

# Autonomy, Democratic Community, and Citizenship in Philosophy for Children: Dewey and Philosophy for Children's Rejection of the Individual/Community Dualism

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## Abstract

Autonomy and citizenship have traditionally been conceived of in terms of rugged individualism and in opposition to dependency and community. This has led to schooling which is individualistic and competitive. Furthermore, because children are considered to be dependent, traditional schooling primarily prepares them for *future* autonomy and citizenship, by depositing information into their heads. Consequently, as Dewey and Freire argue, traditional education fails to facilitate the development of autonomous individuals because it doesn't allow students to think for themselves. In contrast, Philosophy for Children incorporates the Deweyan and Vygotskyian notion that in order to think for oneself, one must be a member of a community. However, Dewey's ideal of community is not the homogenous community, criticized by Iris Marion Young. Rather, it is a democratic community of inquiry, which is inclusive of difference and interacts with other communities. Since P4C rejects the community/individual dualism, it is able to facilitate the development of caring, reasonable, and autonomous individuals who also recognize their interconnectedness with others.

## Introduction

In classical liberal theory the autonomous self and citizenship have predominantly been conceived of in terms of rugged individualism, independency and self-sufficiency. Since community implies dependency and intersubjectivity, autonomy and citizenship have also been defined in opposition to community. This individualistic notion of the self has been very influential in shaping dominant social values, practices and institutions. In particular, it is reflected in the often antisocial and competitive nature of traditional schooling. Furthermore, since children are typically considered to be dependent, they are excluded from this individualistic ideal of autonomy and citizenship. Thus, individualism is also reflected in the dominant view that schooling is primarily preparation for future autonomy and citizenship. I will argue that schooling which assumes this individualistic notion of the self fails to facilitate the development of independent thinking, a caring and altruistic disposition, and collaboration. Consequently it promotes undesirable notions of the self, society and citizenship. In response to the problems of individualism, some schools accept a notion of the self as socially and culturally embedded. Such schools emphasize the importance of community and shared cultural meanings. I will refer to these schools as communitarian schools. However, communitarian schools have the potential to be homogenous, oppressive, and exclusive and may also counter the development of independent thinking. Thus, I will argue that both individualistic and communitarian schools are problematic because they accept an illegitimate community/individual dualism, which leads to impoverished and problematic notions of the self, society and citizenship.<sup>a</sup>

In contrast, Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children program (hereafter P4C) with its Community of Inquiry pedagogy (hereafter COI) is able to overcome these problems because it incorporates Deweyan notions

of the self and democracy, which reject the community/individual dualism. Like psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and fellow pragmatist's Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead, Dewey argues that thinking is the internalization of social processes. Thus, in order to think for oneself, one must be a member of a community. However, for Dewey, only an open, pluralistic and inquiring community can provoke reflective thinking, autonomy and personal growth. Such communities are what Dewey calls democracies. I will argue that the P4C classroom is a model of this type of democratic community. As such, it is able to facilitate the development of reflective, caring, reasonable, and autonomous individuals who also recognize their interdependence and interconnectedness with others. In order to appreciate P4C's ideals of the self, society and democratic citizenship, we must first consider the problems associated with the community/individual dualism and how these problems are reflected in traditional educational practices and ideals.

### Part 1: The Dualistic Concept of the Individual

Dewey argues that the individualistic notion of the autonomous self developed as a response to authoritarian and totalitarian societies, which force their citizens to adopt common values, practices and beliefs, while discouraging self-discovery, self-expression and individual freedom. Thus, the autonomous individual has been conceived of as one who is free to choose and act on his or her own ideal of the good. This notion of autonomy presupposes the existence of an ahistorical, pre-social human nature. When one acts in accordance with this original or authentic self they act autonomously. Other people, culture, as well as one's own bodily and emotional needs, are seen as negative influences, which can interfere with one's ability to act in accordance with their true self. This notion of autonomy is connected to a particular ideal of rationality because it is thought that Reason is the only instrument that allows individuals to transcend these negative influences so as they can objectively choose and act in accordance with their essential nature (Frazer & Lacy, 1993, p. 48). Thus, autonomy is thought to involve freedom from the interference of others, culture, the concrete world, and even one's own body. As Dewey argues, this individualism coincides with the mind/body, mind/world, subject/object, and self/other dualisms, which form the basis of traditional epistemological and metaphysical problems (Dewey, 2004, p. 279-281).

This individualistic ideal of autonomy and selfhood is characterized by *self-sufficiency* and *independence*, which imply that one is free from the influence of others. Since self-sufficiency and independence are seen as characteristic of autonomy; *dependency*, *intersubjectivity*, and *community* are seen as opposed to autonomy and maturity. Thus, while self-sufficiency and independence are seen as virtuous, dependency and interconnectedness with others are considered weaknesses. For example, Fraser and Gordon argue that "dependency" has a negative connotation in dominant discourses. Contemporary examples include "welfare dependency", "drug dependency" and "co-dependency" (1997). They cite Senator Daniel P Monihan, whose claim that dependency is "an incomplete state in life: normal in the child, abnormal in the adult" reflects the dominant view that dependency is a character flaw, abnormality, or even a psychological disorder (1997: p. 25).

Considering the fact that the human environment is a social one, the individual/community dualism appears highly problematic. Since we share limited space and resources with others we must act cooperatively in ways beneficial to society as a whole. However, if people are essentially independent, separate and self-sufficient, there is no motivation to act for the common good. As Dewey explains:

But when men act, they act in a common and public world. This is the problem to which the theory of isolated and independent conscious minds gave rise: Given feelings, ideas, desires, which have nothing to do with each other, how can actions proceeding from them be controlled in a social or public interest?

Given an egoistic consciousness, how can action which has regard for others take place? (2004, p. 285)

This is particularly problematic considering that self-sufficiency and independence are often equated with material wealth (Dewey, 1987b, pp. 249-250). Consequently, the individualistic concept of the self can actually encourage fierce competition for limited resources and result in inequality. Dewey suggests that individualistic societies actually encourage avarice and competitiveness so as to motivate individuals to contribute to the common good, which they would have no incentive to do otherwise (1987a, p. 46). This is why individualism is also associated with a contractual notion of society and citizenship, where individuals surrender some of their liberties in exchange for protection, in the form of legal rights, from the interference of others. By entering into

a social contract, citizens are provided with the right and protection to choose and act in accordance with their own idea of the good so long as they don't interfere with other's rights to do the same.

This contractual ideal of society has been widely criticized, particularly by feminists and communitarians, for normalizing a narrow and undesirable ideal of social relationships and citizenship. It has been argued that while the contractual model reflects the type of public, political, and economic relationships, which distinct and separate individuals voluntarily enter into for their own benefit, it bears little resemblance to the interconnected, caring, and often self-sacrificing and non-voluntary relationships that characterize the private or domestic sphere (Held, 1995, p. 210). Thus the contractual model seems to incorporate public/private and justice (rights)/care dualisms. This is thought to entail ideals of citizenship and society that normalize self-interest, individual conflict and competition, while devaluing and discouraging interconnectedness, care and altruism. The contractual model is often thought to encourage people to make dogmatic and aggressive demands upon others based on their absolute rights. Furthermore, it also seems to imply that we only have a negative responsibility not to interfere with others and, as such, it doesn't require or encourage individuals to act altruistically or to care for those who are most dependent.<sup>b</sup> As Elshtain states, in the contractual model "children, old people, ill and dying people who need care are nowhere to be seen" (1995, p. 266). It has also been argued that the adversarial nature of rights may actually delimit the possibility of caring and altruistic relationships. For example, Michael Sandal argues that justice is inappropriate and unnecessary in familial relationships because it can cause conflict and actually diminish feelings of love and altruism (1982, pp. 28-35).

Many feminists have also pointed out that this individualistic ideal of autonomy, society and citizenship universalises the experiences and values of white, middleclass males. Women and children are traditionally associated with the private sphere and considered to be emotional, concrete, subjective and thus incapable of performing the type of abstract reasoning that would allow them to be independent and autonomous. Linda Gordon and Nancy Fraser's analysis of the different cultural-historical constructions of "dependency", reveals how the term has been associated with particular types of people, notably children-youth, the elderly, the disabled, the poor, migrants, refugees, blacks, women and other marginalized groups. They argue that "post-industrial culture has called up a new personification of dependency: the Black, unmarried, teenaged, welfare-dependent mother" (1997, p. 39). Thus, certain individuals are defined in opposition to the individualistic notion of autonomy and citizenship. For children their dependent, irrational nature is considered acceptable and temporarily (unless they are girls, black, poor, etc.). However, for females, and other marginalized individuals, their dependency is seen as abnormal and permanent, meaning that they are perennially denied autonomy and citizenship.<sup>c</sup>

## Part 2: The Dualistic Concept of the Individual in Education

### Education for future autonomy and citizenship.

Individualism is reflected in educational practices in various ways. Probably its most influential aspect is the implication that children and young people cannot be autonomous citizens in virtue of their dependency. This position coincides with developmental theories, such as Piaget's, which suggest that children are egocentric and don't begin to develop the objective and abstract reasoning, necessary for autonomy, until around puberty. Since rationality is necessary for autonomy children are considered literally incapable of autonomy. Schooling which accepts these notions of childhood and autonomy won't be focused on providing students with opportunities to make autonomous decisions for themselves, to construct their own meanings or to participate in their communities as citizens with rights and responsibilities. Rather, an individualistic notion of the self and a traditional conception of childhood, leads to the type schooling described by White and Wyn, which is structured around the idea of "futures". Its aim is to prepare students for the choices and civic responsibilities they will have in their *future*, adult lives (White and Wyn, 2004, pp. 2-3). This still dominant educational assumption is reflected in T.H Marshall's foundational writings on citizenship:

The right to education is a genuine social right of citizenship, because the aim of education during childhood is to shape the future [italics added] adult. Fundamentally it should be regarded, not as the right of the child to go to school but as the right of the adult citizen to have been educated. (1950, p.299)

However, as White and Wyn argue, schooling which is focused on preparing students for future adulthood is problematic because it often ignores and devalues the current experiences, understandings and interests of students (2004). Such schooling assumes adult/child and adult/youth dualisms. As with other dualistic categories, child and adult are considered to be static, ahistorical and radically polarized opposites. As child is the subordinate category in the partnership it is defined as not adulthood, which means not autonomy and not citizenship, and any similarities or continuity between these dualistic categories is minimized or denied (Wyn, 1995, p. 52)<sup>d</sup>. Thus, schools often assume that the current experiences, interests and understandings of students are radically opposed to adulthood and citizenship. As such, they are not considered educationally important and may even be seen as barriers to an education focused on preparing students for future citizenship. Consequently, schooling that emphasizes futurity won't encourage students to express their own experiences and interests because they are actually seen as something to be transcended through education. As Wyn explains:

Conceptually, the positioning of youth in this way obscures the experiences of young people by relegating them to a less significant realm than those who have reached 'adult' life. Young people are seen as 'non-adults', a group who are deficit. They are citizens of the future rather than citizens in the present... The present is seen as preparation for the future, thereby devaluing the experiences young people have (Wyn, 1995, p. 52)

This dominant ideal of schooling actually seems to assume that it's only when students finish school and become fully autonomous adults that they will find the knowledge acquired at school relevant, useful and meaningful. If we accept this conception of education we should simply expect, as many adults do, that students will find schooling meaningless, boring and onerous. One of reasons students lack intrinsic motivation to learn is because school has no relevance to their current experiences and interests. This is why teachers often use extrinsic rewards and punishments, including competition, as external motivators for learning.

The sense of meaninglessness associated with schooling based on futurity is exacerbated by the fact that even future citizenship and autonomy can appear "elusive" for many students because "not all adults have equal access to citizenship" (Wyn, 1995, pp. 49- 50). As we have seen, women, migrants, refugees, indigenous people, racial or religious minorities, the disabled, and those with low socio-economic status aren't considered to fit the ruggedly independent, self-sufficient ideal of autonomy and citizenship. For students who belong to such groups, the knowledge and skills learnt in schools can appear to be, not only presently irrelevant, but permanently irrelevant. For example, in her research into young women's experiences on growing up, Buchanan asks one 18-year-old girl "what does it take to be an adult woman?" The girl responds:

I don't know if it ever happens. Oh, it takes a lot (laughs). And it depends on whether you're a boy or a girl. For a woman to be considered a total adult I think she'd have to be near the end of her life. (1993, p. 62)

For such students, education can appear to further benefit those privileged students for whom the dominant ideals of citizenship and adulthood were achievable in the first place, while perpetuating their own oppression and exclusion. As such, these students may feel that education only perpetuates their oppression and exclusion, as opposed to providing them with greater freedom to exercise autonomy.

Education that is preparation for future autonomy and citizenship also seems to support rote learning or what Paulo Freire calls "banking teaching", which actually mitigates the development of independent, reflective thinking. Rather than teaching students the reasoning and decision making skills required for autonomy, many schools prepare students for future autonomy and citizenship by exposing them to as much different knowledge, as possible. This is because there is an assumption that the capacity for reasoning somehow develops naturally and because children are considered incapable of practicing reasoning skills so as to develop them. Thus, by filling student's heads with facts, when children are able to think and decide what they really want, they will have something to think about and many different options to choose from. As we have seen students aren't really expected to currently value or apply the knowledge and methods that they learn in schools. They just need to store it away for future use. Thus, presumably the more content that schools can get students to store away now, the more schools can maximize their future capacity for autonomy. The quickest most efficient way to get students to learn content is to systematically deposit facts into their heads and then examine students to make sure that they have remembered them.

However, as Freire argues, far from teaching students to be autonomous agents, such schooling renders students perennially passive, uncritical, and uncreative, which makes them easy targets for manipulation and control by others:

The teacher's task is to organize a process, which already occurs spontaneously, to fill the students by making deposits of information, which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge. And since the people "receive" the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better "fit" for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it. (1993, p. 57)

If we want students to be autonomous, independent thinkers then we need to provide them with opportunities to critically reflect on their own interests and ideas, to solve problems, to create or transform knowledge, to shape their environment and to make decisions for themselves. As Bandam states, "The child cannot learn to make choices, even small or safe choices, without practice in choosing" (1993, p. 30). Independent thinking, autonomy, and citizenship need to be actively facilitated and practiced in schools but education focused on futurity implies that children and adolescents are incapable of such practice.

### **Educating Autonomous students.**

Since schools that focus on preparing students for future autonomy actually seem to counter the development of autonomy, many people have argued that children and youth must be treated and educated as fully autonomous citizens. Thus, child liberationists have rejected the child/adult dualism, arguing that children should have the same freedoms and rights that adults have. Those who take up this position don't normally critique the individualistic assumption that dependency is opposed to autonomy and citizenship. Rather they reject the assumption that children are essentially dependent, arguing that children's dependency is primarily a result of adults not allowing them to make decisions for themselves. The best-known defenses of this position are Farson's *Birthrights* (1974) and Holt's *Escape from Childhood* (1975):

Children are victims of terrible discrimination, prejudice, and abuse. They need protection. But the protection they need most is to have the protection of civil rights, so that they can be regarded as full persons under the law... Children would have the right to exercise self-determination in decisions about eating, sleeping, playing, listening, reading, washing and dressing. They would have the right to choose their associates, the opportunity to decide what life's goals they wish to pursue, and the freedom to engage in whatever activities are permissible for adults. (Farson, 1974, p.27)

Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning, that is, to decide what they want to learn, and when, where, how, how much, how fast, and with what help they want to learn it. To be still more specific, I want them to have the right to decide if, when, how much, and by whom they want to be taught and the right to decide whether they want to learn in a school and if so which one and for how much of the time. (Holt,1975, p.183)

A.S. Neil's *Summerhill School*, founded in 1921, is a well known example of schooling that aimed to provide its students with just this sort of freedom. Like Holt and Farson, Neil believed that if we want children to be autonomous, independent citizens then we must treat them as such (1972, p. 24). He argued that all children are essentially good and that if left to their own accord each child will develop in accordance with their own true nature. His fundamental concern was to produce happy students, and happy people are those who are free to be themselves, so long as they don't interfere with the freedom of others (1972, p. 20). This means that at Summerhill classes were not compulsory and teachers had no more authority than adults. There were school rules and procedures. However, they were decided on at weekly school meetings, in which staff and students had one vote each and students outnumbered staff (1972, p.53). Thus, in contrast to education based on futurity, schools like Summerhill recognize that children do have needs, interests, understandings and experiences that should be treated with respect and care. Furthermore, by enabling children to make their own decisions, such schools may seem to be more facilitative of the reasoning skills, self-awareness, self-expression, independence, and self-

confidence that is necessary for autonomy and citizenship.

However, such schooling has been widely criticized. The main concern is that it seems to provide students with a degree of freedom and responsibility with which they are not cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially equipped to deal with. As Meira Levinson points out, the denial of full rights to children is based on paternalistic reasons. It is thought that if children were free to do as they pleased they would make choices that would reduce their overall capacity for autonomy and happiness (1999, p. 38). For example, if students opted out of taking classes altogether, as many Summerhill students did; they may not acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for autonomy. The problem is that unless students request it, schools like Summerhill don't actively teach any skills and knowledge because this could be seen as indoctrination or coercion. Thus, such schools also seem to assume that the capacity to think for oneself develops naturally. However, in order to acquire the multifaceted and complex thinking, social, affective and practical skills and knowledge that autonomy requires teachers need to actively facilitate. As such, schools like Summerhill may actually be inimical to the development of autonomy because if students are simply able to do as they please, without ever being questioned, challenged, or presented with alternative possibilities, they are unlikely to develop the capacity for reflective, critical, creative, and self-corrective thinking. As we shall see, such thinking is initiated when one has their beliefs and actions problematized and it is developed through participating in activities which require one to solve problems and inquire.

### **Individualism, competitiveness and independency in education.**

Furthermore, even if schools like Summerhill grant students some degree of autonomy, so long as they embrace an individualistic notion of autonomy they are still problematic. Schools, in general, have often been criticized for being overly individualistic and encouraging competitiveness and egoism, which can counter the development of an altruistic and caring attitude, as well as the social skills that are normally considered necessary for autonomy and democratic citizenship.<sup>e</sup> For example, many schools tend to discourage collaborative learning and student interaction. Working with others is often considered cheating and student conversation or interaction is considered to be disruptive behavior. Since such schools incorporate a notion of academic success that emphasizes individual achievement, independent learning and self-sufficiency, students are often fiercely competitive (Slavin, 1985, pp. 5-6). Since individualistic schools promote self-sufficiency, independence, competition and individual success they also tend to disparage dependency. Many students fall behind because they are unwilling to ask questions, to seek assistance, to tell people when they are confused or upset, as all of these are indications of dependency and weakness.<sup>f</sup> As we shall see, the denigration of dependency in schools is particularly problematic if we accept Dewey and Lipman's claim that being perplexed, admitting uncertainty, and asking questions is actually what initiates thinking, and growth.

Since an individualistic, competitive environment doesn't actively encourage collaboration, communication, altruism, and empathy, individualistic schools must impose rules on students to force them to cooperate with teachers and other students. Problematically, such school rules and policies are often constructed as constraints upon student's natural inclinations to disregard or compete with each other. Consequently, students are likely to feel that these rules and procedures are oppressive. As Dewey explains:

It is sometimes assumed, explicitly or unconsciously, that an individual's tendencies are naturally purely individualistic or egotistical, and thus antisocial. Control then denotes the process by which he is bought to subordinate his natural impulses to common or public ends. Since, by conception, his own nature is quite alien to this process and opposes it rather than helps it, control has in this view a flavor of coercion or compulsion about it. Systems of government and theories of the state have been built upon this notion, and it has seriously affected educational ideals and practices. (2004, p. 23)

This could explain why even at Summerhill, where students were actively involved in constructing their own school rules, the rules were frequently and deliberately broken (Neil, 1972). While, students probably had more regard for these rules because they weren't just imposed on them by adults, the rules still tended to be defined as constraints upon the student's natural inclinations, put in place for the sake of maintaining a harmonious school community.

### Part 3: The Dualistic Concept of Community

The dominant alternative to individualism is a communitarian perspective, which emphasizes the social, cultural nature of the self. Communitarians reject the notion of a pre-social, unencumbered self that is able to freely choose between various ideals of the good. This is because they argue that our identity, desires, interests and values are shaped by our cultural environment, our relationships with others, and by the roles and positions that we occupy. Thus, some communitarians argue that the pre-social, unencumbered self of individualism would actually be empty because it wouldn't have any desires, interests, values, and understandings on which to base autonomous decisions (Weiss, 1995, p. 168). Thus, according to communitarianism, in order to be a self one must be a member of a community. This means that individuals are interconnected and dependent on each other for their own self-identity and autonomy. As such, maintaining social cohesiveness may outweigh individual rights and liberties because the community provides the very conditions that give rise to autonomous individuals in the first place.

However, it's argued that since community implies sameness and commonality it actually appears to be opposed to individuality and autonomy. For example, Iris Marion Young argues that community is intended to eradicate the otherness and atomism of social life through the sharing of subjectivities. Through sharing subjectivities it is hoped that individuals will become transparent to one and other, leading to a totalized, unified and harmonious society in which individual differences are transcended (1986, p. 10). Young denies the possibility of such intersubjectivity because in order to reveal oneself to others completely, the self would have to be a complete unity, with total self-knowledge. However, according to Young subjects are not unified and complete, but heterogeneous, decentered, and always in the process of becoming (1986, p.11). Young argues that it is the desire for such a unified, transparent notion of the self that leads to the desire for membership in homogenous communities because only in communities with others very like me can I even come close to having such a notion of self and self-other relationships. Young argues that such commonality requires the denial of differences, via the exclusion and oppression of individuals who don't fit, or won't adapt to, the dominant culture. Furthermore, in order to appear unified, the community must be defined in opposition to some excluded other. Those excluded are defined negatively by the fact that they lack the common, definitive attribute, which entitles membership in the group (Young, 1986, p. 13).

The communitarian perspective may also entail a problematic notion of citizenship. In order to develop into an autonomous self we must be able to participate in a community and in order for the community to flourish it must have a constant stream of participants. Thus, communitarian citizenship emphasizes community participation, maintaining relationships, and promoting common values and practices (Waghid, p. 2). Since individuals are considered necessarily interdependent, and as having common interests and values, communitarianism is sometimes thought to imply that legal rights and responsibilities are not fundamental, especially since they can be adversarial and diminish the caring, altruistic relationships needed for communal life. However, overemphasizing care, altruism and interdependency, while downplaying justice and independence is just as problematic as individualism's reversed dualism. For example, many feminists have pointed out that the caring, trusting, and interdependent nature of personal relationships is often what enables them to become exploitative and oppressive (Elshtain, 1995). This has been particularly the case for women. The ideal that women are naturally caring and altruistic has legitimized keeping women in the home to care for children and husbands, without pay, and often while sacrificing their own needs for the good of the family and society. For women, putting oneself first is often considered to be selfish, uncaring and unfeminine. Thus, many feminists are understandably reluctant to downplay the idea of legal rights, which women have used to gain emancipation, in favour of interdependence and care, which have actually been used to exploit and oppress women (Kiss, 1997, pp. 6-7).

### Part 4: The Dualistic Concept of Community in Education

Many schools and educational theorists emphasize the importance of community and promote the participatory, altruistic and caring attributes of communitarian citizenship. For example, Amitai Etzioni proposes a type of communitarian schooling as a remedy to what he sees as the problematic atomism of modern society:

At present, America provides few opportunities for shared experience and for developing shared

values and bonds among people from different racial, class and regional backgrounds. One of the major reasons for the low consensus-building capacity of American society is that schools are locally run. They do not subscribe to a common national curriculum, and they transmit different sets of regional, racial, or class values. (Etzioni, 1993, p. 114)

Unfortunately, often the ideal of school community promoted, including that promoted by Etzioni, incorporates the homogeneity and exclusivity characteristic of the dualistic notion of community. As Kathleen Abowitz argues:

“School community” can signal an escape from the public sphere to islands of like-minded (like-classed? like-raced?), ideological spheres of sameness and security. Community rhetoric can conceal erasure of difference in the narrowing and purifying of public domains. (Abowitz, 1999, p. 143)

This means that while communitarian schools may emphasize collaboration and care for others who are like oneself, they may encourage intolerance for differences because students may feel that they have the right to force others to assimilate or to exclude them if they threaten social cohesiveness. Thus, communitarian ideals of schooling may encourage just as much aggressiveness and disregard for others as individualistic schools (Waghid, 2005).

The emphasis on social cohesion through creating a sense of tradition, communal values and common knowledge can also be seen to legitimize the inculcating of students with the dominant knowledge and values of their society (Keller, 2002). With common beliefs and values then education should transmit the dominant social. This is sometimes implied by Etzioni:

Reference here is to the numerous values we share as a community – such as the inappropriateness of racial and gender discrimination, the rejection of violence, and the desirability of treating others with love, respect and dignity. If we would all *transmit* [italics added] to the young in schools only these shared values, our world would be radically improved. (1993, p. 97)

Furthermore, the communitarian ideal of the self as socially situated also implies that students may not be able to transcend their situatedness so as to critique or revise the ideas, interests and ends that they internalize from their society. Thus, communitarian ideals may be just as facilitative of rote learning as individualism.

### Dialogue as a pedagogical tool.

Rather than transmit dominant social values and knowledge to students, some more progressive, communitarian-influenced pedagogies emphasize student’s *discovering* or *constructing* common knowledge. Such pedagogies commonly utilize dialogue as the means through which individual students can communicate across differences and attain the consensus and intersubjectivity thought necessary for communal life. Elizabeth Ellsworth argues that educators utilize what she calls communicative dialogue, because they believe it is a “neutral vehicle that carries speaker’s ideas and understandings back and fourth” (1997, p. 49). As such:

Dialogue in education is assumed to be capable of everything from constructing knowledge to resolving problems, to ensuring democracy, to securing understanding, to teaching, to alleviating racism or sexism, to arriving at ethical and moral claims, to enacting our humanity, to fostering community and connection. (1997, p. 85)

However, like Young, Ellsworth argues that such communication and intersubjectivity is impossible because of our essential differences. According to Ellsworth, dialogue cannot enable individuals to freely and completely transmit and receive each other’s meanings because “the rugged terrain between speakers that it [dialogue] traverses makes for a constantly interrupted and never completed passage” (1997, p. 49). In order to gain consensus, in spite of irreducible differences between individuals, dialogue can often involve aggressive argumentation as a means for individuals to persuade others to accept their opinions. As such, classroom dialogue is frequently criticized for being just as aggressive, competitive and adversarial as individualistic learning practices.

Furthermore, Ellsworth argues that the procedures of dialogue are not neutral but are social-political constructs that aim to serve particular interests and purposes. Thus, the procedures of dialogue shape and influence the way meanings are received and communicated (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 85). This means that those who belong to the dominant culture of the dialogical community will probably be better able to persuade others of their opinions because the procedures of dialogue will reflect their values, interests and methods. Thus, the concern is that



such pedagogy has the potential “to silence some students while giving advantage to those capable of eloquently and rationally articulating their points of view” (Waghid, 2005, p. 325). Some students (especially minority students) may either be unable to participate or they will be forced to consent to the views of the dominant group. If they refuse to submit they are likely to be seen as unreasonable and undemocratic.

### **Communitarian citizenship and service learning.**

Since the communitarian notion of citizenship emphasizes contributing to one’s community it implies some type of service learning, which involves students doing some type of community service or volunteer work, normally as a part of their civics education (Kymlicka, p. 272).<sup>g</sup> For example, Etzioni argues that national service would be an essential part of a communitarian education because it would encourage the altruism, cooperation, participation, and the “consensus-building capacities” required for communal life:

National service would also provide a strong antidote to the ego-centered mentality as youth serve shared needs.... A year of national service could serve as an important community builder because it would act as a grand sociological mixer... [It would also encourage] the virtues of hard work, responsibility and cooperation to name a few. (1993, pp. 114-115)

However, traditional service-learning programs can promote an undesirable notion of citizenship as the uncritical and obedient performance of prearranged tasks. Such service learning doesn’t actively facilitate the development of citizens, who are critical, reflective, and creative transformers of their environment because it doesn’t normally enable students to think for themselves, to critique or analyze social problems or to bring about real social change.<sup>h</sup> In fact, many of the tasks that students are required to perform often perpetuate the problems they are responses to rather than solve them (e.g. feeding the homeless) (Kahne and Whetsteimer, 1996, p.4). Furthermore, as Janie Ward argues, traditional service learning doesn’t necessarily facilitate the ideals of altruism, care, collaboration, and respect for others that Etzioni and others intend it to. This is because the relationship between students and those they are helping is a hierarchical one of “giver/receiver”, where the recipient is seen as passive and dependent. (1997, p. 144).

Thus, communitarian educational ideals can be just as problematic as individualism. I don’t believe that either the notions of individuality or community themselves are problematic. Rather it is the assumption that the individual and community are mutually exclusive ideals that is problematic.<sup>i</sup> While there certainly are existing communities that fit Young’s description of community, there are also communities that are supportive of individual growth, freedom and differences. Thus, I believe that what is needed is a reconstruction of these dualistic and essentialist conceptualizations of community, difference, the individual, autonomy, and dependency, such as can be found in the writings of John Dewey and in *Philosophy for Children*. It is because Dewey and *Philosophy for Children* reformulate these dualisms that they can overcome the problems associated with individualism and communitarianism in schools and offer a pedagogy and ideal of community that is facilitative of individual differences and autonomy, as well interconnectness and interdependency between individuals.

## **Part 5: Dewey’s Rejection of the Community/Individual Dualism**

### **Dewey’s autonomous self.**

According to Dewey, the self develops through reconstructing experience. Dewey’s notion of experience is based on Darwin’s idea of an organism adapting itself and its environment in order to flourish and survive. When an individual is unable to respond to a situation in such a way as to have their needs or desires met, they must reconstruct the situation into a meaningful, useful experience. Importantly, the individual is also a part of the situation and consequently they are also changed. Thus, the individual not only transforms their environment, they also adapt their impulses, dispositions, beliefs, and actions so that they will co-operate with the environment and produce desired ends. The individual internalizes those actions, ideas, beliefs and dispositions, that it finds useful for reconstructing experience. The individual will also try to transform or eliminate from the self those actions and beliefs that are shown to be unsuccessful for achieving its ends. This process of internalization is how individuals develop habits, which enable them to interact with the world more effectively, efficiently

and meaningfully. For Dewey, habits constitute the self and guide our further selection and reconstruction of experience:

All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they are the will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity. (Dewey, 1930, p. 25)

Thus, for Dewey, the self develops through an interaction of internal aspects of the self and external aspects of the environment:

Honesty, chastity, malice, peevishness, courage, triviality, industry, irresponsibility, are not private possessions of a person. They are working adaptations of personal capacities with environing forces. All virtues and vices are habits which incorporate objective forces. They are interactions of elements contributed by the make-up of an individual with elements supplied by the out-door world. (Dewey, 1930, p. 16)

The self is not merely determined by external forces but neither is it able to transcend its environment so as to choose and act in accordance with some essential self (Dewey, 1958, p. 37). Since habits are the products of the self's interactions with its environment, a transcendental self would be an empty self or no a self at all. However, individuals still have self-determination. They just can't critically reflect on and revise all aspects of their self at the same time. Individuals have *particular* habits and aspects of their environment problematized, and part of what makes them problematic is that they conflict with other stable features of the self and environment (Dewey, 1930, p. 38). It is these unproblematic, stable aspects that guide our revision of problematic habits and situations. As such, all aspects of our character have the potential to be critiqued and revised. They just can't all be revised at once because the individual would have no habits to initiate and guide such revision in the first place.

Thus, growth is the constant development and transformation of habits (Dewey, 2004, p.47). Growth is continuous because with every experience the individual and their environment are changed, which in turn causes the individual to interact with the world differently. Consequently the individual will then encounter more unfamiliar situations leading to further reconstruction and growth. Thus, like Young, Dewey believes that the self is never complete and static but is always in a process of becoming (Dewey, 2004, p. 40).

If the reconstruction of experience is how the self shapes its own interests, needs, and environment, then autonomy is the ability to effectively reconstruct experience. For Dewey, the capacity for meaningfully reconstructing experiences is the capacity for reflective thinking or inquiry. Inquiry is the capacity to reflect on the situation, so as to articulate the problem, formulate a desired end, develop and implement a means to bring about this desired end, and internalize successful means so as they can be used for the efficient reconstruction of future experience. Thus, inquiry enables us to act purposefully, produce our own meanings, shape our own environment, and control our own growth, rather than have them determined by others, our environment or natural impulses (Dewey, 1930, p. 304). This is why Dewey states, "If attention is centered upon the conditions which have to be met in order to secure a situation favorable to effective thinking, freedom will take care of itself" (2004, p. 292).

For Dewey, freedom doesn't entail freedom from the influences of others or culture. Since the human environment is a social one, an individual's actions must take into account other people's activities and interests because "they are the indispensable conditions of the realization of his own tendencies" (1916, pp. 11-12). Others can be obstacles, constraints, guides, and assistants to our own interactions with the world, as well as beneficiaries or victims of our actions. Thus, in order for each individual self to act autonomously and grow, there must be mutual adaptation, communication, cooperation, and a coordination of interests and actions (Dewey, 1930, p. 17). This gives rise to conjoint actions and communal inquiry as the means to working through diverse and conflicting perspectives so as to construct common meanings and practices that are inclusive of multiple perspectives. In communal inquiry individuals identify a common problem, collaboratively construct a solution, apply the solution and jointly undergo the consequences, resulting in them possessing a common meaning, a shared value, and a similar change in habit or character (Dewey, 2004, p. 11-15). These common meanings or practices are what Dewey calls culture and they are necessary for autonomous action because in order to effectively interact with our social-cultural environment we must act in ways that accommodate other people. Culture includes language, science, art, religion, technology, educational practices, public institutions, political structures, social

values, family structures and domestic practices, etc (Dewey, 1939, p. 6). This means that the actions and beliefs that we internalize, and which become our habits, are necessarily mediated by, and inclusive of others. However, contrary to individualism, for Dewey, the social-cultural nature of the self is not a barrier to our being autonomous. It is actually what enables us to act autonomously in a social environment (2004: p.4, 1930, p. 17).

Not only is communal inquiry necessary for constructing the common meanings that are necessary for autonomy. Dewey argues that communal inquiry is actually a pre-condition of private or individual inquiry. Dewey's notion of the social origins of thinking is similar to psychologist Lev Vygotsky's theory of self-development (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky rejects traditional psychological theories that take individual psychological processes, what Vygotsky refers to as *intrapsychological* functions, as basic. He emphasizes the importance of what he called *interpsychological* functions, which are the dynamics that occur when individuals engage in concrete, social interaction, especially dialogue. Vygotsky believed that the participants in social interaction internalize the functions and processes of the interaction and consequently they become intrapsychological functions (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27). In particular, Vygotsky noticed that when trying to solve problems, young children talk to themselves in the same way that individuals talk to each other in conjoint activity so as to give each other directions, encouragement, discouragement and to coordinate their actions. By talking to themselves in this way, children are able to more purposefully control their thinking and actions. Thus, this egocentric speech is children thinking aloud. According to Vygotsky, egocentric speech is the internalization of social processes and communication with others. As such, by engaging in activities with others that they could not perform by themselves, children internalize the habits and dispositions necessary to perform these tasks independently. Vygotsky refers to the space between what children can do with others and what they can do by themselves as the "zone of proximal development". This is the space in which children learn to act and think independently by being "scaffolded" or supported by others (1978, p. 104).

Prior to Vygotsky, Dewey, argued that thinking is the internalization of the processes that characterize communal inquiry or dialogue. It is when we encounter different others that we are driven to critically compare alternative views, search for reasons to justify our beliefs, construct arguments and self-correct. This is why Dewey argues that logic is not a set of absolute and apriori principals. For Dewey, logic arises in *dialogue* and is then formalized for use in guiding future inquiries. Private inquiry is an internal dialogue, a type of soliloquy, where we construct reasons and criteria so as compare opposing viewpoints and justify a position to our own critical selves. Thus, Dewey argues that dialogue is a precondition for thought:

...soliloquy is the product and reflex of converse with others; social communication not an effect of soliloquy. If we had not talked to others and they with us, we should never talk to and with ourselves. (1958, p. 170)

However, Dewey maintains that "soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought", because it is subjective, situated and limited, whereas autonomous thinking is that which takes into account the needs and perspectives of others, as communal inquiry does (1927, p. 218).

Thus, according to Dewey, we are necessarily dependent on each other for the capacity to inquire and for the common meanings that are necessary for autonomy and growth. Consequently, he rejects individualism's negative notion of dependency. As Dewey explains, it is children's greater dependency, as well as their plasticity, which enables them to grow at such a rapid pace. Dewey accepts that dependency denotes a lack of control or ability in some regard. However, this lack of ability must be compensated for by some other ability because if dependency were merely a sign of "helplessness" and "impotency" it would never be accommodated by "growth in ability, as it so often is" (2004, p. 41). For example, while children's dependency is a result of their lack of physical ability, they compensate for this with an impressive social capacity. As Dewey explains, "children are themselves marvelously endowed with the power to enlist the cooperative attention of others" and "a flexible and sensitive ability to vibrate sympathetically with the attitudes and doings of those about them" (2004, p. 42). Furthermore, dependency is the "chief influence" in promoting the caring, empathetic and attentive dispositions that are essential for communal life and growth. As Dewey states, "the presence of dependent and learning beings is a stimulus to nurture and affection" (2004, p. 44). Thus, dependency is not merely passive but is interactive (Sprod, 2001, p. 83). It has a dual role in facilitating social interaction. It requires one to develop social and affective capacities so as to enlist the assistance of others, and it initiates the caring and altruistic dispositions needed by those who can assist. Since communal inquiry, which enables growth and autonomy, requires both

these social capacities, Dewey actually describes dependency as a “power” and sees the individualistic notion of the self as extremely problematic:

From a social standpoint, dependency denotes a power rather than a weakness; it involves interdependence. There is always a danger that increased personal independence will decrease the social capacity of an individual. In making him more self-reliant, it may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone – an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remedial suffering of the world. (2004, p. 42)

### Dewey’s democratic community of inquiry.

While Dewey’s self is a communal self, his notion of community is not the homogenous, exclusive ideal of community described by Young. Dewey’s notion of community necessitates individual differences. It follows from the Deweyian notion of the self that every individual is unique because each experience that gives rise to the formation of the self is unique. Thus, no two selves can be identical (Dewey, 1983, pp. 170-177). Furthermore, since the Deweyian self is continuously growing it can never have complete self-knowledge or make itself completely known to others. Thus, we are always somewhat unfamiliar and unknowable to each other, as well as to ourselves. However, in contrast to Young and Ellsworth, Dewey doesn’t think that individual differences eliminate the possibility of communal inquiry and intersubjective meanings. Rather, it is because we are unique that all interactions with others have the potential to be problematic experiences, which provoke inquiry and growth (Dewey, 1939, p. 109; Garrison, 1996, p. 445). This is why Dewey states that “a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means to its own growth” (2004, p. 294). Furthermore, for Dewey, the aim of inquiry is not to simply deposit our ideas into other people’s heads. Dewey’s communal inquiry is a creative process in which our ideas interact with the ideas of others so that they are all transformed into something new, but common and inclusive of each individual’s perspective (Garrison, 1996, pp. 446-445). It is only because common meanings incorporate the different perspectives of community members that individuals are able to use them to autonomously interact with their social-cultural environment. If they only reflected the needs of one individual they would be useless for reconstructing the social-cultural environment, which consists of many diverse individuals. Thus, common meanings that are derived from very diverse communities will probably be more useful to individuals than those that are the products of homogenous communities, because they incorporate more perspectives and consequently should have wider applicability.

For these reasons, Dewey argues that democratic communities, those communities which are most facilitative of inquiry, autonomy, and growth, are communities of “radical inclusion” (Sullivan, 2002, p. 226). They are multicultural and global. By global community Dewey doesn’t mean a melting pot, where individuals must surrender prior commitments to local and national communities. Dewey states that individuals may be members of various communities but democratic communities are those that have “varied points of shared common interests” and maintain open lines of communication with other communities, which can provoke them to constantly reconstruct themselves, progress, and become more inclusive and diverse (2004, pp. 82-83). For Dewey, anything that blocks communication and inquiry across communities and cultures, such as hatred and fear, is undemocratic because it impedes freedom and growth:

Intolerance, abuse, calling of names because of differences of religion or politics or business, as well as because of race, color, wealth, or degree of culture are treason to the democratic way of life. For everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and fractions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life. Merely legal guarantees of civil liberties of free belief, free expression, free assembly are of little avail if in daily life freedom of communication, the give and take of ideas, facts, experiences is choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear, and hatred. (1987c, pp. 227-228)

Young considers a similar ideal of community but rejects it because it’s unclear to her how such different communities would interact (Young, 1986, p. 19). Dewey intends for them to interact through the same type of inquiry that characterizes the social interaction within democratic communities. Thus, by democracy, Dewey doesn’t mean merely a type of government but a way whole way of life that supports each individual’s ability to

engage in continuous, collaborative inquiry with diverse others in and between all aspects of their life, including the political, educational, social, familial, and cultural.

Dewey's notion of community also contrasts Young's description of communities as privileging face-to-face relations, which leads communities to exclude individuals who don't share their immediate temporal and spatial location (Young, 1986, p. 2). For Dewey, one's environment doesn't necessarily consist of their immediate physical space and time. As Dewey explains:

Some things which are remote in space and time from a living creature, especially a human creature, may form his environment even more truly than some of the things close to him. The things with which a man varies are his genuine environment. Thus, the activities of an astronomer vary with the stars at which he gazes or about which he calculates...The environment of an antiquarian, as an antiquarian, consists of the remote epoch of human life with which he is concerned, and the relics, inscriptions, etc., by which he establishes connections with that period. (Dewey, 2004, p. 11)

This means that it is not only in each individual and community's best interests to engage with diverse individuals and communities in different locations, and even times, it is actually necessary to do so. Since we can share environments with them, we need to take them into consideration and engage with them, their ideas, needs, and activities if we are to act autonomously. As Dewey explains:

The weal and woe of any modern state is bound up with that of others. Weakness, disorder, false principles on the part of any state are not confined within its boundaries. They spread and infect other states. The same is true of economic, artistic and scientific advances... In such ways as these, internationalism is not an aspiration but a fact, not a sentimental ideal but a force. Yet these interests are cut across and thrown out of gear by the traditional doctrine of exclusive national sovereignty. (1939, p.118)

Dewey recognized that the development of "commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and immigration" during his lifetime further necessitated and enabled communication between individuals living in different spaces, and now we have more sophisticated technology, mass media, and an increasingly global economy as well (Dewey 2004, p. 21; Dewey, 1987c, p. 261).

### **The Deweyian democratic citizen.**

Thus, for Dewey, democratic citizenship entails the *right* and *responsibility* to participate in and facilitate such democratic communities because this is the means to one's own freedom and growth and the freedom and growth of society as a whole. For Dewey, democratic citizen is an individual who engages with others in inquiry in order to meaningfully reconstruct their social-cultural environment so that it is more facilitative of growth and freedom. The social work and philosophical writings of Dewey's friend and fellow pragmatist Jane Addams exemplifies this ideal of democratic citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Addams argues that individuals have a responsibility and a right to interact with others, especially those outside their own immediate family and cultural community. Like Dewey, Addams also emphasized "international interdependence" and developed and participated in communities that crossed national borders (Whipps, 2004, p. 130).<sup>k</sup> Addams believed that interacting with those most different to ourselves leads to the and broadening of our own experiences. This is why in 1889, Addams, along with Ellen Gates Starr and other young, middle class, educated women created the Hull House settlement in the middle of Chicago's poorest, industrial area where new migrants made up eighty percent of the population. Addams saw that rapid industrialization and immigration had lead to huge increases in poverty and inequality because society had not been reconstructed to accommodate these changes. Addams' believed that in order to assist with such social reconstruction, she would need to position herself amongst those who were suffering the negative consequences of these social-economic changes and engage with them in collaborative inquiries. Only then could she gain any understanding of the social-cultural environment that she was trying to reconstruct and make sure that the needs and interests of those affected were incorporated in the solutions constructed. Thus, the Hull House residents, members of the neighborhood, and individuals and groups from outside the immediate neighborhood created a Deweyian like, democratic community of inquiry. The results of this real life communal inquiry are quite astounding, including significant changes in juvenile law, industrial law, public education and health services, women's suffrage, civil rights and unionism, as well as the creation of recreational spaces, services for working girls and mother's pensions. As Addams and the other Hull House residents had intended, they were

able to develop new skills, attitudes and knowledge which enabled them, as well as society as a whole, to more efficiently and meaningfully interact with their environment. Their theory, writings and research, as well as that of other scholars who were visitors at Hull House, including Dewey, lead to new theory, research and even whole academic fields, in the areas of geography, education, medical science, philanthropy, the social sciences, philosophy, politics, and law. Residents from Hull House went on to occupy many influential and important political, academic and official positions in diverse areas. Addams herself was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1931 (Addams 2002, Whipps, 2004).

In contrast to individualism, such democratic citizens are not purely rationalistic, self-sufficient and disinterested in the welfare of others. The capacity and willingness to engage with different people in collaborative inquiries and transform one's environment requires a host of social, intellectual and affective abilities and attitudes, including courage, open-mindedness, care, empathy, reasonableness, and creativity. As Addams explains, the neighborhood residents were not always welcoming to the interferences of women, who they saw as representing a class responsible for, or benefiting from, their oppression. Those members of the neighborhood who let these strangers, potential oppressors, into their homes and lives also took an enormous risk. Thus, the ability to interact with others, especially very different others, requires courage. This is not only because the other may respond to us with hostility and aggression, but because they have the potential to make us realize our own situatedness, biases, misconceptions and weaknesses, which can compel us to question things about ourselves that are so familiar and comforting. As Garrison explains in relation to Dewey, "such openness [to different others] inevitably involves everything from mild discomfort, to unsettling awkwardness, to risking our very self-identity" (1996, p. 447). The fear and risk taking involved in communal inquiry can be decreased by engaging with others in a caring, open-minded, reasonable, and empathetic manner, which builds trust and respect. Furthermore, unless we are open to the other, empathize with them, and are responsive to their reasons, we will not be able to adequately reconstruct the situation or be transformed by the experience. Addams suggests that her social ethics is an extension of the feminine, caring, maternal role that women perform within the domestic sphere. It was the loss of some of women's roles in the home due to industrialization that led Addams to claim that women now had to apply their caring, altruistic capacities in the greater community (Addams, 2002). Thus, like many contemporary feminists, Addams argues that democratic citizenship and inquiry must incorporate aspects of the connected, caring relationships, which characterize the feminine, private, sphere.<sup>1</sup> Addams social ethics also preempts contemporary feminists in that she doesn't set care up in opposition to rights but sees the two as operationally codependent.<sup>m</sup> In order to exercise our right and responsibility to inquire with diverse others we must engage with them in a caring, sympathetic manner.

## Part 6: Autonomy, Democracy and Citizenship in Philosophy for Children

### Thinking for oneself.

Since the Deweyian ideal of the autonomous citizen is not opposed to dependency it is not constructed in opposition to children, young people, and other so called dependents. Thus, P4C, which incorporates this Deweyian ideal of the autonomous citizen, is not a pedagogy that focuses on preparing children and young people for *future* autonomy and citizenship. P4C assumes that children, regardless of their greater dependency, are capable of thinking for themselves and constructing their own meaning. However, unlike *Summerhill*, P4C doesn't assume that if children are left to their own accord they will be entirely capable of making decisions that are in their best interests. Since it is through experience that the capacity for inquiry and autonomy develops, and children have less life experience than adults, children will normally be less autonomous than adults (Dewey, 1984b, p. 59). Thus, there are differences between adults and children but these differences are differences of degree. It's not the case that adults have full autonomy and children completely lack it. As we have seen, for Dewey, there is no such thing as absolute autonomy or maturity because growth is continuous (2004, p. 40). Autonomy, and thus the capacity for citizenship, develops gradually and constantly, as well as differently by different individuals. As such, in contrast to traditional pedagogies, P4C rejects the child/adult dualism but not by denying that there are any differences between children and adults. What P4C denies is the dualistic construction of these categories, which implies that they are polarized, essential and absolute.

Since children can have some degree of autonomy, they have a right to practice it. However, since this capacity is underdeveloped and can always be improved, even in adults, schools have a responsibility to actively facilitate the child's development of autonomy. Thus, schools must provide students with both the opportunity to be autonomous, as well as with an environment and content that scaffolds the development of the skills and dispositions that autonomy requires. As we have seen, both the practice and the development of autonomy involves participating in communal inquiries. Communal inquiry is the means through which individuals construct their own meaning, control their own growth, understand and shape their social-cultural environment, and act autonomously. However, it is also the means through which the self grows and develops the habits required for effective inquiry and autonomy in the first place. Thus, like all people, children have a right to inquire with others in order to both practice and develop their autonomy (Lipman, 2003, p. 203; Bandman, 1993). This right entails that society, particularly schools, have a responsibility to provide children with opportunities to inquire with others. P4C fulfills this responsibility by transforming the classroom into a community of inquiry, as well as by providing students with philosophical content and tools to develop their capacity for communal inquiry, consequently enabling them to be more autonomous citizens (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, p. 119).

A P4C class normally begins with the shared reading of a narrative containing philosophical problems and thinking, which are intended to provoke puzzlement. As Dewey explained, it is such puzzlement that initiates inquiry. Students are then asked to formulate their responses to the text, preferably in the form of questions. As a group, the community chooses a question to be investigated through a collaborative dialogue. Thus, student's questions set the agenda for the inquiry, the aim of which is to work through these puzzlements or problems until students gain some shared sense of clarity, a solution, or meaningfulness, which either progresses the inquiry to a further perplexing issue or which provides a fallible settlement.

Thus, in contrast to the rote learning that can characterize individualistic and communitarian classrooms, the P4C classroom enables students to reflect on their own "beliefs, attitudes and unreflective opinions, irrespective of where they came from, or of how adults, from their more sophisticated perspectives, might judge them" (Splitter & Sharp 1995, p. 169). Thus, unlike learning based on futurity, in the P4C classroom children's current beliefs and experiences are educationally valuable because they are the "raw ingredients" of inquiry, rather than something to be overcome through education (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 169). As such, the P4C classroom enables students to develop a sense of *self-awareness* and the capacity for *self-expression*, which are necessary for autonomy. In order to act in accordance with one's own needs and interests and be able to shape one's own character and social-cultural environment, one must have some understanding of themselves and some capacity to express themselves to others. The communal nature of the P4C classroom facilitates self-awareness and self-expression better than individualistic schools because it requires students to both share their perspectives with others, as well as be exposed to the perspectives of others. This provokes students to reflect upon their own perspectives, experiences, and character and develop a sense of themselves as unique and distinct from others, as well as similar to and connected to others (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 32).

However, contrary to schools like Summerhill, which seem to imply that self-awareness and self-expression are sufficient for autonomy, in the P4C classroom autonomous individuals are those who have a *critical* self-awareness and the ability and willingness to *reconstruct* themselves and their environment. The purpose of reflecting on and expressing one's opinions in the COI is to critically evaluate how such opinions may be developed into possible means for reconstructing a problem common to all community members. However, the often unreflective beliefs that children bring to the inquiry may be very subjective, ill founded, and inflexible and are unlikely to produce autonomous interaction with a changing, multicultural, social environment. This is why Splitter and Sharp refer to children's initial opinions as the "raw ingredients" of inquiry because "the goal of inquiry is to help children transform these ingredients into a more comprehensive world-view, through reflective and self-correcting dialogue; that is, through the activity of the community of inquiry" (1995, p. 169).

The P4C classroom helps students transform their unreflective ideas into more reasonable, autonomous judgments in several ways. When students are exposed to the different perspectives of others their initial beliefs are problematized and they recognize that the realization of their own ideas is dependent upon other people who can support or impede them. As we have seen, this is what provokes inquiry as a means of weighing up alternative perspectives and justifying a position. The interaction of different thinking styles in communal inquiry also draws attention to the processes of thinking themselves, enabling them to be critiqued, improved, and

standardized, leading to more effective inquiry. The philosophical content, language and methods utilized in the also facilitate inquiry. Philosophy's logical dimension focuses on the nature of thinking and argumentation, problem solving, and conceptual analysis. Furthermore, the philosophical content of the dialogue also enables students to discuss issues like the nature of autonomy, free will, personal identity, the self, the problem of other minds, the mind-body problem, values, and the nature of reality and experience, which helps students gain an understanding of themselves and their relation to their social-cultural environment. Thus, the P4C classroom encourages and assists children to transform their unreflective beliefs and methods into judgments that are more reasonable, justified, have been critically compared to alternatives, adhere to standards of good thinking, draw on philosophical knowledge and methods, and which are more objective because they incorporate the perspectives and interests of others. Such judgments better enable children to autonomously reconstruct themselves and their social-cultural environments than do beliefs that have not been subject to such communal, philosophical inquiry. Furthermore, in accordance with Dewey and Vygotsky, participation in the COI enables children to develop the capacity for independent, reflective thinking because they 'apply the practices of open inquiry to their own thinking through the process of internalization' (Cam, 1997, p. 146).

### **The community of inquiry.**

Thus, P4C rejects the individualistic notion that student collaboration and dialogue are impediments to the development of independent thinking and applies the Deweyian idea that community is actually a precondition for autonomy (Lipman, 2003, p. 25; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 242; Cam, 1997, p. 144; Sprod, 2002, p. 148). Consequently, P4C is able to do what communitarian and individualistic schools struggle to, which is facilitate the development of autonomous, independent students, who also recognize their *interdependence* and *interconnectedness* with others (Sharp, 1991). COI participants realize that they are dependent on others for their capacity to think for themselves, as well as for their ability to construct justified, common meanings, both of which are necessary for autonomy. However, unlike communitarian schools, the communal nature of the P4C classroom doesn't entail homogenization and the loss of the individual because, as Dewey explained, it is the interaction of individual differences that gives rise to inquiry and the intersubjective meanings that will enable students to autonomously interact with their social-cultural environment. This is why Dewey argued that "the intermingling in the school of youth of different races, different religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment" (Dewey, 2004, p. 21). Thus, the classroom COI aims to be inclusive of cultural and individual differences.

As such, the COI doesn't require participants to merely adapt to the ideas and methods of the dominant group or be excluded, as other classrooms or schools that emphasize community often do. The COI procedures, which are largely logical in nature, are not absolute and apriori. They are those practices that classroom communities, or other communities, have found effective in past inquiries and which have consequently been formalized so that they can be used to guide future inquiry. Thus, they are socially-culturally constructed and fallible.<sup>11</sup> This means that the COI procedures should reflect the diverse perspectives of the communities from which they evolve and the COI participants are always able to critically reflect on, and reconstruct, both the products and means of dialogue if they find them exclusive or ineffective. This contrasts Ellsworth's description of classroom dialogue as resembling the continuity editing of classical Hollywood cinema. Continuity editing's function is to hide the artificial, constructed nature of the film by making the transition to another appear seamless and natural. Ellsworth claims that in the same way, classroom dialogue often conceals its own culturally constructed processes in order to make the transition from one perspective to another appear natural and unproblematic (1997, p. 89). However, as with Dewey's community, the aim of the COI is not to transmit ideas seamlessly from one individual to another but to have diverse ideas interact and be transformed into new, more common, intersubjective ideas (Sharp, 1991, p. 35). Thinking that is critically aware of its own processes and situatedness is more refined and inclusive and consequently will be more conducive of inter-subjective meanings. Thus, the COI actually values a diversity of thinking styles because of the fact that they make the processes of dialogue conspicuous and open to philosophical investigation. To continue with Ellsworth's cinema metaphor, the COI probably bears more resemblance to expressionist cinema, which uses highly stylized cinematic techniques to purposefully draw attention to its own constructedness and artificiality.



Since COI participants recognize the importance of interdependency and individual differences, the COI also facilitates the development of care, empathy, open-mindedness, reasonableness, respect for others, as well as a host of other affective, intellectual and social skills that are necessary for autonomy and citizenship. Students realize that their own growth and autonomy, as well as that of others, is dependent on all students being able to participate in the classroom inquiry. Thus, they must build a classroom environment that facilitates the *trust*, *confidence* and *courage* that is necessary if students are to risk revealing their ideas and feelings in a public inquiry, which could lead to self-transformation (Sharp, 1991, p. 33). Such an environment is one where students feel that their ideas will be taken seriously and treated with care and respect. In the COI students display such respect and care by attentively listening to and empathizing with each other, as well as by building on each other's ideas. They must also be reasonable, which means not only providing reasons to support their own claims but also being willing to self-correct when the reasons of others impel them to. Students can display care by offering assistance to those struggling to understand, express themselves, or construct an argument. They also learn the importance of being caring and considerate when criticizing, producing counter examples, and transforming another's idea (Lipman, 2003, p. 97) These need not be hostile moves because they actually show that one has seriously considered and is responding to an individual's ideas (Glaser, 1988, p. 21). Importantly, the COI not only facilitates caring attitudes, it facilitates the student's ability to elicit care, assistance, support, and empathy from others. This is because the P4C classroom normalizes and values interdependency, enabling students to feel comfortable displaying confusion, asking questions, and asking others for assistance. This in turn provokes others to develop caring and empathetic skills and dispositions in response to those who signal a need for assistance and care. As we have seen, this is discouraged in individualistic classrooms where signs of dependency are seen as weaknesses.

Unlike individualistic and communitarian schools, which can present care and interdependency as incompatible with rights and rules, P4C rejects the problematic justice/care dualism. Thus, the caring interdependent nature of the COI isn't considered to eliminate the need for classroom rules and procedures, which provide guidelines and standards for how individuals should behave and treat each other, as well as for what counts as good thinking. As with Dewey and Addams, in the COI the relationship between rights, rules and care is actually one of operational codependency. For example, recognition of another's right to participate in the COI can provoke us to engage them in dialogue, as well as guide us to treat them with care and respect so as to sustain open lines of communication. However, our capacity for care and empathy enables us to recognize that others have certain needs, interests, and rights, including the right to inquire with others. The student's capacity for empathy and care enables them to formulate, understand and effectively perform classroom procedures, such as offering others assistance. However, having standard procedures can also initiate and promote caring action, especially in situations where feelings of empathy and care may initially be lacking.

As we have seen, it is often argued that appeals to rights and general rules can be adversarial and consequently impede the development of care and altruism. When appeals to rights or rules involve making aggressive demands, or interfere with one's ability to be altruistic, it is normally because they are seen as natural, absolute, infallible and thus exempt from critical reflection and revision. However, as we have seen, in the COI rights and rules are not conceived of as natural and absolute. They are practices and principles that have been generalized and formalized because in past practice they have promoted communal inquiry, growth and freedom. It is possible that in some situations they may be inappropriate or fail to promote an inclusive, communal inquiry and as such they may need to be restricted, revised or relinquished. For example, Bandman argues that the child's right to inquire and ask questions, which implies that adults have a responsibility to respond to them, is not absolute and unlimited because certain inquiries may be inappropriate, such as when children ask questions that aim to elicit personal information, or where the questions may touch on a subject which another is sensitive about, or in situations where the information that children are trying to elicit from another could be dangerous to themselves (e.g. a child inquires about how to make a bomb) (Bandman, 1993, p. 34). While there are other rules and rights that it is difficult to imagine will ever be inappropriate or undesirable, what is important is that if they ever did become problematic they need not simply be retained under the assumption that they are natural and unalterable. It is this assumption that leads to rules and rights that become oppressive and imperialistic. The fact that the COI rules and procedures are fallible and open to criticism doesn't mean they have no authority, justification and stability. Their justification is their past and present success at fulfilling their purpose (e.g.

promoting communal inquiring) and their, and importance to the community provides them with their force. Having such generally accepted rights and rules in the COI means that students can draw on them to protect their interests and needs or those of others, as well as to defend certain positions. However, since these rights are not absolute, it is also possible for COI participants to surrender their rights so as to act purely for the sake of another or for some greater cause.

Since the rules that govern the COI arise in communal inquiry and are fallible, they are less likely to appear oppressive to students, as the rules in individualistic schools often do. As with Summerhill, COI students can shape the procedures that govern their own learning experience. Consequently, they are more likely to understand, value and promote these procedures. However, in contrast to individualistic schools, the COI procedures are not constructed as means to constraining and controlling student's natural inclinations to be antisocial and individualistic. Rather, in the COI, the classroom procedures and rules are outgrowths and formalizations of the social, interdependent, and caring nature of individuals engaged in communal inquiry. Since they reflect and promote communal inquiry, they actually facilitate student autonomy rather than constrain it. This is why P4C practitioners often claim that students develop a sense of care for, and commitment to, the procedures of inquiry, as well as each other (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 19).

### **The role of the facilitator in the community of inquiry.**

The claim that students in the COI construct their own meaning and care about the procedures and each other is sometimes taken to imply that teachers are merely neutral spectators or equal participants in the COI. For example, Annette Berrian states:

With me as listener, the students are free to interact with each other. That's exactly what I want them to do. I want them to forget that I'm there. The important thing is for them to express their opinion and give a reason for their point of view. (1985, p. 44)

While the P4C teacher doesn't completely control her student's learning by filling their heads with facts, without teacher intervention the COI would probably lose focus, direction, and fail to progress (Sprod, 2002, p. 69; Murriss, p. 40, 44). Consequently, the COI would not fulfill its responsibility to provide students with opportunities to practice, as well as continuously develop and improve, their capacity for autonomy. Thus, unlike Summerhill, the P4C teacher is not thought to occupy a position equal to that of students. The teacher has some degree of authority because of her more developed capacity for philosophical inquiry and her responsibility to provide and maintain a learning environment that provokes and scaffolds rigorous, purposeful, and increasingly more sophisticated communal inquiry (Sprod, 2001, pp. 69-74; Murriss, 2000, p. 41).<sup>o</sup>

The facilitator fulfills this responsibility in several ways, all of which require her to be an active participant in the COI. Firstly, the facilitator is responsible for selecting the texts, materials and content, which will stimulate inquiry. The facilitator should also promote and model the logical and caring procedures that enable communal inquiry, such as taking turns, giving reasons, listening to the speaker, and empathy. Since students are less experienced inquirers, the facilitator will often need to assist students to formulate their questions and ideas, self-correct or revise ideas, construct criteria, clarify concepts, construct alternatives, find reasons, make connections, and draw inferences, while being careful not to impose their own ideas on students. One way the teacher can do this is through open-ended questioning, which provokes critical reflection, deeper thinking, and a search for reasons and explanations (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp. 48-58). The facilitator must also be able to identify and draw out the philosophical aspects of children's dialogue, as well as the logical moves that children make. This implies that P4C facilitators must have a background in philosophy because they must be familiar with different philosophical problems and positions, as well as with the thinking methods and fallacies covered in formal and informal logic (Murriss, 2000, p. 44).

Often the COI will prematurely or uncritically reach a settlement or adopt a view that is problematic. In these cases the teacher has a responsibility to facilitate deeper thinking and the formulation of more reasonable judgments. However, since students are likely to see the teacher as an authority, teacher interventions run the risk of indoctrinating students. Thus, teachers need to be careful and non forceful in their interventions. They should not merely claim that a position is wrong but identify procedural problems with the way it was attained, suggest or give defenses for alternative positions, present possible problems with the position, suggest

counter arguments, and introduce new content. Simply allowing students to prematurely accept positions, or accept positions that are unjustified and problematic fails to facilitate inquiry, growth and autonomy. However, teachers must also provide students with plenty of opportunities and time to think of ideas, arguments, questions, problems, and methods by themselves. Students must also be encouraged to feel that they can question or disagree with teachers, including over their choice of class texts or in regards to classroom procedures. Like all COI participants, the teacher must accept their own fallibility and be willing to provide reasons and self-correct. Teachers must gain their student's trust and cooperation by providing reasons and making choices that demonstrate that they have their student's best interests in mind, not by presenting themselves as infallible authorities or disciplinarians. If the COI refuses to accept certain content or procedures (e.g. listening to each other) they should be able to experience the consequences of that (Sprod, 2002, pp. 69-74 & 167-172; Splitter and Sharp, 1995 pp. 135-140; Murriss, 2000).

### **The global community of inquiry.**

Like Dewey, P4C advocates intend for the classroom COI to expand outwards, making connections with other communities that lead to mutual transformations and growth (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006, Cam, 2000, pp. 175-176). The desired result would be that the COI and its participants develop meanings and habits that are more sophisticated and inclusive of different cultures and people, while other communities are also transformed to be more reflective of the democratic practices and ideas promoted in the P4C classroom. However, such connections and mutual transformations are not an inevitable result of establishing classroom communities of inquiry. Even if students value the classroom COI, this is no guarantee that they will apply collaborative inquiry practices beyond the classroom. The connections between P4C's democratic classroom, the school, and the local and global community must be actively created within schools. Since interaction with other communities and different individuals is essential to one's growth and capacity for autonomy, students have a right to engage with communities as part of their education (Bandom, 1993, p. 37). As Dewey explains:

It is the office of the school environment to balance the various elements in the social environment and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment. (Dewey, 2004, p. 20)

Thus, like communitarian schools, I believe the Deweyian ideal of the self, society and citizenship necessities a type of service learning program where students can participate in the community beyond their classroom. However, it cannot be the traditional service learning implied by communitarianism, which conflicts with the caring, critical, interdependent and transformative citizen that Dewey's philosophy implies. A Deweyian type of service learning would require that students actively engage with those individuals most directly affected by the social problem in a caring, communal inquiry so as to actually reconstruct the problem. As with the Hull House residents, the students would be benefited as much as those they assist because they would develop habits and meanings that would enable them to live a more autonomous, meaningful life. I have called such learning 'social reconstruction learning' to distinguish it from other types of 'service learning' that aren't necessarily reconstructive and which imply a passive recipient of another's service (Bleazby, 2006). Thus, in order to promote the Deweyian ideal of democracy and citizenship, P4C must become a type of social reconstruction learning. While many P4C practitioners may already do just this, there is little in the P4C literature that explicitly recommends or describes such practice. Not only does P4C require social reconstruction learning, social reconstruction learning requires P4C because P4C is the only pedagogy structured specifically to facilitate the type of communal, philosophical inquiry that social reconstruction learning involves (Bleazby, 2004 & 2006).

### **Endnotes**

a Many schools actually embrace aspects of what I call individualism and communitarianism simultaneously, even though the two are constructed as mutually exclusive, oppositional ideals. Often the same schools that define citizenship and autonomy in terms of self-sufficiency and independence also promote a homogenous, exclusive notion of community. Such schools enforce common social-cultural values and community achievements, while also promoting competitiveness

between individual community members and independent learning and achievement. Since many school communities often create a large pooling of common resources for the exclusive benefit of community members, these members are possibly less self-sufficient than students in schools that have no such common wealth. However, such dependency is often denied or ignored so as to give the impression that the success of individual students is the result of hard work, natural ability and individual effort. However, on other occasions such communal wealth may be emphasized because it distinguishes the school community from other communities.

b Elizabeth Kiss provides a thorough, critical review of some of these feminist concerns about rights (1997).

c While unlike children, women in some cultures do have full legal rights, they often lack full citizenship in other ways. For example, since women still perform majority of the unpaid domestic labour and may have no independent source of income, they often lack the time and money to fully exercise their rights and shape their environment (Lister, 1990). Furthermore, because in most societies, it has taken women much longer than men to attain political rights, many patriarchal social practices, systems, policies, and values were already firmly in place and are yet to be reconstructed. It is for such reasons that even in societies where women have the right to vote and run for parliament they are still underrepresented in government and the workforce, particularly in the most influential positions. Furthermore, since women are more likely to be economically dependent they aren't able to fulfil many of the responsibilities that citizenship is thought to entail, such as paying taxes and supporting themselves (Lister, 1990, see also Walby, 1994).

d As Johanna Wyn points out, this is so even though many young people increasingly have responsibilities and experiences resembling those normally associated with adult life and citizenship, especially experiences in paid and unpaid labour, including domestic work. Wyn states that an estimated 75% of secondary students in Australia are involved in some type of paid employment. Many are also sexually active, live independently, consume alcohol, are politically active, have real concerns about social issues, and many will even experience parenthood before finishing school.

e Such criticisms are frequently made by those who promote philosophy for children, with its classroom communal inquiry (e.g. Lipman, 2003, pp. 93-94). This view is also held by those in the cooperative learning movement (e.g. Slavin, 1985 and Johnson & Johnson, 1991). For a critique of competition in education see Michael Fielding (1976). Fielding states that while competition is common in schools and people rarely take a strong position against it, he believes it should be totally eradicated from education because it is "morally repugnant" and involves "working against others in a spirit of selfishness" (1976, pp. 140-141).

f This is not only a problem with school students. A reluctance to appear dependent is reflected by the fact that men are far less willing to seek medical advice than women, for whom dependency is more socially acceptable. Consequently men often have medical conditions, sometimes painful and fatal ones that are not treated in a timely fashion. This problem is also connected to the higher rates of male suicide. Men are far less likely to seek help for depression or personal problems because they want to appear in control and self-sufficient.

g By service learning I don't mean any particular program called Service Learning but rather the general idea and practice of students performing some type of community service as a part of their civics and citizenship education.

h Etzioni actually recommends that service be undertaken for a year after schooling is completed, which means that it would not be an opportunity for students to reflectively practice and develop the types of problem solving skills, attitudes, values, and disciplinary content that we would expect them to learn at school from an early age.

i Abowitz makes a similar claim about the related community/difference dualism (1999).

j For a discussion of the mutual influence that Addams and Dewey had on each other see Charlene Haddock Seigfried (1996, especially ch. 4, and 1999). Seigfried argues that along with the Laboratory School, Addams's Hull House settlement was one of the concrete communities that Dewey developed his ideal of democracy from (1999, p. 212).

k For example, Addams co-founded the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (Whipps, 2004, p. 127).

l For an account of how Dewey and Addams' ideas are similar to contemporary ethics of care theories see Leffers (1993).

m Kiss (1997) and Held (1995) argue for the value of both rights and care. While Carol Gilligan is sometimes claimed to privilege the care perspective, she frequently argues that the masculine justice perspective and the feminine care perspective are intertwined and interdependent (1982). Other philosophers, such as Will Kymlicka, also argue that the two perspectives are compatible and interconnected (2002).

n This doesn't mean that they have no factual or objective basis. In order to be effective at guiding inquiry these methods must correctly interact with an objective reality, as well as the needs and interests of inquirers.

o Dewey also argues that the teacher has some authority and the right to make suggestions because of her "greater background of experience" (1984b, p. 59). He states that if the child doesn't get suggestions from the teacher they will likely get a superficial suggestion from someone else, which may not be "specifically conducive of freedom" (1984b, p. 59).

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