

Educating for Democracy: Teaching 'Australian Values'

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Abstract: The impetus for public education in Australia came from its commitment to democracy inspired by the British Idealists. If the people of a country are to be its governors, these philosophers argued, they must be educated to be governors. Taking this injunction seriously, I will argue that the history of the struggle for democracy should be central to education, taught in such a way that students are able to appreciate the commitment to democracy of Australia's founding figures and to define themselves in relation to this vision as historical actors responsible for the future of Australia and the future of humanity.

Introduction: Losing the Plot

One of the best kept secrets about Australia is that its founding fathers, most notably Alfred Deakin, were committed to making Australia a laboratory for the most advanced ideas on democracy (Boucher, 1990; Sawyer, 2003). The philosophy that underpinned this was British Idealism, a tradition originating with T.H. Green which had been particularly concerned to defend democracy and point out the links between democracy and education. As David Boucher noted in his introduction to an anthology of British Idealist writings, 'the Idealists ... explicitly and fervently linked democratic reforms with the need for reforms in education ... advocating that at all levels access to knowledge was a concomitant on the extension of democracy' (Boucher, 1997, p.xxvii).' The reason was straightforward: 'Only an educated and enfranchised electorate could exercise the duties of citizenship responsibly' (Boucher, 1997, xxviii). For the British Idealists and the founders of the Commonwealth of Australia, the State was a self-governing community crystallizing in its institutions the will for the common good. Its most important end was to provide the conditions for people to develop their full potential as social individuals to contribute to the common good and fulfil their functions as citizens of a democracy.

These ideas were clearly evident in speeches, occasional writings and actions of the founding fathers of Australia, but were more systematically presented and defended by Deakin's friend and fellow Idealist, Walter Murdoch. In 1903 Murdoch published *The Struggle for Freedom*, a book written for and widely used in schools. He argued that representative democracy as it had been established in Australia was the culmination of a struggle for freedom which began when the Anglo-Saxons had been conquered by the Normans in the eleventh century. Through presenting this history, Murdoch argued that the goal of life is self-realization, and that this requires liberty of and democracy within one's society. Now that the struggles for liberty and democracy have triumphed, at least in Australia and New Zealand, Murdoch proclaimed, 'it is obviously our first duty as citizens to learn to govern' (Murdoch, 1903, p.236). In a representative democracy, responsible government is responsibility of government to the people. It is 'government by *public opinion*', so, 'a citizen's first duty is to get into the way of forming right opinions on matters that concern the welfare of the State' (Murdoch, 1903, p.237f.). He continued:

If the people are to govern, it is necessary that the people be educated; therefore the State provides the best education available, and insists that all its citizens shall take advantage of the education provided. ... Every boy or girl who puts whole-hearted diligence into school work is not only learning to be a good citizen in the future, but is a good citizen already (Murdoch, 1903, p.238f.).

So, what went wrong? Why did Australia, after an initial struggle to build a democratic nation, subordinate itself to USA, hand over power to transnational corporations to control its destiny, and allow society to be subjugated by the laws of the market? Why did it embrace neo-liberalism, precisely the doctrine that the Idealists had struggled to overcome? Why did a country which, when it was founded was, after New Zealand, the most democratic country in the world, allow itself to become one of the least democratic countries of the First World?

This could be explained as the success of the opponents of Deakin and his ilk, people who wanted Australia to be nothing but an extractive economy, a place for those ruthless enough to get wealthy by extracting the country's wealth and supplying raw materials to the British Empire, then return to their homelands. It was a simple matter to reformulate this goal around the American rather than the British Empire, and using neo-liberal ideology, to turn back the clock to the nineteenth century. But these people did not succeed in a struggle for power. Power was handed over to them by university educated politicians, civil servants and an educated public who had simply lost the plot. They did not know what liberty and democracy were, let alone have the virtues required to defend them. How could they have lost the plot? They lost the plot because the story of the struggle for freedom was not even told to them. Australia's education system, although it had vastly expanded and young people spent more of their lives studying than ever before, did not educate its pupils and students to be democratic citizens.

Recovering the Plot

What should these young people have been taught? Obviously, a democracy is only possible when its citizens are educated to know what a democracy is and how to participate within it. Beyond this, democracy requires that most of the population be committed to it, to upholding and defending it. They need to value it and to have the virtues required to sustain it. They need to appreciate the threats to democracy and they need to be prepared to oppose such threats. To maintain democracy people need to know and understand why people have been prepared to die for it. And they need to understand this in a way that influences their own lives and actions. How could education achieve this?

A dry exposition of formal definitions and descriptions is by itself unlikely to produce people with the virtues required to uphold liberty and democracy. Nor could any exhortation to uphold 'Australian values' have much effect. Such approaches are based on a delusion brought about by abstracting concepts from lived experience without appreciating the abstraction involved, and thereby failing to appreciate that it is only when these abstract concepts are experienced as embedded in a living context that they are able to inspire people. It is not by discussing such abstractions, but as Alasdair MacIntyre pointed out, it is through stories that people first learn how they should behave and how they should live. As he argued in *After Virtue*,

I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters - roles into which we have been drafted - and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories ... that children learn or mislearn what a child and what a parent is, what the caste of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions and in their words (MacIntyre, 1984, p.216).

By characterize Australians as having 'lost the plot,' I am suggesting that Australians have become anxious stutterers in their actions and in their words, at least when it comes to dealing with political issues. But more than this, they have also lost the inspiration to act and live as democratic citizens. To remedy this situation it is necessary to provide people with a story which enables them to define their place in the world, to take up a role in the present to create a future which will uphold and extend their democracy. Only through a story is it possible to understand the significance of what had been achieved in the past, the crucial conditions for achieving and maintaining the quest for democracy, and then what has to be done for the future.

One possible solution to this would be to republish Murdoch's 1903 book, *The Struggle for Freedom*, and use this as a textbook in civics, to both provide pupils and students with background knowledge of the formation of Australia as a democracy, but also to provide a sense of what it was that Australia and its various institutions originally stood for. From the point of view of teaching values, there is much to commend such an approach, since in celebrating the achievements of the past and describing the institutions of the State Murdoch was above all concerned to inculcate those values required for building a democratic nation. Murdoch understood what MacIntyre rediscovered, that it is first and foremost through stories that we teach people how to live and how to act. As Murdoch wrote in the preface to *The Struggle for Freedom*:

History seems to me to be the one subject which a democratic state cannot afford to neglect in its educational system, because History is the one subject by means of which we can give instruction in *citizenship*. ... To give to its readers a clear and just understanding of the institutions amid which they must play their part as citizens; to strengthen, if it may be, the civic fibre in the hearts and minds of the future citizens of our Commonwealth – such is the purpose, however ill accomplished, of the book; a purpose which the author has never suffered himself for a single instant to forget (Murdoch, 1903, p.v).

However, while this might be a good starting point, something more is required.

Because the plot has been lost so completely in Australia it is unlikely that merely telling the story of Australia's foundation as a nation will revive the commitment to democracy. Our language is now so corrupted that central terms such as democracy, liberty, freedom, responsible government, terms clearly understood by the founding fathers of Australia, have been redefined in public discourse to mean almost their exact opposites. To recover the initial inspiration for democracy in Australia, I believe it is necessary to provide a story which goes back before the triumph of representative democracy to the origins of democracy in Ancient Greece, and then provide some idea of

how democracy evolved from there. Only by appreciating what was unique to Ancient Greece, something that would have been taken for granted among the founders of the Australian federation, can we hope to appreciate the efforts to revive democracy in the present.

Lessons from Ancient Greece

What should be taught about the Ancient Greeks to revive the commitment to democracy? First and foremost, pupils and students should be taught what democracy meant for the Ancient Greeks. 'Democracy' meant a polis in which citizens were actively participating in legislating and decision-making, with offices filled by lot. There was no 'representation'. People freely discussed politics and everything they cared about in the *agora* (the place of assembly) before deliberating in the *ecclesia* (the assembly). Essentially, the Greeks invented politics. There was free speech, free thinking, free examination and questioning without restraint. This was not merely freedom from constraint, however. In Athens, citizens were required to consider public issues, express their views and discuss these. As Pericles proclaimed in his Funeral Oration at the outset of the Peloponnesian War: 'Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the polis as well ... we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all' (Thucydides, 1972, p.147). Participation in the public space required courage, responsibility and shame. And it required education for people to become citizens to give substantive content to this public space. As Cornelius Castoriadis put it, education (*paedia*) for the Greeks first and foremost 'involves becoming conscious that the *polis* is also oneself and that its fate also depends upon one's mind, behaviour, and decisions; in other words, it is participation in political life' (Castoriadis, 1997, p.113). Here for the first time, a people no longer took their institutions as having a foundation outside the community, as heteronymous, and saw themselves as autonomous. A society is autonomous, Castoriadis argued, 'not only if it knows that it makes its laws but also if it is up to the task of putting them into question' (Castoriadis, 1997, p.87). With the birth of autonomy, unlimited interrogation of actions, institutions and beliefs exploded on the scene.

It was this autonomy, involving the population in decision-making, which led to the birth and flourishing of philosophy, drama and history as the citizens of Athens grappled with the problems raised by this freedom of how to make decisions, how to evaluate actions, how to live and how to organize society. As Castoriadis put it:

[A]utonomy, social as well as individual, is a *project*. ... The questions raised are, on the social level: Are our laws good? Are they just? Which laws *ought* we to make? And, on the individual level: Is what I think true? Can I know if it is true – and if so, how? ... Autonomy ... is the unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations as well as the capacity, in light of this interrogation, *to make, to do and to institute* (Castoriadis, 1991, p.163f.)

Some of the most important questions to emerge in this environment were What is the good life? How can society be organized to enable people to live the good life? The notion of the common good emerged as both a goal defining the political order and as a topic for investigation. All decision-making was expected to be for the common good.

Aristotle characterized proper constitutions as monarchies, aristocracies or democracies according to whether one person, the best people, or the general population rule for the common good. Tyrannies, oligarchies and ochlocracies, where people rule in their own interests, were seen as corrupt forms of proper constitutions (Aristotle, 1981, p.189f.).

While more attention is paid to Greek philosophy and drama than Greek history, it was the development of history which should be seen as most important for democracy in Ancient Greece. This might seem a strong claim. In what sense did history begin in Ancient Greece? People before the Greeks told stories about their pasts. But history is more than this. History comes from the Greek word '*Istoria*' which means enquiry. It was not merely telling a story about what had happened but an interrogation of the past to ascertain the causes of conflicts, of successes and failures, and to ascribe responsibility to people for these. History began with the struggle for autonomy which provides the ultimate criteria against which everything else is evaluated. This is clearly evident in the most famous of the Greek histories, Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*. History as inquiry held people responsible for their utterances, actions, works and lives. At the same time history provided a diagnosis of people and society to reveal what should be done to succeed in the future.

Once history in this sense had emerged, its potential became evident to the Greeks. Philosophers wrote histories of philosophy to define the achievements and limitations of past thinkers and to define and defend their ideas as advances over their predecessors. Through history, not only actions but institutions and cultural achievements were evaluated, questioned, and transcended. It is against the background of their history that the role of their literature and philosophy in interrogating and rethinking received ideas, institutions and the lives they were living became possible. It was history which made intellectual, cultural and social progress possible. Most importantly, in the Athenian *polis* it was above all through history and the cultivation of a sense of history that the young were educated. Once some measure of autonomy had been achieved, history informed and was required to inform each generation of what had been achieved in the past, define the problems of the present and their own lives in relation to these, and pass on the project of autonomy. Thereby it united and oriented people in the present with the people of the past to create the future.

The Romans and the Idea of Liberty

Castoriadis' own work illustrates the role that history should play in orienting people to create the future. His short history of Greek democracy provides the necessary reference point for understanding and evaluating subsequent institutions and cultural developments purporting to be democratic. But the achievements of the Greeks, while originating the quest for autonomy, were only the beginning, only extending democracy to a very limited proportion of the population. To comprehend the ideas on which Australia was founded and the successes and failures of Australian democracy, it is necessary to provide pupils and students with some understanding the crucial advances, and also crucial setbacks, in the struggle for democracy and the development of democratic forms since then. This is required in the first instance simply to provide pupils and students with the language to understand the present.

After Greece, it is necessary to have some understanding of the Roman Republic. For instance, it is necessary to have some appreciation of the development of the mixed constitution in Republican Rome, that is, a constitution with democratic, aristocratic and monarchic elements, and what it achieved. Even the Greek Polybius appreciated the greater stability achieved by a mixed constitution and its greater suitability for a large political entity. Democracy in Australia meant a mixed constitution with a strong democratic component, and the need to ensure that the 'aristocracy', for instance a highly educated civil service committed to the common good of the nation, augmented rather than undermined democracy. The study of Rome is also important to appreciate why it failed as a republic, most notably, through the concentration of wealth and the concomitant undermining of the virtues required to sustain a republic. And associated with this, this crisis and responses to it is important for highlighting the importance of history. The decay of the Republic and the seizure of power by emperors engendered some of the most important historical writings in history, examining both why the Roman Republic achieved greatness, how it was undermined, and the debilitating effects of the loss of power by the people. Such work provides us with much of our political vocabulary. Rather than autonomy, the Romans spoke of liberty which, unlike 'autonomy', is still in common usage. But what did it mean? For the Ancient Romans, and for the civic humanists who revived the struggle to achieve and maintain liberty during the Renaissance, the converse of liberty is slavery. To be enslaved is to be put in a position of dependence so that one can be harmed by the will of others. It is to be in an 'obnoxious' position. This is how the Romans of the Empire who lamented the overthrow of the Republic characterized their situation (Skinner, 1998, p.36ff.). It is only by appreciating the difference between liberty and slavery that we can understand the commitment of the founding fathers of Australia to develop a national economy rather than allow Australia to be an economically dependent supplier of raw materials to Britain, and why the Arbitration and Conciliation Commission was established and why it ruled that there should be a basic wage, sufficient for people to support a family and participate in public life. If Australia was to be a democracy, Australians could not allow themselves to be enslaved.

The Troubled Rebirth of Democracy in the Modern World

Democracy, to the extent that it was achieved in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, was democracy within cities. It was direct democracy. The work of Murdoch in tracing the development of representative democracy is still important to understand what was involved in extending democracy from cities to whole countries. However, to understand the successes and failures in this regard it is necessary to have a better appreciation of the relationship between democracy and representative government than provided by Murdoch. Since Murdoch wrote the ideas and inspiration provided by the Northern Italians in the struggle to extend democracy to countries, and the opposition that developed against this, has come to be far better understood (Skinner, 2002). It is now appreciated that the Renaissance can only be understood in relation to the revival of the struggle for liberty. The Northern Italians developed the notion of the State as a self-governing community organized as such through its institutions. They revived history in its original sense, and in their struggle to avoid despotism, developed the notion that

powers should be divided between the legislature and the executive branches of government. They also revived the Greek idea that for democracy to be maintained, people had to be involved in political and social life and had to be able to achieve honour through their participation within the State. These are the ideas that formed 'civic humanism' which inspired all subsequent democratic thought and were presupposed by the founders of Australia.

The first countries to attempt to create democratic republics in countries rather than cities were the Swiss Confederation, the United Provinces (the Dutch Republic), and Britain. In each case, these countries were struggling against or opposing the feudal order represented by the Austrian and Spanish branches of the Habsburg empires. The Swiss Confederation and the United Provinces were the most successful, and the status of these as independent States with the right to self-determination was internationally recognized in the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. One of the most important features of these was the development of levels of government, with the Swiss developing a mixture of direct and indirect or representative democracy. This innovation was immensely important for the future of democracy and became a model for Australia. The first person to promote the idea of an Australian federation, John West (1809-1873), examined the Swiss Confederation and the Dutch Republic, along with more recent experiments in democracy, and on this basis proposed a federal form of government. He hoped this would eventually extend to a world government, but argued for as much decentralization of power as possible. As he proclaimed: 'No system of government can or ought to be satisfactory which does anything for the people which ... takes out of the hands of a town, a district or a Colony, affairs which ... may be properly left to the judgement or even the caprice of those concerned.' To 'suppress lower order democratic institutions', West believed, 'was to prevent training and acculturation in democratic principles and practice' (Ratcliff, p.109).

The development of representative government in Britain traced by Murdoch was associated with the development of parliamentary democracy. Murdoch showed how this was the outcome of the subjugation of the Anglo-Saxons by the Normans, and the subsequent long struggle by which the Norman Yoke was ameliorated and finally overthrown. This finally took the form of a struggle between Parliament and King. The British civic humanists took up and extended the idea of dividing powers, arguing for a division between the judiciary as well as the executive and legislative branches of government. Subsequently, greater levels of democracy were achieved by extending the franchise. But the development of British democracy was more complex and achieved against greater resistance than Murdoch allowed. It has since become clear that with the English revolution of 1640 the civic humanists for a short time succeeded in transforming Britain into a democratic republic, but Cromwell seized power from the civic humanists, and in doing so was supported by the erstwhile Royalist, Thomas Hobbes (Skinner, 2002, vol.II, p.86, 308ff.; vol. III, p.1ff.).

Hobbes was vehemently opposed to the civic humanists and their ideas on liberty, and in *Leviathan* published in 1651 succeeded in elaborating the basis for what would become the main opposition to democracy ever after (Skinner, 2002, vol. III). This is what C.B. McPherson has characterized as 'possessive individualism' (Macpherson, 1962). Hobbes' work involved a deliberate attempt to transform language so that autonomy and liberty as they had been understood in the Ancient World would be

rendered unintelligible (Skinner, 2002, vol. III, p.14f.). Humans were conceived as nothing but machines moved by appetites and aversions who form society and conform to its covenants purely out of egoistic self-interest. Freedom was redefined as freedom from external constraint – that is, to be determined by the internal motions of the body. The only ‘freedom’ Hobbes acknowledged was the kind of freedom traditionally associated with decadence, and this justified redefining the State from a self-governing community to a coercive instrument of rule. Hobbes was also concerned to undermine the influence of history, particularly the work of the Roman historian Livy, characterizing any language that was not associated with conveying knowledge on how to control the world, to form agreements or give orders, as a matter of mere amusement. Hobbes’ ideas were diluted by Locke and Newton who used them to defend an oligarchy of wealth rather than despotism, with the coercive role of the State being redefined as protection of property, but they continued to promote possessive individualism. The ethico-political doctrines to emerge from this were the contractarian notion of rights and utilitarianism. These, along with the Newtonian model of science, formed the foundation for the development of classical and neo-classical economic theory, the ‘Gospel of Greed.’ This gospel came to dominate Great Britain for two centuries. Darwin projected the view of life and the brutish social order based on this doctrine onto the rest of nature and used this view of nature to justify a world order based on the struggle for domination, with the destruction of the weak being taken to be the natural order of things. Dominated by these ideas, the British freed the market from community control and subordinated their society to the market, developed the largest and one of the most brutal empires in history, impoverished its working class and starved millions of Indians and Irish to death. These are the ideas and forms of life against which the British Idealists and the founders of Australia reacted and which the Commonwealth of Australia was designed to leave behind.

In opposing possessive individualism and the social order it engendered the British Idealists drew upon a tradition of thought that had developed in opposition to the heritage of Hobbes. This tradition kept alive the ideas of the civic humanists, but they did much more than this. Grappling with the problem of how to extend democracy to countries while combating the atomistic, mechanistic, utilitarian thinking of the British, they rethought social and political philosophy from the ground up. While the radicals among the French Enlightenment made significant contributions in this regard, it was the further development of their ideas in Germany by Herder, Fichte, the Early Romantics and Hegel that was the point of departure for the British Idealists who inspired Deakin and Murdoch. Herder was a crucial figure in the development of this tradition. Herder developed the notion of culture to characterize whole ways of life, referring to ‘cultures’ in the plural, developing this as the core of a new ethical and political philosophy. It is through culture, Herder argued, that we create ourselves (Berlin, 2000, p.229). Herder acknowledged the diversity of ways of life and the value of each of these. He was vehemently opposed to the arrogance of Europeans and their destructive colonization and exploitation of the rest of the world. The goal of life is not dominating others or satisfying our appetites but self-realization; that is, developing our unique potential as socially situated, yet free, creative agents. This is best achieved through democracy.

Complementing Herder’s arguments, Fichte argued that we only become self-conscious, free agents through being recognized as such by others who we in turn recognize as free. He developed an ethics and politics of freedom on this foundation,

arguing that the central role of the State is to properly recognize the freedom and significance of its citizens, including their rights to gainful and secure employment. Combining the ideas of Herder and Fichte, the Early Romantics and later Hegel developed, in opposition to the Hobbesian mechanical State, an organic view of the State which is essentially the model of the modern nation-state. As Fredrick Beiser described this:

This model of the state was to ensure community and liberty, freedom and equality *within* a framework of continuity and tradition. ... [L]ike the complex, differentiated structure of a living being, the organic state will consist in many intermediate groups, such as guilds, councils and corporations. These groups will be a source of local self-government and popular representation. So rather than consisting only of a central government and a mass of isolated individuals ... the organic state will comprise many autonomous groups. ... [T]hese will ensure the liberty of the people because they represent their interests and are independent of central control; on the other hand they will provide for community because they will permit individuals to participate in, and belong to, them (Beiser, 1996, p.xxvi).

The Romantics proposed a world order of such self-determining organic States, united to protect each other against renegade States.

Developing the notion of culture as the core of society, these German philosophers extolled the value of the history, literature, philosophy and science of each nation. Not only should these subjects be studied, they argued, but as much as possible people should participate in developing their culture, creating their own literature, philosophy and science. Art should not be understood contemplatively. As early poetry was a spur to action, so should it be now, and so should science and philosophy. Herder, as Isaiah Berlin pointed out, was 'the originator of the doctrine of the unity of art and life, theory and practice' (Berlin, 2000, p.203). In extolling the notion of culture as the medium through which people create themselves and their world, Herder redefined the meaning of education as *bildung*, the full development and harmonization of our human powers, and through this, the full development of our individuality.

These are the ideas that were echoed in John West's reflections on constitutions and which were taken up again by the British Idealists. It is in accordance with such ideas that the founders of Australia held local government and trade unions to be of central importance for democracy, and understood education and its importance.

Teaching Australian History for Democracy

Against the background of this history of the quest for democracy the significance of the vision of the founding fathers of Australia should become apparent. It is even more significant that it should have been formulated within Australia, a country that had been colonized by the British as a place to dump their convicts and to extract raw materials, and which in doing so the colonists had almost exterminated the indigenous population. This vision was inspired by two and half millennia of struggle and thought. As a laboratory for the ideas of the British Idealists, the project of achieving democracy in Australia was defined in opposition to the possessive individualism and Social Darwinism that had underpinned the exploitative orientation of the early colonists.

Australian history therefore should be pre-eminently concerned to evaluate the successes or failures in overcoming possessive individualism and Social Darwinism. Insofar as Australia continues to be committed to the project of advancing democracy, this is the story that needs to be told to each generation of Australians as their own story, the story in which they are participants. It is not simply a story about the past but a story about an unfinished project, which, if it is to be kept alive, must be continually retold, questioned, revised and augmented in the process of living it out. Living autonomously involves defining oneself in relation to one's cultural heritage and its projects and acting accordingly, in so doing becoming an historical actor and agent. To educate children to be citizens of a democracy is to induct them as co-authors of Australian history.

In the case of a society as complex as a modern nation, history itself is extremely complex. It is clearly beyond any individual to grasp all this complexity. The story of Australia needs to be contextualized in relation to the broader history of civilizations and of humanity, while the history of Australia itself is a complex of stories of a multiplicity of cultural, political, social and economic fields and institutions, individuals and events. How can pupils and children be taught such a history? It is a feature of stories that they can be schematised or expanded almost indefinitely, condensed to provide a very brief outline of essential developments and then expanded either generally or in relation to particular individuals, institutions, fields or events. This is what makes it possible to tell the history of the quest for autonomy over thousands of years in one short talk. What is required is the cultivation of the ability to move between more schematic and more detailed histories. Teaching history as an essential component of democracy and the quest for autonomy should be seen as primarily a matter of developing the ability to tell stories, to organize disparate actions and events into the unity of a narrative, to contextualize these in relation to broader stories, and thereby develop the capacity to tell the story of one's own life within such broader contexts. It is by granting a place to an immense variety of story-lines in teaching history that individual children will be able to situate themselves within the broader story of Australia and civilization. Since education is essentially a matter of passing on and developing the cultural heritage of civilization and of the nation, it is the history of the various cultural fields that pupils and students should study in greatest depth, although such history is inseparable from the history of political, institutional, economic, geographical and ecological conditions of cultural life. It is through cultural history, however, that the rationale for institutions can be grasped. Through such cultural history pupils and students should be provided with the perspective to appreciate the significance of their institutions and the different vocations open to them, thereby with the perspective to choose what roles they will take up in society.

Teaching 'Australian Values'

What should pupils and students be encouraged to value through such stories? And what place should Australian values have in this? Embracing the project of autonomy involves above all valuing liberty as a condition for self-realization, a value transcending any nation. Building on the achievements of thousands of years of civilization, it involves a commitment not just to the autonomy of people in Australia, but to a world order in which all people are free participants in the creation of the future of humanity and, more broadly, of life on Earth. The commitment to autonomy implies a

commitment to providing the conditions for and calling upon every individual to develop their unique potentials to contribute to the common good not only of Australia, but of humanity in such a way that all others are recognized as free. That is, it involves holding people responsible and requiring them to take responsibility for themselves, their society and the future of humanity, and empowering them to exercise this responsibility, in a way that involves both respecting and augmenting the freedom of others and also holding others responsible for themselves and for their society. Responsibility implies both freedom and being held responsible by others whose freedom each individual is called upon to respect and augment. These others inevitably constrain what one does, but in such a way that this involves acknowledgement of one's freedom. As such, upholding freedom as autonomy is more than just a value. It is a commitment to becoming fully human.

There is a place for upholding 'Australian' values, however. Different communities with a common commitment to autonomy will still have a unique history associated with unique conditions for this project. While calling on each individual to create the future implies the cultivation of a willingness to question the heritage of the past and do to things or create things which have never been done or created before, this does not mean rejecting the past. It involves respect for received traditions as the condition and point of departure for doing anything really new. This is how advances in science or literature or art or statecraft are possible. Those who fail to respect their traditions and attempt complete breaks with the past almost invariably turn back the clock. As situated within Australia it is necessary for pupils and students to appreciate the traditions of their own communities and society, and generally this involves appreciating the value of specifically Australian achievements and virtues. To some extent these can be taught through biographies of outstanding figures. The lives of great statesmen, such as Alfred Deakin, great scientists, such as Howard Florey, great artists such as Arthur Streeton and great writers such as Patrick White are essential to this. However, there is a particular value in keeping alive a memory of the founding ideas of the nation. As far as pupils and students are concerned, a good place to start is with the books written for schoolchildren by Walter Murdoch. In 1912 Murdoch published a second textbook on civics, *The Australian Citizen*. This was read and approved by Deakin before publication and then widely used in schools, going through many editions. After describing the institution of Australia, Murdoch explained the meaning of citizenship. He began by characterizing liberty:

Liberty – the only liberty worth fighting for – should be thought of, not as freedom *from*, but as freedom *to*; not freedom from this or that restraint, but freedom to do this or that thing that is worth doing. ... [L]ook upon liberty as a positive thing, - as freedom to do, to be, to enjoy, to understand, - and you will find that, in innumerable ways, government sets us free. ... The aim of the best government is to make the best kind of life possible to all. (Murdoch, 1912, 208f.)

He concluded with a discussion of the duties of citizens:

When a man's desires go out beyond himself, and beyond the little circle of his brothers and sisters and personal friends, to the whole community; when he desires the common good of the community, and desires it so ardently that he is eager to do anything in his power to further it; when he is ready to throw over his own interests when they conflict with the common good; ... that man is, in spirit

and truth, a good citizen. And in like manner we may say that the bad citizen is he who uses his country for what he can get out of her, who enriches himself at the expense of the common welfare. ... [T]he good citizen has always before his eyes the fair vision of a country better than his own. Our duty to society is to be discontented with society so long as it harbours one preventable evil. ... So long as any injustice is done anywhere in our land, so long as the wealth of the land is unjustly distributed, so long as any man or woman through no fault of their own suffers a degrading poverty, so long as a single child is denied any of the opportunities which ought to be the common birthright of all, there is room for improvement and a field for the active exercise of good citizenship. The good citizen is he who thinks of these things, and who strives with all his might, in however humble a way, to make his country one in which justice prevails, in which freedom is real and no shadow, and in which the spirit of brotherhood rules. ... [T]he spirit of brotherhood reaches out from one land to another; and it may be that some day the good citizen will be the citizen of the world. ... To make the society in which we live a true *Commonwealth*, in the best sense of the term – not a mere collection of persons scrambling for wealth, each one seeking his own selfish ends without regard for others, - but a hearty comradeship for all noble purposes, each one striving for the good of all, and all together seeking for the most splendid and beautiful life possible to human beings, - that is the task of citizenship (Murdoch, 1912, p.234ff.).

These are the ideas that should be taken as the point of departure for thinking about values in Australian education.

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