 11 in some kind of historical, cultural, and international context; and what moral lessons might be drawn from the attack.[1] These moral lessons range from "Remembering the Uniformed Heroes at the World Trade Center" to "Tolerance in Times of Trial." Similarly, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) offers lesson plans for "9/11" on its Web site[2]: these materials range from "The Bill of Rights" to "My Name is Osama," the story of an Iraqi-American boy taunted by his peers because of his name and Muslim customs. Although the materials offered by these organizations vary widely, their pervasive theme is well articulated by the president of the NCSS: "[W]e need to reinforce the ideals of tolerance, equity, and social justice against a backlash of antidemocratic sentiments and hostile divisions."

* For comments on an earlier draft of this essay, I am indebted to Mark Stein, Lucas Swaine, Shelley Burtt, Stanley Fish, Mary Beth Klee, Ellen Frankel Paul, and the other contributors to this volume. I also wish to thank my indefatigable research assistants and copyeditors, Karen Liot and Emily Mintz. I began this inquiry in response to questions about the relation of academic to moral excellence from the late Patty Farnsworth, to whom I dedicate this essay.

[1] Available on-line at http://neahin.org/programs/schoolsafety/september11/materials/hshome.htm [accessed April 30, 2003].

[2] Available on-line at http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/moments [accessed April 30, 2003].

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The generally liberal civics lessons offered by the NEA and the NCSS were quickly attacked by conservatives for promoting an unprincipled tolerance, for focusing too much on America's flaws, and for failing to impart a proper knowledge and love of American institutions and ideals. A group of distinguished conservative educators and commentators published a set of their own civics lessons emphasizing love of the United States and its ideals, the heroism of the rescuers of September 11, and the need for better knowledge of American history and institutions.[3] These sharply divergent views of proper civics lessons led a reporter for the *New York Times* to note that the anniversary of September 11 threatened to bring back the "culture wars" into U.S. classrooms.[4] Even leading political pundits could not resist entering the civic education fray. Thomas Friedman offered his mildly liberal "9/11 Lesson Plan," in which he championed American democratic government while admitting that the United States is not perfect and that its conduct abroad causes dismay even among its friends.[5] William J. Bennett offered a more conservative lesson by insisting that "American students should be taught what makes this nation great. . . . Even with its faults, America remains the best nation on earth. . . ."[6]

The strident polemics we frequently find in these civics lessons might well lead one to think that liberals and conservatives can find no common ground. Broadly, one might say that liberal responses to "9/11" emphasize the need to resist jingoism and to consider why hatred of America might be in some ways justified, while conservative responses emphasize the nation's virtues and the need for resolve to defend them in times of danger. According to conservatives, liberal civics lessons amount to little more than preaching unprincipled toleration even of the intolerable; according to liberals, conservative civics lessons amount to little more than preaching unprincipled jingoism and triumphalism. Still, despite these profound differences about the content of civic education, both liberal and conservative advocates insist that civic education in American schools must reach beyond mere civic knowledge and civic skills to shape students' deepest civic values, attitudes, and motivations. In other words, liberals and conservatives agree that civic education must aim at imparting proper civic virtues, though they obviously disagree stridently about which virtues to impart.

[3] See Chester E. Finn, Jr., et al., *September 11: What Our Children Need to Know* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2002): available on-line at http://www.edexcellence.net/Sept11/September 11.pdf [accessed April 30, 2003].

[4] See Kate Zernike, "Lesson Plans for Sept. 11 Offer a Study in Discord," *New York Times*, August 31, 2002, late edition–final, sec. A, p. 1, col. 3.

[5] Thomas L. Friedman, "9/11 Lesson Plan," *New York Times*, September 4, 2002 (editorial), sec. A, p. 21, col. 5.

[6] William J. Bennett, "A Time For Clarity," *Wall Street Journal*, September 10, 2002 (editorial). I comment on these debates in James Bernard Murphy, "Good Students and Good Citizens," *New York Times*, September 15, 2002 (editorial), sec. 4, p. 15, col. 2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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Among contemporary political theorists, the debate over civic education closely parallels, albeit at a lower "temperature," the polemics over the civics lessons of September 11. Conservatives, such as Lorraine Pangle and Thomas Pangle, defend the views of those American founders who argued that the vast majority of Americans do not need to acquire the virtues of political participation, just the virtue of vigilant judgment of their elected officials.[7] By sharp contrast, Benjamin Barber, a liberal, insists that all citizens ought to be educated in the civic virtues necessary for competent political participation.[8] And where the Pangles emphasize the virtues of patriotism, zeal for public service, and vigilance, Amy Gutmann, a liberal, emphasizes toleration and mutual respect.[9] Even among liberals there is very little agreement about which civic virtues to teach in schools. Some liberal theorists insist that the political virtues of toleration, civility, and a respect for democratic procedure rest upon the acquisition of the moral virtues of individuality, respect for moral diversity, and autonomy.[10] In their view, liberal democratic politics depends upon morally liberal citizens. Other liberal theorists insist, by contrast, that liberal political virtues, such as political tolerance and respect for the rule of law and democratic procedures, do not depend upon liberal moral virtues such as respect for moral diversity or autonomy. One might be, for example, a very good citizen of a liberal democracy without being morally liberal.[11]

What do these debates about civic education in schools teach us? Despite the vociferous disagreements about the proper content of civic

[7] According to the founders: "[T]he civic virtues to be fostered in the vast majority of Americans as national and also as state citizens are not so much virtues enabling participation in rule as they are virtues enabling vigilant judgment of the few representatives who are to participate in rule." See Lorraine Smith Pangle and Thomas L. Pangle, "What the American Founders Have to Teach Us about Schooling for Democratic Citizenship," in Lorraine M. McDonnell, P. Michael Timpane, and Roger Benjamin, eds., *Rediscovering the Democratic Purposes of Education* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 26–27.

[8] "Citizens are women and men educated for excellence—by which term I mean the knowledge and competence to govern in common their own lives. The democratic faith is rooted in the belief that all humans are capable of such excellence. . . ." Benjamin R. Barber, *An Aristocracy of Everyone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5.

[9] "Should schools go beyond teaching the most basic virtue of toleration and also teach mutual respect?" Amy Gutmann, "Why Should Schools Care about Civic Education?" in *Rediscovering the Democratic Purposes of Education*, 81.

[10] "It is probably impossible to teach children the skills and virtues of democratic citizenship in a diverse society without at the same time teaching them many of the virtues and skills of individuality or autonomy." Amy Gutmann, "Civic Education and Social Diversity," *Ethics* 105, no. 3 (1995): 563.

[11] For example, John Tomasi argues that politically liberal civic virtues ought to be compatible with liberal and nonliberal ways of life, not only with "some philosophical ideal of moral autonomy (such as that inspired by the work of Mill or Kant), but also with those that come from more embedded, traditionalist ways of understanding reasons for action and attitude (the 'reasonable Romantics,' or citizens of faith)." See Tomasi, "Civic Education and Ethical Subservience: From *Mozert* to *Santa Fe* and Beyond," in Stephen Macedo and Yael Tamir, eds., *Moral and Political Education, NOMOS XLIII* [hereafter *Nomos*] (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 207–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

education, both liberals and conservatives share two fundamental assumptions. First, they agree that civic virtue is the proper aim of civic education.[12] Although virtually all advocates of civic education use the language of civic virtues, none of them defines what he or she means by 'virtue' or how civic virtue differs from civic knowledge or civic skill.[13] I will therefore define 'civic knowledge' as an understanding of true facts and concepts about civic affairs, such as the history, structure, and functions of government, the nature of democratic politics, and the ideals of citizenship. 'Civic skills' are the trained capacities for deploying civic knowledge in the pursuit of civic goals, such as voting, protesting, petitioning, canvassing, and debating. 'Civic virtues' integrate civic knowledge and civic skills with proper civic motivations, such as respect for the democratic process, love for the nation, and a conscientious concern for the common good. I follow philosopher Linda Zagzebski in defining virtues as success terms: on this view, a person does not have a civic virtue unless he or she has both the proper motivation and the knowledge and skills to be effective in civic engagements.[14] Being effective in civic engagements certainly does not mean that one is always or even often successful: political activity is unavoidably hostage to unpredictable contingency. But no one can claim to have civic virtue who lacks the knowledge and skills to cogently debate and take a stand on public affairs, to elicit the cooperation and support of fellow citizens, and to perform one's chosen or required public duties. In short, on my account, civic skills presuppose civic knowledge just as civic virtue presupposes civic skills.

Civic education ought to aim at civic virtue and not merely at civic knowledge and skills because without a virtuous motivation, knowledge and skills lack moral worth. After all, civic knowledge and skills are routinely put into the service of all manner of immoral political conduct, ranging from the deliberate subordination of the common good to self-interest, including the use of deception, manipulation, and coercion, all the way to a traitorous betrayal of the nation to its enemies. So civic

[12] According to the Pangles, however, "[i]t is a mark of the grave difficulties into which our democracy has fallen that the very idea of civic virtue has passed out of currency. . . ." See "What the American Founders Have to Teach Us about Schooling for Democratic Citizenship," 21. In reality, as we have seen, the language of civic virtue is ubiquitous in debates about civic education.

[13] In "The Role of Civic Education," a report issued as part of the *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education, 1998), Margaret Stimman Branson distinguishes three essential components of civic education as civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions, without attempting to theorize about the relations among them. See http://www.civiced.org/articles_role.html [accessed April 30, 2003].

[14] "A virtue, then, can be defined as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end." Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 137.

education must not aim only to increase civic knowledge and civic skills; civic education must ultimately aim to promote civic virtue. Voting, debating, petitioning, legislating, and administering can be instruments of evil and injustice if they are badly motivated. Proper civic motives need not be selfless or pure, but they cannot be wholly based upon greed or hatred. As it happens, there is good empirical evidence that civic knowledge tends to foster civic virtue: as citizens learn more about political institutions and principles, their political engagements become not only more rationally coherent but also more public-spirited.[15]

Most liberals and conservatives, therefore, properly share the first assumption, without telling us why, that civic education ought to aim at civic virtue. They also share a second assumption, namely, that civic education aimed at civic virtue is a primary responsibility of public schools. Because of the nearly universal confusion of education with schooling, reflected in the pervasive use of the word 'education' to mean only schooling, most advocates of civic education never even betray awareness that civic education need not mean civic schooling. Although most civic education has always taken place outside of school, advocates of civic education almost never consider the comparative advantages of schools and other agencies of civic education. Yet all of the best empirical evidence tells us that schools are relatively weak instruments of civic education, especially of civic education aimed at civic virtue. Clear and sound thinking about civic education is impossible until we first learn to distinguish civic education from civic schooling and to theorize about the relations between them.

Citing evidence from the best empirical studies (discussed below), I will argue that schools can play a small though significant role in teaching civic knowledge and that schools can indirectly foster civic skills by encouraging extracurricular participation in student government and other voluntary organizations. These studies, however, also suggest that schools are wholly inept instruments for attempting to impart the proper motivations essential to genuine civic virtue. Moreover, I will argue on both empirical and normative grounds that the very attempt to impart civic motivations, such as moral tolerance or patriotism, undermines the essential moral purpose of schooling, which is to foster the love and skilled pursuit of knowledge. History, social studies, literature, and the sciences are bowdlerized, sanitized, and falsified when educators seek to use them as vehicles of civic uplift. As we shall see, the proper aim of schools to foster a love of genuine knowledge is always and everywhere subverted when they attempt to foster civic virtue. However, because civic knowl-

[15] See William A. Galston "Civic Knowledge, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A Summary of Recent Research," in *Constructing Civic Virtue: A Symposium on the State of American Citizenship* (Syracuse, NY: Campbell Public Affairs Institute, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 2003), 35–59. Galston's brief for civic knowledge fails to consider, however, the inadequacy of civic knowledge and the dangers of its misuse.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

edge often fosters civic virtue, schools can properly play an indirect role in promoting civic virtue simply by better imparting civic knowledge.

Given the nearly universal consensus across the political spectrum that public schools ought to promote civic virtue, arguing that they should not seems almost perverse. Furthermore, public schooling in the United States is itself a product of the passion for civic education. Universal public schools for the purpose of republican civic education were first proposed by French philosophers and economists, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Baron Turgot, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Because John Baptist de LaSalle (1651–1719), founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, had already established a widespread network of local Catholic schools in France, some French *philosophes* advocated publicly funded schools to counteract the moral and political influence of the Catholic Church. These French schemes for republican civic education in universal public schools were first realized, however, not in France but in the Netherlands in the first decade of the nineteenth century. But in the 1830s and 1840s, François Guizot and Victor Cousin, both French liberals and successive ministers of public instruction, established a system of public schools for liberal and republican civic education. The French *philosophes* had a decisive influence on Thomas Jefferson during the 1780s, just as the later French liberals would deeply influence Horace Mann in the 1830s.[16]

From its inception in America in the 1790s, "[p]ublic education was to be republican civic education."[17] Although there is much to admire about this commitment to universal schooling, the dark side of civic education in public schools was evident from the beginning—not just in its strident anti-Catholicism, but also in its narrow conception of who deserved to be educated. Jefferson and his followers took the civic mission of public schools so seriously that they denied schooling to noncitizens, such as women, blacks, and Native Americans.[18] And because the fundamental premise of civic education was that civic virtue was compatible only with Protestant religion, Mann later clothed his republican civic education in the garb of nondenominational Protestantism.[19]

[16] For the origins of public schooling in Europe and America, see Charles Leslie Glenn, Jr., *The Myth of the Common School* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 15–62; for the origins in France, see Christian Nique, *Comment l'Ecole devint une affaire d'État: 1815–1840* (Paris: Nathan, 1990).

[17] Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 217.

[18] Lawrence Cremin says of Jefferson: "Granted his abiding concern with the education of the people, he defined the people in political terms—as free white males." See Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783–1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 114. Smith says of the Jeffersonians: "Education came to be so identified with preparation for citizenship that noncitizens were often denied it." See his *Civic Ideals*, 189.

[19] As Cremin says: "In essence, Mann accepted the propositions of the republican style of educational thought and recast them in the forms of nineteenth-century nondenominational Protestantism." Cremin, *American Education*, 136–137.

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To understand the broad appeal of civic education in the schools today, we must look at the fate of these earlier forms of civic education. Although an ecumenical and nondenominational Protestantism appeared to be an appropriate religious and moral basis for common schools in the America of the early nineteenth century, the arrival of large numbers of Catholics and Jews beginning in the 1840s called into question this assumption.[20] Most educators have long agreed that sectarian religious education, even of the ecumenical Protestant variety, violates the civic trust that underpins public support for common schools. How can Catholics and Jews, for example, be expected to financially support common schools that teach a nondenominational Protestantism? Today, debates about moral education in schools are following much the same pattern as did earlier debates about religious education. Liberal and conservative moralists argue that their brand of moral education is uniquely ecumenical, and, hence, appropriate for common schools. Liberal moralists ask: Who can be opposed to students learning to become morally autonomous? Conservative moralists ask: Who can be opposed to students learning to become honest, courageous, temperate, and just?[21] But one person's moral ecumenism is another person's moral sectarianism: liberals are suspicious of conservative moralism, just as conservatives are suspicious of liberal moralism. Thus, proposals for moral education in public schools have become yet another front of the broader culture wars, and many educators are coming to the conclusion that both liberal and conservative moralism violate the civic trust that underpins common schools. Each of us sends his or her own children to common schools with the expectation that none of us gets to impose his or her own sectarian religious or moral values at school.[22]

Yet without any civic, religious, or moral education, public schools seem to lack a compelling moral purpose. Surely schools must aim higher than merely providing the information and skills associated with 'the 3 Rs', that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic? Herein lies the special appeal of civic education today. In civic education, many educators believe that they have found the one truly ecumenical kind of moral education. Since America's common schools are publicly funded and governed by means of democratic political processes, how can anyone object to civic education in such schools? Why would democratic citizens pay for com-

[20] As Diane Ravitch rightly observes: "Mann's nonsectarianism, we now recognize, was nondenominational Protestantism." See her "Education and Democracy," in Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti, eds., *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 18.

[21] Liberal moral education is usually neo-Kantian and emphasizes critical reflection and autonomous choice; conservative moral education is usually neo-Aristotelian and emphasizes character formation and virtue.

[22] See the critique of liberal and conservative moralism in Amy Gutmann's *Democratic Education*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 56–64.

mon schools if these schools did not train future democratic citizens?[23] Since every American citizen has an interest in promoting civic virtue in the next generation of citizens, who could legitimately object to civic education in public schools? In civic education we seem to have found a way to cut the Gordian knot of sectarian religious and moral controversy and to provide a kind of moral education that respects the deep pluralism of American society. Indeed, as we shall see, several leading contemporary political theorists argue that civic education ought to be not just one proper aim of public schooling but the primary aim.

Unfortunately, civic education aimed at civic virtue turns out to be no more truly ecumenical than was nondenominational Protestantism. Political theorists can agree no better than educators and pundits on the proper civic virtues: some insist that democratic citizens must be taught to think critically about the values of their own families and respective faiths, while others insist that even unexamined religious and moral commitments are perfectly compatible with good democratic citizenship.[24] Some theorists insist that democratic citizens must have sincere respect for those who have different moral and religious views; others insist that considerable intolerance and disrespect (within the bounds of law and civility) are fully compatible with civic virtue. These debates among political theorists presaged the public debates over the civic lessons of September 11.

In practice, then, as well as in theory, we simply cannot agree about the appropriate civic virtues. In the face of such deep and seemingly intractable divisions, holding the education of our children hostage to culture wars over civic virtue seems imprudent at best. By contrast, there is a much higher degree of agreement about what kinds of civic knowledge and civic skills are appropriate for democratic citizens. But even if we could all agree about the appropriate civic virtues, schools would remain the wrong place for such education for two reasons: first, because schools are ineffective instruments for imparting civic virtue; and second, because the attempt to impart civic virtue subverts the inherent moral purpose of schools, which is to lead students to love genuine knowledge.

II. Civic Education or Civic Schooling?

When Mark Twain bragged that he never let school interfere with his education, he was admirably clear about the difference between the two. Unfortunately, writers about civic education are rarely so clear. Philoso-

[23] Gutmann, for example, wonders "why so much taxpayer money should go to schooling that gives up on the central aims of civic education." See her "Civic Education and Social Diversity," 572–73.

[24] Gutmann, for example, insists upon teaching critical reflection, while William Galston does not.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

phers differ on how widely we ought to understand the concept of education, though all agree that any concept of education must be of a wider range than the concept of schooling. Some philosophers define 'education' in very broad terms as the whole ensemble of influences that shape the formation of a human person beyond what is given by natural capacity and mere maturation; in this sense, education takes in all of the formal and informal aspects of the fostering, nurturing, cultivating, and rearing of a person.[25] Social scientists employ this broad concept of education when they speak of 'enculturation' or 'socialization'. Other philosophers restrict the meaning of 'education' to deliberate or intentional efforts to teach or to learn, thereby omitting the whole realm of tacit learning.[26] For my purposes of contrasting education with schooling, either view of education is acceptable, since all plausible understandings of education take in a vastly wider range of agencies than schools. And by 'schooling', I mean institutions that aim to inculcate general knowledge and skills rather than merely technical training for a particular occupation.

Unfortunately, in addition to these wider senses, the word 'education' is often used to refer merely to schooling, as when we speak of the "expense of education." As philosopher John Passmore observes, " 'education' does create troublesome ambiguities."[27] As we shall see, writers on education display not just verbal but also deep conceptual confusion about the relation of schools to education. Part of this confusion is driven by rhetorical inflation: education is an elevated way to speak about mere schooling. However, this use of the concept of education to refer to mere schooling, by confusing the whole for the part, makes clear thinking about schooling nearly impossible. If we vest discussions of schooling with all of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual weight of human education, then rational assessment of schools becomes untenable. We might accept the endorsement of all manner of intellectual, moral, and spiritual aims in education until we discover that the endorser meant not 'education' but 'schooling'. And to reject civic education seems suspiciously epicurean or even unpatriotic until we make clear that we reject only civic schooling. In the broad sense of education, all politics, indeed, all human endeavors take their truest measure in relation to their contribution to human education, but schooling is only one of many modalities of edu-

[25] John Dewey takes this comprehensive view of education in his *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1916; reprint, New York: Free Press, 1944), 10–22, as does John Passmore in his *The Philosophy of Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 21–22.

[26] John Wilson argues that an intention to educate is necessary to the concept of education in his *Preface to the Philosophy of Education* (London: Routledge, 1979), 20–22. Cremin defines 'education' as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort"; see Lawrence A. Cremin, *Public Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 27.

[27] Passmore, *The Philosophy of Teaching*, 21.

cation. I think that our tacit confusion of education with schooling helps to explain the passion and bitterness of the politics of schooling: we think and act as though all of education were at stake!

Advocates of 'civic education' usually mean by this expression only 'civic schooling'.[28] By implying that civic education is civic schooling, arguments for civic education in schools acquire great rhetorical force. Who could be against civic education? As advocates of civic education frequently point out, since the civic virtues are not innate, they must be learned. And from this true premise such advocates then falsely conclude that civic virtues must be taught in school. For example, political theorist William Galston writes: "In most times and places the necessity and appropriateness of civic education has been accepted without question. It has been taken for granted that young human beings must be shaped into citizens and that public institutions have both the right and the responsibility to take the lead."[29] If 'civic education' here refers broadly to the range of agencies by which citizens are formed, then Galston is obviously right: every polity must see to the broad political education of future citizens. Conversely, if 'civic education' refers to 'civic schooling', then Galston is clearly wrong, since many polities have educated citizens without recourse to schools.

Unfortunately, Galston goes on to make clear that by civic education, he means only civic schooling: "In the United States today, however, civic education has become intensely controversial."[30] Of course, it is only civic schooling that has occasioned controversy, not civic education. That Galston confuses education with schooling is also evident from his statement above that civic education is for "young human beings." The classical view is that although schooling is mainly for the young, moral and civic education is mainly for adults. So contemporary advocates are right in asserting that civic education is traditional, but wrong to imply, as they usually do, that civic education has always meant civic schooling.[31] Galston's impoverished view of civic education is also evident in his quotation from a recent manifesto from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT): "Democracy's survival depends upon our transmitting to each new generation the political vision that unites us as Americans. . . . Such

[28] A striking exception to this rule is the work of Nancy L. Rosenblum, who frequently takes to task other political theorists for failing to consider the importance of nonscholastic civic education: "There are good reasons to take some of the burden of democratic education off schooling and to acknowledge a division of educational labor." Nancy Rosenblum, "Pluralism and Democratic Education: Stopping Short by Stopping with Schools," in *Nomos*, 164.

[29] William Galston, "Civic Education in the Liberal State," in Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 89–101. As we shall see, this chapter is not about education but about schooling.

[30] Ibid., 89.

[31] As Galston does when he speaks of civic education (meaning schooling) in "most times and places."

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values are neither revealed truths nor natural habits. There is no evidence that we are born with them." Unfortunately, from these true premises the manifesto jumps rashly to the conclusion that it is the schools' responsibility to transmit these values.[32] Curiously, in other contexts, Galston is well aware of the educative role of other institutions in American society. He points out that the U.S. Army might well do a better job of teaching racial harmony than American schools do.[33]

Although most advocates of civic education simply conflate education with schooling,[34] some do attempt to distinguish education from schooling. Philosopher Eamonn Callan distinguishes "between common education and common schooling on the one hand, and separate education and separate schooling on the other." He says that common education "prescribes a range of educational outcomes—virtues, abilities, different kinds of knowledge—as desirable for all members of the society. . . ."[35] Here we might think that there are many possible agencies for creating a common education in a society, from mandatory public service, to public media, to the public legal culture, to the Boy and Girl Scouts, etc. But Callan seems to have an entirely scholastic understanding of 'common education'. He rightly observes that a common education might be achieved by different kinds of schools: common schools can provide a common education, but so might properly regulated separate and private schools. If our conception of common education is a minimalist one, he says, then it will be easy to implement in separate schools, but if our conception of common education is demanding, then it will be harder to implement in separate schools.[36] On Callan's view, common education may be achieved through many kinds of schools, but it remains a wholly scholastic enter-

[32] "Are the ideas and institutions—and above all the worth—of democracy adequately conveyed in American schools?" See *Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles* (Washington, DC: Education for Democracy Project, 1987), 8–9.

[33] William Galston, "Individual Experience and Social Policy: Thinking Practically about Overcoming Racial and Ethnic Prejudice," in *Nomos*, 429.

[34] As Tomasi says: "Most debates about liberal civic education proceed from the assumption that civic education concerns fitting children for the role they are to play as *public* persons." In other words, these debates proceed on the assumption that civic education means teaching civic values and virtues to children in school; the controversy is about which values and virtues to teach. Tomasi makes it clear that he shares this assumption: "What would it mean, in a diverse society, to educate people about the meaning of their political autonomy?" This is a great question, but his answer relies only on the school: "Political liberal civic education must take as its task not only the preparation of students for liberal *politics* but also their preparation for *life*. . . ." See Tomasi, "Civic Education and Ethical Subservience" in *Nomos*, 196, 198, 206. Political theorist and public schoolteacher Meira Levinson even argues that autonomy can only be learned at school—leading Rob Reich to observe that, by this logic, "prior to the advent of institutional schools, no one was autonomous." See Rob Reich, "Testing the Boundaries of Parental Authority Over Education: The Case of Homeschooling," in *Nomos*, 298–99.

[35] Eamonn Callan, *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 163.

[36] Ibid., 169–71.

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prise.[37] "What we need," he argues, "are common schools worthy of the ends of common education."[38] By reducing common education to a scholastic education, however, Callan undermines the force of his arguments for its necessity: "The necessity of a common education for all follows from the need to secure a sufficiently coherent and decent political culture and the prerequisites of a stable social order."[39] Even if some kind of common education is needed in a democracy, there is no reason to think that democracy requires a common scholastic education.

The most important recent argument for civic education in schools is Gutmann's *Democratic Education*. She certainly distinguishes the school from other agencies of education. "A democratic theory of education focuses on what might be called 'conscious social reproduction'—the ways in which citizens are or should be empowered to influence the education that in turn shapes the political values, attitudes, and modes of behavior of future citizens." A democratic theory of education, she says, "focuses on practices of deliberate instruction by individuals and on the educational influences of institutions designed at least partly for educational purposes."[40] Yet even assuming that a democratic theory of education should focus only on deliberate modes of education, Gutmann focuses almost exclusively on the school.[41] Indeed, she admits that "it is hard to resist the temptation to focus entirely on schooling, since it is our most deliberate form of human instruction. . . ."[42] Among the agencies of deliberate instruction, why is school the "most deliberate"? There are many sources of deliberate instruction apart from a school: ministers have a curriculum, as do wardens, parents, doctors, journalists, advertisers, coaches, and Boy Scout leaders. Perhaps Gutmann means that deliberate instruction is more prominent at school than among these other sources of education? In any event, she offers no argument or evidence that schools are more significant or effective as agents of "conscious social reproduction" than any other deliberate educator.[43]

Why must a theory of democratic education focus only on deliberate instruction? After all, many political theorists, from Aristotle to Toc-

[37] Ibid., 166. Callan asks advocates of separate schools to "show how a satisfactory common education can be given to children who do not attend common schools."

[38] Ibid., 220.

[39] Ibid., 166. Callan goes on to say ". . . once we reject the crazy idea that a common education can be completely repudiated . . ."

[40] Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 14.

[41] She does briefly discuss libraries, cultural institutions, and literacy programs. And in one place she lists these agents of deliberate education: "libraries, bookstores, museums, newspapers, movies, radio, television, and other cultural institutions" (ibid., 234). Her list is interesting for what it omits, such as churches, prisons, corporations, civic associations, the Boy Scouts, etc.

[42] Ibid., 15.

[43] "We can appreciate the centrality of schooling to democratic education and still recognize that there is much more to democratic education than schooling" (ibid., 16). Whence this centrality?

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queville, believed that civic education, including, and perhaps especially, democratic civic education, was mainly the by-product of growing up and participating in a democratic polity. Perhaps democratic civic virtue is a matter not of deliberate instruction, but of "habits of the heart" acquired indirectly, yet profoundly, from activities in churches, voluntary associations, and juries.[44] But Gutmann explicitly sets aside the question of how democratic schooling relates to the larger processes of democratic socialization. Unfortunately, her characterization of the field of political socialization is very misleading. First, she says that studies of political socialization "tend to focus on what might be called 'unconscious social reproduction'." In fact, many of these studies seek precisely to compare the causal significance of both unconscious and conscious agencies of education;[45] in addition, there is a branch of political socialization studies dedicated to the examination of civic education in schools.[46] Second, Gutmann says that studies of political socialization are merely descriptive: "their aim is to explain the processes by which societies perpetuate themselves." By contrast, she says, the aim of a democratic theory of education is normative, that is, "to understand how members of democratic society should participate in consciously shaping its future." When education becomes assimilated into political socialization, "it is easy to lose sight of the distinctive virtue of democratic society, that it authorizes citizens to influence how their society reproduces itself."[47]

[44] For Tocqueville's view that democratic education is a matter of laws and mores (*moeurs*), see *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1:2, 9, 265. "Political associations can therefore be considered great schools, free of charge, where all citizens come to learn the general theory of associations." Ibid., 2:2, 7, 497.

[45] For a smattering of an immense literature comparing schooling with other modes of political socialization, see Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 304, 355, 381, 387; Fred I. Greenstein, *Children and Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 4, 166; M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 181–227; M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 230, 231, 269, 270; John L. Sullivan, James Piereson, and George E. Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 115–17, 251; Herbert McClosky and Alida Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983), 371, 420; Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 416–60; and Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 302–407.

[46] For a smattering of this large literature, see Kenneth P. Langton and M. Kent Jennings, "Political Socialization and the High School Civics Curriculum in the United States," *American Political Science Review* 62, no. 3 (1968): 852–67; Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Pathways to Participation," *American Political Science Review* 76, no. 1 (1982): 94–108; and Richard G. Niemi and Jane Junn, *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

[47] Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 15.

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Gutmann's attempts to justify her focus on schools by setting aside the literature of political socialization fail. To begin with, the best studies of political socialization do not merely seek to describe the mechanisms by which society reproduces itself, but are designed precisely to answer normative questions in democratic theory, such as: What kinds of educational experiences lead citizens to various civic values, virtues, and activities? Moreover, anyone who consciously seeks to influence social reproduction should probably want to understand the mechanisms by which society reproduces itself. And even if democratic education turns out to be mainly the by-product of other kinds of social and political activity—even if citizens are formed mainly by informal modes of association—how does it follow that democratic citizens cannot deliberate about how to shape, influence, and encourage these indirect modes of civic education? Why cannot democratic citizens deliberate to shape, consciously though indirectly, the unconscious modes of civic education? Democratic deliberation can aim for full transparency, directness, and self-awareness even while conceding that democratic education proceeds mainly through obscure, oblique, and tacit agencies.

Finally, Gutmann offers no argument or evidence that the democratic education that takes place in schools, or could take place in schools, stems from direct, deliberate instruction rather than from indirect, tacit, and informal modes of student association. Indeed, although she claims that schooling "is our most deliberate form of human instruction," she argues that schools can and should teach moral values by means of their "hidden curriculum."[48] Yet, to the extent that schools teach civic virtues tacitly, they are not instruments of "conscious social reproduction"; and if schools are, in part, instruments of unconscious social reproduction, then how does Gutmann justify her neglect of all other instruments of unconscious social reproduction? In short, her distinction between conscious and unconscious modes of education does not serve to distinguish schools from other modes of socialization. Perhaps all institutions and associations engage in both kinds of education? Stephen Macedo follows Gutmann into this untenable conundrum when he celebrates the "hidden curriculum" of civic education in public schools and then attempts to argue that "public schools have an important moral advantage with respect to civic education: they pursue our deepest civic purposes *openly* and allow people to argue about these purposes in local as well as national democratic venues."[49] So public schools pursue civic education openly through their

[48] "Schools develop moral character at the same time as they try to teach basic cognitive skills, by insisting that students sit in their seats (next to students of different races and religions). . . ." Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 53.

[49] Macedo even suggests that civic education in public schools is mainly tacit: "It is not simply, or perhaps even principally, the substantive curriculum of these schools that is crucial. Common schools have a 'hidden curriculum'. . . ." Yet he later warns: "The vice of a too-heavy reliance on indirect modes of civic education is that we might be led to exploit false consciousness." See Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 232 and 279.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

hidden curriculum! As we shall see from a number of empirical studies, the effect of schools on civic virtue is mainly tacit and indirect. So the focus on schools in these accounts of democratic education lacks any theoretical foundation.

Before we begin to understand the proper role of civic education in schools, we must first think more clearly about the relation of scholastic to other kinds of education. If we understand education to refer broadly to all kinds of learning experiences, then it becomes clear that little of our learning takes place in school, but instead takes place at home, among peers, on the job, at the library, and in places of worship, as well as under the influence of the media. Even if we understand education to refer more narrowly to deliberate instruction, then we still can see that a schoolteacher is only one of many teachers in our lives: clearly our parents are teachers, as are our ministers, coaches, librarians, and doctors. Our friends also often act as teachers, as do journalists, advertisers, employers, judges, and scoutmasters. So most of our learning does not occur in school, and most of our teachers are not schoolteachers.

Lawrence Cremin describes the relation between the school and other agencies of deliberate instruction as an "ecology of education."[50] A school can relate in a general way to other agencies of education by confirming them, complementing them, or counteracting them. Which of these relations makes sense will depend, in part, upon the nature of the subject matter. Schools have a virtual monopoly on some kinds of knowledge, for example, chemistry, Latin, and calculus; schools generally avoid other kinds of knowledge, say, of obscure religious doctrines or job-specific information. But many kinds of knowledge are shared between schools and other educational sources, from English and history to sex education and, of course, civics. Since most of what we learn about politics we learn from our families, friends, the media, and voluntary organizations, schoolteachers and administrators ought to decide whether what they teach about politics should confirm, complement, or counteract what students are learning or will learn from their other educators. Unfortunately, advocates of civic education almost never ask, let alone attempt to answer, this question.

We will need to think creatively about other modes of civic education because of what empirical research tells us about the effectiveness of schools. Since public schools have a long and pervasive history of engaging in civic education, political scientists over the past five decades have attempted to answer basic questions, such as: Where do citizens acquire their civic knowledge, skills, and virtues? What role do schools play in this acquisition? And, in particular, what role do high school civics courses play?

It is always risky to ground normative claims in empirical research: empirical beliefs generally change more quickly than do normative com-

[50] Cremin, *Public Education*, 27–53.

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mitments. Our empirical findings (like our normative commitments) are always fallible, especially as they shape our beliefs about politics and society. And even though the best empirical studies of politics are framed in ways that attempt to answer normative questions about politics, these studies rarely answer our precise normative questions. The best normative arguments about civic education rely on subtle and sophisticated concepts of civic knowledge, motivation, reasoning, dispositions, skills, and virtues; but the empirical studies of civic education are usually framed in much cruder terms, such as knowledge and values. As we shall see, many studies that seem to present conflicting findings about the role of schools in civic education can be shown to converge once we distinguish civic knowledge from civic skills and from civic virtue. Moreover, when empirical studies do not converge, it is always risky to attempt to adjudicate disputes among scholars who rely on divergent studies. But, when there is a consistency of empirical findings and a substantial consensus among researchers, then normative theorists ought to take note. Research about political socialization has achieved a substantial convergence of findings and a substantial professional consensus about the relative importance of schooling and other factors in civic education. Let us cautiously consider what these studies might teach us about the proper role of the school in civic education.

Many students of political socialization follow Tocqueville in arguing that the most important schools of democracy are not schools at all but voluntary and civic associations. Studies focusing on the acquisition of civic competence or civic skills have found, not surprisingly, that these skills are mainly acquired not by children in schools but by adults in churches, unions, civic organizations, and workplaces. Gabriel Almond's and Sidney Verba's classic 1963 study, *The Civic Culture*, examined the formation of civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes in five nations. These researchers found that schools had some effect on civic skills, but not a strong effect compared to the salience of workplace experiences.[51] Almond and Verba confirmed Adam Smith's view that ordinary employment is the most powerful educative force in the lives of most people: "Of crucial significance here are the opportunities to participate in decisions at one's place of work."[52] The effect of schools on civic competence was

[51] In each nation those who report that they are consulted about decisions on their job are more likely than others to score high on the scale of subjective political competence. . . . Unlike many of the relationships between family and school participation and political competence, the relationships between competence on the job and subjective political competence remain strong even within matched educational groups. . . . Whether job participation leads to democratic political orientations, or vice versa, is difficult to tell; but the evidence is strong that these two develop closely together and mutually support each other.

Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 365–66; cf. 355.

[52] Ibid., 363.

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mainly indirect: schools link students to all kinds of other associations.[53] Later, in 1980, Almond said about *The Civic Culture* that it "was one of the earliest studies to stress the importance of adult political socialization and experiences and to demonstrate the relative weakness of childhood socialization."[54]

Nothing is more characteristic of the modern confusion of education and schooling than the assumption that education is for children. In a major, more recent study (1995), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady found that the institutions most responsible for fostering civic skills and political participation were jobs, voluntary associations, and churches. They also found that American high schools provide civic education "not by teaching about democracy but by providing hands-on training for future participation."[55] Similarly, Robert Putnam's famous book, *Bowling Alone* (2000), endorses the findings of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady that we acquire our democratic virtues in our voluntary associations. Putnam argues that "voluntary associations may serve not only as forums for deliberation, but also as occasions for learning civic virtues, such as active participation in public life." He says that schools could do a better job imparting civic knowledge in the classroom and indirectly fostering civic skills by encouraging participation in service learning programs and extracurricular activities. He never suggests that schools themselves could become nurseries of civic virtue.[56]

Other researchers focus less on civic skills and more on civic knowledge and civic attitudes. Among these researchers, there is a widespread and long-standing consensus that an individual's civic knowledge and civic attitudes are best predicted by his or her years of schooling. For example, M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi survey a huge body of literature about the role of education in political socialization. They report a broad consensus that interest in politics, the possession of political skills, political participation, and support for the liberal democratic creed, all increase with years of schooling.[57] Does this suggest that schools are effectively teaching civic virtue? Actually, there is no agreement about how to explain the simple correlation between educational attainment and civic virtue. Since years of schooling correlates strongly with parental intelligence, education, and socioeconomic status, as well as with a stu-

[53] "Not only does the more highly educated individual learn politically relevant skills within the school, but he also is more likely to enter into other nonpolitical relationships that have the effect of further heightening his political competence." Ibid., 304.

[54] Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, eds., *The Civic Culture Revisited: An Analytic Study* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 29.

[55] "That activity in school government or school clubs is such a strong predictor of later political activity fits nicely with our emphasis on the role of civic skills as a resource for politics. . . . Indeed, the fact that actual participatory experiences appear to be the most important school effect is a significant finding for understanding civic education." Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*, 376 and 425.

[56] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 339–40 and 405.

[57] Jennings and Niemi, *Generations and Politics*, 230.

dent's own intelligence and subsequent socioeconomic status and occupation, it is very difficult to tease out the independent role of schooling. Perhaps some other factor (or factors), such as parental education or the student's own intelligence, causes both high educational attainment and civic virtue?

Some researchers believe that schooling shapes political attitudes by socializing students into a distinctive scholastic culture; this process of socialization is thought to be primarily informal and extracurricular. Others believe that schools do not so much socialize students into a common scholastic culture as allocate students to quite different socioeconomic milieus: "Schools confer success on some and failure on others over and above any socialization outcomes."[58] Jennings and Niemi believe that schools both socialize students into a common culture *and* allocate students into quite different socioeconomic ranks; however, they report that their data more strongly support the allocation theory.[59] To the extent that schools merely allocate students into various social classes, they simply reproduce the socioeconomic hierarchy of the wider society. In this sense, the main effect of schooling on political conduct is to sort students into various social classes, each with its own distinctive political culture.

More recently, Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry propose two mechanisms by which schooling fosters levels of civic virtue: the first is by sorting citizens into social and political ranks, each with its own level of civic knowledge and virtue; the second is by enhancing the cognitive sophistication of students.[60] Nie and his colleagues found that students with more formal education were likely to be more politically tolerant, not because of anything taught in school, but simply because of their greater verbal proficiency.[61] These findings confirm many earlier studies of the relation of educational attainment to political toleration, that is, the willingness to accord civil liberties to those with whom one disagrees. Samuel Stouffer pioneered this research in the 1950s. He argued that college graduates were more tolerant than others simply as a by-product of their greater cognitive sophistication.[62] Philip E. Jacob then

[58] Ibid., 231.

[59] "While schools are in one sense supposed to perform a leveling function, they are also expected to make distinctions, and to encourage and facilitate varying interests, skills, and predispositions. Our results speak very much to the latter expectation. Educational institutions may indeed accomplish a leveling, but it is abundantly clear that when students leave secondary school they have become politically stratified in many respects and that this stratification by no means diminishes over time." Ibid., 270.

[60] "There are two theoretically and empirically distinct mechanisms linking education to democratic citizenship. The first runs through the cognitive outcomes of education; the other, through the impact of education on the positional life circumstances of individuals." Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 39.

[61] "Verbal proficiency was found to be the only significant intervening variable linking education to democratic enlightenment." Ibid., 161.

[62] "Although many other studies have confirmed the relationship between education and political tolerance, few authors have added anything of consequence to the cognitive explanation Stouffer proposed." Sullivan et al., *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, 117.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

investigated what it might be about college that could foster greater political tolerance: the curriculum did not seem to matter, except that students who focused on the liberal arts were better informed about politics and more active; the quality of teaching had almost no effect on the attitudes of students; and, perhaps most surprising, the style of pedagogy, that is, whether classes involved student participation or not, did not matter.[63] Other studies of the effects of college on political values also find that college increases political tolerance; these studies attribute this effect to the sheer increase in knowledge and cognitive sophistication among college graduates.[64] In a newer study, Nie and D. Sunshine Hillygus confirm the importance of sheer verbal proficiency in fostering political engagement, political knowledge, and public spiritedness. In their view, the only aspect of the curriculum that matters is the number of social science courses taken; these authors claim that these courses also contribute to greater civic participation.[65] Many researchers warn against attributing too much weight to schooling in shaping political attitudes: "Education is very weakly related to tolerance, when the relationship is controlled for other variables."[66] Jacob's finding that the liberal arts foster political involvement, combined with the consensus that the sheer amount of political knowledge and understanding fosters political tolerance, strongly suggests that the main role that school can play in fostering civic virtue is to enhance the general knowledge of students.

If schooling itself were effective in fostering civic virtue, then we should expect Americans today to exhibit a much higher degree of civic virtue than Americans of the mid-twentieth century. After all, Americans today have much more formal schooling than they did fifty years ago, let alone a century or two ago. Clearly, schooling cannot be the royal road to civic virtue, since virtually all measures of political and civic engagement in

[63] " 'Student-centered' techniques of teaching and stress on discussion in contrast to lecture or recitation have been strongly advocated as effective means of engaging the student's personal participation in the learning process, and encouraging him to reach valid judgments on his own on important issues. Studies of the comparative effectiveness of such methods do *not* generally support such a conviction." Philip E. Jacob, *Changing Values in College: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of College Teaching* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 8.

[64] See Clyde Z. Nunn, Harry J. Crockett, Jr., and J. Allen Williams, Jr., *Tolerance for Nonconformity* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1978), 65 and 75; and Sullivan et al., *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, 115 and 117. See also McClosky and Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance*, 371: "The more one knows and understands about public affairs (as measured by our scales of political information and sophistication), the higher the probability that one will respond favorably to the various libertarian rights. . . ."

[65] "An individual's verbal skills before college entrance have two distinct effects on future civic and political activity: not only does verbal aptitude have a direct path to participation and engagement, but it also maintains an indirect path by leading students to major in the social sciences, where they are further stimulated to become politically active and engaged citizens." Norman H. Nie and D. Sunshine Hillygus, "Education and Democratic Citizenship," in Ravitch and Vitteritti, eds., *Making Good Citizens*, 50. But Nie and Hillygus were not able to determine whether taking more social science courses caused greater political engagement in students or merely reflected it.

[66] Sullivan et al., *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, 251.

the United States show a steep decline over the past half-century.[67] Americans' vastly greater attainments of schooling have not even made them more knowledgeable about politics, let alone more inclined to vote or volunteer: citizens today know no more about politics than they did a half-century ago.[68] These paradoxes strongly suggest that the role of schooling in fostering civic knowledge and civic virtue must be quite indirect.

Most states in the United States require public schools to teach civics courses. Since advocates of civic education in public schools strongly support such courses, we might ask: What role do civics courses play in fostering desirable political knowledge, attitudes, and conduct? After a series of studies in the early 1960s, Kenneth Langton and M. Kent Jennings published in 1968 a very influential article concerned with the effects of high school civics courses on a range of political knowledge, attitudes, values, and interests.[69] They found that the high school civics curriculum had very little effect on any aspect of political knowledge or values: "Our findings certainly do not support the thinking of those who look to the civics curriculum in American high schools as even a minor source of political socialization." It is important to note, however, that they found a greater effect of civics courses on political knowledge than on political values or attitudes.[70] In 1974, Langton and Jennings, now with the addition of Niemi, revised and enlarged their earlier article. They now found that the educational level of parents and the amount of political discourse at home had a much greater impact on the measured knowledge and values of individuals than did high school courses; where high school civics courses had any effect, it was only on those students who were just finishing those courses.[71] A subsequent study by Paul

[67] Richard Brody (1978): "Over the past quarter-century, the proportion of the population continuing on to post-secondary education has doubled. In light of this development and the manifest relationship between education and participation, the steady decline in turnout since the 1960s is all the more remarkable." Cited in Nie et al., *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*, 99.

[68] "Why, given dramatically increasing educational opportunities, higher average levels of educational attainment, and the strong relation between education and political knowledge at the individual level, have aggregate political knowledge levels remained relatively stable over the past half-century?" Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 199.

[69] Langton and Jennings, "Political Socialization and the High School Civics Curriculum in the United States," 852–67. They examined the effects of these courses on political knowledge, political interest, spectator interest in politics, political discourse, political efficacy, political cynicism, civic tolerance, and participative orientation.

[70] For the whole sample, civics courses had the strongest relationship on political knowledge. For black students, civics courses had a significant effect on political knowledge: "The civics curriculum is an important source of political knowledge for Negroes. . . ." Ibid., 865, 858, and 860.

[71] M. Kent Jennings, Kenneth P. Langton, and Richard G. Niemi, "Effects of the High School Civics Curriculum" in Jennings and Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence*, 191. "[I]n the very short run the curriculum exerts what little effect it has on those under current exposure" (192).

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Allen Beck and Jennings (1982) reconfirmed the impotence of civics courses but found that participation in extracurricular activities, both in high school and beyond, fostered later political participation by young adults.[72]

These and other studies created a lasting professional consensus that the scholastic curriculum in general has some effects on the civic knowledge, but little or no effect on the civic values, of students and that civics courses in particular have essentially no effect on political attitudes or values.[73] Richard Niemi and Jane Junn challenged this consensus in their major 1998 study, *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn*. Niemi and Junn analyzed data that enabled them to study the effects of different kinds of civics courses on students' political knowledge and attitudes. They hypothesized that certain kinds of teaching methods might significantly add or subtract from learning about politics.[74] They found that, although the civics curriculum had much less effect on political knowledge and values than did the home environment, civics courses did matter. In particular, civics courses that were taken quite recently, had a large variety of topics studied, and included discussion of current events, fostered significantly greater political knowledge.[75] As with earlier studies, Niemi and Junn found that although the curriculum had some effect on political knowledge, it had virtually no effect on political attitudes.[76]

It is too soon to tell if this study by Niemi and Junn will alter the existing consensus that civics courses do not matter; some reviews suggest that the current consensus is likely to prevail.[77] At a deeper level, though, this study largely confirms the conventional wisdom: Niemi and Junn surmise that one key reason that they found civics courses more significant than did Langton and Jennings is simply because the earlier study focused mainly on the effects of civics courses on attitudes, while their own analysis focused mainly on the effects on civic knowledge. In

[72] Beck and Jennings, "Pathways to Participation," 101–2. "[T]hose who engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to become politically active later on. . . ." (105).

[73] "It is fair to say that insofar as there is consensus on anything in political science, and insofar as political scientists are at all concerned about formal education and its role in political socialization, there has been a consensus that a formal civics curriculum or its equivalent is all but irrelevant to citizens' knowledge of or engagement with politics. . . ." Elizabeth Frazer, "Review of Niemi and Junn *Civic Education*," in *Government and Opposition* 35 (2000): 122. See the discussion of the scholarly consensus in Niemi and Junn, *Civic Education*, 13–20. They comment: "[T]he presumption that academic knowledge is gained entirely or even primarily in the classroom may be a truism for some subjects but not for civics" (61).

[74] Niemi and Junn, *Civic Education*, 81.

[75] Ibid., 123–24.

[76] Ibid., 140.

[77] See Jay P. Greene, "Review of *Civic Education*," *Social Science Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2000): 696–97. Greene performed a reanalysis of the Niemi and Junn data set and found that the variable of how recently the civics course was taken collapsed into whether a student is enrolled in a civics class at the time that the civics test is taken: "If knowledge fades so rapidly that the only benefit of a civics class occurs while one is in it, then schools may not be able to do much to improve civics knowledge in the longer run." Greene found defects in other independent variables as well.

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short, all of these studies confirm a more qualified consensus that civics courses might have some role in fostering civic knowledge but essentially no role in fostering civic attitudes or virtues.[78] The differential impact of schooling on knowledge and values is strongly confirmed by the two largest studies of the long-term impact of schooling: Herbert Hyman and Charles Wright's classic studies of the enduring effects of schooling on knowledge and on values concluded that schooling has a much larger effect on knowledge than on values.[79]

Ironically, political theorists have come to eagerly embrace education for civic virtue in the schools just at the moment when political scientists have reached agreement that civic education in schools has little effect on political knowledge and less effect on political attitudes.[80] Of course, the descriptive findings of social scientists, while relevant to the normative debates about civic education, are not conclusive. If one favors education for civic virtue in schools, then one is likely to regret that such education is ineffective; conversely, if one rejects education for civic virtue in schools on normative grounds, then one might be pleased to discover that it does not work. Gutmann cites the scholarly consensus about civics courses but then correctly observes: "Empirical studies measure the results of civics and history courses as they are, not as they might be."[81] No one can doubt that civics and history courses could be much better than they usually are; and perhaps these better courses might be more effective.[82] In the end, however, Gutmann concedes that political socialization at home is always likely to be much more formative than anything at school: "This conclusion is compatible with the claim that history and civics courses can and should teach democratic virtue, so long as we understand democratic virtue to include the willingness and ability of citizens to reason collectively and critically about politics."[83] Usually we assume that one

[78] "As expected, the overall explanatory power of the model for both political attitudes is relatively small compared with the model predicting overall political knowledge." Niemi and Junn, *Civic Education*, 140.

[79] See Herbert H. Hyman and Charles R. Wright, *Education's Lasting Influence on Values* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 65.

[80] Not only do civics courses not have much effect but neither do history or social studies courses. See Jennings, Langton, and Niemi, "Effects of the High School Civics Curriculum," 191; and M. Kent Jennings, Lee H. Ehman, and Richard G. Niemi, "Social Studies Teachers and their Pupils," 226–27; both chapters in Jennings and Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence*.

[81] Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 106.

[82] A group of political scientists and educators designed a new civics curriculum to teach tolerance and have experimentally tested its effects on students; they claim that this new curriculum causes students (on average) to express more tolerant attitudes. For the curriculum, see Patricia Avery et al., *Tolerance for Diversity of Beliefs: A Secondary Curriculum Unit* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium, 1993). For the studies claiming that this curriculum made students more tolerant, see Patricia Avery et al., "Exploring Political Tolerance with Adolescents," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 20, no. 4 (1992): 386–420; and Karen Bird et al., "Not Just Lip-Synching Anymore: Education and Tolerance Revisited," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 16, nos. 3–4 (1994): 373–86.

[83] Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 107.

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ought to do something only if one can do it. While there is some evidence that schools can effectively teach political knowledge, there is virtually no evidence that schools can effectively teach political virtue, that is, a disposition to want to become a good citizen by, for example, reasoning collectively. Here we have the perfect triumph of hope over experience.

We ought not be surprised by the evidence that civic virtue is not acquired by children in school. After all, our contemporary political scientists have merely ratified the wisdom of the greatest political philosophers, ancient and modern, who insisted that civic virtue is acquired only by adults from active participation in public affairs. Plato's guardians, for example, must wait until they are thirty-five years old to begin their fifteen years of civic education, which takes place not in school but in direct participation in governmental affairs.[84] Aristotle is also clear that "a youth is not a suitable student of political science" because, although the intellectual virtues can be taught, the moral virtues result from habit.[85] For Aristotle, civic education is the responsibility of the legislator, not the teacher: the legislator uses law to educate citizens by ensuring that they acquire the right habits as they grow up.[86] Once citizens have grown up with the right civic virtues, then, as mature citizens, they might benefit from Aristotle's teaching about politics. Tocqueville beautifully captures the ancient view that schools foster academic knowledge just as politics fosters civic virtue: "The institutions of a township are to freedom what primary schools are to science; they put it within the reach of the people; they make them taste its peaceful employ and habituate them to making use of it."[87] For Tocqueville, then, schools must be dedicated to imparting knowledge; civic virtue, by contrast, will be learned in town meetings, in churches, and on juries. What we find, then, in Plato, Aristotle, and Tocqueville are very sophisticated analyses of the various agencies of civic education and a conception of civic education that does not rely on the institution of the school.[88]

Both classic political philosophers and contemporary political scientists seem to agree, then, that deliberate instruction aimed at inculcating civic knowledge and virtue is strikingly ineffective. Some knowledge of the history, structure, and functions of government and of the nature of politics might well be taught in civics courses, but not proper civic attitudes, such as a desire to contribute to the common good, a respect for democratic values, a love of country, or toleration of opposing views. Yet ad-

[84] Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 540A.
[85] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1095a3 and 1103a15.
[86] Ibid., 1103b4, 1103b21, 1180a32.
[87] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I:1, 5, 57.
[88] True, Aristotle does recommend public or common schooling over private schooling (*Politics*, 1337a3; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1180a14), but there is no evidence that he thinks these schools should aim at civic education; in fact, he prefers a liberal education for leisure over a civic education (*Politics*, 1338a21–32).

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vocates of civic education in schools insist that it must aim not only at civic knowledge but also at civic virtue. Naturally, advocates of civic education are free to insist that although existing methods of teaching civic virtue in schools are ineffective, some new and better kind of civics courses might work. At the same time, those of us who object to the whole endeavor of using public schools as instruments of partisan civic indoctrination may take some comfort in its near total failure.

III. Civic Virtue or Intellectual Virtue?

Curiously, leading contemporary advocates of civic education in schools admit that it is ineffective.[89] What drives the passion for civic and other kinds of moral education is not the conviction that they are effective, but the conviction that without civic and moral education, schooling lacks any compelling moral purpose. It is no accident, then, that advocates of civic education in public schools all share the fundamental assumption that purely academic education consists only in the acquisition of skills and information and thus lacks an inherent moral dimension. If academic education merely involves the acquisition of amoral information and skills—if it is merely about 'the 3 Rs'—then we might as well ask: Why should any society make a fundamental and expensive public commitment to common schools?

The view that education seeks to put an amoral intellect in the service of a moral heart is powerfully expressed by Immanuel Kant. Education by means of teaching and instruction, says Kant, aims solely at the acquisition of skillfulness, and 'skillfulness' he defines as a capacity for achieving any possible end.[90] Of course, it would be deeply immoral simply to arm students with powerful weapons and give them no guidance for their use, so Kant insists upon a supplemental education in 'moralization' (*Moralisirung*): "Man must not simply be skillful for any possible end, unless he also develops a character so that he chooses only purely good ends."[91] Because Kant defines academic instruction as the acquisition of amoral skills, no amount of academic learning will contribute to moral goodness: "A man can be physically and even mentally quite cultivated but still, with poor moral cultivation, be an evil creature."[92] Thus, by describing academic education in the amoral terms of the acquisition of skills, rather than in the moral terms of conscientiousness in the pursuit

[89] See, for example, Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 106–7; and Macedo, *Democracy and Distrust*, 235.

[90] Kant, *On Pedagogy (Pädagogik)* 9:449. Cf. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals (Grundlegung)* 4:423; and *The Metaphysics of Morals (Metaphysik der Sitten)* 6:392, 444–45. All Kant citations are by volume and page number from the standard Prussian Academy edition of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1902–). All translations of Kant are mine.

[91] "*Der Mensch soll nicht bloss au allerlei Zwecken geschickt sein, sondern auch die Gesinnung bekommen, dass er nur lauter gute Zwecke erwähle.*" *On Pedagogy (Pädagogik)* 9:450.

[92] Ibid., 9:469–70.

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of truth, Kant has created a moral vacuum in academic education and generated the need for compensatory moral education. In contemporary debates about academic schooling, progressive educators emphasize the learning of certain skills, such as critical thinking skills, while traditionalist educators emphasize the mastery of certain kinds of information; but all of our contemporary pedagogues follow Kant by describing the aims of academic education in the amoral terms of information and skills.

In the current debates over civic education in schools, both advocates and critics universally frame the debate as "between people who insist that the community should be able to teach democratic values and others who insist that the community should have no more authority than is necessary to teach intellectual skills."[93] Framed in this way, a rich conception of civic virtues looks much more attractive than an impoverished conception of academic skills. Once we make a moral vacuum of academic education, how can anyone object to the need for a compensatory moral or civic education? Gutmann consistently contrasts her morally rich conception of democratic education to the morally impoverished conception of purely academic education called 'civic minimalism'. Gutmann, like the advocates of 'civic minimalism', always defines this purely academic education in the most amoral of terms: "literacy and numeracy," "the 3R's," or "basic skills."[94] If citizens expect civic education in addition to mere academics, "then they are authorized to impose some values on schools."[95] In short, academic education does not involve "values." Gutmann's conception of a proper civic education includes not only academics but also moral values: "It would need to include teaching literacy and numeracy at a high level. It would also need to include teaching—not indoctrinating—civic values such as toleration, nondiscrimination, and respect for individual rights and legitimate laws."[96]

Gutmann argues that academic knowledge helps children to live a good life in the "nonmoral" sense,[97] and, she says, the skills that we acquire from a nonmoral education can contribute to the moral education of citizens.[98] She labels as "amoralism" the view that schools should stick to only teaching academics: "An apparent attraction of this solution is

[93] See Christopher Eisgruber, "How Do Liberal Democracies Teach Values?" in *Nomos*, 74.

[94] "Mandating civic minimalism would entail *constitutionally prohibiting* citizens from requiring any more of schools than teaching the 3 R's, or some other clearly specified minimum." Gutmann, "Civic Minimalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Patriotism: Where Does Democratic Education Stand in Relation to Each?" in *Nomos*, 35.

[95] Ibid., 34.

[96] Ibid., 37. "In addition to a high level of numeracy and literacy, [it would also need to include] teaching civic values such as racial nondiscrimination and religious toleration . . ." (42).

[97] It helps children "learn how to live a good life in a nonmoral sense by teaching them knowledge and appreciation of (among other things) literature, science, history, and sports." See Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 51.

[98] "The logical skills taught by science and mathematics, the interpretive skills taught by literature, the understanding of different ways of life taught by both history and literature, and even the sportsmanship taught by physical education can contribute to the moral education of citizens." Ibid., 51.

that schools would thereby rid themselves of all the political controversies now surrounding moral education and get on with the task of teaching the 'basics'—cognitive skills and factual knowledge."[99] Yet, she insists that amoralism is impossible in practice, because schools teach moral virtues and values informally through the "hidden curriculum" or ethos of the school. This is true, but we still have to decide whether to try to orient the ethos of the school toward intellectual or civic virtues. Macedo also describes academic schooling as equipping students with amoral weapons for any possible end: "Children must at the very least be provided with the intellectual tools necessary to understand the world around them, formulate their own convictions, and make their own way in life."[100]

Callan worries that if common schools eschew all moral and civic aims, then they will sink to the "lowest common denominator" of society's understanding of what children can learn. Such morally vapid common schools will be, he says, "unacceptable to the adherents of separate education and uninspiring to those of us who once looked to the common school with strong social hopes."[101] Purely academic education is only a "lowest common denominator," "unacceptable" to some, and "uninspiring" to others if we assume, with Kant, that it is intrinsically amoral. Given this prevailing conception of academic education, Callan rightly alerts us to a dilemma for the common school: if we reject controversial moral and civic aims in common schools, then we must defend an "uninspiring," not to mention amoral, education; but if we embrace a rich conception of moral or civic education, then our schools become inspiring to some and unacceptable to others. A minimalist academic education undermines the ideal of the school, while a maximalist moral education undermines the ideal of the *common* school.

Gutmann and others offer civic education as precisely the way of escaping this dilemma: they rightly argue that amoral academic minimalism fails to honor the moral ideal of schooling just as maximalist liberal or conservative moralism fails to honor the ideal of the common school. Therefore, to fill the moral vacuum of amoral academic education, Gutmann and others champion civic education not just as one aim of common schools, but as the primary aim.[102] Similarly, Macedo asserts that "the core purpose of public schooling is to promote civic ideals."[103] And Callan says that because schooling has such a large place in children's

[99] Ibid., 53.

[100] Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust*, 238. Macedo sees academics as a moral vacuum, but not public schools: "At their best, public schools exemplify a spirit of mutual respect, reciprocity, and mutual curiosity about cultural differences" (123).

[101] Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 170.

[102] "[W]e can conclude that 'political education'—the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation—has moral primacy over the other purposes of public education in a democratic society." Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 287; cf. 127 and 290.

[103] Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust*, 122.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

lives, "the evolution of the roles and ideals that the institution offers to children as their schooling progresses should be designed with an eye to whatever pattern of moral development issues in the virtue of the citizen."[104] We can now better appreciate why advocates of civic education in schools care so little about the effectiveness of schools as instruments of civic education: public schools need a compelling moral purpose and civic education is a compelling moral purpose. Gutmann goes so far as to argue that without civic education, public schooling does not merit public support.[105]

If academic education intrinsically lacked a compelling moral purpose, then I would agree that our students need a compensatory moral education—and an education in the civic virtues might well be the most apt kind in a pluralistic democracy. But, as every good teacher knows, mere information and skills cannot be the aim of academic education because apart from a virtuous orientation toward truth, information and skills are mere resources and tools that can be put into the service of sophistry, manipulation, and domination. Only when the acquisition of information and skills is combined with a proper desire for true knowledge do we begin to acquire 'intellectual virtue', which may be defined as the conscientious pursuit of truth.[106] Every virtue theorist has his or her own catalogue of virtues, but what matters more than the particulars on the list is the relation among them. My developmental hierarchy of intellectual virtues begins with the virtues of intellectual carefulness such as single-mindedness, thoroughness, accuracy, and perseverance. Having acquired these virtues in elementary school, students must then learn how to resist temptations to false beliefs by acquiring the virtues of intellectual humility, intellectual courage, and intellectual impartiality. Finally, adults ought to strive for coherence in what they know and for coherence between their knowledge and their other pursuits by acquiring the virtues of intellectual integrity and ultimately wisdom. John Dewey thought that the aim of academic pedagogy was the inculcation of certain traits in students, among them open-mindedness, single-mindedness, sincerity, breadth of outlook, thoroughness, and responsibility. Dewey insisted that these academic or intellectual virtues "are moral traits."[107]

Once we grant that academic education is itself a limited kind of moral education, then the question we face is not whether to pursue moral education in schools: academic schooling is intrinsically a kind of

[104] Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 176.

[105] She wonders "why so much taxpayer money should go to schooling that gives up on the central aims of civic education. If schooling ceases to become a compelling public good, then it should be privately rather than publicly funded, at least for everyone but parents who cannot afford to educate their children." Gutmann, "Civic Education and Social Diversity," 572–73.

[106] See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 175–77.

[107] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 356–57; cf. 173–79.

moral education. The questions we face are, rather, What kind of moral education is appropriate to the institution of the school? Schools seem apt instruments for some but not all kinds of moral education. And is civic education compatible with the intrinsic moral aim of academic schooling, namely, the conscientious pursuit of true knowledge? As we shall see, civic education, both in theory and in practice, subverts the intrinsic moral purpose of academic schooling.

What happens to academic education in the context of schools committed to civic education? Whether we look to the history of civic education or to the ideas of civic educators, the answer is quite certain: the academic pursuit of knowledge will be corrupted through a subordination of truth-seeking to some civic agenda. The history of civic education in the United States is a cautionary tale, indeed. Many advocates of civic education rightly invoke the prestige of Jefferson, who was a leading pioneer and prophet of using common schools for republican civic education.[108] What these advocates fail to notice, however, is how Jefferson's commitment to civic education corrupted his own intellectual integrity. Jefferson's initial vision of his proposed University of Virginia reflected his lifelong commitment to the freedom of the human mind from every tyranny erected over it: "This institution," he wrote, "will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow the truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it."[109] But as a civic educator, Jefferson could not bear the thought of future students at his university being exposed to and corrupted by politically incorrect ideas. Thus, in order to protect them from the seductive Toryism of David Hume, Jefferson spent two decades promoting the publication of a censored, plagiarized, and falsified but politically correct edition of Hume's *History of England*.[110] When he could find no partners in this intellectual crime, he then enlisted James Madison's support as a fellow member of the Board of Overseers of the nascent University of Virginia to draft regulations aimed at suppressing political heresy and promoting political orthodoxy. Jefferson and Madi-

[108] See, for one example, Pangle and Pangle, "What the American Founders Have to Teach Us about Schooling for Democratic Citizenship," 21–46.

[109] Jefferson, quoted in Leonard W. Levy, *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 157. Levy comments about this noble aspiration: "Six years later and only a few months before his death, he viewed the law school as the place from which the path of future generations would be lit by the vestal flame of political partisanship rather than by truth or unfettered inquiry."

[110] On Jefferson's decades-long promotion of John Baxter's plagiarized, falsified, and republicanized edition of Hume, see Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 6, *The Sage of Monticello* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1981), 205–7. Arthur Bestor, "Thomas Jefferson and the Freedom of Books," in Bestor et al., *Three Presidents and Their Books* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 1–44: "It is embarrassing, to say the least, to find Jefferson recommending such a sorry combination of plagiarism, expurgation, and clandestine emendation" (18). For Baxter's text, see John Baxter, *A New and Impartial History of England* (London: H. D. Symonds, 1796–1801); Baxter never mentions his reliance on Hume.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

son succeeded in passing a resolution to "provide that none [of the principles of government] shall be inculcated which are incompatible with those on which the Constitutions of this state, and of the U.S. were genuinely based, in the common opinion. . . ." This resolution goes on to specify the texts that must be taught in the school of politics (Locke, Sidney, *The Federalist Papers*, and U.S. and Virginia constitutional documents).[111] Moreover, Jefferson came to agree with Madison's argument that "the most effectual safeguard against heretical intrusions into the School of politics, will be an able [and] orthodox Professor. . . ."[112] To this end, Jefferson and later Madison worked to ensure that only those professors who espoused a strict constructionist interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and the doctrine of states' rights would be appointed to the school of politics.[113] Because of his passion for civic education in republican virtue, Jefferson abandoned his commitment to intellectual freedom in favor of partisan indoctrination at his own beloved University of Virginia. That such a champion of intellectual freedom who swore undying enmity to every tyranny over the mind of man should himself attempt to whitewash, censor, and suppress what he called "heresy" powerfully illustrates the poisonous consequences of using schools as instruments of civic education.

Jefferson has truly been the poisoned wellspring of American civic education in schools ever since. Some historians have systematically analyzed the civic values taught in public school civics, literature, history, and social studies courses. It should be no surprise that in order to teach civic values, American textbook writers in every epoch have systematically sanitized, distorted, and falsified history, literature, and social studies in order to inculcate every manner of religious, cultural, and class bigotry—including racism, nationalism, Anglo-Saxon superiority, American imperialism, Social Darwinism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-intellectualism.[114] An early text from 1796 warns of the danger posed by the importation of French ideas and persons: "Let America beware of infidelity, which is the most dangerous enemy that she has to contend with at present. . . ." The author goes on to teach schoolchildren that Native Americans lack all science, culture, and religion; that they are averse to labor and foresight; and that "the beavers ex-

[111] See "Minutes of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia, March 4, 1825," in Bestor, "Thomas Jefferson and Freedom of Books," 43–44. Among the mandatory texts were the Virginia Resolutions of 1798–1800, which uphold the states'-rights, strict-constructionist interpretation of the Constitution, according to Bestor (27).

[112] See letter of Madison to Jefferson, February 8, 1825, in Bestor, "Thomas Jefferson and the Freedom of Books," 41–42.

[113] See the letters of Jefferson and of Madison in Bestor, "Thomas Jefferson and Freedom of Books," 39–44.

[114] Among many histories of American civic education, see Smith, *Civic Ideals*; Bessie Louise Pierce, *Civic Attitudes in American School Textbooks* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1930); and Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

ceed the Indians, ten-fold, in the construction of their homes and public works. . . ."[115] Later, in the wake of large-scale Irish immigration during the 1840s and 1850s, school texts begin a massive campaign of slander and calumny against Roman Catholicism. Textbooks not only describe Catholicism as an anti-Christian form of paganism and idolatry, they even blame the Church for the fall of the Roman Empire. One speller asks: "Is papacy at variance with paganism?" A historian says that no theme in school texts before 1870 is more universal than anti-Catholicism; according to these texts, Catholicism has no place in the American past or future.[116] In the period after 1870, religious bigotry gives way to racial bigotry and all non-Anglo-Saxon peoples are described as permanently and immutably inferior due to their intellectual, moral, and physical degeneracy. Beginning in 1917, during World War I, many states began to pass laws forbidding any instruction in public schools that might be disloyal to the United States, including the teaching of the German language; at the same time, many states also passed laws requiring all public schoolteachers to be American citizens and to swear an oath that they would teach patriotism.[117]

This subordination of knowledge to civic uplift is not merely a relic of the past: in many states, Creationism is taught in place of biology and geology because of the perceived moral dangers of Darwinism. And many states continue to require American history to be falsified in order to promote patriotism. The Texas Education Code provides that "textbooks should promote democracy, patriotism, and the free enterprise system"; this provision is still employed to sanitize the teaching of history in Texas.[118] In 2002 the New York Board of Regents was found to have falsified, on moral grounds, most of the literary texts used in its exams; here classic literature was bowdlerized in the interests of political correctness.[119] Some systematic examinations of current social studies and history textbooks find extensive evidence of how American history is distorted, twisted, and falsified in order to emphasize the previously neglected contributions as well as the victimization of women and minorities.[120] Although Anglo-Saxon triumphalism now frequently gives way to multicultural victimization, nothing has changed in the American passion for subordinating truth-seeking to moral and civic uplift.

[115] Elhanan Winchester, *A Plain Political Catechism Intended for the Use of Schools in the United States of America* (Greenfield, MA: Dickman, 1796), questions 60 and 65.

[116] See Elson, *Guardians of Tradition*, 47–48, 53.

[117] See Pierce, *Civic Attitudes in American School Textbooks*, 229–39.

[118] See Alexander Stille, "Textbook Publishers Learn: Avoid Messing with Texas," *New York Times*, June 29, 2002, late edition, sec. A, p. 1, col. 1.

[119] See N. R. Kleinfield, "The Elderly Man and the Sea? Test Sanitizes Literary Texts," *New York Times*, June 2, 2002, late edition, sec. 1, p. 1, col. 1.

[120] See Gilbert T. Sewall, "History Textbooks at the New Century," A Report of the American Textbook Council (New York, 2000); and Paul C. Vitz, *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in our Children's Textbooks* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

No one should be surprised that American schoolbooks, like any form of human knowledge, should often prove mistaken and misguided. But textbooks do not go astray merely because their authors are fallible human beings sincerely seeking true knowledge; rather, texts go astray because their authors deliberately subordinate the pursuit of knowledge to an agenda of civic education. American textbooks are often explicitly anti-intellectual: they repeatedly emphasize that moral and civic virtue is far more important than mere knowledge.[121] What again and again proves fatal to the pursuit of knowledge is the conviction that civic virtue is more important than truth.

Civic education aimed at civic virtue in schools usually involves various kinds of duplicity on the part of educators: teachers pretend to teach American history, but actually merely use historical examples to covertly attempt to impart one or another civic virtue. This subordination of knowledge to civic uplift often proceeds through the presentation of genuine facts, but facts selected by an ulterior motive of inducing patriotism or cosmopolitanism. Just as nothing can be more misleading than a photograph, so nothing can be more fictitious than a biased selection of "facts" in the presentation of history or social studies. In response to the traditionally rosy and uplifting versions of American greatness designed to instill patriotism, we now find dark and brutal narratives of American imperialism and racism designed to covertly instill multicultural tolerance. Both the traditional and the radical narratives of American history might be equally factual just as they are equally false. Of course, any presentation of American history will be selective and, hence, in some ways biased or misleading, but the effort to present American history truthfully (using the consensus of historians as a proxy for truth) will surely fail if our motive is to use that history to inculcate one or another civic virtue.

Both conservative and progressive civic educators routinely subordinate the quest for truth to a preferred agenda for civic uplift. As we shall see, some civic educators frankly espouse the falsification of history or the weakening of academic standards in pursuit of civic virtue. Yet so deep-seated is the urge to falsify American history that even when civic educators claim to reject "brainwashing" or "indoctrination," they proceed to advocate precisely that.[122]

[121] See Elson, *Guardians of Tradition*, 226.

[122] For example, educator William Damon argues that our schools ought to use American history to teach students to love their country: "Now I am aware that when I write this, I risk being accused of trying to indoctrinate children by brainwashing them with a whitewashed picture of America. But whitewashing is not at all what I have in mind. For one thing, it is a necessary part of character education to teach about the mistakes that have been made and the problems that persist." Of course, to describe the evils in American history, such as slavery, lynching, and the killing of the natives, as "mistakes" is the very definition of "whitewashing." See Damon, "To Not Fade Away: Restoring Civil Identity Among the Young," in Ravitch and Viteritti, eds., *Making Good Citizens*, 139.

Advocates of civic education devote virtually all of their analysis to the question of what values ought to be taught or ought to be permitted to be taught in schools. It is almost always taken for granted that knowledge should be subordinated to moral and civic uplift, so the only questions are: What values ought to be inculcated? And who should decide? Some argue that a common democratic culture requires a common democratic education in all schools, while others argue that our pluralist democratic culture requires a wide diversity of moral and civic education in schools. In legal theorist Michael McConnell's pluralist vision, every school, public or private, ought to have the right to corrupt the pursuit of knowledge in the service of its preferred ideology.[123] Apparently we must choose either to subordinate knowledge to an official orthodoxy or to permit the subordination of knowledge to all manner of unofficial orthodoxies. Just as those who see no intrinsic value to art discuss it purely in terms of its moral upshot, so those who see no intrinsic value to the pursuit of knowledge always discuss it purely in terms of its moral upshot.[124]

We might distinguish two very different ways in which the virtues of truth-seeking might be subordinated to, and corrupted by, civic schooling. The first concerns the 'curriculum', that is, the content of what is taught, and the second concerns the 'pedagogy', that is, the methods employed to convey the curriculum. Galston is refreshingly frank about the danger that civic education poses to the truth-seeking virtues of the academic curriculum. He distinguishes a philosophical education oriented toward truth-seeking and rational inquiry from a civic education oriented toward producing good citizens. He rightly observes about the purposes of civic education: "It is unlikely, to say the least, that the truth will be fully consistent with this purpose."[125] But Galston is a champion of civic education, so he bites the bullet and defends the imperative to falsify history: "For example, rigorous historical research will almost certainly vindicate complex 'revisionist' accounts of key figures in American history. Civic education, however, requires a more noble, moralizing history: a pantheon of heros, who confer legitimacy on central institutions and constitute worthy objects of emulation."[126]

Certainly young children are incapable of understanding complex accounts of American history, not because such accounts are "revisionist," but simply because they are complex. Children of any age, however, are

[123] "Conservative celebratory history is permissible; so is left-progressive critical history; and if Mormons want to teach that American history is the working out of the providential hand of God, that is permissible too." Michael McConnell, "Education Disestablishment," in *Nomos*, 102–3.

[124] McConnell, for example, like all the other advocates of civic education, describes academic education in purely amoral terms: "It may be necessary for all citizens to be literate and numerate . . . [and] to have a rudimentary understanding of United States history and civics. . . ." McConnell, "Education Disestablishment," 102.

[125] Galston, "Civic Education in the Liberal State," 90.

[126] Ibid., 91.

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capable of understanding that their nation, like their family, is both lovable and far from perfect. To suppose that children need to be taught in school to love their country is equivalent to supposing that children need to be taught in school to love their mothers. No advocate of patriotic education in schools has ever furnished any evidence suggesting that American students do not love their country. Galston's particular arguments here are very weak, indeed; few other major advocates of civic schooling have expressly embraced his open subordination of the truth.[127] But Galston rightly sees that there is an inevitable tension between educating for citizenship and educating for knowledge, even in a liberal democratic society.

Galston's moralizing history pretends to teach actual history while covertly attempting to inculcate civic virtues; other parts of the curriculum are also misused, perhaps more subtly, to covertly teach civic virtues. Yet Callan admits, in his understated way, that when teachers try to be moral educators, "[t]here are certainly risks that the intellectual authority of the teacher will be abused."[128] The case of *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* reveals the widespread abuse of the intellectual authority of the teacher in many contemporary public schools.[129] In this case, Robert Mozert, a Christian fundamentalist, objected to a reading series required by his local public school that included stories about a Catholic New Mexican Indian settlement, a boy who likes to cook, Anne Frank's unorthodox religious opinions, etc. This court case has provoked endless controversy about what values ought to be taught in schools and about who should have the authority to decide. To my mind, what is troubling about this case is that these stories were part of a curriculum in English, yet they were selected not because of their beauty, renown, or even the felicity of their English style, but for the civic purpose of promoting tolerance by favorably illustrating a diversity of lifestyles.[130] Soviet education followed the same model: "Before the Revolution, Russia had 1,000 tractors; now thanks to comrade Stalin we have 250,000 tractors. How many more tractors do we have under developed socialism?"

[127] Galston is right that citizens embrace their civic commitments primarily through nonrational attachments but wrong to think that they need moralizing history lessons at school in order to become attached to their country. Indeed, it is precisely because the school can rely on these primary nonscholastic civic bonds that the school is free to encourage the pursuit of genuine knowledge. So Galston here again reveals his confusion of civic education with civic schooling. For a quite different critique of Galston, see Will Kymlicka, "Education for Citizenship," in J. Mark Halstead and Terence H. McLaughlin, eds., *Education in Morality* (London: Routledge, 1999), 96–97.

[128] Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 216.

[129] *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 827 F.2d 1058 (6th Cir. 1987). I will not attempt to discuss the many moral, religious, and legal issues raised by this case nor rehearse the many arguments that it has generated.

[130] Gutmann describes *Mozert*: "The parents' objections were directed at an English curriculum that, by state mandate, was supposed to serve the purpose of civic education, not just education in the skills of reading and writing." See Gutmann, "Civics Education and Social Diversity," 571–72.

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The hijacking of academic aims for a covert moral and civic agenda is more troubling than the questions of the merit of the values being taught and who should have the authority to select textbooks. According to Macedo, what might be objectionable is a covert civic agenda heavily biased in favor of only one ethical way of life; he insists that civic education promote respect for a variety of ways of life.[131] The issue is deeper than one of balance: the issue is whether deliberately attempting to inculcate moral or civic values under the guise of teaching English or any other field of knowledge constitutes an abuse of the proper intellectual authority of teachers.[132] American teachers do not claim to be exemplars of civic virtue; they are neither certified nor hired on that basis. Their authority, such as it is, rests solely on their passion for, and command of, a body of knowledge and of the techniques for communicating it to students. Teachers ought to be exemplars of intellectual virtue; whether they are exemplars of other kinds of moral and civic virtues is not essential to their authority as teachers. To place their limited but real moral authority in the service of promoting nonacademic virtues is an abuse of that authority.

Just as the academic curriculum can be wrongly subordinated to an agenda of civic education, so can academic pedagogy. Indeed, much of what is known as 'progressive' educational pedagogy—that is, teaching that attempts to respond to the spontaneous curiosity of the student, often in hands-on, collaborative projects—has long been advocated on moral and civic grounds as much as on academic grounds. Dewey, in particular, championed many progressive pedagogical innovations because he thought that they turned classrooms into laboratories of democracy. Progressive pedagogues have always insisted that their methods are egalitarian, democratic, tolerant, and caring, and that they foster autonomy in the child. Indeed, some contemporary advocates of civic education argue that democratic civic education might be pursued best not by direct manipulation of the curriculum, but through the indirect means of progressive pedagogical methods.[133]

Political theorist Joe Coleman points out that it is "no accident" that progressive pedagogical techniques "have a distinctly civic dimension";

[131] "While it would be unreasonable to insist on perfect 'balance' in school readers or other parts of the curriculum, political liberals can sympathize with objectors to a reading program so heavily biased toward a particular comprehensive view that it appears designed to advance that view and denigrate alternatives." Stephen Macedo, "Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God v. John Rawls?" *Ethics* 105, no. 3 (1995): 487.

[132] Nor is the issue whether such attempts at indoctrination are effective or not. Our empirical evidence suggests that such efforts to inculcate attitudes are not usually effective, perhaps for reasons discussed by Eisgruber in his "How Do Liberal Democracies Teach Values?" 62–65. The issue is the rectitude of the intention to indoctrinate.

[133] "[W]hat if (civic) education also occurs through the ways in which children are taught and interact within the public school?" Joe Coleman, "Civic Pedagogies and Liberal-Democratic Curricula," *Ethics* 108, no. 4 (1998): 752.

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after all, he suggests, they were designed largely for that reason.[134] Instead of raising the fundamental moral question of whether it is appropriate to deploy pedagogical techniques for civic ends, Coleman proceeds directly to recommending the use of progressive pedagogy to inculcate liberal civic education on the grounds that using the curriculum to do so is too "heavy-handed."[135] So a deft and subtle mode of indoctrination is superior to a crude and blunt one? Coleman argues that progressive pedagogy has also been advocated on purely academic grounds, so progressive educators need not harbor a desire to indoctrinate: "Intentionally or not, then, student-centered learning is a civic pedagogy."[136] It would indeed be a wonderful world if the most academically effective pedagogy just happened also to be the ideal kind of civic education. But how likely is that? As Coleman knows, the progressive pedagogies that he champions on civic grounds have been subjected to decades of withering attack on academic grounds by educators and psychologists.[137] We cannot hope to adjudicate that dispute here, but Coleman should tell us how to set priorities if our academic and civic aims conflict. Gutmann, by contrast, is quite clear about how to set priorities. She says that the moral primacy of political education means precisely that school pedagogy may rightly be designed to promote democratic values and virtues even at the cost of purely academic achievement.[138]

In practice, then, and in theory, we have compelling evidence that civic education represents a permanent and fundamental threat both to the academic curriculum and to academic pedagogy: the quest for civic virtue will forever attempt, and often succeed, to trump the pursuit of knowledge. How seriously we take this subordination of academic to moral education will depend upon our understanding of the values and virtues intrinsic to an academic education. I cannot attempt here to develop a full normative theory of the aims and methods of academic education. However, I can offer some reasons and evidence for my assertions that intellectual virtue is the proper aim of schooling, that intellectual virtue is a kind of moral virtue, and that, therefore, the cultivation of intellectual virtue is the kind of moral education appropriate to the institution of the school.

[134] Ibid., 754.
[135] Ibid., 755.
[136] Ibid.
[137] The best summary of the academic case against progressivism is E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), which Coleman references but does not discuss.
[138] In addition to providing moral arguments against 'tracking' (segregating by academic ability), sexist education, racial segregation, and (narrowly) vocational education, even where these might be academically warranted, democratic education "also supports a presumption in favor of more participatory over more disciplinary methods of teaching. Participatory methods are often the best means of achieving the disciplinary purposes of primary schooling. But even when student participation threatens to produce some degree of disorder within schools, it may be defended on democratic grounds for cultivating political skills and social commitments." Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 287.

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Ever since Kant, academic education has been pervasively defined in amoral terms as the acquisition of information and skills that might be put to use for good or bad ends. Indeed, the obvious way to object to my claim that academic education is a kind of moral education is to point out that the information and skills acquired in school are just as easily put to use in the service of sophistry as in the service of truth-seeking. But this view of academic education in terms of mere information and skills misdescribes the actual point of scholastic education, which is to acquire information and skills in the context of a love for genuine knowledge, that is, a love for what Zagzebski calls "cognitive contact with reality."[139] In other words, good math, history, science, and English teachers do not attempt to arm students with morally neutral resources and weapons and then hope for the best. Good teachers attempt to fuse the growing acquisition of information and skills to a growing desire for genuine knowledge. In other words, proper academic education does not seek merely to provide the means for whatever ends might be chosen by the student; proper academic education encompasses both the means and the end. Dewey saw this clearly: "The knowledge of dynamite of a safecracker may be identical in verbal form with that of a chemist; in fact, it is different, for it is knit into connection with different aims and habits, and thus has a different import."[140]

A scholastic education is the acquisition of information and skills in the context of acquiring a love for truth and knowledge; a scholastic miseducation is the acquisition of information and skills in the context of learning to subordinate truth-seeking to the desire for things such as power, wealth, or fame. Indeed, if academic education were merely a matter of information and skills, then we might well wonder why we need teachers at all. Computers are quite effective at conveying information and coaching skills; thus, given how we normally describe academic education, it is not surprising that computers are increasingly replacing human teachers. The indispensable role of the human teacher is motivational: our relations to our teachers, which often rest on deep currents of affection and a desire for emulation, foster and inspire our love for learning and for the joys of a life devoted to learning. The deep affective energies between student and teacher properly serve to bond the acquisition of information and skills to a genuine love for knowledge.

We often contrast the academic education of the mind to the moral education of the heart. Indeed, Aristotle famously distinguishes intellectual virtues as perfections of the rational part of the soul from moral virtues as perfections of the nonrational part of the soul.[141] However, if academic education involves not only intellectual skills but also the right

[139] "I define knowledge as cognitive contact with reality arising from what I call 'acts of intellectual virtue'." Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, xv.
[140] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 356.
[141] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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motivation, then the scholastic virtues are not merely intellectual, but also involve feeling, passion, and love. The pursuit of truth involves just as much passion as any other love. Just as any morally virtuous person is emotionally attracted to what is good, so any intellectually virtuous person is emotionally attracted to what is true. So the contrast between an education of the intellect and an education of the sentiments is untenable since the virtues of teaching and learning require both the mind and the heart. Indeed, the very language of 'intellectual' virtues or virtues of the 'mind' is deeply misleading; the virtues of truth-seeking are as passionate as any other kind of moral virtue.

In short, our relation to our intellectual virtues is just as deep as our relation to our other moral virtues. At the same time, however, our relation to any one of our virtues is fundamentally different from our relation to our capacities and skills. Capacities and skills, like any resource or tool, are things we can use or misuse; we recognize a kind of "distance" between our selves and our resources or skills. Virtues, whether intellectual or other kinds, are aspects of persons or traits of character; virtues cannot be misused because they cannot be used at all. This is why the maxim "honesty is the best policy" is so paradoxical, for policies are things we deliberately deploy while honesty is usually thought of as an aspect of a person. An honest person cannot deploy honesty any more than he or she can deploy dishonesty. Academic education properly aims to shape who we are as persons—namely, as persons who care about the truth—and not merely to enhance our capacities and skills.

The first stage of my developmental hierarchy of intellectual virtues consists of the virtues of carefulness, such as single-mindedness, thoroughness, accuracy, and perseverance. These seem, at first, more like capacities or skills than like virtues; after all, why cannot a sophist or any other bad person make use of single-mindedness, thoroughness, accuracy, and perseverance? Here Passmore usefully distinguishes the skill of carefulness from the virtues of carefulness: a sophist can certainly acquire the skill of carefulness, but a good student learns to care about being careful: he learns to love single-mindedness, thoroughness, precision, and perseverance because these traits are inseparable from truth-seeking.[142] The higher-order virtues of intellectual courage, intellectual impartiality, and intellectual honesty are more obviously traits of character rather than mere capacities or skills. Whereas (ideally) teachers tend to focus on the virtues of carefulness in primary school, teachers in high school and college attempt to inculcate intellectual courage, impartiality, and honesty by requiring students to consider several points of view on a question, to stand up for their own judgments, to be willing to consider new and

[142] Passmore describes a good teacher: "He hoped to develop in his pupils not only the capacity for proceeding carefully, but a caring about, passion for, accurate statement, careful reading, sound arguments." Passmore, *The Philosophy of Teaching, 188.*

unfamiliar ideas, and to admit the limits of their own knowledge and the fallibility of their own judgments.

Finally, in our practices of praising and blaming persons, we certainly treat intellectual traits as if they were moral traits. Just as we praise people for being morally honest, courageous, and conscientious, so we praise people for being intellectually honest, courageous, and conscientious. Here, perhaps, our practices of blame are more revealing than our practices of praise, because we often praise people for admirable non-moral qualities, such as their beauty, talent, and strength; yet by praising them we do not assume that they exercise voluntary control over these qualities. By contrast, we tend to blame people only for qualities over which they do exercise at least indirect voluntary control. It seems wrong to blame people for being ugly, frail, or untalented.

We blame people for qualities that we hold them responsible for, and we hold them responsible for qualities that they have voluntary power to avoid; such qualities are moral qualities. Our practices of blame show that we expect people to be conscientious in the pursuit of truth, just as we expect them to be conscientious in the pursuit of their moral duties. Do we blame people for the quality of their beliefs? Indeed, we have a rich vocabulary for blaming people for what we take to be their unjustified and irrational beliefs. We call them (in Zagzebski's list) narrow-minded, careless, intellectually cowardly, rash, imperceptive, prejudiced, rigid, or obtuse. I would add superstitious, gullible, dogmatic, and fanatical.[143]

Of course, to say that an education in the intellectual virtues is a kind of moral education is not to say that it is a complete moral education. One can easily possess all the virtues of truth-seeking and still morally fail in many other ways through intemperance, injustice, and many other vices. As Thomas Hobbes was the first to concede about himself, intellectual courage is quite compatible with physical cowardice. Neither good teachers nor good students need be moral paragons. Does this mean that the intellectual virtues might be misused by morally bad people? Does conscientiousness in truth-seeking make a bad person even more dangerous? As we noted above, intellectual virtues cannot be misused because, being aspects of persons, they cannot be used at all. Nor is it plausible to suppose that moral evil might be aided and abetted by truth-seeking; indeed, since moral evil almost always involves false belief, conscientiousness in truth-seeking is likely to mitigate moral evil. So we must avoid claiming either that the intellectual virtues are the whole of moral virtue or that they are not even a part of moral virtue.

Even if we were to agree that an academic education is itself a kind of moral education, we still might wonder why the school is the best instrument for this kind of moral education. Aristotle says that virtues of thought can be taught, while moral virtues can only be learned from

[143] For Zagzebski's list, see *Virtues of the Mind*, 20.

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experience and habit.[144] On his account, many virtues of thought presuppose moral virtues and, hence, moral experience and habituation. His moral virtues require the guidance of the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom—thus the necessity of teaching. Still, Aristotle seems right to observe that teaching plays a greater and more fundamental role in the acquisition of the intellectual virtues than of the other moral virtues. No one doubts that schools are apt instruments for promoting the acquisition of information and intellectual skills, but what about the motivational dimension of intellectual virtues? Are schools apt instruments for teaching the love of knowledge and a desire for truth? Here we must distinguish the child's natural desire for knowledge in general from his or her acquired desire for a particular body of knowledge. A student's love for a particular branch of knowledge, cannot, like any deep motivation, be directly taught, but, as they say, it can be caught; to the extent that schools are a setting for students to be exposed to and "infected" by the love of knowledge, then schools are apt instruments for intellectual virtue. As Passmore rightly asks: "And where else, if not a school, is the child to acquire the intellectual loves?"[145]

What evidence do we have that schools are the proper instruments for academic education? We noted above that empirical studies of civic education found that schools do have some small effect on civic knowledge even if virtually no effect on civic attitudes or virtues. There are no empirical studies, to my knowledge, of the effectiveness of schools in inculcating the intellectual virtues. However, the most influential study of the effects of scholastic attainment on the knowledge of adults may be suggestive of the important role of schools not only in inculcating a body of information but also in fostering a disposition to the lifelong acquisition of knowledge. In *The Enduring Effects of Education*, Herbert Hyman, Charles Wright, and John Reed surveyed the knowledge of adults many decades after they had completed their schooling. These authors found not only that every year of schooling contributed positively to the knowledge base of adults, but also that every year of schooling contributed positively to the propensity of adults to continue learning by reading newspapers, magazines, books, and seeking out opportunities for adult education. By including in their survey knowledge of current events, these researchers were able to establish that those adults who had the most schooling were also keeping abreast of current events most effectively. So we have some evidence that schools do effectively foster a lifelong love for learning.[146]

Once we see that the conscientious pursuit of knowledge is the inherent moral purpose of schooling, we will not be surprised by the absence of any agreement about which civic virtues we ought to teach in schools.

[144] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a14.
[145] Passmore, *The Philosophy of Teaching*, 197.
[146] Herbert H. Hyman, Charles R. Wright, and John Shelton Reed, *The Enduring Effects of Education* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 80–93.

Since none of the civic virtues is intrinsically related to the inherent moral purpose of schooling, there is no academically principled way to decide which civic virtues ought to be taught in schools. I quite strongly value a commitment to human rights, the rule of law, public service, and a love of America, but I do not see what these noble virtues have to do with pursuing knowledge of physics, French, English, chemistry, history, and math. No catalogue of civic virtues can be shown to be a prerequisite of academic excellence, a part of academic excellence, or the product of academic excellence. The simple truth of the matter is that one can be a paragon of academic virtue and a lousy citizen. Many great scholars, scientists, and educators have notoriously lacked the civic virtues by being resident aliens, cosmopolitans, or epicureans. Trying to decide which civic virtues to teach in schools is like trying to decide which sports or which crafts to teach: since none of these is intrinsically related to academic education, there are no academic grounds for deciding these matters.

Why is civic education in schools so ineffective? We saw that civics courses may well have some modest effect upon civic knowledge but essentially none on civic attitudes or motivations. Let us consider some reasons offered. Some educators argue that civics courses are inherently irrelevant to the academic curriculum. Because civic education, like driver or consumer education, lacks an intrinsic relation to the academic curriculum, it quickly becomes regarded by teachers and students as purely ancillary and irrelevant. The purely ancillary nature of civics courses may help to explain why they prove to be so ineffective. To overcome this irrelevance, many advocates insist that civic education become incorporated into the core academic curriculum, so that English, history, and social studies courses impart lessons in civic virtue. But here we become impaled upon the fundamental dilemma of civic education: if we teach civic virtue in a way that respects the integrity of the academic curriculum, then civics becomes merely ancillary and irrelevant; contrarily, if, to overcome this irrelevance, we attempt to incorporate civic education into the academic subjects, then we inevitably subvert the inherent moral aim of these subjects by subordinating the pursuit of truth to civic uplift.

Indeed, there may be something paradoxical and self-defeating about the whole project of teaching civic virtue in schools. Niemi and Junn speculate that civic education might be ineffective largely because it is so whitewashed. In the attempt to make civics promote patriotism, American civics courses, they observe, present a "Pollyannaish view of politics that is fostered by the avoidance of reference to partisan politics and other differences of opinion. . . ." So instead of a nasty contest between interest groups, we get "how a bill becomes law"—a presentation of civics cleansed of all politics as well as of all possible interest. Niemi and Junn also decry the Whiggish distortions of American history, in which the "problems"of the past (such as racism and oppression) are invariably "solved" in the present. Niemi and Junn worry that these attempts to inculcate civic trust might not just be ineffective,

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but might actually backfire by creating greater political cynicism.[147] The authors of a new civics curriculum designed to foster great tolerance for the diversity of beliefs claim that it has made many students more tolerant even though it also made some students dramatically more intolerant.[148] These perverse effects call into question the whole project of attempting to manipulate students' attitudes. Similarly, political theorist Christopher Eisgruber observes of the attempt to inculcate values through an academic course: "How would students react to such a course? My suspicion is that any student old enough to understand such a course would also be old enough to recognize it as propaganda—and to resent it for that reason."[149] Students are often adept at detecting when knowledge is treated merely as a vehicle for carrying moral attitudes; these students then rightly suspect the credibility of such knowledge. If teachers express such contempt for the value of the knowledge they teach, why should students value learning?

It is, in many ways, reassuring that civic education aimed directly at civic virtues is ineffective. But it would be deeply unfortunate if, as many argue, the attempt to inculcate civic virtues serves to undermine the teaching of civic knowledge. Instead of constantly subordinating knowledge to moral uplift, we ought to have more confidence in the sheer moral value of knowledge. As we have seen, the cognitive sophistication cultivated in schools by itself strongly contributes to political tolerance, that is, the willingness to extend civil liberties to those with whom we strongly disagree.[150] A leading team of political scientists offers this hypothesis: "If we are correct that the number of years of formal schooling acts to increase tolerance regardless of the manifest and subtle political content of that education, then educational attainment should act to increase tolerance even in regimes with contrary messages." These political scientists found strong evidence that years of schooling increased political tolerance even in Hungary under the Communists. Ironically, intolerant regimes foster toleration simply by schooling their citizens—even when (or especially when?) this schooling is designed to foster political intolerance.[151] In the United States, specifically political knowledge has been shown to promote political tolerance, active participation in politics, more

[147] "Instead of a balanced approach, the emphasis in teaching about gender and race appears to be exclusively on the 'good things'—the abolition of slavery, the end of legal segregation, the enfranchisement of women, the fall of many barriers to women's participation. . . ." Niemi and Junn, *Civic Education*, 150–51.

[148] See Bird et al., "Not Just Lip-Synching Anymore: Education and Tolerance Revisited," 374.

[149] Eisgruber, "How Do Liberal Democracies Teach Values?" 77.

[150] "[I]t is the cognitive outcomes of education, rather than the positional outcomes, that are responsible for the connection between education and tolerance." Nie et al., *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*, 72.

[151] "[T]he communist regimes in Eastern Europe, with their emphasis for the last half-century on modernization through education, unintentionally created new generations of citizens who were prone to work for the toppling of the very regimes that saw to their education." Ibid., 184.

coherent political opinions, and a more rational relation between participation and one's political goals.[152] So we ought to be confident that we are contributing significantly to civic virtue merely by attempting to impart to our students genuine knowledge and, in particular, civic knowledge. In light of the ineffective and often counterproductive nature of civic education aimed directly at civic virtue, we have many reasons to believe that schools are better advised simply to stick to their essential task of pursuing genuine knowledge. No doubt this scholastic kind of civic education is seriously deficient, but we must remember that most of what we learn in life is not learned in school, and most of our teachers are not schoolteachers.

What is the relation of schooling to civic education more broadly? This is a very large question that would take us far beyond the scope of this essay, but I will briefly consider, by way of a partial answer, the relation of the intellectual virtues to the civic virtues. A good citizen ought to possess the intellectual virtues because they will help him or her to resist false beliefs. Bad politicians frequently tempt us to believe things that are false by appealing to our national pride, our greed, our resentments, or our fears for the future. 'Intellectual virtue' means acquiring precisely those dispositions that lead us to resist these temptations to false beliefs. A good citizen need not care only about the truth of his or her political beliefs, nor must a good citizen, as a partisan, advocate the whole truth. However, a good citizen must care about whether the views that he or she advocates are true. So intellectual virtue might be necessary for good citizens, but it is hardly sufficient. An intellectual paragon might well be a lousy citizen: no amount of conscientiousness in the pursuit of truth constitutes or even reliably leads to a zeal for public service or to the courage to defend one's nation. Indeed, as Plato famously observes, those who most sincerely love genuine knowledge are often the most repelled by the inevitable simplifications and distortions of political ideology and rhetoric. It is very difficult to reconcile a passion for knowledge with the political imperatives to advocate partial truths, to hide the truth at times, and to appeal to nonrational passions. None of this, I believe, amounts to a fundamental incompatibility between intellectual and civic virtue, but it does suggest some real tensions and moral challenges. So a scholastic education is only a partial civic education, and the intellectual virtues are only a part of the civic virtues.

IV. Conclusion: Civics or Civility?

Putnam's aforementioned and influential study of the decline of American civic and political participation, *Bowling Alone*, has fueled the grow-

[152] See Delli Carpini and Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*, 219.

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ing consternation about the waning of civic virtue in the American polity. In the face of such widespread and passionate moral concern about the decline in civic virtue, we do well to ask: Just how important is civic virtue to American democracy? How widespread must civic virtue be? Although the framers of the U.S. Constitution strongly affirmed the importance of civic virtue, they nonetheless counted upon the careful division of powers and the rule of law to compensate for a likely shortfall of virtue. The Constitution was famously described as an "engine that would go of its own," that is, it would equilibrate power, secure liberty, and govern effectively without relying upon the civic virtue of the republic's participants. Nonetheless, we cannot rely upon constitutions and laws alone to protect our democratic ideals. Does anyone follow Kant in supposing that institutional design alone can make democracy safe for a race of devils? It seems more likely that raw self-interest, lust for power, and indifference will ultimately undermine any legal or institutional arrangement. Still, it is easy to exaggerate the importance of widespread civic virtue in a large, complex, and commercial republic such as the United States.

Those who express most concern about the decline in civic virtue tend to forget that the U.S. polity is not simply a republic of citizens but also a liberal society of persons. America's deepest traditions of liberty have always affirmed each person's fundamental right not to aspire to civic virtue. Of course, every resident of the United States, whether a citizen or not, is obliged to obey the law and respect the legal rights of every other resident. Nevertheless, America does not require all citizens, let alone resident aliens, to commit themselves to work conscientiously for the good of the nation by serving in the armed forces or even by merely voting. Indeed, the American polity prides itself on its respect for whole communities of persons whose religious commitment to pacifism prevents them from being good citizens in the classic sense of being willing to fight for their nation. How many Americans would want to live in a pure democratic republic in which military service, voting, and other public service were mandatory for all? So, yes, Americans want some civic virtue but not too much, and Americans want many people to have civic virtue but certainly not everyone.

Even those who, like Putnam, are most concerned about the recent decline in civic virtue do not look to the school as either the source of or the remedy for America's civic ills. What role can schools properly play in fostering more civic virtue? Although civic virtue includes more than mere knowledge, clearly knowledge about the structure, functions, and ideals of government are essential for civic virtue. Civic knowledge is a perfectly appropriate aim for institutions of learning. Who could object to public schools teaching about public institutions? The bitter controversies over civic education and the dangers of indoctrination arise not from teaching civic knowledge but from attempting to instill certain civic attitudes, whether multicultural toleration or patriotism.

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The history of civic education in schools is as old as public schooling itself and this history is a cautionary tale. The attempt to use public schools for the purpose of sectarian civic education has always led to a bitter politics of religious and moral recrimination, a deep fraying of civic trust, and a wholesale abandonment of common schools by Roman Catholics and others. Nondenominational Protestant civic education in the nineteenth century provoked many Catholics, Lutherans, and some Jews to take on the enormous burden of parochial education. With the current erosion of public confidence in common schools, the rise of private and home schooling, and the push for vouchers, the future of public education in the United States is increasingly uncertain. Much of the current dismay with public schools stems from their perceived academic failings, but many parents send their children to private schools because they believe that public schools attempt to indoctrinate their children with either liberal or conservative civic virtues. Wherever schools become battlegrounds for partisan moral and religious agendas, the whole ideal of common schooling loses public support.

Public schools in a pluralistic society have a special moral duty to forbear from all nonacademic kinds of moral education. This is because the project whereby citizens agree to educate their children together in publicly funded schools depends upon a high degree of civic trust. Each of us, with our own comprehensive moral and religious outlook, surrenders our children to a common school on the assumption that none of us is permitted to deliberately impose his or her own conception of moral or civic virtue on the rest. We all must acknowledge the temptation to want the common school to reinforce the moral and civic aims that we pursue at home, but civic trust equally depends upon our principled forbearance from advocating that the common school do so. For, as we have repeatedly learned throughout U.S. history, once public schools adopt any particular conception of moral or civic education beyond the moral education inherent to academic study, not only is the moral integrity of schooling likely to be compromised as the curriculum and pedagogy are manipulated in an attempt to indoctrinate students, but this loss of integrity also will fray the civic trust necessary for vibrant common schools.

Admittedly, it requires truly heroic forbearance to refrain from taking advantage of the naïveté of small children who are a captive audience for all manner of idealistic moral and civic uplift, to refrain from deploying the intellectual authority of the teacher in favor of a noble moral or civic aim, and to refrain from manipulating academic curricula and pedagogy for moral and civic ends. Of course, every advocate of some particular version of moral or civic education in our common schools will claim that, although all other proposals are obviously sectarian, his or her proposal is uniquely universalistic and merits the support of the entire community. However, as I have here argued, the deepest objections to moral and civic education in schools are unrelated to the question of how widely

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052504211104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

accepted or not a moral agenda might be or even how widely accepted a moral agenda ought to be. Indeed, civic moral education has always posed a uniquely powerful threat to schooling precisely because its aims are so widely and often rightly shared. The deepest objections to moral and civic education stem from their incompatibility with the conscientious pursuit of truth, which is the necessary aim of all academic schooling; for public schools, there is the additional and very important concern about undermining civic trust.

Purely academic moral education in the intellectual virtues poses the least risks for the corruption of schooling and the greatest potential for fostering the civic trust necessary for vibrant common schools. Ironically, civic trust around common schooling will be fostered best by renouncing civic education in schools. No one can plausibly claim that the attempt of schools to convey accepted bodies of knowledge to students along with the disposition and skills to seek truth reflects an uncivil intention to indoctrinate.[153] Indeed, what we mean when we accuse public schools of "indoctrinating" students is that schools have abused their proper intellectual authority by deliberately imposing some moral agenda under the guise of academic study and have thereby violated the civic trust that parents have placed in them. To the extent that the content of the curriculum and the methods of instruction are consistent with international standards of academic scholarship and pedagogy, parents have no plausible grounds for thinking that their trust in the common school has been violated.

Even if the effects of schooling are not politically neutral, even if, as we have reason to believe, the cognitive sophistication and genuine knowledge acquired in school tend to lead students to greater political tolerance, these foreseen but unintended spillover effects of schooling do not violate the proper expectations of parents or citizens. Insofar as schools intentionally aim at the virtues of truth-seeking, they have not violated our civic trust—even if the effect of this schooling is neither morally nor politically neutral. However, to demand civics lessons that offer inherently partisan conceptions of civic virtue violates the civic trust upon which vibrant common schools depend. These civics lessons would truly lack all civility.

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[153] "Certainly no one applies the word 'indoctrinate' when the schools try to teach most facts and *accepted* bodies of knowledge. That is regarded not as any unwarranted 'imposition' but as a duty." Hyman and Wright, *Education's Lasting Influence on Values*, 66.

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