Moral Diversity and Moral Education[1]

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Although national surveys consistently show that an overwhelming majority of adults in the United States would like to see some sort of moral education in the schools, it is not clear how much real agreement this indicates. "**Whose** morality are we talking about?" one might ask. The significance of this question is apparent when we consider the moral diversity among those who ask it. This is not merely a diversity among moral beliefs. This is bound to be present to some degree in any large group of reflective people. Many societies are multicultural. As Amy Gutmann puts it, these societies contain within their borders "many cultures that interact in some significant way with each other."[2] Thus, a multicultural society will, in part, be characterized by different traditions and practices, some of which may reflect fundamental moral and religious differences.

The United States is such a multicultural society. Constitutional commitment to the separation of church and state, combined with the belief of many that morality is ultimately grounded in religion, poses a serious challenge: How can the public schools place moral education on their agendas without offending fundamental beliefs and practices of at least some significant portions of the public?

One response is that, like it or not, moral education cannot be kept out of the schools. As Robert Fullinwider puts it:[3]

> *[A] school that set out deliberately* ***not*** *to morally educate its students would simply have to close down altogether. It could not teach children their native language since so much of any natural language is about how to be and not to be. It would have to deprive its students of all stories of human affairs, since those stories are structured by evaluative concepts — by ideas of success and failure, foresight and blindness, heedfulness and heedlessness, care and negligence, duty and deleliction, pride and shame, hope and despair, wonder and dullness, competition and cooperation, beginning and ending. But without stories of human affairs, a school could not effectively teach non-moral lessons either. It could not teach about inflation, log-rolling, scientific discovery, coalition-building, paranoia, ecological niches, deterrence of crime, price controls, or infectious diseases.*

Assuming Fullinwider is right, the question is not **whether** moral education is have a place in the schools; rather, it is **what** that place should be.

However, when we turn to what place moral education in the schools should have, important differences remain even among those who accept Fullinwider's observations. It may be true that, simply by enforcing rules, punishing cheating, and evaluating student performance, schools will influence the moral development of children. But those who wish to minimize the role of the public schools in moral education will say that these activities are necessary for a school to function at all. This is a matter of performing essential functions

rather than explicit moral instruction. So, one can still hold that, although banishing moral education from the schools is futile, and even undesirable, this does not mean that moral education should be made an explicit part of the curriculum.

As for teaching non-moral lessons on inflation, scientific discovery, crime, infectious diseases, and the like, it is true that adults, and even many children, have moral beliefs about these matters. However, this alone does not warrant attempting to instruct children about what moral values they should attach to them.

Nevertheless, attempting to minimize the public schools' contribution to the moral education of children poses serious risks. First, it risks impoverishing children's abilities to function as responsible citizens once they become adults. This is something that today's adults may later regret. It is also something about which tomorrow's adults might complain — much as they would if they were not being given the opportunity to develop scientific and mathematical skills. That is, they might complain that they had a right to be assisted in exercising, refining, and developing their moral capacities as they studied subjects that have significant moral dimensions (as history, literature, science, and even mathematics do).

Second, insofar as moral education remains hidden in the shadows of the curriculum, there is a danger that schools will attempt to influence children in ways that cannot pass public scrutiny. Since some form of moral education is bound to take place in the schools, it seems best to have this explicitly acknowledged in the curriculum. Children not only study science, mathematics, history, and literature. They are informed that this is what they are studying. It is presumed that they are capable engaging in the kinds of thinking these subjects require. But if studying these subjects also contains certain "moral lessons," this, too, is something that children can understand. To deny this is both to underestimate children and to increase the risk of indoctrination rather than education.

Still, the challenge of moral diversity, especially in its multcultural forms, remains. The major question this paper addresses is whether common ground can be found among such diverse perspectives — common ground that is responsive to the various worries one might have about explicitly placing moral education on the agenda of the public schools. Any persuasive account will have to respect different perspectives even as it attempts to articulate common ground.

However, an important point to keep in mind is that, in addition to revealing cultural differences, an examination of the multicultural dimensions of a society can reveal similarities. Much depends on how the subject is approached. Fullinwider suggests that in order sympathetically to understand another culture, we need to bear in mind the distinction between **form** and **value.**[4] A simple illustration is rules of the road. In the United States the rule is to drive on the right side of the road; in England it is the left. In the United States there is a heavy reliance on stop lights and stop signs. In England there is greater reliance on roundabouts. However, these rules and practices are designed to serve the same values — safe and efficient travel.

In general, Fullinwider observes:[5]

> *Sensitivity to the form/value distinction is important because it allows us to gauge how, and in what way, another society differs from our own. In some cases, it may well be that another culture differs from ours in the values it serves and promotes. For the most part, however, charitable interpretations of another culture proceeds on the assumption that it tries to realize the same deepest values we do, and that its outward differences are simply differences in form.*

Fullinwider's examples focus on cultural differences and similarities from society to society; but the same point can be made about many cultural differences and similarities within a single society.

Of course, even if different cultures have common values, it does not follow that their respective forms serve those values equally well. It may not matter whether driving is on the left or right side, but perhaps it can be shown that roundabouts are often superior to stoplights — from either the standpoint of safety or efficiency. This would provide some reason for introducing more roundabouts in the United States (something that, in fact, has happened). To appreciate this, however, it is necessary to be open-minded enough to be receptive to new, and possibly strange sounding, ideas. Such open-mindedness can provide two benefits. First, it makes self-criticism and self-improvement possible. Second, by gaining an understanding of different forms that attempt to realize similar values, one may acquire greater acceptance of and respect for those whose beliefs and practices differ from one's own.

However, as we shall see, there are limits to this. Deep differences in values might be discovered — as well as intractability. This, too, has to be carefully factored into moral education. Some of the worries to which this gives rise will be discussed below. Here, however, it is enough to note that the social and political practices associated with morality are seldom as straightforward as rules of the road. Even if their various forms rep-

resent efforts to serve the same basic values, discovering that this is so (and how it is so) is not an easy task. Yet, the rewards of greater understanding and improvement in critical thinking seem clearly to outweigh any frustrations that might result from such efforts. Further, we might say, since multicultural education is concerned with how different cultures interact with each other, moral education cannot responsibly exclude fair consideration of the interests of all who are affected by that interaction. Also, when children in the classroom are themselves associated with different cultures, their sense of identity and self-worth is as much at stake as their ability to engage in critical thought.

Fullinwider points out one of the great dangers of neglecting multicultural education. Particularly in societies that have assumed a dominant economic position in the world, like the United States, there is a tendency to assume cultural superiority. Associated with this is **judgmentalism**, marked by gaining satisfaction from boosting one's own sense of moral worth by making negative moral assessments of others. Fullinwider's remedy for judgmentalism is not abstention from judgment; it is the cultivation of open-mindedness. This, he says, is quite teachable:[6]

> *We can rehearse students at waiting to make up their minds until they've heard the different sides of a case and we can train them how to follow and evaluate arguments and evidence. We can habituate them to inquire, ask questions, follow leads, seek more information, invite comment, and welcome different perspectives. We can impress upon them cautionary tales of the wrongs that flow from hasty, careless, reckless, and ill-considered judgments.*

So, Fullinwider advocates deliberately encouraging students to develop good habits of critical thinking. While this can be done without explicitly including multicultural education, doing it in that context can both enrich students' understanding of other cultures and their critical thinking abilities. But ignoring multicultural concerns is not a real option in most societies today; and it certainly is not in the United States. Since responsibly addressing those concerns itself requires the exercise of critical thinking skills, multicultural education should go hand-in-hand with the development of those skills. However, encouraging the exercise of critical thinking skills in the context of multicultural education is bound to raise moral issues in the classroom — thereby placing moral education squarely on the schools' agenda. So, we must next address some common worries about moral education in the public schools.

SOME COMMON WORRIES

Obviously, one fear that many have is that moral education in the schools will be nothing more than the indoctrination of some group's favored "universal" perspective — the inculcation of certain partisan moral beliefs that will be uncritically received by children as if they were universal moral truths. Others fear the absence of indoctrination. They fear the schools will encourage the permissive and uncritical view that anyone's moral opinions are as credible as anyone else's, thus undermining moral values that should be taken as authoritative. Those who fear indoctrination may ask, "**Whose** moral values are going to be inculcated, and with what authority?" Those who fear its absence may reply, "How can we expect our children to develop sound moral values if none are inculcated?"

In a highly homogeneous, closed society these worries might not arise. In such a society it might seem quite clear both that certain moral beliefs should be inculcated in the young, as well as which beliefs these should be. However, for us it is quite evident that, at some level, there is a great deal of diversity in moral beliefs. We see this not only when we compare different cultures with each other, but also when we look closely **within** any but the most tightknit cultures.

For many, awareness of the diversity of moral beliefs and practices raises the question of whether the validity of moral beliefs can go no further than one's particular cultural identity. This view of morality, commonly referred to as **cultural relativism,** is typically accompanied by a reluctance to make moral judgments about other cultures and an attitude of tolerance toward those with different moral beliefs. However, should a culture exhibit judgmental and intolerance attitudes, the cultural relativist view implies that this is all right — for that culture. So, there is nothing in the idea of cultural relativism that requires nonjudgmentalism or tolerance, even if most supporters of the cultural relativist view do, in fact, have these attitudes.

However, those who believe there are underlying, universal moral truths can, nevertheless, also share the moral modesty of such relativists. It is one thing to believe there are universal moral truths and quite another to believe one knows what they are, let alone how they should be applied to particular circumstances. In the absence of certainty, a universalist might share some of the relativist's reluctance to judge other cultures.

Of course, there are self-assured universalists who have no doubts about the soundness of their own beliefs — only those of others. But even they could concede that, however mistaken others may

be in their moral beliefs, this does not necessarily mean that those beliefs are less reasonable than their own. Morality, they may say, is not simply a determination of reason.

Given the broad range of possible responses to moral diversity, what is a teacher to do? Fears of indoctrination are likely to come from relativists and universalists alike. Relativists may fear that the schools will attempt to indoctrinate children with beliefs that are either intolerant of the diversity around them or that undermine children's beliefs that are rooted in local cultural or family traditions. Self-assured universalists may worry that the schools will undermine the beliefs of their children by attempting to accommodate the diversity around them — the schools will either explicitly or implicitly inculcate a relativistic attitude. Or, they may fear, the schools might attempt to inculcate what they take to be universal values — but mistaken ones. In short, self-assured universalists fear the schools will be relativistic. Relativists (and even some universalists) fear the schools will be universalistic. Finally, there are those who reject both self-assured universalism and relativism — but who fear what the adherents of either view might do in the schools.

These worries should be taken seriously. Many (but not all) universalist views are intimately bound up with religious views. Constitutionally in the United States, public schools are neither deliberately to promote nor denigrate the religious beliefs of students. As James Herndon puts it, children have the same fundamental, constitutional rights as adults "not to have religious or other orthodoxy imposed upon them and the rights to respect for their beliefs, religious or otherwise."[7] So, from a constitutional point of view, teachers need to avoid both moral/religious indoctrination and the subversion of moral/religious beliefs. From an ethical point of view this should be avoided, too. As Herndon points out, respect for the dignity and reasoning powers of students requires this.[8]

Respect for the dignity and reasoning powers of students also requires teachers to resist **pronouncing** for the students that certain answers to morally challenging issues are right or wrong. This resistance is sometimes confused with another view: students, as well as their teachers — often say that what they really like about classroom discussion of moral issues is that there are no right or wrong answers. A teacher might well say that **for purposes of classroom discussion,** students will not be judged or graded in terms of whether their views are right or wrong. But this means only that other evaluative criteria will be used (such as, how carefully one articulates and supports one's views, or how well one takes other views into account). This is quite compatible with there actually being right or wrong views, even if teachers never pronounce that such and such is right or wrong. Students can be expected to try to come up with the most supportable views they can. If it is assumed (rather than argued) that no views are more supportable than any others, this task would lose its point.

One way possible way to avoid this confusion between not making pronouncements about what is right or wrong and there not being any right or wrong views is to keep insisting on the distinction whenever students or parents seem to fail to grasp it. However, there is a better way to deal with the problem. This is to make clear that the task of students is to clarify and critically examine their own views and listen carefully to and respond critically, but respectfully, to the views of others. If this is made clear, it is unlikely that students will conclude that all answers are equal — even if all are respected as equals in the inquiry. Some answers will be regarded by students as more adequate than others, even when it is not clear what the very best answer is, or even whether there is a "best" answer. For there surely are answers that are less adequate than others. For example, students may not know what is the **best** way teachers might evaluate students, but they know that failing students simply because they wear glasses, have blond hair, or have freckles is unacceptable — and they can explain why. On such matters, no authoritative figure is needed to confirm their judgment.

What this example illustrates is that, important as it is to acknowledge and respect the multicultural aspects of our society, this should not obscure the common moral ground that often cuts through our differences. It can be agreed that all schools should oppose arbitrary and capricious treatment of students. Students should be treated respectfully rather than disparagingly; kindly rather than cruelly; fairly rather than unfairly, and so on. Although the concepts of respect, kindness, and fairness are anything but precise, there are central, uncontroversial instances of each — as well as their contraries.

This is not a point restricted to the allegedly simpler world of children. It can be extended to the adult world, as well. Amy Gutmann points out that, "No culture or political community with which we are familiar gives its members good reasons for rejecting principles or practices that protect innocent people from being enslaved, tortured, murdered, malnourished, imprisoned, rendered homeless, or subject to abnormal physical pain and sickness."(189) She is not saying, of course, that innocent people are never treated in these ways. Rather, she is saying that members of

all cultures or political communities with which we are familiar have good reason to condemn such practices.

This still leaves a vast area of morality open for critical discussion. Although Gutmann accepts the notion that there are universal moral principles that cannot be reasonably rejected, these principles underdetermine particular moral practices, leaving considerable room for rich and creative variations in local customs and practices. Further, space is also left for fundamentally unresolved, yet reasonable, moral disagreement. A more detailed consideration of the example of rules of the road nicely illustrates these points.

As already noted, in the United States (and most of the world) people drive on the right hand side of the road, using the left for passing. In England it is the opposite. Both practices are instances of a more general rule that driving should be regularly on only one side of the road rather than, say, randomly on either. Of course, there are more than two ways to avoid complete randomness. Driving on the right side on Monday through Thursday and the left side Friday through Sunday is a regular pattern. Or the pattern could change monthly, and so on. None of these other possible alternatives is taken seriously because of the confusion and danger that would result from their adoption. Efficient, safe travel, we might say, is valued in both the United States and England. In regard to these ends, which rule is better — drive on the left or drive on the right? There is no obvious reason to insist that either is superior to the other (although some might nevertheless wish to argue the case). Still, both are superior to an indefinite number of other possibilities.

There are many other driving rules and practices — traffic signals, stop signs, yield signs, roundabouts, as well as common courtesies. Are roundabouts preferable to traffic signals? Informed, reasonable people might disagree about this. Even if no one would say that one is always preferable to the other, there might well be disagreement about the preferability of one to the other in particular kinds of conditions (e.g., urban vs. rural settings).

However, it should be noted that these disagreements pivot around more than one value. Presumably, safety is valued by all reasonable people. So, is efficient travel. And people may have other values (for example, driving for pleasure, driving in a relaxed manner). Taking all these values in account is difficult and it requires modification of some ends in light of others. The values of safety and efficiency alone make this clear. Absolute safety is unattainable as long as we have moving automobiles. So, we must ask, "How safe is safe enough?" Obviously, at some point, efficiency and safety compete with each other. Even though it is known that a speed limit of 55mph reduces accidents and fatalities, expressways permit 65mph. While no one seriously argues that the limit should be lowered to 40mph or raised to 100mph, many might argue for a return to 55mph, while others might argue for 75mph (closer to the actual speed of a rather high proportion of drivers). Just what the range of reasonable disagreement is can be left unspecified without affecting the main point. Whatever that range is likely to be, at some point reasonable people may strongly disagree about the values of safety and efficiency in relation to one another. But this does not mean there are no large areas of agreement about the importance of both safety and efficiency. (No one will argue seriously, for example, that a 65mph limit should be set in school zones.)

There are two other aspects of this rules of the road analogy that should be mentioned. First, any rule of the road is bound to have exceptions. One should stop at a stop sign (unless a runaway truck will ram into the back of your car....). These exceptions cannot all be stated in the rule. This would make the rule too complex to be stated even if (contrary to fact) we could list all the possibilities. The exceptions depend very much on particular circumstances, somethings relativists are fond of emphasizing. However, the justification of exceptions itself appeals to more general considerations (such as safety). This means that good judgment must accompany whatever rules there are. Furthermore, much as we might wish for a rule about rules, there is no algorithm for when a rule is no substitute for good judgment.

Second, when in England one **ought to** drive on the left hand side and conform to the local rules. When in the United States one **ought to** drive on the right hand side and conform to the (often different) local rules. Isn't this, then, a relative matter? It is. But, again, the justification for conforming to local rules appeals to more general considerations of efficiency and safety. It is just that when these considerations are applied to different locales (including their different practices), they warrant driving differently. This does not preclude **criticizing** the local rules with which one ought to comply. There is no contradiction in believing that one ought to comply with rules that themselves ought to be improved or even eliminated. But, of course, there are limits to this. (If some people were shipwrecked on the coast of a society that had a practice of enslaving shipwreck victims, they would not be obligated to comply with this practice.)

But from what perspective might local rules and practices be criticized? Amy Gutmann poses the

challenge: "Where can anyone find an Archimedian point outside any culture or political community from which to justify the overriding of local understandings?"[9] It might be thought that, without such an Archimedian point, valid criticism is not possible and universal moral aspirations are illusory. Gutmann rejects both conclusions, but with important reservations. A closer look at what she has in mind will prove useful.

DELIBERATIVE UNIVERSALISM

Amy Gutmann's specific concern is political ethics rather than ethics or morality in general, and she focuses on adults rather than children. Nevertheless, what she says has important implications for the moral education of children. As already mentioned, Gutmann characterizes a multicultural society as one that includes many cultures that significantly interact with each other.

A culture, says Gutmann, is a human community "associated with ongoing ways of seeing, doing, and thinking about things."[10] If we are to speak of distinctive cultures within a given society, there must be some striking differences among these ways of seeing, doing, and thinking about things. However, not all such differences will be moral differences. Distinctive features of language, social entertainment, and even family structure need not reflect **moral** differences at all. But even when they do, the differences need not reflect fundamental disagreements with other cultures. As rules of the road illustrate, striking differences in practices are compatible with shared fundamental values.

Although larger than a few families, a culture can be, and often is, smaller than an entire society. This explains why a country such as the United States can be referred to as a multicultural society. Furthermore, since a culture need not be defined by geographical boundaries even a small community can have multicultural features. Even individuals can, and often do, have multicultural features, particularly when their parents and other relatives have strong associations with more than one culture.[11]

One might think that once those from different cultures mix together so that geographical distinctiveness is lost, cultural distinctiveness will be lost, too. However, this has not happened in the United States, and the disappearance of richly diverse cultures into a larger, more uniform culture would be a regrettable loss. Nevertheless, the viability of a multicultural society depends on social compatibility at some level. That is, some shared values are necessary, even if the particular forms they take may sometimes differ.

However, even if the mixing of different cultures in one society need not undermine cultural distinctiveness, the perceived need for shared societal values poses another danger. More likely than cultural differences disappearing is the emergence of some forms of cultural dominance, especially in the political arena. When not all cultural voices are given a serious hearing, injustices result. At the same time, when different voices are given a serious hearing, fundamental moral disagreements on some matters can be expected to surface. Gutmann's main concern is with what to make of the fact that reasonable people may find themselves in such disagreements, especially when this seems to reflect cultural differences.

Gutmann offers four theoretical perspectives on these multicultural concerns: cultural relativism; political relativism; comprehensive universalism; and deliberative universalism. She favors deliberative universalism. Here is why.

Cultural relativism resolves ethical questions in terms of whatever dominant norms prevail in a given culture. These norms have no validity beyond the culture that adopts them. Gutmann notes two problems with this view. First, it is difficult to find enough homogeneity within a given culture to determine a set of norms comprehensive enough to address the basic ethical concerns of its members. Gutmann's cites the disagreement among Mormoms about the practice of polygamy as an example. Second, even when dominant norms can be found, cultural relativism cannot provide a standard to evaluate the justice of dominant views. Dominance settles questions of justice by virtue of assertion and power, not moral justification. But, to take an especially egregious case, social consensus within a dominant group that slavery is acceptable does not justify it.[12] Unfortunately, cultural relativism offers neither a means for resolving disagreements when social consensus breaks down nor a meaningful way of protesting against injustices the majority may inflict on the minority. These difficulties often arise within a given culture (e.g., the Mormons). They are even worse when they arise in a multicultural setting.

Political relativism makes no effort to resolve substantive disagreements by determining which of the conflicting views is actually right. Instead, it calls for procedural resolutions. Internal disagreements call for just procedures to resolve them. Impartial judicial hearings and trials by jury are attempts to provide just procedures. Gutmann agrees that just procedures are necessary for human well being, but they are hardly sufficient. Who gets to decide, judge or jurors? How are judges and jurors selected? Even if judges and jurors agree that there should be freedom from enslavement, torture, and poverty, these are basic

human goods, says Gutmann. They are not merely procedural goods. In fact, just political procedures cannot guarantee that people will not be unjustly denied such basic goods.

Political relativism, says Gutmann, "rightly endorses argument, negotiation, and adjudication among people with diverse cultural identities and conflicting moral positions",[13] but this presupposes that those who disagree **have** substantive positions from which they are arguing. Even though accepting procedural means for resolving disagreements is compatible with retaining these commitments, she says, this is no substitute for them.[14] So, political relativism still leaves us with the problem of grounding our basic moral values.

For Gutmann, the shared defect of cultural and political relativism is that they allow "too little room for recognizing the distinctively human capacity for creative and morally reflective identity, which cannot be reduced to a reflection or entailment of any given communal identity."[15] But both also issue the fundamental challenge of all forms of relativism to find an Archimedian point from which local understandings might be criticized.

Gutmann's response to this question is to reject the assumption from which it proceeds. That assumption is that no particular culture, nor any combination of cultures that interact, is internally resourceful enough to provide us with opportunities for critical self-reflection. Gutmann suggests an alternative view, a kind of **practical reasonableness**, "exercised by people who assess the moral understandings of the cultures and political communities with which they identify rather than accept them as morally binding or an unalterable aspect of their identity."[16] Critical assessment can be triggered by an awareness of conflicts among existing understandings. Nevertheless, the criteria for assessing these conflicts can come from within shared social understandings. Further, wrestling with these conflicts can give rise to new social understandings.

As already noted, Gutmann points out that some moral principles and practices do have universal features. In response to the claim that all widely accepted moral concepts and principles are of local origin, Gutmann says that the cultural relativist "must claim that the universality of these principles is a cosmic coincidence or else concede that some ethical considerations either transcend particular cultures or are immanent in every culture because of certain basic features of human nature that are, strictly speaking, intercultural."[17]

These universal, moral features of different cultures suggest to Gutmann that there are limits to what can count as a "morality" at all. Anything that might count as a morality must make room for talk about the injustices of murder, deceit, and torture, and it must be responsive to others' pain and oppression. To this she adds three requirements of **reasonableness** about social justice: 1) a merely prudential or self-regarding view is insufficient; 2) inferences and empirical claims must be challengeable by reliable methods of inquiry; and premises that are not empirically or logically supportable should, nevertheless, not be radically implausible.[18]

Finally, Gutmann points out that, even if we cannot stand outside of **all** cultures when we make moral judgments, we need not be judging from inside one and only one culture. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to all cultures on behalf of the weak, voiceless, and exploited. How could he succeed in doing this? Gutmann's answer is that doing so "depends on the possibility of justifying actions to people who do not share the same communal attachments."[19] King found such a possibility in basic human goods that "span the considerable diversity of modern cultures and support a set of ethical standards support a set of ethical standards that are universal at least for the world as we know it and human beings as we know them."[20]

So, Gutmann appeals to a kind of moral universalism. However, she is quite careful to restrict its scope. The third and fourth perspectives on multicultural concerns are comprehensive universalism and deliberative universalism. **Comprehensive universalism**, Gutmann insists, has an unattainable aspiration. It insists that there are moral principles that are sufficient to resolve all fundamental moral conflicts.

It is not entirely clear whether Gutmann is committed to the view that there **cannot** be such a set of principles, or that, as matters stand right now, there are moral issues about which people reasonably disagree. However, in practical terms, it may not matter which view she has in mind. The basic point is that we are not now in possession of a comprehensive set of universal principles that both command the assent of all reasonable people and yield univocal resolutions of issues about which there seems to be fundamental disagreement — and we have little reason to believe this will ever change.

In any case, Gutmann's view implies that, at least for all practical purposes, it is best to exchange comprehensive universalism for a less ambitious view. She offers **deliberative universalism**, a view that is committed to basic, universal moral principles that can be employed to settle many moral issues (such as murdering the innocent, arbitrary arrests, or systematic deception on the part of government), but which leave room for reasonable disagreement about some fundamental moral concerns (such as the legalization of abortion).

Even if Gutmann were to concede that the ambitions of comprehensive universalism cannot be shown to be, in principle, unattainable, her practical point would not be undermined. A fair-minded assessment of moral discourse today seems to support her notion that there are some fundamental moral issues about which reasonable people disagree — and that these disagreements are not merely factual, but more deeply moral. Acting as if this were not so invites settling such disgreements by force, indoctrination, or suppression — rather than by education.

What educational implications might the adoption of Gutmann's deliberative universalism have? It encourages forums for public deliberation. Even where there are fundamental differences, these can be discussed openly, critically, and respectfully. As Gutmann puts it, conflicts that involve fundamental moral disagreements "are best addressed and provisionally resolved by actual deliberation, the give and take of argument that is respectful of reasonable differences."[21] Of course, this approach need not be restricted to areas of fundamental disagreement. It can characterize moral discussion of less divisive issues as well.

Gutmann has adult, public forums of discussions of issues of political justice in mind. But her notion of deliberative universalism has considerable promise for the classroom as well. The benefits she describes for deliberative discussions of political justice apply equally well to classrooms designed for moral discussion:[22]

1. Forums that are well-designed for deliberation are more fair than those that use coercive or indoctrinative measures.
2. Respect is shown for all reasonable opinions.
3. Mutually respectful people are more open to changing their minds when they hear good objections to their views.
4. There is a greater chance of discovering better resolutions of differences.
5. "Deliberation encourages people with conflicting perspectives to understand each other's point of view, to minimize their moral disagreements, and to search for common ground."

These all seem to be desirable aims of moral education in the schools. The classroom is not "value-free." At the same time that it is receptive to the fundamental commitments students already have, such a classroom encourages critical reflection and reinforces open-mindedness, listening to and understanding others, respecting others, and respecting oneself. These are essential attributes for citizens in any viable, culturally diverse, society. If this is so, what better place can there be to foster them than in classrooms of students who are beginning to learn their way as members of such societies?

NOTES

1. An expanded version of this paper will appear in my *Reasonable Children* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas), forthcoming.
2. Amy Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3, summer 1993, p. 171.
3. Robert Fullinwider, "Science and Technology Education as Civic Education, " in Paul T. Durbin, ed., *Europe, America, and Technology: Philosophical Perspectives* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 206-7.
4. Robert Fullinsider, "Ethnocentrism and Education in Judgment," *Report from the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2, Winter/Spring 1994, p. 7.
5. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
6. Ibid., p. 11.
7. James Herndon, "Ethics Instruction and the Constitution," Thinking, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 9.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 188.
10. Gutmann, p. 171.
11. Ibid., p. 183.
12. Ibid., p. 178.
13. Ibid., p. 187.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 188.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 190.
18. Ibid., p. 191.
19. Ibid., p. 193.
20. Ibid., p. 193.
21. Ibid., p. 197.
22. Ibid., p. 199.

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