Good Education in an Age of Measurement

Ethics, Politics, Democracy

Gert J. J. Biesta

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Acknowledgments

From the point of view of the reader, books often present themselves as finished and complete products. From the perspective of the writer, however, they are always located within a particular context and are connected to specific events and experiences. This book is no exception. The main motivation for writing this book stems from my encounters with teachers working in a wide variety of educational settings and systems across the world. I have found many of them to be at least as passionate about education as I am, and I have seen them devoting a significant part of their lives to the difficult task of education. They often do so under complex circumstances, particularly when policy imperatives severely restrict their opportunities to follow their educational intuition and act upon their own professional judgment. Although many teachers are concerned about the quality of education—not in the abstract sense of quality indicators and league tables but in the much more concrete sense of what education can do for the children, young people and adults they teach—in my experience teachers, but also administrators, those working in educational support and development roles, and educational policymakers, sometimes find it difficult to articulate and justify their views and beliefs about what education is for, what good education is, and what is educationally desirable. I do not believe that those involved in education are unable to make such judgments. I have rather come to the conclusion that many of those working in education lack a vocabulary to

raise questions about the aims and ends of education and, in relation to this, often also lack real opportunities for asking such questions. The ideas presented in this book are not only an attempt to understand why it has become more difficult to ask the question, "What is good education?" I also offer suggestions for ways of speaking that might be helpful in giving the question of what education is for a more prominent place in our educational practices. For me this has everything to do with the development of a language that is genuinely educational, as I believe that the language of learning that has become so dominant in recent times has actually made it more difficult to ask questions about what good education might look like.

Although I do not wish to pretend that the ideas presented in this book will settle the discussion about good education once and for all, I have been encouraged by the ways in which those involved in teaching at many different levels and in many different contexts have responded to my work and have found some of the insights and ideas useful. I particularly would like to mention my colleagues and students at the Institute of Education of the University of Stirling, my new academic home; the inspiring people from the Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg, Canada; and staff and students at the University of Örebro and at Mälardalen University, Sweden, and at the University of Oulu, Finland. I would like to thank all of them for the many fruitful discussions about matters of educational concern. I also would like to mention my former and current doctoral students who continue to inspire me with their dedication, energy, and creativity. Finally I would like to thank Dean Birkenkamp for his confidence in this project and for his continuous support.

On the Question of Purpose in Education

If the number of hits on Internet search engines is anything to go by, there is no shortage of views about good education. A Google search for "good education" results in 1,360,000 hits, while Yahoo even goes to 5,830,000.[1] Even if we take away fake hits such as "shop here for 'good education,'" the numbers still indicate that the question of good education is a concern of many. To a certain extent this is not surprising, not in the least because it is quite difficult to be *against* good education (although "bad education" still generates about 400,000 hits on Google and 800,000 on Yahoo). But the real question is not whether we should be for or against good education. The real question is what actually constitutes good education and, more important, how we might be able to discuss and develop our ideas about good education in a way that goes beyond just articulating our personal preferences. The aim of this book is to make a contribution to such a discussion.

One reason for writing this book stems from the observation that the question of what constitutes good education almost seems to have disappeared from discussions about education. Although the question of good education is a difficult and contentious question, I believe that it is also the

most central and most important question we can and should ask about our educational endeavors. Education, be it in the form of schooling, workplace learning, vocational training or learning through life, is by its very nature a process with direction and purpose. That is why the question of good education—the question as to what education is *for*—is not optional but always poses itself when we engage in educational activities, practices and processes.

The problem is not only that the question of good education seems to have disappeared. I also believe that in many cases the question of good education has been replaced by other discourses. Such discourses often appear to be about the quality of education—think, for example, of discussions about the effectiveness of education or on accountability in education—but in fact never address the question of good education itself. They rather displace the *normative* question of good education with technical and managerial questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of processes, not what these processes are supposed to be for. This is not just detrimental for education itself. It also precludes those who should be involved in discussions about what constitutes good education—such as teachers, parents, students and society as a whole—from taking part in them. The displacement of the question of good education is therefore detrimental for the democratic control over education. I believe that the only way to regain ground is by posing the question of good education openly and explicitly *as* a normative question—a question of aims, ends, and values—and tackling this question head-on rather than in an indirect or implicit manner.

My second reason for writing this book stems from the observation that the question of good education also seems to be relatively absent from the literature, particularly research and scholarly literature on education. Again, if search engines can provide some indication of the level of interest, it is remarkable that a Web search using Google scholar only found 167 hits for texts with "good education" in the title, while a combined search in the Australian and British Education

Index (from 1979 and 1975 onward respectively) and ERIC, the American Education Index (from 1966 onward) only came up with 31 contributions with "good education" in the title.[2] This is not to suggest that opinions about good education are absent in the literature, but such opinions often remain unexplored and implicit. Positions are often taken before the question as to what it would mean to take position is itself explored.

My ambition with this book is not to just add another opinion to the discussion. My aim rather is to explore what it might mean to address the question of good education in a more precise manner. The book is thus aimed at all those who agree that the question of good education—the question of purpose, the question as to what education is *for*—should actually be a central and ongoing concern within educational practice, policy and research.

The observations that have led me to the writing of this book are not meant to suggest that educational practice nowadays is without reflection. On the contrary: in my work I meet many teachers who enthusiastically engage with new ways of thinking and doing and who make a sincere effort to incorporate the latest insights from research and scholarship in their educational practices. But while there is a lot of change and innovation going on at classroom, school and policy levels, the focus is often more on the *how*—"How can we introduce these new ideas in the classroom?"—than on the *why*—"And why should we actually do this?" Take the example of collaborative learning. Many classrooms today are radically different from what they looked like several decades ago. While then classrooms were generally quiet and pupils were supposed to listen to and take in what the teacher had to say, contemporary classrooms are often full of activity and talk and the role of teacher has become more that of a facilitator than that of a source of knowledge and wisdom. But that doesn't mean that the "old" classroom was necessarily bad and the "new" classroom is necessarily better. In some cases students may benefit from interaction,

talk and activity, for example if the aim for students is to test their understanding by explaining their views to fellow students. But in other cases the collaborative classroom would actually hinder learning, for example, when the aim is the mastery of a complex skill—something that may require concentration and perseverance, rather than discussion and collaboration. Whether collaborative forms of student activity are to be preferred therefore entirely depends on the purpose of the activity, that is, on the outcomes that are considered to be educationally desirable. It is only when we are able to say something about the latter question that we can begin to make decisions about how we might want to achieve what is aimed for.

With this I do not wish to suggest that the average teacher would be lacking the capacity or, even worse, the intelligence for making judgments about the aims and ends of education. If there is anything lacking it is first and foremost at the level of the "tools" for dealing with the question of purpose in education. If there is anything lacking, therefore, it is first and foremost a language or vocabulary that allows us to articulate questions about the purposes of education and to do so in a precise enough manner. This is, of course, not to suggest that it is *only* a question of language. There is also the question of time—the time available to step back from the flow of everyday practice in order to ask why we are actually doing what we are doing. And there is, most crucially, the question as to whether all those who share a concern for education— teachers, students, parents, society at large—are actually in a position where they are allowed to engage in deliberation and judgment about the purposes of education. This is why, in this book, I not only wish to contribute to the development of ways of speaking that can help us to deal with the question of purpose in education in a more precise manner. At the very same time I want to show how and why it has become more difficult to engage with these questions in an open and democratic way. My aim with this book is therefore both analytical and programmatic.

The book is organized in the following way. In Chapter 1—"What Is Education For?"—I raise the question of good education against the background of the remarkable rise of a culture of measurement in educational policy and practice in many countries around the world. I argue that measurement of educational "outcomes" can never replace answering the question of purpose in education, although at times it seems as if this is what those who are engaged in measurement seem to do or seem to aspire to. I relate the marginalization of the question of good education to a phenomenon that I refer to as the "learnification" of education, by which I have in mind the tendency to replace a language of education with a language that only talks about education in terms of learning. I argue that while learning obviously is one of the central concerns of education, a language of learning makes it particularly difficult to grapple with questions of purpose—and also with questions of content and relationships. Against this background I then introduce a simple framework for dealing with the question of purpose in education. The framework is based on the observation that educational processes and practices generally work in three different areas and thus can be said to serve three different kinds of purposes. I refer to these as qualification, socialization and subjectification. I not only suggest that de facto many if not all educational practices have an impact in these three domains. I also argue that when we engage in discussions about what education should be *for,* we should do so in relation to these three dimensions. While it may be possible in some situations to focus our educational endeavors on only one of these dimensions, in reality there will always be a particular "mix" of the three purposes of education, which means that the real question is not whether we should opt for qualification, socialization *or* subjectification, but what particular combination we see as desirable and justifiable. I provide two brief examples, one in the field of citizenship education and one in the

field of mathematics education, in order to show how the distinctions I introduce might be helpful in addressing the question of purpose in education.

In the next two chapters I provide analyses of recent developments in education that, in my view, have actually contributed to the displacement of the question of purpose. In Chapter 2—"Evidence-Based Education between Science and Democracy"—I focus on recent calls to turn education into an evidence-based profession, a profession based on scientific knowledge about "what works." Although the question as to "what works" is very important in educational practice—it is actually the question teachers have to deal with continuously—I show that the way in which the proponents of evidence-based education envisage the ideal connection between research and practice is educationally problematic, practically unworkable and ultimately antidemocratic. I focus the discussion on three assumptions within the debate: views about educational practice, views about the relationship between knowledge and action and views about the relationship between research and practice. In all three cases I not only show what I consider to be problematic about prevailing ideas about the role of evidence in education, but I also provide alternative ways of understanding the relationships among research, policy and educational practice.

In Chapter 3—"Education between Accountability and Responsibility"—I focus on the question of accountability in educational policy and practice. While there is nothing wrong with the idea of accountability as such and while it actually should play a central role in education committed to the ideal of democracy, I show how over the past decades the idea of accountability has transformed from a professional and democratic notion to one that is fundamentally managerial. This has led to a situation where the focus of accountability has shifted from questions of aims and ends of education practices to questions about the smoothness and effectiveness of educational processes. This, in turn, has

had a profound impact on the different parties engaged in accountability practices, on their identities and relationships, and thus on their ability to take part in practices of account-ability in a purposeful manner. I show how managerial accountability regimes have impacted the opportunities for responsible action and explain how the technical-managerial definition of accountability has actually eroded opportunities for responsible action.

While in Chapters 2 and 3 I deal with the context in which questions about good education can be raised—and basically show why, how and in what ways it has become more difficult to raise those questions in a truly democratic manner—the chapters in the second part of the book focus more explicitly on aspects of the discussion about good education in relation to the framework introduced in Chap-ter 1. In Chapter 4—"A Pedagogy of Interruption"—I take up the question that I explored in more detail in my book *Beyond Learning* (Biesta 2006a). The question is whether it is still possible to make a meaningful distinction between socialization and subjectification. In the chapter I not only try to clarify why the possibility for making this distinction has become a problem. I also show why it is important to be able to make this distinction and provide a way of speaking about education—centered on the notions of "coming into the world" and "uniqueness" and summarized with the idea of a "pedagogy of interruption"—which aims to respond to some of the challenges raised in relation to the distinction between socialization and subjectification.

In Chapter 5—"Democracy and Education after Dewey"—I relate the discussion about good education more explicitly to the question of democracy. The question I address in this chapter is how it might be possible in education to both imple-ment the principles of democracy and meet the demands of education. Central to my argument in the first part of this chapter is the idea that democracy is not simply about the aggregation of preferences on the basis of the idea of majority rule, but rather are about the translation (and transformation)

of such preferences from individual wants to collective needs and a conception of the common good. Engaging in such translation processes provides important opportunities for civic learning. In the second part of the chapter I discuss how we can connect the three dimensions of education to the question of democracy. Rather than focusing on the question of how the content of education can be democratized—which basically links democracy to the question of qualification—I argue that democratic opportunities first and foremost exist in the subjectification dimension of education and that it is only through this that we can engage more democratically with the other dimensions of education.

In Chapter 6—"Education, Democracy and the Question of Inclusion"—I develop an argument of why we should not think of the role of education in democratic societies entirely in terms of socialization. Although there is an important task for education in what we might see as the reproduction of the democratic "order," the important question is whether we should indeed understand democracy as a particular social and/or political order. Against attempts to make the existing democratic order more inclusive, I introduce a different way to think about democracy and democratization, one in which democracy is seen as sporadic and democratization is about interruptions of the existing democratic order in the name of equality. Conceiving of democracy and democratization in this way makes it possible to see different opportunities for education in a democratic society rather than just in terms of the reproduction of the existing democratic order.

In the epilogue I bring the threads of the chapters in this book together, indicate what I think the discussion in this book has achieved, and highlight questions that need further attention and discussion. I suggest that those discussions not just require another book or another publication, but that they first of all hint at the need for educators—at all levels of the educational system—to engage with the question of purpose so that the question of good education can, again, become the central question in our educational endeavors.

Notes

1. Search conducted for "good education" at www.google .com and www.yahoo.com on 12 July 2009.

2. Search conducted on 12 July 2009.

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What Is Education For?

The past twenty years have seen a remarkable rise in interest in the measurement of education or, in the lingo of the educational measurement culture, in the measurement of educational "outcomes." Perhaps the most prominent manifestation of this can be found in international comparative studies such as the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS), the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) and OECD's *Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA). These studies, which result in league tables that are assumed to indicate who is better and who is best, are intended to provide information about how national education systems perform compared to those of other countries and are thus generally competitive in their outlook. Findings are utilized by national governments to inform educational policy, often under the banner of "raising standards." League tables are also produced at the national level with the aim of providing information about the relative performance of individual schools or school districts. Such league tables have a complicated rationale, combining elements of accountability and choice with a social justice argument that says everyone should have access to education of the same quality. The data used for producing such league tables are also used to identify so-called failing schools and,

in some cases, failing teachers within schools (see Tomlinson 1997; Nicolaidou and Ainscow 2005; Hess 2006; Granger 2008).

Interest in the measurement of educational outcomes has not been restricted to the construction of league tables. The measurement of outcomes and their correlation with educational "inputs" is also central in research that aims to provide an evidence base for educational practice. Proponents of the idea that education should be transformed into an evidence-based profession often argue that it is only through the conduct of large-scale experimental studies and careful measurement of the correlation between educational inputs and outcomes that education will be able to witness "the kind of progressive, systematic improvement over time that has characterized successful parts of our economy and society throughout the twentieth century, in fields such as medicine, agriculture, transportation and technology" (Slavin 2002, 16). In the United States the reauthorization in 2001 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) has resulted in a situation where federal research funding is only available for research that utilizes this particular methodology in order to generate scientific knowledge about "what works."

An important precursor of many of these developments can be found in research on school effectiveness, which played an influential role in discussions about educational change and improvement from the early 1980s onward (see Townsend 2001; Luyten et al. 2005). While the research initially focused on variables at the school level, later work increasingly paid attention to the dynamics of teaching and learning in order to identify the variables that matter in making schooling more effective. With it came a shift toward a more narrow view of relevant outcomes and outputs (see, e.g., Rutter and Maugham 2002; Gray 2004). In recent years the movement as a whole has become more interested in the wider question of school improvement rather than just issues concerning effectiveness (see, e.g., Townsend 2007). Notwithstanding this, the school

effectiveness and improvement movement has played an important role in the idea that educational outcomes can and should be measured.

Valuing What We Measure or Measuring What We Value?

The rise of the measurement culture in education has had a profound impact on educational practice, from the highest levels of educational policy at national and supranational level down to the practices of local schools and teachers. To some extent this impact has been beneficial as it has made it possible for discussions to be based on factual data rather than just on assumptions or opinions about what might be the case. The problem, however, is that the abundance of information about educational outcomes has given the impression that decisions about the direction of educational policy and the shape and form of educational practice can be based *solely* upon factual information. Although this is what increasingly appears to be happening in discussions about education in the wake of international comparisons, league tables, accountability, evidence-based education and effective schooling, there are two problems with this way of thinking.

The first problem is that while it is always advisable to use factual information when making decisions about what ought to be done, what ought to be done can never be logically *derived* from what is the case. This problem, which in the philosophical literature is known as the "is-ought problem" and which was first identified by the Scottish philosopher David Hume in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740), implies that when we engage in decisions about the direction of education we always and necessarily have to make *value* judgments—judgments about what is educationally *desirable.* This implies that if we wish to say something about the direction of education we always need to complement

factual information with views about what is considered to be desirable. We need, in other words, to *evaluate* data and evidence and for this, as has been known for a long time in the field of educational evaluation, we need to engage with *values* (see, e.g., House and Howe 1999; Henry 2002; Schwandt and Dahler-Larsen 2006).

The second problem, which is related to the first and in a sense is its methodological corollary, is the problem of the validity of our measurements. More than just the question of the *technical validity* of our measurements—i.e., the question whether we are measuring what we intend to measure—the problem lies in what I suggest is referred to as the *normative validity* of our measurements. This has to do with the question whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure. The rise of a culture of performativity in education—a culture in which means become ends in themselves so that targets and indicators of quality become mistaken for quality itself—has been one of the main drivers of an approach to measurement in which normative validity is being replaced by technical validity (see, e.g., Ball 2003; Usher 2006).

The need to engage explicitly with values in our decisions about the direction of education is easily overlooked, particularly in those cases in which the concepts used already seem to express values. An example of this can be found in discussions about educational effectiveness. Besides the fact that it is actually quite difficult to make a case for education that is *not* effective—which shows the rhetorical force of the idea of "effectiveness"—effectiveness is actually a value. This might suggest that a case for effective schooling or for teacher effectiveness is exactly doing what I am suggesting we should do, viz., to make a judgment about what is educationally desirable. The problem, however, is that "effectiveness" is an *instrumental* value, a value that expresses something about the quality of *processes* and, more specifically, about their ability to

bring about certain outcomes in a secure way. But whether the outcomes of such processes are themselves desirable is an entirely different matter—a matter for which we need judgments that are not based on instrumental values but on what we might refer to as *ultimate* values. This is why a case for effective education is not enough—and it could even be argued that sometimes educational practices that are not effective, for example because they provide opportunities for students to explore their own ways of thinking, doing and being, can actually be more desirable than those that effectively proceed toward predetermined ends. Instead of simply making a case for effective education, we therefore always need to ask, "Effective for what?"—and given that what might be effective for one particular student or group of students may not necessarily be effective for other individuals or groups, we always also need to ask, "Effective for whom?" (see Bogotch, Mirón, and Biesta 2007).

In order to bring issues of value and purpose back into our discussions about education, particularly in situations in which measurement figures prominently, we therefore need to reengage with the question as to what constitutes *good* education. In this chapter I will contribute to this in two steps. In the next section I explore some of the reasons why we seem to have lost sight of questions about value and purpose in education. I suggest that at least part of the explanation for this has to do with a phenomenon to which I will refer as the "learnification" of education: the transformation of an educational vocabulary into a language of learning. I then suggest a framework for engaging with the question of purpose in education, based on the idea that education operates in three different but overlapping domains to which I will refer as qualification, socialization and subjectification. I illustrate how this framework might help in exploring questions about purpose in education through a brief discussion of two curricular areas: citizenship education and mathematics education.

The "Learnification" of Education

As I have mentioned in the prologue, there is very little contemporary work that engages explicitly with questions about what is educationally desirable. Despite much discussion about the improvement of educational processes and practice, there is very little explicit discussion of what such processes are supposed to bring about. There is very little explicit attention, in other words, to the question as to what constitutes *good* education (for an exception see Fischman, DiBara, and Gardner 2006; on good educational research see Hostetler 2005; on responsible assessment see Siegel 2004). Why might this be so?

One reason for this could be that the question of educational purpose is seen as too difficult to resolve—or even as fundamentally irresolvable. This is particularly the case when ideas about the purposes of education are being seen as entirely a matter of personal preference, that is, based on subjective values and beliefs about which no rational discussion is possible. This often lies behind a dichotomous depiction of views about the aims of education in terms of "conservatism" versus "progressivism" or "traditional" versus "liberal." One question is whether such value positions are indeed entirely subjective and thus beyond rational discussion. Yet even if this were the case, one could argue that at least in democratic societies an attempt should be made to engage in discussions about the aims and ends of (public) education—how difficult such discussions might actually be (see Pirrie and Lowden 2004; Allan 2003).

What is more likely, however, is that the absence of explicit attention for the aims and ends of education is the effect of reliance upon a particular "commonsense" view of what education is for. (We shouldn't forget, of course, that what appears or presents itself as "common sense" often serves the interests of a particular group much better than the interests of other groups.) The prime example of such a "commonsense" view about the purpose of education is the idea that

what matters most in education is academic achievement in a small number of curricular domains, particularly language, science and mathematics. It is this view that has given credibility to such studies as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA. Whether academic knowledge is indeed of more value than, for example, vocational skills all depends on the access that such knowledge gives to particular positions in society. This, as the sociological analysis of education has abundantly shown, is precisely how the reproduction of social inequality through education works. It is, therefore, first of all in the interest of those who benefit from the status quo to keep things as they are rather than to open up discussion about what education might be or become. What makes the situation even more complicated is that those in disadvantaged positions often tend to support the status quo on the basis of the (often mistaken) expectation that they will eventually also acquire the benefits currently available to those in more privileged positions. That such expectations are often erroneous can, for example, be seen in attempts to increase participation in higher education on the presumption that this will make the positional advantage of a higher education degree available to a larger number of people. What is forgotten in this argument is that an increase in the number of people with a higher education degree will inevitably reduce the positional advantage of having such a degree. Moreover, other markers of "distinction"—such as the difference between a degree from a "good" and a "not-so-good" university—will often take over in order to reproduce existing inequalities in a different way (on this see Ross 1991; Rancière 1991).

The reasons for the relative absence of attention to questions about educational purpose are, however, not merely "external." I wish to argue that they also have to do with transformations within the field of education itself and that they are closely connected to a shift in the vocabulary that is being used to talk about education. As I have argued elsewhere in more detail (see Biesta 2004a; 2006a), the past two decades have witnessed a remarkable rise of the concept of

"learning" and a subsequent decline of the concept of "education" (empirical support for this thesis has been provided by Haugsbakk and Nordkvelle 2007). The rise of what I have referred to as the "new language of learning" is manifest, for example, in the redefinition of teaching as the facilitation of learning and of education as the provision of learning opportunities or learning experiences; it can be seen in the frequent use of the word "learner" instead of "student" or "pupil"; it is manifest in the transformation of adult education into adult learning, and in the replacement of "permanent education" by "lifelong learning." The following extract from a European policy document still provides a perfect example of the "new language of learning."

> Placing learners and learning at the centre of education and training methods and processes is by no means a new idea, but in practice, the established framing of pedagogic practices in most formal contexts has privileged teaching rather than learning.... In a high-technology knowledge society, this kind of teaching-learning loses efficacy: learners must become proactive and more autonomous, prepared to renew their knowledge continuously and to respond constructively to changing constellations of problems and contexts. The teacher's role becomes one of accompaniment, facilitation, mentoring, support and guidance in the service of learners' own efforts to access, use and ultimately create knowledge. (Commission of the European Communities 1998, 9, quoted in Field 2000, 136)

It is important to see that the new language of learning is not the outcome of one particular process or the expression of a single underlying agenda. It rather is the result of a combination of different, partly even contradictory trends and developments. These include (1) the rise of new theories of learning that have put emphasis on the active role of students in the construction of knowledge and understanding and the more facilitating role of teachers in this; (2) the postmodern critique of the idea that educational processes can be controlled by

teachers and ought to be controlled by them; (3) the so-called silent explosion of learning (Field 2000) as evidenced in the huge rise of informal learning throughout people's lives; and (4) the erosion of the welfare state and the subsequent rise of neoliberal policies in which individuals are positioned as responsible for their own (lifelong) learning (for more detail see Biesta 2004a; 2006a; see also Biesta 2006b).

The rise of the new language of learning can be seen as the expression of a more general trend to which I now wish to refer—with a deliberately ugly term—as the "learnification" of education. "Learnification" refers to the transformation of the vocabulary used to talk about education into one of "learning" and "learners." A focus on learning and learners is, of course, not just problematic. To see that learning is not determined by input but depends on the activities of students—although not a new insight—can help us to rethink what teachers can best do to support their students' learning. There are even emancipatory possibilities in the new language of learning to the extent to which it can empower individuals to take control of their own educational agendas. Yet there are also problems connected with the rise of the new language of learning, and in this regard we shouldn't underestimate the power of language. In the context of this chapter I wish to highlight two problematic aspects of the new language of learning. One issue concerns the fact that "learning" is basically an *individualistic* concept. It refers to what people, as individuals, do—even if it is couched in such notions as collaborative or cooperative learning. This stands in stark contrast to the concept of "education" that always implies a *relationship*: someone educating someone else and the person educating having a certain sense of the purpose of his or her activities. The second problem is that "learning" is basically a *process* term. It denotes processes and activities but is open—if not empty—with regard to content and direction. To say, for example, that teachers should promote students' learning—a phrase not unknown in the policy literature—actually says very little, if anything at all, if it is

not accompanied by a specification of *what* students should learn and *for what purpose* they should learn it. "Empty" use of the word "learning" also occurs within the educational research community, for example when the American Educational Research Association calls for conference contributions "that examine learning within and across complex social and cultural ecologies from a historical perspective and that examine policy implications for improving learning in formal and informal settings in ways that take into account the complex ecological factors that help to shape opportunities to learn" (*Educational Researcher* May 2009, 301).

How, then, can we bring questions of purpose and direction back to the educational agenda?

What Is Education For?

My aim in this chapter is not to specify what the purpose or purposes of education should be. I have rather set myself the more modest task of outlining the *parameters* that in my view should frame discussions about the aims and ends of education, acknowledging that there is already a wide range of different views available and also acknowledging that in democratic societies there should be an ongoing discussion about the purposes of education—both with regard to state-funded and privately funded education. One way to develop a framework for discussions about the aims and ends of education is to start from the actual functions that educational systems perform. I wish to suggest that education generally performs three different (but related) functions, to which I will refer as the qualification, socialization and subjectification function of education.

A major function of education—of schools and other educational institutions—lies in the *qualification* of children, young people and adults. It lies in providing them with the knowledge, skills and understandings and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgment that allow them to

"do something"—a "doing" that can range from the very specific (such as in the case of training for a particular job or profession, or the training of a particular skill or technique) to the much more general (such as an introduction to modern culture, or the teaching of life skills, etcetera). The qualification function is without doubt one of the major functions of organized education and constitutes an important rationale for having state-funded education in the first place. This is particularly, but not exclusively, connected to economic arguments, i.e., to the role education plays in the preparation of the workforce and, through this, in the contribution education makes to economic development and growth. The qualification function is, however, not restricted to preparation for the world of work. Providing students with knowledge and skills is also important for other aspects of their life, for example in the case of political literacy understood as the knowledge and skills needed for citizenship, or cultural literacy more generally.

Here, however, we move into a second major function of education to which I will refer as *socialization.* The socialization function has to do with the many ways in which, through education, we become part of particular social, cultural and political "orders." Sometimes socialization is actively pursued by educational institutions, for example with regard to the transmission of particular norms and values, in relation to the continuation of particular cultural or religious traditions, or for the purpose of professional socialization. But even if socialization is not the explicit aim of educational programs and practices, education will still have a socializing effect, as has been shown by the research on the hidden curriculum. Through its socializing function education inserts individuals into existing ways of doing and being. In this way education plays an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition—both with regard to its desirable and its undesirable aspects.

Education does, however, not only contribute to qualification and socialization but also impacts on what we might refer

to as individuation or, as I prefer to call it, *subjectification*—the process of becoming a subject (see also Chapters 4 and 5). The subjectification function might perhaps best be understood as the opposite of the socialization function. It is precisely *not* about the insertion of "newcomers" into existing orders, but about ways of being that hint at independence from such orders, ways of being in which the individual is not simply a "specimen" of a more encompassing order. Whether all education actually contributes to subjectification is debatable. Some would argue that this is not necessarily the case and that the actual influence of education can be confined to qualification and socialization. Others would argue that education always also impacts on the individual—and in this way it always also has an individuating "effect." What matters more, however, and here we need to shift the discussion from questions about the actual functions of education to questions about the aims, ends and purposes of education, is the "quality" of subjectification, i.e., the kind of subjectivity—or kinds of subjectivity—that are made possible as a result of particular educational arrangements and configurations. It is in relation to this that some would argue—and have argued (see, e.g., in the British tradition of analytical philosophy of education Peters 1966; 1976; Dearden, Hirst, and Peters 1972; and, for a recent contribution, Winch 2005; and in the critical tradition Mollenhauer 1964; Freire 1970; Giroux 1981)—that any education worthy of its name should *always* contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting.

The main point I wish to make with this chapter is to suggest that when we engage in discussions about what constitutes good education we should acknowledge that this is a *composite question,* i.e., that in order to answer this question we need to acknowledge the different functions of education and the different potential purposes of education. An answer to the question of what constitutes good education should therefore always specify its views about qualification, socialization *and* subjectification—even in the unlikely case that one would

wish to argue that only one of them matters. To say that the question of what constitutes good education is a composite question is not to suggest that the three dimensions of education can and should be seen as entirely separate. The opposite is the case. When we engage in qualification, we always also impact on socialization and on subjectification. Similarly, when we engage in socialization, we always do so in relation to particular content—and hence link up with the qualification function—and will have an impact on subjectification. And when we engage in education that puts subjectification first, we will usually still do so in relation to particular curricular content and this will always also have a socializing effect. The three functions of education can therefore best be represented in the form of a Venn diagram, i.e., as three partly overlapping areas, and the more interesting and important questions are actually about the intersections between the areas rather than the individual areas per se.

Where we do need to separate the three dimensions of education is in terms of our *rationales* for education, i.e., our answers to the question of what constitutes good education. Here it is important to be explicit about how our answers relate to qualification, socialization and/or subjectification. What is most important here is that we are aware of the different dimensions, of the fact that they require different rationales, and also of the fact that while synergy is possible, there is also potential for conflict between the three dimensions, particularly, so I wish to suggest, between the qualification and socialization dimension on the one hand and the subjectification dimension on the other (I will return to this in Chapter 4).

Two Examples: Citizenship Education and Mathematics Education

In order to make my proposals more concrete, I will briefly show what using the framework outlined above might imply

for discussions about the aims and ends of education. I will do this in relation to two curricular areas: citizenship education and mathematics education.

To begin with the first: in the literature on citizenship education there is a strong tendency to confine the task of citizenship education to that of qualification, that is, to providing children and young people with the knowledge, skills and dispositions—known in the literature as the "citizenship dimensions" (see Kerr 2005)—that are considered to be essential for their citizenship. We might say that in this view citizenship education focuses on the acquisition of political literacy, either understood in terms of knowledge about the rights and duties of citizens and the workings of the political system or, in more progressive approaches, with an emphasis on developing the ability to critically analyze the dynamics of political processes and practices. One reason for articulating the rationale for citizenship education in terms of qualification stems from the intention not to turn it into explicit political socialization, i.e., not to think of citizenship education as the inculcation of a particular set of political values and convictions. Notwithstanding this, many programs for citizenship education are actually based upon clear views about what constitutes a "good citizen." The approach to citizenship education in Scotland, for example, clearly states that education should enable children and young people to become "responsible citizens," and thus not only articulates the knowledge, skills and dispositions that students should acquire but also specifies what kind of citizen—and in relation to this, what kind of person—they should become (see Biesta 2008a). A similar view can be found at the level of European policy where there is a strong tendency to argue that all inhabitants of the European Community should become "active citizens" (see Biesta 2009a). Such approaches clearly push the rationale and agenda for citizenship education toward the socialization dimension and put education in the position of the "producer" of particular identities and subjectivities. The question for education—and thus also for

educators—is not only whether citizenship education should be confined to qualification or should also include socialization, i.e., whether citizenship education should focus only on the possible conditions for citizenship or should play an active role in the "production" of a particular kind of citizen. The question is also whether citizenship education can and should contribute to what we might refer to as political subjectification, i.e., the promotion of a kind of citizenship that is not merely about the reproduction of a predefined template but that takes political agency seriously (see also Westheimer and Kahne 2004). This clearly moves the discussion about citizenship education beyond that of socialization and, at the very same time, raises important questions about forms of qualification that can promote political agency in a way that goes beyond socialization into a particular, predefined view of what the good citizen is or ought to be. Looking at the domain of citizenship education in this way shows that there are different answers to be given to the question as to what citizenship education should be and should aim for. This, as I have argued above, is not a matter of choosing for qualification *or* socialization *or* subjectification but is rather about the particular "mix" of these dimensions. After all, political knowledge and understanding (qualification) can be important elements for the development of explicitly political ways of doing and being (subjectification), just as a strong focus on socialization into a particular citizenship identity can actually lead to resistances that, in themselves, open up opportunities for political subjectivity and agency.

While it may seem rather easy to think about a subject like citizenship education in terms of the three purposes of education, this may appear more difficult when we focus on a much more "traditional" subject such as mathematics education; a subject, moreover, that clearly seems to be about the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the development of understanding. I do believe, however, that it is both possible and necessary to look at a subject like mathematics in the same way in order to be able to articulate an *educational*

rationale for mathematics education. It is easy to see that there is a strong focus within mathematics education on qualification, that is, on providing students with mathematical knowledge and skills and, most importantly, insight and understanding, in order for students to become proficient in mathematics. There is, however, an important socialization dimension to this as well. After all, to include mathematics in the curriculum and to give it a prominent place in testing and definitions of educational success already conveys a particular message about the importance of mathematics and thus functions as socialization into a world in which mathematics carries importance. Socialization into such a world can also be an explicit aim of mathematics education—and teachers may well want to convince their students that engagement with mathematics is indeed important. If, instead of seeing mathematics as a body of knowledge and skills, we approach it as a social practice—a practice with a particular history and with a particular social "present"—we can even begin to develop a rationale for mathematics education that gives a central place to socialization, seeing it as an engagement with the social practice of "mathematizing" rather than as the acquisition of a body of knowledge and skills (for such a rationale see Biesta 2005a; see also Valero and Zevenbergen 2004). This, however, does not exhaust the possible rationales for mathematics education, since we can also ask what kind of opportunities a field like mathematics might offer in the domain of subjectification, i.e., what kind of opportunities for being and becoming the engagement with the field of mathematics and the practice of mathematizing might offer. In this respect we might also explore the moral possibilities of mathematics and mathematizing, for example, by treating division not as an act of carving things up but as one of sharing that raises questions about fairness and justice. This suggests that the rationale for mathematics education—and perhaps we can say for *good* mathematics education—is therefore also one that needs to be developed through engagement with the three dimensions of education.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to make a case for the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. I have shown that we live in an age in which discussions about education seem to be dominated by the measurement of educational outcomes and that these measurements play an influential role in educational policy and, through this, also in educational practice. The danger of this situation is that we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value. It is the latter, however, that should ultimately inform our decisions about the direction of education. This is why I have argued for the need to engage with the question as to what constitutes *good* education, rather than, for example, effective education. I have tried to indicate why questions about the aims and ends of education seem to have disappeared from our horizon, and have connected this specifically with the rise of the language of learning and the wider "learnification" of education. What I have not tried to do in this chapter is give an answer to the question as to what constitutes good education, not in the least because I am aware of the plurality of views about this, and also because I am convinced of the importance to keep the discussion about the aims and ends of education going rather than to close it down prematurely. My contribution in this chapter has first of all been to emphasize that the question of good education is a composite question. This means that in our discussions about the aims and ends of education we should be aware of the different roles and functions of education. I have suggested that it might be helpful to make a distinction between three functions of education—qualification, socialization and subjectification—and have argued that we should not see these as separate aspects of education but rather as overlapping, intertwined and, to a certain extent, even conflicting dimensions of what education is and can be about. Whereas on the one hand I have presented these three dimensions as functions of educational processes and practices, i.e., as areas in

which education can have "effects," I have, on the other hand, suggested that these are also three areas in which education can aim to operate. In this sense they can also be seen as three potential roles of education. Although it is not always easy to distinguish the three dimensions, and although it is even more difficult to grasp the interactions between what happens in these three areas, I think that it is important in our discussions about the purposes of education to be aware of this complexity and to engage with it explicitly. If we fail to do so—if we fail to engage with the question of good education head-on—there is a real risk that data, statistics and league tables will do the decisionmaking for us. This is why it is important to give the question of good education a prominent place in our educational endeavors. This is as important for the everyday practice of schooling as it is for the highest levels of educational policy making.

2

Evidence-Based Education between Science and Democracy

In the prologue to this book I have argued that the question of good education has been displaced by technical and managerial questions about education; questions that focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of educational processes, not on what the processes are supposed to bring about. The rise of a culture of measurement in education is one manifestation of this displacement. In this chapter I focus on another dimension of this trend, one that has to do with the idea that evidence—and more specifically scientific evidence generated through large-scale randomized control trials—ought to play a central role in our decisions about education. Some have gone as far as to argue that such evidence should be the *only* basis for our decisions about the conduct of education—a line of thinking expressed in the idea of evidence-*based* education. Others have argued that such evidence should at least inform our educational decisionmaking—expressed in the notion of evidence-*informed* education. In this chapter I explore to what extent such ideas make sense and where, how and why they become problematic, particularly with regard to the discussion about the aims and ends of education.

The Turn to Evidence in Education

The idea that education should be or become an evidence-based practice and that teaching should be or become an evidence-based profession has recently come to prominence in several countries around the world (see, e.g., Davies 1999; Atkinson 2000; Oakley 2002; Slavin 2002; Feuer et al. 2002; Simons 2003; Cutspec 2004; Thomas and Pring 2004). In Britain the push for evidence-based education partly came in the wake of critical reports about educational research that were commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (the Hillage Report 1998) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (Tooley and Varby 1998). These reports expressed serious doubts about the quality and relevance of educational research, arguing, among other things, that educational research did not provide answers to the questions the government asks in order to develop educational policy; that it did not provide educational professionals with clear guidance for their work; that it was fragmented, noncumulative and methodologically flawed; and that it often was tendentious and politically motivated (see Pring 2000, 1).

Questions about the quality and relevance of educational research were not only raised by policy makers and educational practitioners, but also came from within the educational research community itself. On the one hand it was argued that *educational research* should not be left to educational researchers, but should be subject to centralized agenda-setting, both with respect to its contents and its methods, so that it can become more practically relevant. On the other hand it was suggested that *educational practice* should not be left to the opinions of educators, but that their work should be based on research evidence. The call for a *double transformation* of both educational research and educational practice lies at the very heart of the idea of evidence-based education (see Davies 1999, 109; Fox 2003, 93).

In Britain the call for the transformation of educational research and practice has led to a range of initiatives aimed

at narrowing the gap between research, policy and practice. Amongst these are attempts to synthesize the findings of educational research through the conduct of systematic research reviews and attempts to make the outcomes of research more readily available to different educational constituencies. It also includes attempts to centrally set the agenda for educational research, both with respect to its contents and its methodology. With respect to the latter there is a strong push for experimental research that, according to proponents of evidence-based education, is the only method that is able to provide secure evidence about "what works" (see Hargreaves 1999; Oakley 2002; see also Cutspec 2004, 1–2).

While similar concerns about the quality and impact of educational research have been raised in the USA, the implications of these discussions have been far more dramatic than in Britain and have, according to some, radically changed the landscape of educational research (see, e.g., Eisenhart and Towne 2003). Although the idea that research in education should be able to tell us "what works" was already articulated in the 1980s (Bennett 1986), it was not until the late 1990s that this way of thinking began to have an impact on legislation about federal research funding. Since the reauthorization in 2001 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind), the "gold standard" of randomized controlled field trials seems to have become the preferred—if not prescribed—methodology for educational research (see Slavin 2002, 15; Cutspec 2004, 5). Although there is some indication of the emergence of a broader and more encompassing definition of what counts as scientific research in education (see National Research Council 2002; Feuer et al. 2002; Erickson and Guttierez 2002), the call for causal analysis by means of experimental research in order to find out "what works" remains dominant (see Slavin 2002; 2004; Mosteller and Boruch 2002).

The case for evidence-based practice in education has generated much discussion on both sides of the Atlantic. Proponents of evidence-based education stress that it is about

time that educational research starts to follow the pattern that has created "the kind of progressive, systematic improvement over time that has characterized successful parts of our economy and society throughout the twentieth century, in fields such as medicine, agriculture, transportation, and technology" (Slavin 2002, 16). They suggest that the "most important reason for the extraordinary advances in medicine, agriculture, and other fields is the acceptance by practitioners of evidence as the basis for practice," and particularly the randomized controlled trial that can establish "beyond reasonable doubt the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of treatments intended for applied use" (Slavin 2002, 16).

Opponents of the idea of evidence-based education have raised many questions about the appropriateness of the evidence-based approach for the field of education. Some have questioned the homology between education and medicine (e.g., Davies 1999; Pirrie 2001; Simons 2003) and have pointed to the different meanings of evidence in these fields (Nutley, Davies and Walter 2003). Others have questioned the positivistic assumptions underlying the idea of evidence-based education and have criticized the narrow conception of research entailed in evidence-based education (e.g., Atkinson 2000; Elliot 2001; Berliner 2002; St. Pierre 2002; Erickson and Guttierrez 2002; Oliver and Conole 2003). Still others have criticized the managerial agenda of evidence-based education and its linear, top-down approach to educational improvement (e.g., Brighton 2000; Hammersley 2000; Ridgway, Zawojewski and Hoover 2000; Davies 2003; Fox 2003; Olson 2004), and the lack of an acknowledgement of the crucial role of values in educational research and practice (e.g., Davies 1999; Burton and Underwood 2000; Hammersley 2000; Elliot 2001; Willinsky 2001; Sanderson 2003; Oliver and Conole 2003).

In what follows I wish to take a critical look at the idea of evidence-based practice and the ways in which it has been promoted and implemented in the field of education. Although I do believe that there is scope for improvement of the ways in which educational research and educational

practice communicate and interact—an issue that has been central ever since education became an academic discipline (see e.g., Lagemann 2000)—I am not convinced that evidence-based practice as it is currently being presented and promoted provides the most appropriate matrix for addressing this issue. I am particularly concerned about the tension between scientific and democratic control over educational practice and educational research. On the research side evidence-based education seems to favor a technocratic model in which it is assumed that the only relevant research questions are questions about the effectiveness of educational means and techniques, forgetting, among other things, that what counts as "effective" crucially depends on judgments about what is educationally desirable. On the practice side evidence-based education seriously limits the opportunities for educational practitioners to make such judgments in a way that is sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualized settings. The focus on "what works" makes it difficult if not impossible to ask the question what it should work *for* and who should have a say in determining the latter. To develop my argument I will examine three key assumptions of evidence-based education. I will first ask to what extent the practice of education can be compared to the practice of medicine, the field in which the idea of evidence-based practice was first developed. I will then look at how we should understand the role of (research) knowledge in professional action, with special attention to the question as to what kind of epistemology would be appropriate for professional practices that wish to be informed by the outcomes of research. Third, I will look at the expectations about the practical role of research that are implied in the idea of evidence-based education.

Professional Action in Education

The idea of evidence-based practice has its origins in the field of medicine. It was initially developed to teach medical

students, but evidence-based medicine rapidly became the main paradigm in clinical practice and clinical decisionmaking. In addition to the spread of evidence-based practice from medicine to most other health fields, it has been advocated and adopted in more distant fields of professional activity, such as social work, probation, human resource management and, last but not least, education (see Sackett et al. 1996; Sackett et al. 1997; Davies, Nutley and Smith 2000). Although evidence-based practice may at first sight seem to provide an attractive framework for bringing research and professional practice more closely together, there is a real question as to whether it offers a *neutral* framework that can simply be applied to any field of professional activity, or whether it is a framework that brings with it a particular view of professional practice (see Hammersley 2001; Elliot 2001). If the latter is the case—and I will argue below that it is—the question that needs to be asked is whether this framework is appropriate for the field of education.

Central to evidence-based practice is the idea of *effective intervention* (see, e.g., Evans and Benefield 2001, 528; Oakley 2002, 278; Slavin 2002, 16, 18; Hoagwood and Johnson 2003, 5–8). Evidence-based practice conceives of professional action as intervention, and asks from research that it provide evidence about the effectiveness of interventions. Research needs to find out, in other words, "what works" and the main, if not only, way of doing this, so it is often argued, is through experimental research, most notably in the form of randomized controlled trials.

The idea of professional action as effective intervention indicates that evidence-based practice relies upon a *causal model of professional action* (see Burton and Chapman 2004, 60; Sanderson 2003, 335–338). It is based on the idea that professionals do something—they administer a treatment, they intervene in a particular situation—in order to bring about certain effects. Effective interventions are those in which there is a secure relationship between the intervention (as cause) and its outcomes or results (as effects). It is important to note

in this regard that "effectiveness" is an *instrumental* value: it refers to the quality of processes, but does not say anything about what an intervention is supposed to bring about. This means, among other things, that it is meaningless to talk about effective teaching or effective schooling; the question that always needs to be asked is "Effective for what?" Also, evidence-based practice appears to rely on a separation between the means and ends of professional action (see Elliot 2001, 558, 560). Evidence-based practice assumes that the ends of professional action are given, and that the only relevant (professional and research) questions to be asked are about the most effective and efficient ways of achieving those ends. In this respect, evidence-based practice entails a *technological model of professional action.*

While both assumptions may be valid in the field of medicine—although I do think that they are only valid in relation to a very particular and rather narrow conception of health—I do not think that they can easily be transposed to the field of education. To begin with the role of causality: apart from the obvious fact that the condition of being a student is quite different from that of being a patient—being a student is not an illness just as teaching is not a cure—the most important argument against the idea that education is a causal process lies in the fact that education is not a process of physical interaction but a process of *symbolic* or *symbolically mediated* interaction (see Burton and Chapman 2004, 59; Hammersley 1997; Olson 2004). If teaching is to have any effect on learning, it is because of the fact that students interpret and try to make sense of what they are being taught. It is only through processes of (mutual) interpretation that education is possible (see anderstraeten and Biesta 2001). Despite attempts of many to transform education into a causal technology (often based on the idea that we only need more research in order to find and ultimately control all the factors that determine learning), the simple fact that education is not a process of "push and pull"—or in the language of systems theory, that education is an open and recursive system—shows that it

is the very impossibility of an educational technology that makes education possible (see also Biesta 2004b). While we may want to refer to the activities of teachers as interventions—and one could argue that teaching always intervenes in some way or another in an existing course of events—we should not think of these interventions as causes, but as opportunities for students to respond and, through their response, to learn something from these opportunities (see Burton and Chapman 2004, 60–61; Biesta 2006a).

This brings me to the second assumption about professional action implied in evidence-based practice: the idea that education can be understood as a technological process in which there is a clear separation between means and ends, and in which it is assumed that the ends are given and the only relevant (professional and research) questions to ask are about the most effective and efficient way of achieving these ends. There are two problems with applying this line of thinking to education. The first is that even if we would be able to find the most effective way of achieving a particular end, we may still decide not to act accordingly. There is a substantial amount of research evidence that suggests that the most influential factor in school success is the home environment, and more importantly the experiences in the first years of children's lives. This would suggest that the most effective way to achieve success in education would be to take children away from their parents at an early age and put them in an "ideal" environment. Although there are quite a lot of strategies that try to intervene in the home environment, most societies find it undesirable to choose the most effective road toward educational achievement. This shows that knowledge about the effectiveness of interventions is not as such a sufficient basis for decisions about educational action. There is always the question as to whether particular interventions are *desirable* (see also Sanderson 2003).

In the case of education, and this is my second point, we not only need to ask whether our educational activities, strategies

and—if one wishes to use the word—interventions are desirable as such; we also always need to ask what the educational impact of our actions is. We may well have conclusive empirical evidence that in all cases physical punishment is the most effective way of deterring or controlling disruptive behavior. Yet, as Carr (1992, 249) has argued, "the practice should nevertheless be avoided because it teaches children that it is appropriate or permissible in the last resort to enforce one's will or get one's own way by the exercise of violence." The point here is that in education means and ends are not linked in a technological or external way, but are related *internally* or *constitutively* (see Carr 1992). The means we use in education are not neutral with regard to the ends we wish to achieve. It is not that in education we can simply use any means as long as they are "effective." The means we use "contribute qualitatively to the very character … of the goals which they produce" (Carr 1992, 249). This is why education is at heart a moral practice more than a technological enterprise (Carr 1992, 248; see also Elliott 2001).

These considerations suggest that the model of professional action implied in evidence-based practice—i.e., the idea of education as a treatment or intervention that is a causal means to bring about particular, pre-given ends—is not appropriate for the field of education. What is needed for education is a model of professional action that is able to acknowledge the noncausal nature of educational interaction and the fact that the means and ends of education are internally rather than externally related. What is needed, in other words, is an acknowledgement of the fact that education is a moral practice, rather than a technical or technological one—a distinction that goes back to Aristotle's distinction between *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *techne* (instrumental knowledge) (see Aristotle 1980, particularly book VI; see also Biesta 2009b). The most important question for educational professionals is therefore *not* about the effectiveness of their actions but about the potential educational value of what they do, i.e., about the educational desirability of the opportunities for learning

that follow from their actions. This is why the "what works" agenda of evidence-based practice is at least insufficient and probably misplaced in the case of education, because judgment in education is not simply about what is possible (a factual judgment) but about what is educationally desirable (a value judgment). As Sanderson (2003) concludes: "the question for teachers is not simply 'what is effective' but rather, more broadly it is, 'what is appropriate for these children in these circumstances'" (2003, 341). To suggest that research about "what works" can replace normative professional judgment is not only to make an unwarranted leap from "is" to "ought." It is also to deny educational practitioners the right *not* to act according to evidence about "what works" if they judge that such a line of action would be educationally undesirable (see also Burton and Chapman 2004).

Professional Judgment and Practical Epistemology

The conclusion that professional judgment is central to educational practice, and that the nature of this judgment is moral rather than technical, does not imply that professional judgment in education may *not* be informed by the outcomes of educational research. The second issue that I want to explore, therefore, is how we should understand the way in which research outcomes may impact on educational practice. For this we need to turn to epistemological questions (and it is remarkable to see that little attention has been paid to this dimension in the discussion; for some exceptions see Berliner 2002; Sanderson 2003; Eraut 2003; Burton and Chapman 2004). The main question here is what kind of epistemology might be appropriate for an adequate understanding of the role of knowledge in (professional) action. To develop an answer to this question I will take a closer look at the work of John Dewey who, in my view, has developed one of the most powerful and sophisticated "practical epistemologies" available in Western philosophy (see Biesta and Burbules 2003).

Although there may be different views about how research can and should be used in educational practice, there seems to be an almost unanimous expectation that research *can* tell us "what works," that it can provide "sound evidence" about the likely effects of policy and practice, and "sound evidence of effectiveness" more generally. Whether these expectations are warranted ultimately depends on the epistemological assumptions one brings to the understanding of what research can achieve. It is here that Dewey's ideas are relevant, both with respect to what we can expect from research and with respect to the question of how research can be used in educational practice.

The most important aspect of Dewey's theory of knowing lies in the fact that it is *not* premised on the dualism between immaterial mind and material world—a dualism that has been the framework for modern epistemology at least since the time when Descartes divided reality into *res cogitans* (the knowing "stuff") and *res extensa* (the "stuff" that occupies space). Dewey offers a theory of knowing that does *not* start with the impossible question as to how "a knower who is purely individual or 'subjective' and whose being is wholly psychical and immaterial . . . and a world to be known which is purely universal or 'objective' and whose being is wholly mechanical and physical" can ever reach each other (Dewey 1911, 441). Instead, he approaches the question of knowledge from within an action-theoretical framework, one in which knowing is understood as "a way of doing"—which is why we may want to refer to Dewey's position as a theory of *knowing* and not a theory of *knowledge* (see Biesta 2004c).

The central concept in Dewey's theory of knowing is the notion of *experience.* Experience is not about consciousness or mental awareness but refers to the transactions of living organisms and their environments. Dewey's transactional understanding of experience provides a framework in which knowing is no longer about an immaterial mind looking at the material world and registering what goes on in it—a view to which Dewey refers as the *spectator theory of knowledge.* For

Dewey, knowing is not about a world "out there," but concerns the *relationship* between our actions and their consequences— which is the central idea of Dewey's *transactional theory of knowing.*

Because knowing is about grasping and understanding the relationship between our actions and their consequences, knowing can help us to gain better control over our actions— better at least, that is, than in the case of blind trial and error. "Where there is the possibility of control," Dewey writes, "knowledge is the sole agency of its realization" (Dewey 1925, 29). It is important to see that "control" here does not mean complete mastery, but the ability to intelligently plan and direct our actions.

The main reason why Dewey's transactional theory of knowing is important for our discussion is that it provides us with a framework for understanding the role knowledge plays in action. To understand Dewey's approach, it is first of all important to see that we do not need to have any knowledge at all in order to act. It is not that we need to have information about "the world" before we can act in it. As living organisms, we simply are always already active; we simply are always already in transaction with our environment. This does not mean, of course, that we do not learn as a result of our transactions with the world. The whole idea of experience is precisely that we undergo the consequences of our "doings" and that we change as a result of this. Dewey explains that experience results in "change in the organic structures that conditions further behavior" (Dewey 1938, 38). He refers to such changes as *habits.* Habits are not patterns of action, but predispositions to act.

We basically acquire our habits through processes of trial and error—or, in more theoretical language, through experimentation. In a very fundamental sense, experimentation is the only way in which we can learn anything at all: we learn because we do and subsequently undergo the consequences of our doings. Yet for Dewey there is a crucial difference between blind trial and error—experimentation without

deliberation and direction—and what he calls *intelligent* action. The difference between the two has to do with the intervention of thinking or reflection, that is, with the use of symbolic operations.

To understand Dewey's ideas about the role of thinking in action, it is important to see that we only learn and acquire new habits in those situations in which the organism-environment transaction is interrupted. One way to find an adequate response in such situations is through trial and error. Sometimes this will be successful; sometimes it will not. Apart from the fact that trial and error may not be a very efficient way of problem solving, there is also the risk that some attempts to solve the problem may be irreversible, which means that if those attempts do not solve the problem we may not be able to solve the problem at all. The way out of this predicament, according to Dewey, is through experimentation with different lines of action at a symbolic level, rather than through overt action. This is precisely what thinking does: it is the "dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action" (Dewey 1922, 132). The choice for a specific line of action should be understood as "hitting in imagination upon an object which furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of overt action" (Dewey 1922, 134). Whether this choice will actually lead to coordinated transaction—whether the problem will be solved—will, of course, only become clear when we actually act. Thinking and deliberation cannot solve problems, nor can they guarantee that the chosen response will be successful. But what they can do is make the process of choosing more intelligent than it would have been in the case of blind trial and error.

It is because of the fact that our experimental problem solving is embedded in symbolic operations, in thinking and deliberation, in language, stories, theories, hypotheses, explanations, etcetera, that we not only learn at the level of our habits. We also add to our "symbolic resources" for addressing future problems. We could say that we have gained knowledge, as long as we do not forget that this is

not knowledge about "the world" but about the *relationships* between our actions and their consequences in this particular situation. After all, according to Dewey's transactional framework this is the one and only way in which the world will ever "appear" to us.

The foregoing account of reflective experimental problem solving—a process to which Dewey refers as *inquiry* (Dewey 1938)—is the matrix for Dewey's account of the *acquisition* of knowledge. One of the main implications of this view is that inquiry—or research—does not provide us with information about a world "out there," but only with information about *possible relationships between actions and consequences.* In the case of everyday problem solving we learn about possible relationships between our actions and their consequences. In the case of randomized controlled trials we learn about possible relationships between experimental treatments and measured results. In neither case, however, does this result in truths about a world "out there." It rather gives us "warranted assertions" about relationships between what we did and what followed from it. This means that inquiry and research can only tell us what is possible—or to be even more precise: they can only show us what *has been* possible. Research, in short, can tell us what *worked,* but cannot tell us what *will work.*

Dewey's account of the process of inquiry is, however, not only an account of how we acquire knowledge. It is at the very same time an account of how we solve problems. From the latter point of view, Dewey's account also provides us with a model of professional action and, more importantly, with a view about the role of knowledge in action. There are three things that are important in Dewey's account. First of all, for Dewey professional action is not about following tried and tested recipes, but about addressing concrete and, in a sense, always unique problems. Dewey's transactional view implies that although there are structure, form and duration in our transactions with the world, we cannot and should not expect that situations will stay the same over time, and we should definitely not expect so in the social realm.

Second, it is important to see that knowledge acquired in previous situations—or knowledge acquired by others in other inquiry or research situations—does not enter the process of reflective problem solving in the form of a rule or prescription. When Dewey writes that "no conclusion of scientific research can be converted into an immediate rule of educational art" (Dewey 1929, 9), this is not only because all that research can give us is an understanding of possibilities—of what worked, not what will work. It is also because in reflective problem solving we do not use "old" knowledge to simply tell us what we should do. We use "old" knowledge to guide us in our attempts to understand what the problem might be and in guiding us in the intelligent selection of possible lines of action. What "old" knowledge does, in other words, is help us in making our problem solving more intelligent. Yet, the proof of the pudding always lies in the action that follows. This will "verify" both the adequacy of our understanding of the problem and, in one and the same process, the adequacy of the proposed solution (for Dewey's views on verification see Biesta and Burbules, 68–71).

This may seem to suggest—and this is my third point—that Dewey would not object to a technological view of professional action as long, that is, as we do not expect too much or the wrong thing from research and as long as we keep in mind that professional judgment is always about situations that in some respect are unique. But for Dewey, problem solving is not simply about finding the right means for achieving a particular end. For Dewey intelligent problem solving should include both means and ends. It is not only that we need to judge "existential materials" with respect to their function "as material means of effecting a resolved situation" (Dewey 1938, 490). At the very same time and in one and the same process we need to evaluate ends "on the basis of the available means by which they can be attained" (490). The point of the process of inquiry is to institute "means-consequences (ends) in *strict conjugate relation* to each other" (490).

The upshot of this is that neither in our role as researcher nor in our role as professional educator should we accept given problem definitions and given, predetermined ends. Dewey makes a strong case for arguing that both in research and professional practice any ends are of the nature of a hypothesis, and that such hypotheses have to be formed, developed and tested "in strict correlation with existential conditions as means" (Dewey 1938, 490). Similarly, we should approach given definitions of a problem as hypotheses that may alter as a result of the inquiry process. Dewey argues, in other words, that we should not only be experimental with respect to means, but also with respect to ends and the interpretation of the problems we address. It is only along these lines that inquiry in the social domain can help us to find out not only whether what we desire is achievable, but also whether achieving it is desirable. Dewey's "pragmatic technology" (Hickman 1990) is therefore not about social engineering or social control in the narrow sense of the word. Action in the social domain can only become intelligent action when its intrinsic relationship with human purposes and consequences, i.e., when the political nature of inquiry in the social domain, is fully taken into account.

Dewey's practical epistemology thus provides us with an important alternative for the model of evidence-based education. There are two crucial differences. First of all, Dewey shows that "evidence" does not provide us with rules for action but only with hypotheses for intelligent problem solving. If, to put it differently, we want an epistemology that is practical enough to understand how knowledge can support practice, we have to concede that the knowledge available through research is not about what works and will work, but about what has worked in the past. The only way to utilize this knowledge is as an *instrument* in intelligent professional action. The second difference between Dewey's approach and traditional views of evidence-based practice is that neither research nor professional action can and should only focus on the most effective means to bring about predetermined

ends. Researchers and practitioners should also engage in inquiry about ends—and do this in close relation to inquiry into means. Systematic inquiry into what is desirable is not only a task for educational researchers and educational practitioners but, in the case of education, extends to society at large. A democratic society is precisely one in which the purpose of education is not given but is a constant topic for discussion and deliberation.

The Practical Roles of Educational Research

The idea behind the "what works" slogan is that research should provide information about effective strategies for educational action. I have already shown that educational practice is more than the simple application of strategies or techniques to bring about predetermined ends. I have also already shown, with Dewey, that research can only indicate what *has worked,* not what works or will work, which means that the outcomes of research cannot simply be translated into rules for action. Knowledge about the relationship between actions and consequences can only be used to make professional problem solving more intelligent. While I have argued that research should not only investigate the effectiveness of educational means but should at the same time inquire into the desirability of educational ends, evidence-based practice only focuses on the first task and, in doing so, assumes that the only way in which research can be relevant for educational practice is through the provision of instrumental or technical knowledge.

In his discussion of the ways in which social science research can be of practical relevance, de Vries (1990) refers to this particular way in which research can inform social practice as the *technical role* of research. In the technical role research is a producer of means, strategies and techniques to achieve given ends. De Vries argues, however, that there is at least one other way in which research can inform practice. This is by providing different *interpretations,* different ways

of understanding and imagining social reality. He refers to the latter as the *cultural role* of research.

De Vries's distinction allows us to see that the provision of instrumental knowledge is not the only way in which educational research can inform and be beneficial for educational practice. While there is an important task for educational research in finding, testing and evaluating different ways of educational action, research can also have impact when it helps educational practitioners to acquire a different understanding of their practice, if it helps them to see and imagine their practice differently. To see a classroom through the lens of behavioral objectives or through the lens of legitimate peripheral participation can make a huge difference. The difference it makes is not only that we can see things differently. By looking through a different theoretical lens, we may also be able to understand problems that we did not understand before, or even see problems where we did not see them before (think, for example, of the ways in which feminist scholarship has helped us precisely to make problems visible). As a result, we may be able to envisage opportunities for action where we did not envisage them before. The cultural role of educational research is thus no less practical than the technical role. A key problem with the idea of evidence-based practice is that it simply overlooks the cultural option. It focuses on the production of means for given ends and reduces research questions "to the pragmatics of technical efficiency and effectiveness" (Evans and Benefield 2001, 539). It only has technological expectation about research.

There are two further aspects of de Vries's distinction between the technical and the cultural role that are important for our discussion. The first is that although the two roles can be distinguished from each other, this does not mean that they should necessarily be thought of as separate. On the one hand de Vries shows that different interpretations often help us to see new problems and new possibilities for action and therefore can lead to different and/or more precise "technical" questions for further research. On the other

hand, if research is successful in performing its technical role, if, in other words, research does bring about strategies and approaches that successfully solve problems, this may well convince us to see and understand the situation in terms of the framework that informs this particular approach. More often than not, therefore, the technical and the cultural approach mutually inform and reinforce each other.

The foregoing may suggest that the technical and the cultural role are two options available to researchers to choose from. This, however, may not always be the case. De Vries argues that the role that educational research can play depends to a large extent upon the micro- and macropolitical conditions under which researchers operate. In those cases in which there is a strong consensus about the aims of education or, to put it differently, where the aims of education cannot be questioned, the only "possible" role for research seems to be a technical role. When, on the other hand, such a consensus does not exist, there is a possibility for research to play a cultural role by providing different interpretations of the situation. De Vries connects this analysis with the idea of democracy. He suggests that a democratic society is a society in which social research is not restricted to a technical role, but can also perform a cultural role. A democratic society is, in other words, characterized by the existence of an open and informed discussion about problem definitions and the aims and ends of our educational endeavors. The fact that the whole discussion about evidence-based practice only seems to have technical expectations about the practical role of research is, therefore, also a worrying sign from the point of view of democracy.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined three key assumptions that underlie the idea of evidence-based education. In discussing the model of professional action implied in the idea of

evidence-based education I have argued that education cannot be understood as an intervention or treatment because of the noncausal and normative nature of educational practice and because of the fact that the means and ends in education are internally related. This implies that educational professionals need to make judgments about what is educationally desirable. They need to make judgments, in other words, about good education. Such judgments are by their very nature *normative* judgments. To suggest that research about "what works" can replace such judgments not only implies an unwarranted leap from "is" to "ought" but also denies educational practitioners the right *not* to act according to evidence about "what works" if they judge that such a line of action would be educationally undesirable. The problem with evidence-based education is therefore not only that it is not sufficiently aware of the normative dimensions of educational decisionmaking. The problem is that it also limits the opportunities for educational professionals to exert their judgment about what is educationally desirable in particular situations.

A similar issue emerged in the discussion about the epistemological assumptions of evidence-based practice. Using Dewey's practical epistemology I showed that research cannot supply us with rules for action, but only with hypotheses for intelligent problem solving. Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the educational professional in this is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It rather is to utilize research findings to make their problem solving more intelligent. This not only involves deliberation and judgment about the means and techniques of education; it involves at the very same time deliberation and judgment about the ends of education. Dewey's practical epistemology therefore challenges the idea of evidence-based education in two ways: it challenges the way in which evidence-based education thinks about what research can achieve in relation to educational practice, and it challenges the technocratic model

in which it is assumed that the discussion can and should be restrained to technical questions about "what works." Dewey helps us to see that normative questions are serious research questions in their own right; questions, moreover, that need to be part of a full, free and open normative debate among all those with a stake in education (which not only includes those with a direct interest in education, but ultimately should include all citizens).

The idea that the link between research, policy and practice is not restricted to technical questions, but can also be established through the ways in which research can provide different understandings of educational reality and different ways of imagining a possible future, was central in the third step of my discussion, in which I looked at the way in which evidence-based education conceives of the relationship between research, policy and practice. I not only suggested that evidence-based education seems to be unaware that research can play both a technical and a cultural role, and that both can have very real and practical consequences. I also showed that the extent to which research can perform a technical and/or a cultural role can be taken as an indication of the democratic quality of a society. This is why the current climate in which governments and policy makers seem to demand that educational research only plays a technical role can and should indeed be read as a threat to democracy itself (see Hammersley 2001, 550).

It is for all these reasons that there is a real need to widen the scope of our thinking about the relationship between research, policy and practice, so as to make sure that the discussion is not restricted to finding the most effective ways to achieve certain ends, but also addresses questions about the desirability of the ends themselves. With Dewey I wish to emphasize that we always need to ask the question whether our ends are desirable given the way in which we might be able to achieve them. In education, the further question that always needs to be asked is about the educational quality of our means, i.e., about what students will learn from our

use of particular means or strategies. From this perspective it is problematic that the discussion about evidence-based practice is only focused on technical questions—questions about "what works"—while forgetting the need for critical inquiry into normative and political questions about what is educationally desirable, questions as to what constitutes good education. If we really want to improve the relationship between research, policy and practice in education, we thus need an approach in which technical questions about education can be addressed in close connection with normative, educational and political questions about what is educationally desirable. The extent to which a government not only allows the research field to raise this set of questions, but actively supports and promotes research and researchers to go beyond simplistic questions about "what works," may well be an indication of the degree in which a society can be called a democratic society. From the point of view of democracy an exclusive emphasis on "what works" is therefore not enough.

3

Education between Accountability and Responsibility

My argument so far has focused on the ways in which recent trends in the field of education have made it more difficult to engage with questions about the aims and ends of education. I have characterized this as a process in which the question of good education has been displaced by other questions—such as questions about measurement and evidence—that are fundamentally unable to generate answers to the question as to what is educationally desirable. In this chapter I focus on yet another dimension of this development, viz., the way in which the idea of accountability has been transformed from a notion with real democratic potential to a set of procedures that have stifled educational practice and that have reduced normative questions to questions of mere procedure. Just as the idea of evidence-based practice poses a threat to the democratic control of education, the managerial approach to accountability has eroded opportunities for educators to take responsibility for their actions and activities and, more specifically, for what their actions and activities are supposed to bring about.

Two Interpretations of Accountability

According to Charlton (1999; 2002) accountability is a "slippery rhetorical term" with at least two largely distinct meanings: a technical-managerial meaning and a looser, more general meaning. In general discourse, accountability has to do with responsibility and carries connotations of "being answerable-to." The technical-managerial meaning, on the other hand, refers more narrowly to the duty to present auditable accounts. Originally accountability only referred to financial documentation. The current *managerial* use of accountability is, however, a direct extension of this financial usage in that an accountable organization is seen as one that has the duty to present auditable accounts of *all* of its activities. The link between the two meanings of accountability is weak. Charlton argues that "only insofar as it is legitimate to assume that the provision of auditable documentation is synonymous with responsible behaviour" is there any overlap between the two meanings of accountability (see Charlton 2002, 18). Yet, the rhetoric of accountability operates precisely on the basis of a "quick switch" between the two meanings, making it difficult to see an argument against accountability as anything other than a plea for irresponsible action.

Charlton not only makes a helpful conceptual distinction between the two meanings of accountability; his account also shows that the *managerial* use of the idea of accountability has its history in a strictly financial context in which the purpose of auditing is "to detect and deter incompetence and dishonesty in the handling of money" (2002, 24). He argues that the logic of financial auditing has simply been *transposed* to the managerial context, without much consideration for the question as to what extent this logic is appropriate for managerial purposes. Rather than adapting the principles of the audit process to the specifics and requirements of a different context, Charlton demonstrates that the culture of accountability has led to a situation in which practices had to adapt to the principles of the auditing process (see also Power 1994;

1997). "Transparent organizations are auditable, and auditable organizations are manageable—and *vice versa*. Therefore, organizations *must be made auditable*" (Charlton 2002, 22).

Although Charlton seems to suggest that the two meanings of accountability currently exist together, it could be argued that the tradition that sees accountability as a system of (mutual) responsibility rather than as a system of governance was the dominant tradition before the rise of the technical-managerial approach. There is clear evidence for this in education, where, as Poulson (1996; 1998) has argued, discussions about accountability in the late 1970s and early 1980s were strongly focused on a *professional* interpretation of accountability. Apart from a professional interpretation of accountability, there were also attempts to articulate a *democratic* approach to accountability, arguing that making schools accountable to parents, students and the wider citizenry would support the democratization of education (see Epstein 1993; Davis and White 2001).

The shift from professional and democratic notions of accountability to the current hegemony of the technical-managerial approach should be read against the background of a wider societal transformation and transformation of the educational system. Gewirtz, in her study of educational reform in England, characterizes this transformation as a development from "welfarism"—the educational settlement in England before 1988—to the new managerialism of "postwelfarism" (see Gewirtz 2002). Welfarism is characterized by a public service ethos; a commitment to professional standards and values such as equity, care, and social justice; and an emphasis on cooperation. The "new managerialism," on the other hand, is characterized by a customer-oriented ethos, decisions driven by efficiency and cost effectiveness, and an emphasis on competition, especially free market competition (see Gewirtz 2002, 32). Accountability and its corollary quality assurance are the main instruments of the new managerialism. In her study Gewirtz shows in much detail the problematic impact of the new managerialism on

the day-to-day practice in secondary schools in England (see Gewirtz 2002, especially 138–154).

The Changing Relationship between the State and Its Citizens

Besides the question of how the history of accountability in education might best be described, there is, of course, also the question of how the shift from a professional and democratic to a managerial approach to accountability can be understood. This has been a major question in educational policy research over the past decades, and continues to be a central topic for debate and research. Most authors agree that the rise of accountability should be understood against the background of *ideological* transformations (the rise of neoliberalism and neoconservatism) and *economic* changes (most importantly the oil crisis and the economic slowdown in the mid-1970s, and the subsequent rise of global capitalism), which, together, have resulted in the decline— if not demolition—of the welfare state and the rise—if not hegemony—of the neoliberal/global capitalist logic of the market (for a comprehensive overview see Apple 2000). One of the important questions in the discussion concerns the exact relationship between ideological and economic changes. Some would argue that they were relatively independent and have mutually reinforced each other. Faulks (1998) has suggested that Thatcherism was much more a *response* to the changing economic situation than an independent ideological factor driving change.

One of the most significant changes that has been brought about as a result of this development is the *reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and its citizens.* This relationship, so I wish to argue, has become less a *political* relationship— that is, a relationship between government and citizens who, together, are concerned about the common good—and more an *economic* relationship—that is, a relationship between the

state as provider and the taxpayer as consumer of public services.

The reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and its citizens should not be understood as simply a different way of relating. The new relationship has fundamentally changed the role and identity of the two parties and the terms on which they relate. Not only can it be argued that the relationship between the state and its citizens has been depoliticized. One could even argue that the sphere of the political itself has been eroded (see, e.g., Marquand 2004; Biesta 2005b). Crucially, the language that is used is an economic language, which positions the government as provider and the citizen as consumer (see Biesta 2004a; 2006a). *Choice* has become the key word in this discourse. Yet "choice" is about the behavior of consumers in a market where their aim is to satisfy their needs, and should not be conflated with democracy, which is about public deliberation and contestation about the common good and the just and equitable (re)distribution of public resources.

According to the logic of the market the relationship between the state and its citizens is no longer a *substantial* relationship but has turned into a strictly *formal* relationship. This reconfiguration is closely connected to the rise of the culture of quality assurance, the corollary of accountability. Indeed, current quality assurance practices typically concentrate "upon *systems* and *processes* rather than outcomes" (Charlton 2002, 20; emphasis in original). Quality assurance is about efficiency and effectiveness of processes, not about what these processes are supposed to bring about. This is why the constant emphasis of the British government on "raising standards" in education and other public services is rather vacuous since it lacks proper (democratic) discussion about which standards or "outcomes" are most desirable. The same problem, as I have shown, underlies much of the research of the "school effectiveness and improvement industry" (Gewirtz 2002, 15), since these studies mainly focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of processes, without raising the

far more difficult normative and political question about the desirability of what such processes should result in.

Citizens as Consumers: From Direct to Indirect Accountability

Epstein (1993) has argued that the ideas of parental choice and of making schools accountable to parents represents a real democratic opportunity but that progressive and radical educators have not always seized this opportunity. This is one reason why a conservative interpretation has managed to become hegemonic. It is, of course, important to acknowledge that parental choice in itself can hardly be called democratic if it is not a part of wider democratic deliberation about the shape and form and aims and ends of education in society. If the latter dimension is lacking, parental choice simply leads to what Apple aptly describes as the "conversion of economic and social capital into cultural capital" (Apple 2000, 237). In such a situation parental choice simply reproduces existing inequalities. What also should not be forgotten is that contemporary discourses about choice in education are generally introduced within the context of neoliberalism rather than classical liberalism. Olssen provides a helpful account of the distinction between the two.

> Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism, the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neoliberalism the state seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. (Olssen 1996, 340)

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This is the particular constellation under which accountability in education currently operates. What is most peculiar about this situation is the odd combination of marketized individualism and central control. This explains why professional and democratic models of accountability have become virtually extinct. The reason for this is that education has been repositioned as a public service, provided by the government and paid for by taxpayers' money. In this constellation there is no *direct* accountability between parents (or, for that matter, students) and schools. The accountability is *indirect.* Direct accountability takes place between schools and the state, and the rationale for this mode of accountability is mainly formal (i.e., financial or in terms of the quality of processes), although there is also a quasisubstantial concern (for example through an agenda of "raising standards").

The relationship between schools and parents (or, again, students) that is "produced" through this system is, as I have mentioned before, fundamentally an economic one. The role of parents and students in the "accountability loop" is only *indirect,* in that the government can ultimately be held accountability for the "quality" of the public services they deliver. But the latter relationship is, itself, an apolitical relationship, in that it positions citizens as consumers who can "vote" about the quality of the services delivered by the government but don't have a democratic say in the overall direction or content of what is being delivered—if delivery is an appropriate concept in the first place.

While neoliberal governments tend to position citizens as consumers of public services, Poulson (1998) has reported that research on parental views and choices in education conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s predominantly found that parents "neither saw themselves as consumers, nor education as a product" (Poulson 1998, 420). Yet research conducted by Hughes et al. (1994) revealed that "parents of children in primary schools in England increasingly began to identify themselves as consumers during the course of the study" (Poulson 1998, 420). Similarly, Gewirtz (2002) documents how

the discourse of accountability has been internalized by head teachers, radically changing their professional self-perception and identity. Both examples show that the culture of accountability is producing particular kinds of relationships and particular identities within these relationships.

Accountability or Responsibility?

The foregoing reconstruction of the rise of the managerial approach to accountability shows that this rise is not an isolated phenomenon, but that it is part of a transformation of society in which political relationships and the sphere of the political itself seem to have been replaced by economic relationships. The ground for the current mode of accountability seems to be an economic one, in that the right to accountability that the government claims seems to arise from the financial investment it makes in public services like education. Although at first sight there seem to be opportunities for a more democratic "face" of accountability, i.e., in the relationship between parents and students as "consumers" of education and schools as "providers," I have argued that there is no direct relationship of accountability between these parties, but only an indirect one. The only role parents and students can play is that of consumers of educational provision, but there is no opportunity to participate in any public, democratic discourse about education. O'Neill describes the predicament as follows:

> *In theory* the new culture of accountability and audit makes professionals and institutions more accountable *to the public*. This is supposedly done by publishing targets and levels of attainment in league tables, and by establishing complaint procedures by which members of the public can seek redress for any professional or institutional failures. But underlying this ostensible aim of accountability *to the public* the real requirements are for accountability *to regulators, to departments*

> *of government, to funders, to legal standards.* The new forms of accountability impose forms of *central control*—quite often indeed a *range of different and mutually inconsistent* forms of central control. (O'Neill 2002, 4)

The problem is that while many would want the culture of accountability to do the first (i.e., to be accountable to the public), it actually does the second (i.e., being accountable to the regulators) and thereby takes the real stakeholders out of the "accountability loop." In this respect the current technical-managerial approach to accountability produces economic relationships between people and makes democratic relationships difficult if not impossible.

The impact of this on the day-to-day practice in schools and other institutions is that institutions seem to adapt themselves to the requirements of accountability and audit, rather than the other way around. To quote O'Neill once more:

> *In theory* again the new culture of accountability and audit makes professionals and institutions more accountable *for good performance.* This is manifest in the rhetoric of improvement and raising standards, of efficiency gains and best practice, of respect for patients and pupils and employees. But beneath this admirable rhetoric the real focus is on performance indicators chosen for ease of measurement and control rather than because they measure accurately what the quality of performance is. (O'Neill 2002, 4–5)

O'Neill points out that the incentives of the culture of accountability are by no means unreal. Yet what they seem to elicit is behavior that suits the accountability system— behavior that suits the inspectors and those responsible for quality assurance—rather than that it acts as an incentive for professional and responsible action. Ironically, this can easily result in a situation that is detrimental for the "consumers" of public services. If, for example, schools are rewarded for high exam scores, they will increasingly try only to attract "motivated" parents and "able" children and will try to keep

"difficult students" out. Ultimately, this results in a situation where it is no longer the question of what schools can do for their students, but what students can do for their school (see Apple 2000, 235).

The conclusion of the foregoing analysis can only be that the current culture of accountability is deeply problematic. Accountability is an apolitical and antidemocratic strategy that redefines all significant relationships in economic terms, and hence conceives of them as formal rather than substantial relationships. This, as I have shown, is both the case with the relationship between government and citizens and with the relationship between government and educational institutions. As a result, parents and students are also maneuvered into an economic relationship—one in which they are the consumers of the provision called "education"— without there being an opportunity for them to hold either the schools or the government directly to account. In the end, we are left with a situation in which systems, institutions and individual people adapt themselves to the imperatives of the logic of accountability, so that accountability becomes an end in itself, rather than a means for achieving other ends.

Middle-Class Anxiety

The conclusion that the current culture of accountability is problematic is, of course, not new, although I do hope to have shed some new light on why and how this is so. But while an adequate diagnosis is important, the real and most urgent question is whether there is a way out of this situation. Is there an alternative for the current regime of accountability? Are there ways to resist the current culture of accountability? Before answering this question there is one further issue I wish to raise, which has to do with the question of how it has been possible for the culture of accountability to have become so prominent and pervasive. Why do people believe in accountability? And why do they actively invest in it?

One reason for the success of accountability in British education may have to do with a phenomenon to which I will refer as "middle-class anxiety"—although it may not only be within the British context that this mechanism is at work. In the English educational system there is a deep rift between so-called public schools (also referred to as fee-paying or independent schools—although the latter notion of course masks the actual dependencies that are at work) and state schools. From the outside, it seems as if public schools are more successful in that, on average, they "produce" students with higher exam scores who, generally, have a better starting position on the job market and have access to higher-status higher education. Many middle-class parents aspire to the culture of public schools, which they perceive as the "gold standard," and they do not want their children to be disadvantaged or left out. For precisely this reason, they are willing to actively support a government agenda of "raising standards" in state schools and the accompanying regime of inspection, central control and accountability. But they forget that the success of public schools has as much to do with the "quality" of the school as with the social and culture capital of its students and their parents.

A further reason why the culture of accountability has become possible lies in the fact that parents and students may indeed believe that if they position themselves as consumers in relation to education, they will obtain real power over education. As I have tried to demonstrate, this is not the case in the current situation because there is no *direct* accountability between the "consumers" and "providers" of education. The state exerts central control over education, leaving parents and students out of the decision loop.

A third reason is associated with Charlton's idea of the "quick switch" between the two different meanings of accountability. Because it is assumed that accountability has to do with responsibility, it has become difficult to argue *against* accountability, since this may look like an argument *for* irresponsible action. But what is the connection between

accountability—or, more precisely, the current culture of accountability—and responsibility? In the next section I want to take a closer look at Zygmunt Bauman's work, with particular emphasis on his ideas regarding responsibility, in order to consider the extent to which accountability and responsibility can be connected and how we might achieve a new connection between accountability and responsibility.

Being Responsible for Our Responsibility

Bauman's work relies on a clear distinction between ethics and morality. Morality concerns "the aspect of human thought, feeling and action that pertains to the distinction between "right and 'wrong'" (Bauman 1993, 4). Ethics, on the other hand, refers to rules, codes and norms. It is the codification of what counts as moral action, a codification in terms of (universal) laws. Implied in the idea of ethics is not only the assumption that it is possible to articulate such laws. Ethics also expresses a particular belief as to what it is to lead a moral life, viz., the life of obedience to the moral law(s) (see Bauman 1998, 75). This view stands in sharp contrast to the view in which the moral life is conceived as a life of choice between right and wrong *without* the guidance of norms, codes and laws.

Bauman characterizes modernity as the era of ethics, i.e., the era in which it is/was assumed to be possible to articulate, define and codify what would count as moral behavior. The moral thought and practice of modernity, he writes, were "animated by the belief in the possibility of a *nonambivalent, nonaporetic code*" (Bauman 1993, 9; emphasis in original). It is precisely the disbelief in this possibility that Bauman sees as distinctly postmodern. The "post" here is not meant in a chronological sense, i.e., in the sense of displacing and replacing modernity at the moment when it ends or fades away. It rather is meant to imply "that the long and earnest efforts of modernity have been misguided, undertaken under

false pretences," and that "it is modernity itself that will demonstrate (if it has not demonstrated yet) … its impossibility" (Bauman 1993, 10). For Bauman, therefore, the postmodern implies the end of ethics. But it is important to see that this does not imply the end of all morality, but only the end of "codified morality." This does not mean that morality is "saved." Bauman only claims that the end of (modern) ethics opens up the possibility for (postmodern) morality. But there is no guarantee whatsoever that the postmodern era will actually be more moral than the modern one. It is only *a* chance and nothing more than that (see, e.g., Bauman 1998, 109). "It remains to be seen," he writes, "whether the time of postmodernity will go down in history as the twilight, or the renaissance, of morality" (Bauman 1993, 3).

The central notion in Bauman's articulation of postmodern morality is the idea of "responsibility." Bauman provides a range of arguments for supporting his claim that responsibility is what postmodern morality is about, yet the most convincing argument may well be found in the contention that following the rules, however scrupulously, does not and will never save us from responsibility. We can always ask ourselves and we can always be asked by others whether our following of some set of (ethical) rules is or was the right thing to do—and we will never have a conclusive answer to that question. And this is precisely what postmodernism shows us: that moral choices are indeed *choices*, and that moral dilemmas are indeed *dilemmas*, and not "the temporary and rectifiable effects of human weakness, ignorance or blunders" (Bauman 1993, 32). The postmodern world, Bauman argues, is one "in which *mystery* is no more a barely tolerated alien awaiting a deportation order" (1993, 33; emphasis in original). It is a world in which we learn to live "with events and acts that are not only not yet explained, but (for all we know about what we will ever know) inexplicable" (Bauman 1993).

Some would say—and this is a recurring theme in the writings of all critics of postmodernity and postmodernism (see Biesta 2005c)—that the postmodern acceptance of

contingency and ambiguity implies the end of morality and even poses a severe threat to the very possibility of human co-habitation as such. Bauman, however, clearly takes the opposite view. He argues that the postmodern "reenchantment" of the world carries a chance of readmitting human moral capacity to that world. Not so that the world will as a consequence become necessarily better and more hospitable. "But it will stand a chance of coming to terms with the tough and resilient human proclivities it evidently failed to legislate away—and of starting from there" (Bauman 1993, 34). Bauman's account thus reveals why responsibility is both possible and necessary under the postmodern "condition." It is *possible* because postmodernity leaves behind the belief in the possibility of a universal moral code, and more specifically the codified rational ethics of modernity. It is for this very reason, however, that responsibility becomes necessary. This raises the question of how we should actually understand responsibility.

Responsibility and Moral Autonomy

One way to approach Bauman's understanding of responsibility is to say that for him only an individual can be responsible. He argues that the problem with attempts to codify morality is that the moral "I" is just being seen as "a singular form of the ethical 'us'" and that "within this ethical 'we,' 'I' is exchangeable with 's/he'" (Bauman 1993, 47). Yet in the moral relationship "I and the Other are not exchangeable, and thus cannot be 'added up' to form a plural 'we'" (Bauman 1993, 50). Following the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Bauman argues that a moral relationship *is* a relationship of *responsibility*. What distinguishes a moral relationship from a contractual relationship is that responsibility is *not* reciprocal. It is not, Bauman argues, that I am responsible for the other because the other is, will be, or has been responsible for me. Responsibility for the other—*real* responsibility, so we could say—is one-sided, nonreciprocal and nonreversible.

My responsibility for the other is always already "there." It is *not* a responsibility that follows from my decision to be responsible or not. Bauman stresses that it rather is "the *impossibility* of not being responsible for this Other here and now that constitutes my moral capacity" (Bauman 1993, 53; emphasis in original). This is not to say that everybody will actually *be* responsible. But the point is that in order *not* to be responsible we must "forget" something.

> The condition of *not* being haunted by scruples is quite easy to obtain, to be sure. In fact we all obtain it and are in it, most of the time. But "most of the time" we move outside the realm of moral action into the area where conventions and etiquette, going through the codified and thus easily learnable and readable motions, as well as the simple rule of respecting the other's privacy, . . . will do. The rest of the time, though, we are in morally charged situations, and that means being on our own. (Bauman 1993, 53–54, n.19; emphasis in original)

While rules can be universal, responsibility is by its very "nature" nonuniversal, singular, unique. By the same token, morality is "endemically and irredeemably *nonrational*—in the sense of not being calculable" (Bauman 1993, 60). The "moral call" rather is thoroughly personal; it appeals to *my* responsibility, which means that "I am moral *before* I think" (Bauman 1993, 61; emphasis in original). It is not, therefore, that one can choose to be responsible for the other or not. Bauman rather holds that being responsible for the other is our human condition: "moral responsibility—being *for* the Other before one can be *with* the Other—is the first reality of the self" (Bauman 1993, 13; emphasis in original).

Morality, Proximity and Modernity

The preceding analysis provides an outline of a postmodern moral philosophy that tries to take responsibility seriously

in its own terms and urges us to take responsibility for our responsibility. The interesting thing about Bauman's work, however, is that he not only provides us with a different way to understand what it means to be responsible but that he also addresses the (sociological) question of to what extent responsibility is actually possible in our society. The central concept in this discussion is the Levinasian idea of *proximity*. For Levinas morality has to do with the relationship between two beings—and not more than two. Bauman aptly speaks of the "moral party of two." Levinas expresses the unique quality of the moral relationship with the idea of *proximity*. Proximity, however, is not about physical closeness. It does not refer to a shortening of distance, but should be understood as a "suppression of distance" (Bauman 1993, 87). This suppression is, however, not an act. Proximity is more like "attention" or "waiting." Seen in this way, we could say proximity describes the predicament of being in the moral situation and of being a moral self. It describes at the same time the specific *quality* of the moral situation, and something like the *condition* upon which morality might become possible, might "occur."

Since morality only exists in the moral party of two, the situation dramatically changes when a third person enters the scene. This is when "society" appears. Now "the naive, unruled and unruly moral impulse—that both necessary and sufficient condition of the 'moral party'—does not suffice anymore" (Bauman 1993, 112). Society needs "norms, laws, ethical rules and courts of justice" (Bauman 1993, 114). Bauman basically sees this necessity as a *loss*. "Objectivity, the gift of the Third, has delivered a mortal, and at least potentially terminal, blow to the affection which moved the moral partners" (Bauman 1993, 114). The "Other" now dissolves in the "Many," and the first thing to dissolve is what Levinas calls the "Face," i.e., the otherness of the other, and hence morality, that is "the responsibility for that otherness" (Bauman 1993, 130). In this situation we need help and the name of that help, according Bauman, is "society" (116). Yet society

offers its help in two different ways. Or, to put it differently, society "consists" of two different processes—Bauman calls them *socialization* and *sociality*—which both, in a different way, offer "help" when morality is no longer possible. (Note that Bauman's use of the word "socialization" in this context is different from how I have introduced it in Chapter 1.) Socialization and sociality might best be understood as two different reactions of society to the "fact" of the moral impulse; reactions, more specifically, to the spontaneity and unpredictability of this impulse. Socialization is the attempt to domesticate the moral impulse, to provide structure to society, or to see society as structure (Bauman 1993, 123). Bauman discerns three ways in which "the disruptive and deregulating impact of moral impulse" *can* be neutralized by society and also actually *has* been neutralized by (modern) society.

The first of these is by "assuring that there is *distance,* not *proximity* between the two poles of action—the 'doing' and the 'suffering' one" (Bauman 1993, 125; emphasis in original). It is, in other words, "the removal of effects of action beyond the reach of moral limits" (Bauman 1993). In this situation actors become just one link in a long chain, and they see and have the ability to control only the next link; they can neither see nor control the ultimate and overall aims. In such a situation the moral capacity of the actor, now prevented from interfering with the overall aim and outcome, is deployed in the service of the *efficiency* of the process. The moral focus shifts, in other words, to the "loyalty to the mates" (Bauman 1993, 126)—a development that "reinforces discipline and willingness to cooperate" (Bauman 1993, 127) but at the same time stifles responsibility. The second "arrangement" consists of exempting some "others" "from the class of potential objects of moral responsibility" (125)—a process that Bauman calls *dehumanization.* What happens here is that those who are at "the receiving end of action" are *denied* the capacity to be moral subjects and are "thus disallowed from mounting a moral

challenge against the intentions and effects of the action" (127). The third "arrangement" involves disassembling the object of action into a set of "traits," so that it no longer appears as a (potentially) moral self. In this case actions become targeted to specific traits but not to the person as a whole—as a result of which an encounter with that whole person is unlikely to happen.

Bauman stresses that these "arrangements" are not simply strategies that have been or can be deployed in order to make morality more difficult or to make morality disappear— although they can be used as such. They are also simply the "effects" of socialization, the "effects" of society's attempt to become more structured, more organized and more ordered. While these arrangements do not promote immoral behavior, and in that respect could be called "neutral," they do not promote good behavior either. They rather render social action morally "adiaphoric," i.e., morally indifferent. The overall effect of socialization is what Bauman describes as an "out-rationalizing" of the moral impulse (119).

The process of *sociality,* on the other hand, results in "out-aesthetizing" the moral impulse. Sociality is, in a sense, everything that socialization is not. Sociality "puts uniqueness above regularity and the sublime above the rational, being therefore generally inhospitable to rules" (Bauman 1993, 119). While this process presents no danger of out-rationalizing the moral impulse, sociality poses a different threat to proximity. The main point of sociality, of the "celebration of spontaneity," is that it brings individuals together in what Bauman calls the "crowd." The "crowd" is the situation where individuals simply "do" and "are." It brings "the comfort of non-decision and non-uncertainty" (Bauman 1993, 132). It is for that reason that in the "crowd" the question of responsibility will simply never arise. Bauman demonstrates that both processes result in much the same outcome—they both create a situation in which heteronomy—heteronomy of rules or heteronomy of crowds—taking the place of the autonomy of the moral self. "Neither … socialization of society nor the sociality of the

crowd, tolerate moral independence. Both explore and obtain obedience—though one by design, the other by default (132).

In a sense we now have come full circle in that we can say that the major tendency of modernity with respect to morality has been that of socialization. For Bauman, after all, modernity is/was the era of *ethics,* the era of codified, structured, regulated morality. In this respect Bauman also offers a moral diagnosis of modernity—or a diagnosis of modern morality—in that he shows how the process of socialization (which is the more encompassing attempt of society to structure, order and control), makes proximity, and hence responsibility, more and more difficult. Although the emphasis in Bauman's analysis is on the effects of socialization, we can also deduce from Bauman's writings that we should not think of sociality as the process that can save morality from the iron grip of socialization. Sociality appears as the other dangerous extreme of social life, the other threat to morality.

Bauman's overall conclusion is, however, slightly optimistic. While he argues again and again that morality has become difficult under conditions of modern life, it has not become impossible. Bauman argues that fortunately, "the moral conscience," that "ultimate prompt of moral impulse and root of moral responsibility—has only been *anaesthetized,* not amputated" (249; emphasis in original). He clearly puts his hope and faith in the possibility that moral conscience is only dormant and therefore, in principle, can be awakened. It may strike the modern mind as "preposterous" to suggest that conscience is "humanity's only warrant and hope" (Bauman 1993). Yet it seems to be the only possibility we have to at least be able to expose both the immorality of codified morality and the immorality of the norms of the majority. "We have little choice but to place our bet on that conscience which, however wan, alone can instill the responsibility for disobeying the command to do evil" (250).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have focused on the question of how the current culture of accountability has affected relationships. The first conclusion I wish to draw is that the culture of accountability poses a threat to *political* relationships in that accountability redefines relationships in economic terms. As a result, the accountability relationship becomes a *formal* relationship where "quality," the most empty and abused word of the past decade, becomes confined to processes and procedures, rather than relating to content and aims. The depoliticization of relationships is at stake both in the relationship between the state and its citizens and between the state and educational institutions.

This change has also affected relationships between schools and teachers on the one hand and parents and students on the other. They have been maneuvered into a position in which it is easier to think of their relationship in economic terms as well. In using the term "easier," I am avoiding the suggestion that the "providers" and "consumers" have been pressed into this kind of thinking. The mechanisms at work are subtler and have more to do with falling into what turns out to be the most "convenient," most "normal" way of thinking and acting. Going against the grain always requires more effort and conviction than choosing that path of least resistance.

One effect of this redefinition process has been the depoliticization of the relationship between schools/teachers and parents/students, in that their interaction focuses primarily on questions about the "quality" of the provision (e.g., compared to other providers; an effect of league tables) and individual value for money ("Is my child getting the best out of this school?"), rather than on questions about the common educational good ("What is it that we want to achieve as a community for the community?"). "Middle-class" anxiety, so I have suggested, may be one of the "mechanisms" at stake in the depoliticization of these relationships. All of this is unfortunate, since there are real democratic possibilities at

the local level of schools and educational institutions, even opportunities for real democratic accountability.

A further effect of this process has been the deprofessionalization of the relationship between schools/teachers and parents/students. Teachers and educational institutions have been maneuvered into a position in which they have to go along with the customer and meet customers' needs. As a result it has become more and more difficult for them to make use of their professional judgment if this goes against apparent "needs" of the learner. Similarly, parents and students have been maneuvered into a consumer position in which it becomes more difficult for them to rely upon and ultimately trust the professionality of educators and educational institutions.

The only democratic option that seems to be left in the wake of these changes is an *indirect* approach where parents and students can call the state to account. The problem is, however, that under the culture of accountability, the state only wants to be held accountable in terms of the "quality" of its delivery of public services, and not in political, let alone democratic, terms. The position of teachers and educational institutions in all this is even more problematic, because they have become trapped on the provider side of the equation. Parents and students can still raise their voice on the basis of the fact that they can present themselves as consumers of what the state provides. Teachers and educational institutions do not possess such spending power and, as a result, don't seem to have any basis in the economic equation to raise their voice. The obvious option for them would be, of course, to raise their professional voice; but this voice has been made suspect under the culture of accountability as well.

The inevitable conclusion is that the culture of accountability has dramatically changed the relationships in the educational landscape and, by the very same process, has changed the identities and self-perceptions of the parties involved. There are, as I have suggested, powerful psychological mechanisms at work in all this. By taking on the role of the

consumers of educational provision, parents and students may gain a feeling of power that may be difficult to resist. I am not suggesting, of course, that parents and students should simply be subjected to the judgments of educational professionals, and even less to the bureaucratic whims of educational institutions. But the culture of accountability has made it very difficult for the relationships between parents/students and educators/institutions to develop into mutual, reciprocal and democratic relationships, relationships that are based upon a shared concern for the common educational good.

It is precisely at this point that the work of Bauman is important. Bauman's work first of all demonstrates that post-modernism should not be seen as undermining responsibility but rather as the situation in which responsibility becomes both a necessity and a real possibility. The postmodern doubt about the possibility for ethical rules and systems is the beginning of responsibility, not its end. Second, Bauman urges us to take responsibility for our responsibility. He urges us to acknowledge that the possibility for responsibility depends upon each of us individually. Third, I believe that Bauman's work is extremely helpful in understanding why it is so difficult for the moral impulse to manifest itself in our society. This is the main significance of his discussion about socialization and sociality. On the one hand he shows how socialization stifles the moral impulse. Yet at the very same time he argues that sociality is not the "solution" for the problems raised by socialization, since it ultimately makes proximity impossible.

Against this background I am inclined to conclude that the culture of accountability poses a very serious threat to responsibility. Accountability is not simply another discourse about how we might understand responsibility, nor is it another definition or operationalization of responsibility. The culture of accountability poses a serious threat to the possibility for proximity. Bauman's account of the three ways in which the moral impulse can be neutralized offers a

surprisingly accurate account of the microrelationships that are brought about by the culture of accountability. It reveals that the technical-managerial approach to accountability can in no way be reconciled with an approach in which responsibility is central.

Does any positive agenda follow from these deliberations? I am inclined to say that one of the most important lessons to be gained by viewing the culture of accountability through the lens of postmodern ethics is an understanding of how this culture poses a threat to the possibility for proximity. It is important, at this point, to recognize that proximity is not a romantic notion. Bauman's argument is not that society is the problem and that community is the solution. Proximity, to put it differently, is not "sociality." Proximity is not about physical closeness; it does not refer to a shortening of distance. Proximity has to do with attention and waiting. Proximity is something that has to be "achieved" again and again and that crucially depends upon our own, individual efforts and commitments to be attentive, to wait, and so on. It articulates both the predicament of being a moral self and the quality of the moral situation qua moral situation, the condition upon which responsibility might occur.

I wish to emphasize that this is not only a personal task. It is also a professional task, that is, if we are willing to see that responsibility is an essential component of what educational relationships are made of. Ultimately, redefining our relationships on the basis of responsibility might also be a way to regain and reclaim the political dimension of accountability, in that we can understand the political as taking responsibility for that which is of common concern (the *res publica*). After all, to take political responsibility is precisely to take responsibility for what is not directly of interest to us, and may not even be of any interest to us at all.

4

A Pedagogy of Interruption

In Chapter 1 I have outlined a framework for engaging with the question of good education. The framework entails a distinction between three functions of education to which I have referred as qualification, socialization and subjectification. My aim with highlighting these distinctions was not only to indicate the different "areas" in which education actually operates. I have also suggested that we can see qualification, socialization and subjectification as three possible aims of education. The distinction between the three notions is therefore meant to be both analytical and programmatic. It can help educators to analyze their practices and it can help them to have more precise discussions about the aims and ends of their activities. At the same time it can make clear that a decision to focus education on only one of these areas actually implies a decision *not* to pay attention to the other dimensions (which of course does not mean that there will be no "effects" in the other areas). One issue that I did not discuss in Chapter 1 is whether it is indeed possible to make a meaningful distinction between qualification, socialization and subjectification. In this chapter I focus on one aspect of this, which is the question of whether it is still possible to make a meaningful distinction between socialization and subjectification. My reason for posing the question in this way

has to do with the fact that the way in which this distinction has been made in the past has become problematic. In this chapter I will not only try to indicate why this is so, but will also present a possible answer to this predicament, both at a more theoretical level and in terms of what I refer to as a "pedagogy of interruption."

A Pedagogy of Interruption

Toward the end of my book *Beyond Learning* (Biesta 2006a) I make a case for a pedagogy of interruption. At first sight it may seem odd to argue that pedagogy should interrupt and that teachers should in some way be engaged in interrupting (the activities of) their students. Isn't it the case, so one could ask, that the task of teachers is to support their students, to facilitate their learning, to make sure that they achieve as best they can, and so on? Doesn't a call for a pedagogy of interruption go against everything that is important in education? My answer to these questions is simple: it depends. And it depends first and foremost on what we think education is and should be about. As I have shown in Chapter 1, "education" is a multilayered and multifaceted concept. On the one hand it is used to *describe* particular practices, such as schooling or the education children receive from their parents; on the other hand it is used to *judge* such practices and their outcomes, for example when we say that schools nowadays focus so much on testing that they no longer provide a proper education. Yet this raises a further question, because when we make judgments about what "good" or "effective" or "successful" education is, we are relying upon views about what education is *for*. This means that we cannot make judgments about the quality of education if we are not clear about what we are actually expecting from it. This is why it is important to make a distinction between different functions and purposes of education, as I have done in more detail in Chapter 1.

Whereas some would argue that schools should only be concerned with qualification, and others argue that education has an important role to play in socialization, I take the position that subjectification should be an intrinsic element of all education worthy of the name. This is not so much meant as an empirical statement referring to the fact that education always in some way impacts upon the subjectivity of those being educated. It is also meant as a normative statement expressing the belief that education becomes uneducational if it only focuses on socialization—i.e., on the insertion of "newcomers" into existing sociocultural and political orders—and has no interest in the ways in which newcomers can, in some way, gain independence from such orders as well. Education, in other words, should always also have an interest in human freedom, and this is what lies behind my insistence on the importance of the subjectification dimension of education.

The idea of pedagogy of interruption is not meant to cover all dimensions of education but is specifically focused on subjectification. In order to explain why this is so I will, in what follows, begin with a brief reconstruction of the roots of modern education. The purpose of this is not only to provide a sense of the history of the idea that subjectification should matter in education. It is also to provide a background against which I can show how the particular modern way to understand subjectivity has been problematized and why this is not only a philosophical problem but also, and perhaps first and foremost, an educational one. Against this background I then present a set of ideas that aim to engage with the question of human subjectivity in a different way. This, in turn, will allow me to make clear what is at stake in a pedagogy of interruption.

The Opening and Closure of Modern Education

The idea of subjectivity as a proper educational concern or interest and as something that is different from socialization

has a particular, modern history, a history that can be traced back to the Enlightenment. A key figure in this history is Immanuel Kant. This is not so much because Kant invented a particular, modern notion of subjectivity—although it can be argued that he did that as well—but first and foremost because, retrospectively, Kant's work has become an important reference point for the development of modern education. Notions such as autonomy, rationality and criticality—all hallmarks of an education that aims to "invest" in human subjectivity—can easily be traced back to Kant's writings on enlightenment and education.

Kant defined enlightenment as the release of the human being "from his [*sic*] self-incurred tutelage" and defined tutelage as the inability of the human being "to make use of his [*sic*] understanding without the direction from another" (Kant 1992 [1784], 90). *Philosophically* the most significant aspect of Kant's notion of "rational autonomy"—autonomy based upon reason—was that he did *not* conceive of this as a contingent historical possibility, but saw it instead as something that was an inherent *telos* of human nature. This is why he argued that to block progress in enlightenment would be "a crime against human nature" (Kant 1992 [1784], 93). *Educationally,* the most important aspect of Kant's thought is to be found in his claim that the "propensity to free thinking" could *only* be brought about through education (see Kant 1982, 710). Kant not only wrote that the human being "is the only creature that has to be educated" (697). He also argued that the human being can only become human—that is, a being who makes use of his understanding without the direction from another (which we may refer to as a rational autonomous being)—"through education" (699).

With Kant the rationale for education thus became founded upon the idea "of a certain kind of subject who has the inherent potential to become self-motivated and self-directing," while the task of education became one of bringing about or releasing this potential "so that subjects become fully autonomous and capable of exercising their individual and

intentional agency" (Usher and Edwards 1994, 24–25). What is most significant about Kant's intervention—and this is why we might say that his work marks the inauguration of modern education—is that he established a link between education and human freedom. Kant made the question of human freedom the central issue for modern education by making a distinction between heteronomous determination and self-determination and by arguing that education ultimately had to do with the latter, not the former. In a sense, therefore, it was only after Kant that it became possible to distinguish between socialization and subjectification.

Whereas in this way Kant's arguments opened up a whole new realm for educational thought and practice—and the idea that education is not simply about inculcation or training but entails an orientation toward freedom, independence and autonomy has remained a central tenet of modern education—this opening was closed off almost before it could start. This happened along two related lines. It was first of all because in the Kantian framing there was only one definition of what it meant to be human. With Kant autonomy based upon the use of reason became the marker of humanity—which left those who were considered to be not or not yet rational, including children, in a "difficult" position. It was also because the achievement of enlightenment was not seen as a contingent historical possibility, but, as I have shown, as something that was firmly rooted in the *telos* of the human being. This meant that modern education became founded upon a particular truth about the destiny of the human being.

For a long time the closure entailed in the Kantian articulation of the foundations of modern education went unnoticed. This was partly because there was widespread support for the underlying belief that human beings ultimately are rational beings who strive for autonomy. This, after all, was very much the "agenda" of the French, the German and the Scottish Enlightenment. Yet, and more importantly, the closure in Kant's articulation of the foundations of modern education went also unnoticed because those who were excluded from this

definition of the *telos* of the human being—those who were deemed to be irrational or prerational (such as children)— lacked a voice to protest against their own exclusion. And they lacked this voice precisely because of the particular definition of what it meant to be human. They were excluded, in other words, before they could even speak or before they could even be acknowledged as capable of speaking (see Rancière 1995; Biesta forthcoming[a]; see also Chapter 6).

Humanism

Philosophically, one way of exposing what is problematic about the way in which the modern educational project was inaugurated is by focusing on its humanist foundations. I use "humanism" here in a specific, philosophical sense of the word, viz., as the idea that it is possible to know and express the essence or nature of the human being, and also that it is possible to use this knowledge as the foundation for subsequent action—in the sphere of education but also, for example, in the sphere of politics. Emmanuel Levinas characterizes such a form of humanism as entailing "the recognition of an invariable essence named 'Man,' the affirmation of his central place in the economy of the Real and of his value which [engenders] all values" (Levinas 1990, 277). In this specific sense we can characterize the Kantian "framing" of modern education as humanistic in that it is based upon a particular truth about the nature and destiny of the human being. This is not to suggest that Kant articulated a naturalistic conception of human subjectivity (for a helpful discussion on this see Laverty 2009). But his work did become an important reference point for a humanistic approach to education in the Levinasian sense of "humanism."

In twentieth-century philosophy humanism has basically been challenged for two reasons. On the one hand questions have been raised about the *possibility* of humanism, i.e., about the possibility for human beings to define their own essence

and origin. Foucault and Derrida have both shown the impossibility of trying to capture our own essence and origin—an impossibility that has become known as the "end of man" or the "death of the subject" (see Foucault 1970; see also Derrida 1982). On the other hand questions have been raised about the *desirability* of humanism. This line has particularly been developed by Heidegger and Levinas (see Biesta 2006a for more detail; see also Derrida 1982, 109–136). For Levinas the "crisis of humanism in our society" began with the "inhuman events of recent history" (Levinas 1990, 279). Yet for Levinas the crisis of humanism is not simply located in these inhumanities as such, but first and foremost in humanism's inability to effectively counter such inhumanities and also in the fact that many of the inhumanities of the twentieth century—"[t]he 1914 War, the Russian Revolution refuting itself in Stalinism, fascism, Hitlerism, the 1939–45 War, atomic bombings, genocide and uninterrupted war" (279)—were actually based upon and motivated by particular definitions of what it means to be human. This is why Levinas concludes—with a phrase reminiscent of Heidegger—that "humanism has to be denounced … because it is not *sufficiently* human" (Levinas 1981, 128; emphasis added).

The problem with this form of humanism is that it posits a *norm* of "humanness," a norm of what it means to be human, and in doing so excludes those who do not live up to or are unable to live up to this norm—and at the dawn of the twenty-first century it is clear that this is not simply a theoretical possibility. Yet this point is not simply a general and philosophical one; it also has important educational ramifications. From an educational point of view the problem with this form of humanism is that it specifies a norm of what it means to be human *before* the actual manifestation of "instances" of humanity. It specifies what the child, student or newcomer *must* become before giving them an opportunity to show who they are and who they will be. This form of humanism thus seems to be unable to be open to the possibility that newcomers might radically alter our understandings of

what it means to be human. The upshot of this is that education then (again) becomes a form of socialization, as within this particular framing each "newcomer" can only be seen as a—more or less "successful"—instance of an essence that has already been specified and that is already known or characterized in advance.

As long as we see education through the lens of socialization, all this is, of course, not really a problem. Yet it is here that Kant remains important because he has left us with the idea that it might be—and in a sense *ought to be*—possible to make a meaningful distinction between education and socialization, that it ought to be possible to make a distinction between education oriented toward the insertion in existing orders and education oriented toward freedom. If we are committed to this distinction, if we are committed to what Foucault has so aptly referred to as Enlightenment's "undefined work of freedom" (Foucault 1984, 46), then it becomes important to think again about ways in which we might be able to distinguish education from socialization, both in theory and in practice, and moreover to do so in ways that do not bring us back to the philosophical framings that caused these problems in the first place.

Coming into the World: Presence, Plurality and Uniqueness

In my work I have responded to this challenge through a combination of two sets of ideas. On the one hand I have replaced the idea of education as the production of a particular kind of subjectivity—as a process where we as educators try to bring about a particular kind of human being, e.g., the rational autonomous human being—with the question of how we, as unique individuals, come "into presence" and, more specifically, how we come into presence in a world of plurality and difference. The idea of "coming into presence" articulates an educational interest in human subjectivity and

subjectification but does so without a template, i.e., without a predefined idea about what it means to be and exist as a human being. It thus tries to overcome a humanistic determination of human subjectivity and subjectification. The shift in focus to "coming into presence" bears resemblance to forms of child-centered and student-centered education. But whereas extreme forms of child- and student-centered education would simply accept anything and anyone that comes into presence, I emphasize the need for judgment about what and who comes into presence. My only point is that this judgment should occur *after* the event of coming into presence, not before. There is, of course, a risk entailed in this, but the question here is not whether we should try to do away with this risk. The question is whether in order to prevent a new Hitler or a new Pol Pot from coming into presence we should forfeit the possibility of a new Mother Teresa, a new Martin Luther King or a new Nelson Mandela from coming into presence as well. It is as simple—and of course also as tremendously complicated—as that.

The other notion I have used in order to respond to the challenge outlined above is the idea of "uniqueness." The idea of "uniqueness" is a way to overcome humanism because if we can make a case that each individual is in some sense unique, then we can no longer reduce our individuality to some underlying definition of what it means to be human. At the same time, if it is possible to think of subjectification in terms of uniqueness, we will have found a way to distinguish education from socialization, as socialization is always about how we are part of wider, overarching "orders," whereas uniqueness expresses how we are different from those orders. "Coming into presence" and "uniqueness" are therefore the two central concepts in my response to the challenge of modern humanism. But just to postulate these concepts is, of course, not enough. I will therefore now briefly outline how I understand both ideas, how they are connected, what they imply for the responsibility of educators and how this, in turn, leads to the idea of a pedagogy of interruption.

From "Coming into Presence" to "Coming into the World"

One author whose work I have found helpful for developing the idea of "coming into presence" is Hannah Arendt, and particularly her analysis of the active life—the *vita activa* (Arendt 1958). Arendt distinguishes between three modalities of the active life: labor, work and action. *Labor* is the activity that corresponds to the biological processes of the human body. It stems from the necessity to maintain life and is exclusively focused on the maintenance of life. Its efforts must be perpetually renewed so as to sustain life, which means that labor creates nothing of permanence. *Work,* on the other hand, has to do with the ways in which human beings actively change their environment and through this create a world characterized by its durability. In this mode of activity the human being—as "*homo faber*" rather than as "*animal laborans*"—is the builder of stable contexts within which human life can unfold. While labor and work have to do with instrumentality and necessity and with aims and ends that are external to the activity, *action,* the third mode of the *vita activa,* is an end in itself and its defining quality is *freedom.*

For Arendt, to act first of all means to take initiative, that is, to begin something new. Arendt characterizes the human being as an *initium*: a "begin*ning* and a begin*ner*" (Arendt 1977, 170; emphasis added). She argues that what makes each of us unique is our potential to do something that has not been done before. Arendt compares action to the fact of birth, since with each birth something "uniquely new" comes into the world (see Arendt 1958, 178). But it is not only at the moment of birth that something new comes into the world. We *continuously* bring new beginnings into the world through our words and deeds. For Arendt action is intimately connected with freedom. She emphasizes, however, that freedom should not be understood as a phenomenon of the will, that is, as the freedom to do whatever we choose to do, but that we should instead conceive of it as the freedom "to call something into being which did not exist before"

(Arendt 1977, 151). The subtle difference between freedom as sovereignty and freedom as beginning has far-reaching consequences. The main implication is that freedom is not an "inner feeling" or a private experience but by necessity a public and hence a political phenomenon. "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom," Arendt writes, "and its field of experience is action" (146). Arendt stresses again and again that freedom needs a "public realm" to make its appearance (149). Moreover, freedom only exists *in action,* which means that human beings *are* free—as distinguished from their "possessing the gift of freedom"—as long as they act, "neither before nor after" (153). The question this raises is how freedom can appear.

To answer this question it is crucial to see that "beginning" is only half of what action is about. Although it is true that we reveal our "distinct uniqueness" through what we say and do, everything depends on how others will take up our initiatives. This is why Arendt writes that the agent is not an author or a producer, but a subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely one who began an action and the one who suffers from and is subjected to its consequences (see Arendt 1958, 184) (which is the reason why I prefer the notions of "subjectivity" and "subjectification" over notions like "individuality" and "individuation"). The upshot of this is that our "capacity" for action—and hence our freedom—crucially depends on the ways in which others take up our beginnings. The "problem" is, however, that others respond to our initiatives in ways that are unpredictable. Although this frustrates our beginnings, Arendt emphasizes again and again that the "impossibility to remain unique masters of what [we] do" is at the very same time the condition—and the *only* condition—under which our beginnings can come into the world (244). We can of course try to control the ways in which others respond to our beginnings. But if we were to do so, we would deprive others of their opportunities to begin. We would deprive them of their opportunities to act, and hence we would deprive them of their freedom.

Action is therefore never possible in isolation. Arendt even goes as far as to argue that "to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act" (188). This also implies that action in the Arendtian sense of the word is never possible without plurality. As soon as we erase plurality—as soon as we erase the otherness of others by attempting to control how they respond to our initiatives—we deprive others of their actions and their freedom, and as a result deprive ourselves of our possibility to act, and hence of our freedom. All this is captured in Arendt's statement that "plurality is the condition of human action" (8). This should, however, not be read as an empirical statement but rather as the normative core of Arendt's philosophy in that her work is committed to a world in which everyone has the opportunity to act, appear and be free.

An important implication of this line of thinking is that the public domain, the domain "in which freedom can appear," should not be understood in physical terms—it does not necessarily coincide, for example, with a street or a shopping mall—but denotes a particular *quality* of human interaction. The public domain refers to "the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.... It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men [*sic*] exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly" (Arendt 1958, 198–199). This means that "unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands," i.e., the spaces created through work, "it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears ... with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves" (199).

Arendt's notion of "action" entails an understanding of the way in which human beings come into presence—and *continue* to come into presence—that is not about the expression of some presocial identity, but has to do with the

ways in which we engage with the complexities of a world populated by others who are not like us. Our freedom and subjectivity are therefore not to be found outside of the web of plurality; they only exist within it. Arendt thus helps us to see that subjectification—which is an ongoing, never-ending process—is a process of gain and loss, and if we are not willing to run the risk of losing some of what we bring into the world, we will never be able to gain our freedom and subjectivity. It is, therefore, only when we engage with the web of plurality that we can come into presence. This explains why subjectification is a difficult process. But this is not a difficulty we should try to overcome or do away with. Whereas the notion of "coming into presence" very much emphasizes what happens on the side of the individual, it is perhaps better to always think of "coming into presence" as a process of "coming into the world"—where "the world" stands for a world of plurality and difference.

Uniqueness

The notion of "uniqueness" plays an important role in the ideas I have taken from Arendt, particularly her claim that we disclose our "distinct uniqueness" through action—which, as I have shown, implies that we can only disclose this unique-ness if we are willing to run the risk that our beginnings are taken up in ways that are different from what we intended. What is important about Arendt's views is that they help us to approach the question of uniqueness in relational, political and existential terms, as she links the idea of "uniqueness" to the particular ways in which we *exist* with others. But the idea of disclosing one's distinct uniqueness through action still runs the risk of conceiving of uniqueness in terms of characteristics or qualities of the subject—and would thus conceive of uniqueness in terms of what we *have* or *possess*. (It would, to put it differently, turn the question of unique-ness into a question of identity.) There are several problems with this way of understanding uniqueness. One is that if we

think of uniqueness in terms of the characteristics we have, we must assume that there is some underlying "substratum" (as philosophers would call it) that can be the carrier of such characteristics. This brings us close, again, to the idea of an underlying human essence, and thus would bring humanism back into our thinking. There is, however, a second problem that in my view is the more important one. This has to do with the fact that if we would only relate to others in order to make clear how we are different from them, there would, in a sense, be nothing "at stake" in our relationships with others. Or, to put it differently, we would only "need" others in order to find out and make clear how we are different from them—how my identity is unique—but once this has become clear we wouldn't need others anymore. Our relationship with others would therefore remain instrumental.

The philosopher who has helped me most to think through these issues and articulate an alternative way of approaching the idea of uniqueness is Emmanuel Levinas. What I find most significant about Levinas's work is not that he has generated a new theory about the uniqueness of the human being but has instead introduced a different *question* about uniqueness. Instead of asking what *makes* each of us unique—which is the question of characteristics and possessions—Levinas has approached the question of uniqueness by asking when it *matters* that I am unique, that I am I and no one else. Levinas's answer to this question, to put it briefly, is that my uniqueness matters in those situations in which I cannot be replaced by someone else, that is, in those situations where it matters that *I* am there and not just anyone. A helpful way to understand the distinction between "uniqueness as difference" and "uniqueness as irreplaceability" can be found in a short text by Alfonso Lingis (who translated Levinas's work into English). The text is called *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Lingis 1994). Let me briefly reconstruct Lingis's argument.

Lingis argues that "community" is often understood as constituted by a number of individuals having something

in common. A special instance of this kind of community is what Lingis defines as the "rational community." In the rational community "the insights of individuals are formulated in universal categories, such that they are detached from the here-now index of the one who first formulated them" (Lingis 1994, 110). Membership of the rational community gives people a voice. It enables them to speak, but it is speech in the capacity of their membership of the rational community. This means that the voice by which they speak in this capacity is a representative voice. We expect from doctors, electricians, airline pilots and so on that they speak according to the rules and principles of the rational discourse of the community of which they are a representative. This means, however, that the thing that matters when they speak is *what* is said. But *how* it is said and, more importantly, *who* is saying it is immaterial as long as what is said (and done) "makes sense." This, in turn, means that when we speak in this capacity we do not speak with our own voice but with the common voice of the community we represent. When we speak in this capacity we are, therefore, interchangeable. This, in turn, means that our uniqueness does not count and is not at stake.

Education plays an important role in the production and reproduction of rational communities. Through qualification and socialization, schools and other educational institutions provide their students with a voice—and often with a number of different voices. But these voices are all representative voices. They allow students to speak as representatives of particular communities, traditions, discourses, practices and so on. But if this is so, what, then, would it mean to speak with one's own voice? What would it mean to speak outside of the confines of rational communities?

To develop an answer to this question Lingis discusses two "limit cases" of communication, one where we are at the "end" of communication, so to speak, and one where we are at the beginning. Both are examples of situations where we cannot rely on a "script" that can do the talking for us. The first is the situation where we are with someone who is dying. In such a

situation it is very difficult to find the right words. Anything one says sounds, in a sense, vacuous or even absurd. But the point of speaking in such situations is not primarily about what you say. What matters first and foremost in such situations is *that* you say something and, more importantly, that *you* say something. The situation is one that does an appeal to *you* to be there, and the very thing you cannot do in this situation is just walk away and send someone else in to replace you. You are "singled out," so to speak, and it is therefore up to *you* to respond, to invent a unique response, to speak in your own, unique voice, rather than through a representative voice. This is also the case in the second example Lingis gives, of a mother trying to communicate with her young child at the moment just before a shared language emerges. Here, again, the mother cannot speak to the child with the borrowed, representative voice of the rational community because, so we might say, the child has not yet entered this community. What is required in this situation, therefore, is for the mother to attend to the singularity of the situation and to respond in her own, unique way. What is it, then, that speaks "in these terminal and inaugural situations" (Lingis 1994, 117)? According to Lingis it is "not the ego as a rational mind, as a representative of universal reason," but "someone in his or her materiality as an earthling" (117).

Lingis's discussion helps us to see that a substantial amount of our speaking is done with a representative voice: with the voice afforded by our society, our culture, our profession and so on. Although such speech is important, the point Lingis tries to make is that this way of speaking can never "reach" our uniqueness. It is a kind of speech at the level of interchangeable social roles. It is only when we go outside of rational communities, outside of communities that are constituted by communality, that the opportunity to speak with our own voice arises. Here we are no longer within communities that have something in common; we are part of a community of those who have nothing in common—and it is precisely this condition that requires our unique, singular voice. This

voice, as Lingis's examples suggest, is not so much a way of speaking. It is first and foremost a way of responding, a way of taking up a responsibility that, in a sense, is "demanded" by the situation we are in—demanded by the face of the other, as Levinas would put it. There is no way in which someone else can take up this responsibility for us. If we are with someone who is dying and are lost for words, the solution is not to get a professional in to do the talking—the only "solution" is to stick with the situation. And when we are with a child and are before any communication constituted by a rational community, there is no professional in the world who can stand in for us. Again we have to respond in our own, unique, ways. What Lingis shows, therefore, is a way in which uniqueness is constituted by a responsibility we cannot evade—or only at the price of being irresponsible—which is precisely what Levinas had in mind when he wrote that responsibility is "the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity" (Levinas 1985, 95). It is in those situations that our uniqueness matters and it is therefore in those situations—neither before nor after—that we can be said to be constituted as unique, singular subjects rather than as specimens of a more encompassing order.

There is one final point to add to this exploration of uniqueness, which is that the rational community and the "other" community, the community of those who have nothing in common, should not be understood as two separate communities and even less as two options we can choose from. It is not that we can first decide what kind of community we would like to have and then simply bring it into existence. There are two reasons for this. The first is that we cannot do *without* rational communities. They do important work for us and we do important work in constructing and reconstructing such communities—and, as I have suggested, education plays an important part in this. The second reason is that the "other" community is not a community that in any sense can be produced. The other community exists sporadically, at those moments when we find ourselves exposed to the

other, at those moments when we find ourselves exposed to "an imperative" (Lingis 1994, 111). Finding ourselves exposed is not something that flows from our knowledge of the other or that is based on our knowledge of the other and our subsequent decision to become responsible for the other. The other community, as an other set of relationships, an other modality of our "being with others," only exists from time to time as the interruption of the work of the rational community. The other community "recurs … troubles the rational community, as its double or its shadow" (10). It lives "inside" the rational community as a constant possibility but not as a possibility that can be forced into existence. After all, as soon as we were to say that everyone should become responsible or act responsibly we would have turned the "other" community into a rational community.

What Is at Stake in a Pedagogy of Interruption?

Whereas Lingis and Levinas can help us to understand uniqueness differently—not as something that has to do with our being but as something that has to do with our existence—their views do not result in some kind of educational program. Their views do not give us guidelines for the production of unique individuals. The reason for this is that uniqueness is not something that can be produced; it is not something that can be the guaranteed outcome of a particular educational intervention or a particular pedagogy. But although uniqueness cannot be produced, it is rather easy to make sure that uniqueness will *not* appear, will have no chance at appearing. This will happen when we prevent our students from any encounter with otherness and difference, any encounter that might interrupt their "normal" ways of being and might provoke a responsive and responsible response. This is when we let our students become immune to what might affect, interrupt and trouble them (see also Masschelein and Simons 2004).

If we see educational responsibility as a responsibility for the coming into presence of unique individual beings—and in this chapter I have tried to make clear why it is important to articulate educational responsibility in this way—then this responsibility is first and foremost a responsibility for a particular, "worldly" quality of the spaces and places in which "newcomers" can come into presence. It is, in the Arendtian sense, a responsibility for the plurality that is the condition of human action and human freedom. If we close off this plurality, if we make the world into a rational community or a collection of rational communities, we will still have many ways in which newcomers can gain a voice, but none of these voices will be unique—they will all just be representative. A pedagogy of interruption is, therefore, a pedagogy that aims to keep the possibility of interruptions of the "normal" order open. It is first of all a pedagogy committed to the possibility of interruption and perhaps also a pedagogy that itself will interrupt (see also Biesta 2006a, chapter 5). A pedagogy of interruption thus has its place in the domain of subjectification, not qualification or socialization—although it may work "through" these domains as well. A pedagogy of interruption is not a "strong" pedagogy; it is not a pedagogy that can in any sense guarantee its "outcomes." It rather is a pedagogy that acknowledges the fundamental *weakness* of education vis-à-vis the question of subjectification. This ontological weakness of education is at the very same time its existential strength, because it is only when we give up the idea that human subjectivity can in some way be educationally produced that spaces might open up for uniqueness to come into the world. This is what is at stake in a pedagogy of interruption.

5

Democracy and Education after Dewey

In this and the following chapter I focus on the question of how we can connect discussions about good education with the idea of democracy. The reference point for my discussion in this chapter is an essay written by Jürgen Oelkers entitled "Democracy and Education: About the Future of a Problem" (Oelkers 2000). In this essay Oelkers sets an interesting and important challenge for those who are concerned about the role of education in a democratic society. The challenge, as he phrases it, is to formulate "a theory of 'democratic education' *after* Dewey" (3; emphasis in original). Oelkers identifies several interlocking problems with Dewey's views on the relationship between democracy and education. The main bone of contention, however, seems to lie in Dewey's claim that we should see democracy as a form of life—"a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey 1985 [1916], 93)—and not primarily or exclusively as a form of government. This leads Dewey to suggest that there is no *qualitative* difference between school and society to the extent that both are forms of life that can, and in Dewey's view should, be organized democratically. The difference is only a difference of scale, hence Dewey's idea of the school

as an "embryonic society." Oelkers, on the other hand, wants to keep more distance between democracy and education, emphasizing that the school is not a society, or society a school. The question then is how democratic education can at the same time "implement the principles of democracy" and "meet the requirements of education" (Oelkers 2000, 15). In this chapter I aim to respond to this challenge.

Democracy and Education Revisited

Oelkers argues that democracy "cannot be defined merely as a *form of life* and that education cannot simply be its correlation" (2000, 5; emphasis in original). He sees democracy and education as qualitatively different spheres that cannot simply be mapped onto each other. A democracy is "the *politically* controlled process of change and a *socially* participative exchange" (Oelkers 2000, emphasis in original) that requires forms of interaction and communication that go well beyond what is possible within the confines of the school. Although Oelkers doesn't deny that democratic exchange and decisionmaking will involve learning, such "endless" learning processes are not the same as the learning for which we have schools. He therefore concludes that from the point of view of schooling, "a reduction of education to social experience or experimental learning is not tenable" because "the decisive aspect of education is subject-related learning, meaning the point at which the knowledge and ability of third parties is translated into one's own experience, so that the standards become individualized" (15–16). This is not to say that this kind of learning is irrelevant for democracy, but it is different from the learning that goes on in relation to democratic communication and collective decisionmaking itself. Oelkers therefore rejects Dewey's idea of the school as an "embryonic society" (16), basically, so we might say, because the school is not a society and society is not a school.

While this may disqualify Dewey's particular way of connecting democracy and education, the question as to what exactly is meant by combining democracy and education remains (see Oelkers 2000, 5). According to Oelkers the "theoretical challenge for the future" is to move beyond Dewey's view that there is "one and only one" relationship between the school and society, viz., the relationship between "the small and the large" (16). Or to be more precise: if it is granted that the school is not a society and that society is not a school, then the question is how democratic education can at the same time "implement the principles of democracy" and "meet the requirements of education" (15). To illustrate the predicament behind this question Oelkers discusses the views of Maynard Hutchins, fifth president of the University of Chicago (1929–1945), who in the 1930s argued for a humanistic university curriculum that would prepare students for their future role as citizens (13). Oelkers highlights Hutchins's claim that for this curriculum to be effective it has to be seen as nonnegotiable, i.e., as "not available for amendment" (13) and, more importantly, not available for *democratic* amendment. The point is that as soon as the curriculum would be opened up for democratic contestation and negotiation, it "would dissolve into separate, individual interests" (13). In such a situation "everyone would pick out the education he or she needed but would not be *educated* … and would never have been subjected to the standards that a real education demands" (13; emphasis in original).

While Hutchins's argument might make sense as long as we assume that the educative value of the curriculum lies in the intrinsic quality of the knowledge on offer—a view that has played a central role in particular forms of liberal education (see Biesta 2002)—the argument becomes far more difficult to maintain when we look at it through the lens of the politics of the curriculum (see, e.g., Apple 1979). As Oelkers admits, a given curriculum is always the expression of particular interests—which means that in any given curriculum the interests of some are always better served

than the interests of others. In "multicultural, open, rapidly disintegrating societies" (Oelkers 2000, 14) this has not only become increasingly *visible.* In such societies it is also much more likely that different groups will submit a demand for their own "share" of the curriculum, a share that will represent their own interests and points of view. Yet this is precisely where the problem for democratic education arises, because if we are to leave education entirely to particular interests, there is no guarantee that it will still serve the democratic cause. This is why Oelkers argues that the future of the problem of democratic education has to do with "the prospects for the development of a *general* education in a democratic society" (5; emphasis added). It is also why he believes that Dewey's answer to this question is not—or no longer—convincing, not only because it does not seem to recognize the educational problems that would arise from letting democracy into the school, but also because it is attuned "neither to the media society nor to forms of particular emancipation, neither to various cultures nor to the large and shallow areas of discussion, neither to self-confident individuality, nor to the status of customers who are learning to obtain the education that they consider they need" (12).

What Oelkers has in mind with his call for the development of (a framework for) *general* education is a form of education that is *nonparticularistic,* i.e., a form of education that does not simply represent one particular view to the exclusion of all other available views and positions within the plurality characteristic of a democratic society. What he is after, in other words, is a kind of education that is not simply a form of socialization into a particular "order"—be it a social, a political, a religious or a cognitive order. This seems to suggest that Oelkers is after a form of education that has room for subjectification, although it is interesting to see that Oelkers rather seems to approach (school) education in terms of qualification given that he defines the task of (school) education as that of subject-related learning. Instead of seeing this as a denial of the subjectification dimension of education, I

wish to interpret Oelkers's statement as a question about the relationship between qualification and subjectification in (school) education, and I will use this chapter to explore this relationship in more detail.

Democracy, Education and the Public Sphere

Oelkers's discussion of the relationship between democracy and education focuses on a particular dimension of the problem, viz., the problem of *democratic demands* on education or, more specifically, democratic demands on *public* education. The issue of democratic demands not only underlies his concern that if we were to open up education to such demands, education would no longer be able to perform its proper and distinctive function (although we need to ask further questions about what the proper and distinctive function of schools actually is; see below). It is also an important aspect of the future of the problem of democratic education, in that Oelkers assumes that public schools will increasingly have to become responsive to their "clientele" in order to justify their existence. Oelkers approaches the issue of the justification of public education through contractual theory and more specifically through the idea of the existence of an (implicit) contract between the generations about the content and purpose of the public school (2000, 15). It is on this basis that he stresses the importance for schools of adopting a "feedback orientation." He writes: "If the schools do not learn from their *customers* they will not be able to meet the requirements of the generation contract," which is why he concludes that "public schools will increasingly have to put up with democratic questions about their efficiency" (15; emphasis in original).

The justification of public education is, of course, one of the most crucial issues in a democratic society, but the question that must be asked is whether customer demands can be as easily equated with democratic demands as Oelkers

seems to suggest. As I have argued in Chapter 3, one of the key differences between customer demands and democratic demands is that the former are motivated by a wish to satisfy *private* wants, whereas the latter are oriented toward the achievement of *collective* or *public* goods that, by definition, go beyond individual wants and can sometimes even go against them. This is not to deny that private wants are often presented in democratic terms, most often in the form of a rights language in which groups claim, for example, their democratic right to have their worldview represented in the curriculum or even claim their democratic right to withdraw from exposure to public education. But it is of crucial importance to see that claims to such rights are based upon *individual* interest (including interests of individual groups) and an abstract appeal to democracy, and not upon an orientation toward the common good.

This suggests that there are at least two ways to understand the impact of democratic demands on education. Oelkers seems to suggest that such demands will lead to a particularistic and fragmented curriculum, which is one of the main reasons why he wants to shield education from too much democratic interference. "There is no automatic argument in favor of subjecting schools to excessive supervisory stress unless it makes sense," he writes; since "they really do operate best in the form of *self-government*" (Oelkers 2000, 15; emphasis in original). But democratic demands only result in a fragmented curriculum if we treat those demands themselves in particularistic terms, i.e., if we think of democracy as the situation in which all such demands are, in principle, legitimate and should, in principle, be met. There are both theoretical and pragmatic-historical reasons that make clear this is only one of the ways in which we can approach such demands.

To begin with the theoretical point: the distinction between consumer demands and democratic demands resonates with the distinction between two models of democratic decision-making, the *aggregative* model and the *deliberative* model

(see Young 2000, 18–26; Elster 1998, 6). The first model sees democracy as a process of aggregating the preferences of individuals. A central assumption of this approach is that the preferences of individuals are taken—and ought to be taken—as given and that politics is only concerned with the aggregation of preferences, often, but not exclusively, on the basis of majority rule. Where these preferences come from, whether they are valid and worthwhile or not, and whether they are held for egoistic or altruistic reasons are considered to be irrelevant questions. The *aggregative* model thus assumes "that ends and values are subjective, nonrational, and exogenous to the political process" and that democratic politics is basically "a competition between private interests and preferences" (Young 2000, 22).

Over the past two decades an increasing number of political theorists have argued that democracy should not be confined to the simple aggregation of preferences but should involve the *deliberative transformation* of such preferences (see also Chapter 6). Under this model, democratic decisionmaking is seen as a process that involves "decision making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants" (Elster 1998, 8)—arguments about both the means and the ends of collective action. Deliberative democracy, then, is not about "determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but [about] determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons" (Young 2000, 23). The deliberative approach thus points at the importance of the *transformation* of individual wants into collective needs.

Although the idea of deliberative democracy is relatively new in political theory, the idea that individual wants must be transformed into collective needs in order to gain political force and currency is of a much older date and is inextricably linked to the idea of the *public sphere.* In his book *Decline of the Public* (Marquand 2004), David Marquand defines the public sphere as "a space, protected from the adjacent market and private domains, where strangers encounter each other as equal partners in the

common life of the society" (27). Marquand emphasizes that we should see the public sphere as a *dimension* of social life, not as a sector of it. It is a dimension with its own norms and decision rules, a set of activities that can be carried out by private individuals, private charities and even private firms as well as public agencies. It is "symbiotically linked" to the notion of a public interest, in principle distinct from private interests, and central to it are the values of citizenship, equity and service. In it goods are distributed on the basis of need and not of personal ties or access to economic resources. The public domain is not only *different* from the private domain "of love, friendship and personal connection" and from the market domain "of buying and selling," of "interest and incentive" (4); it is also *separate* from both these domains.

Marquand makes clear that the key function of the public domain is to define the public interest and to produce public goods. It is the domain where citizens collectively define what the public interest is to be, "through struggle, argument, debate and negotiation" (33). This implies that the values "that sustain, and are in turn sustained by, the public domain" (57) are not the values of self-interest but of collective interest. Given that collective interest may sometimes go against one's immediate self-interest, engagement with and commitment to the public domain—which can be seen as another name for citizenship— imply "a certain discipline" and "a certain self-restraint" (57). Marquand emphasizes that this does not come naturally but has to be "learned and then internalized, sometimes painfully," which is why he argues that the implementation of these values in a real-world society requires nothing less than "a cultural and ideological revolution" (57). In Britain this revolution was essentially "a Victorian achievement—albeit one that the twentieth century built on extensively" (41).

These considerations suggest that we can—and in my view should—approach the question of democratic demands on education differently. Instead of assuming that as soon as we let such demands in we will end up with a particularistic

and fragmented curriculum, with an educational offer that in its attempt to satisfy everyone actually serves no one, we should start from the assumption that *democratic* demands are never the aggregate of particularistic demands, but are always *translated* demands, that is, demands that are the outcome of the translation of "private troubles" into "collective issues" (Mills 1959). Democratic demands, in short, are the outcome of collective deliberation and have an orientation toward the common good. This is not to suggest that such demands will result in an education that is all-inclusive because, to borrow a phrase by Chantal Mouffe, each democratic "settlement" always has its own *constitutive outside* (see Mouffe 2000). But there is an important difference between exclusions that are the outcome of democratic processes and exclusions that are the result of the hegemony of one particular outlook. The reason for this is that democratic exclusions can *in principle* be justified and, more importantly, can always be challenged and renegotiated in the very name of democracy.

The Decline of the Public Sphere?

We should, however, not only pay attention to what is theoretically possible, but should also ask what can actually be achieved. This is why we must raise the question of why it has become increasingly difficult to articulate and even perceive the distinction between private interests and the common good (see also Chapter 3). The answer to this question is twofold. At the *rhetorical level* we now live in an era in which many people would flatly deny the existence of such a thing as the common good. Margaret Thatcher's famous dictum that "there is no such thing as society" was precisely meant to suggest that "society" has no objective and independent existence, but only exists as the sum of individuals operating under market conditions in order to satisfy their individual needs. In this neoliberal scenario the state no longer repre-

sents the common good—it has merely become a regulator, a quality controller and inspector of what is on offer in the marketplace.

Difficulties with making the distinction between private and public interests not only have to do with rhetoric—although we shouldn't underestimate the power of rhetoric—but also have to do with *actual transformations* that have taken place in many contemporary societies. The key point here is that common interests do not arise from nowhere but have to be produced through the translation of "private troubles" into "common issues." It is therefore not only that we no longer seem to have a *conception* of the public interest and the common good. Many commentators have argued that we also no longer have the practices and institutions that make such translations possible (see, e.g., Bauman 2000; Marquand 2004; Biesta 2005b). What we no longer seem to have is a *public sphere.*

Given the way in which the public domain was won from the private and the market domain, it is not surprising that its erosion over the past decades is precisely the outcome of incursions from both the private and the market domain. In his analysis of the decline of the public sphere Marquand has many important things to say about the "revenge of the private" (Marquand 2004, 79), the protest against the "hard, demanding, 'unnatural' austerities of public duty and public engagement in the name of authenticity and sincerity" (79), and particularly shows how identity politics, understood as the idea that "the private self should be omnicompetent and omnipresent" (80), has made deliberative politics of any sort "virtually impossible" (82). The main focus of his analysis, however, is on the ways in which the logic of the market do-main, both directly and through the way in which this logic has been adopted by Conservative governments in Britain since the mid-1970s, has colonized and eroded the public domain. For Marquand this is not simply a process in which the market has intruded on the public and private sphere; it is a process in which the neoliberal values of self-interest

and utility maximization have become the core values of British government—and for that matter many contemporary neoliberal governments—in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

This analysis seems to be confirmed by the outcomes of empirical research. One of the main findings of the Citizenship Audit, a large-scale survey about the state of democracy and citizenship in Britain conducted in 2000 and 2001 (Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley 2004), is the fact that citizenship has become increasingly an individualistic affair. Whereas the overall levels of political participation may not have changed, the nature of this participation has become increasingly individualistic, rather than being expressed through collective action. The research not only shows a change in the mode of participation. It also makes clear that to the extent that there are still organizations operating in a public sphere, they themselves are increasingly about single issues (interest groups) rather than about the construction of the common good. This is why the citizenship audit talks about the rise of the *atomized citizen.*

Policy makers tend to see the rise of the atomized citizen as the main *cause* of the decline of the public sphere. This is why many intervention strategies—particularly educational strategies aimed at the young—try to effect changes in people's motivation to participate in collective decisionmaking. But Marquand argues that the decline of the public sphere should not be seen as the *effect* of the rise of the atomistic citizen but rather as its *cause.* He argues that we should see the "retreat from citizenship" as a response to the fact that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for individuals to actually *be* citizens, that is, to have a say in deliberation about the definition of the common good. A similar conclusion is reached by Zygmunt Bauman who argues that the remedy for contemporary individualized society is the need for "*more, not less, of the 'public sphere'*" (Bauman 2000, 51; emphasis in original). At a superficial level it looks like governments—particularly neoliberal governments—seem to address this point in their attempts to give their citizens (commonly referred to as "taxpayers")

more choice. But it is important to see that choice is not the same as democracy. Consumers can choose from a set menu. Democracy, however, only exists when citizens are involved in decisions about what should go on the menu in the first place.

What does this mean for democracy and the curriculum? The conclusion I wish to draw is that democratic demands on education do not necessarily have to lead to a curriculum that is particularistic and fragmented as long as we are aware of the distinction between particularistic and democratic demands. Whereas the former are just about the expression of consumer preferences, the latter are about the transformation of such preferences in the light of common interests and a wider orientation toward the public good—even, as I have suggested in Chapter 3, if such orientations go against individual preferences. To implement the principles of democracy therefore does not necessarily mean that we can no longer meet the requirements of education, as this would only be the case in a "consumerist" definition of democracy, one that equates democracy with the aggregation of preferences as they are. But we have to acknowledge that in our time an implementation of the principles of democracy is not as easy and straightforward as it may have been in the past. This is not only because we seem to have lost a robust belief in the idea of the common good. It is also because of the slow but steadfast erosion of the practices and institutions that used to serve as the places and spaces through which the translation of private troubles into public issues could occur. This, as I have shown, should not be interpreted as a lack of interest or motivation on behalf of citizens, but first and foremost as a lack of opportunities for real democratic participation. This may well be a greater problem for the future of democracy and democratic education than Oelkers's fear of the splintering of the curriculum due to consumerist demands. This is not only because the demise of the public sphere reduces the opportunities for democratic *action.* It is also, and perhaps

first and foremost, because the demise of the public sphere reduces the opportunities for democratic *learning,* that is, the kind of learning that follows from participation in the construction and maintenance of common life (see Biesta 2005b; see also Carr and Hartnett 1996).

Meeting the Requirements of Education

If the task is to articulate an understanding of democratic education that both implements the principles of democracy and meets the requirements of education, and if this further implies that such an education should be nonparticularistic, then this not only raises questions about how we might understand the principles of democracy; it also entails the question as to what it would mean to meet the requirements of education and, more specifically, to meet these requirements in a nonparticularistic way. For Oelkers, as I have shown, meeting the requirements of education first and foremost means acknowledging that "the decisive aspect of [school] education is subject-related learning," which is learning that has to do with the translation of the "knowledge and ability of third parties . . . into one's own experience, so that the standards become individualized" (Oelkers 2000, 16). This is what Oelkers sees as the main "raison d'être" of the school as an institution, and in relation to this he stresses that we shouldn't conflate this with "social experience or experimental learning" (15), which, although not unimportant as learning processes, are not what *schooling* is primarily about.

Although I do not wish to downplay the importance of content in schooling—which is the reason why I believe that qualification is one of the dimensions of good education—I do wish to question whether the task of schooling is exhausted by the idea of subject-related learning. One problem is that as soon as we define the function of the school in terms of content, we immediately end up with the familiar questions about who decides what is included in the curriculum. Given

that a curriculum can never be all-inclusive—partly for pragmatic reasons but such reasons immediately show the fundamental impossibility of an all-inclusive curriculum (see also Osberg and Biesta forthcoming)—we have to concede that a given curriculum is always only a particular selection of what might be possible. This, as I have shown above, is why those who are not represented in a particular curricular configuration will feel excluded—even more so if a particular curriculum is actually presented as a *general* curriculum, a curriculum of everything for everyone. Such problems will persist as long as we think of schools only as institutions of socialization and as long as we approach the curriculum only in epistemological terms. There is, of course, a long-standing tradition in modern educational thought and practice, the tradition of *Bildung,* in which it is assumed that real education will indeed only follow from exposure to or active engagement with general knowledge (see Biesta 2002; 2006a). Yet in order to meet the requirements of education we should not only focus on processes of socialization but also and at the same time pay attention to processes of *subjectification.*

Here the challenge of a nonparticularistic conception of education poses itself in a different way, viz., as the question whether it is (still) possible to make a distinction between socialization and subjectification, or whether we have to concede that all subjectification is ultimately a form of socialization. This is, of course, precisely the question I have dealt with in Chapter 4, arguing that instead of thinking of subjectification as the development of an inherent rational potential, we should use notions such as "coming into the world" and "uniqueness" to understand subjectification as a process that is not only radically open toward the future but that at the very same time is intrinsically democratic. The reason for this is that to come into the world necessarily implies to come into the world of plurality and difference, a world in which everyone can act, in which there are opportunities for all to bring their beginnings into the complex web of plurality. Which is not to suggest, as I have

emphasized in the discussion so far, that all such beginnings should simply be accepted for what they are or, as I have indicated above, that democracy is about the aggregation of such beginnings.

To emphasize the importance of subjectification, and to argue that subjectification can be understood—and "done"— in a nonparticularistic way that can meet the demands of democracy, does not mean that a school for subjectification is a different school than a school for qualification. Subject-related learning is an important element of why we have schools in the first place but subject-related learning only becomes *educational* subject-related learning if it can give a place to subjectification. With this I do not have in mind what Oelkers seems to suggest, viz., what he describes as the translation of the knowledge and ability of "third parties" into one's own experience "so that standards become individualized" (Oelkers 2000, 16). Although Oelkers refers to the ways in which standards can become individualized, his interest is in the individualization of *standards,* not the individualization of *individuals,* so to speak. Oelkers approaches subject-related learning from the angle of knowledge—or content more generally—and is interested in how individuals can make such knowledge their own. His interest, in other words, is a didactical or curricular one. But making abstract knowledge into one's own knowledge is not, in itself, a process that is relevant for subjectification. I wish to suggest, therefore, the connection between subjectification and subject-related learning from the angle of subjectification. This means foregrounding the question of how different areas of knowledge can provide opportunities for the ways in which unique individuals can come into the world. This does not imply a merely instrumental engagement with curricular knowledge but rather means to take the content of education very seriously. It is, after all, only when such content is taken seriously that it provides something to engage with, something to take a stand toward, and thus provides a possible "entry" into the world.

Conclusion: Democratic Education after Dewey?

In this chapter I have tried to respond to the challenge set by Oelkers to formulate a theory of democratic education *after* Dewey. Central to this challenge is the problem of how democratic education can implement the principles of democracy and at the same time meet the requirements of education. One of the key questions is whether the implementation of the principles of democracy *necessarily* leads to an education that is particularistic, or whether it is possible to think of democratic education in a nonparticularistic way.

On the one hand I have argued that it is important to be aware of the distinction between *democratic* demands and *particularistic* demands (to which I also have referred as "consumerist" demands). Whereas particularistic demands may indeed threaten the possibility of an education that is nonparticularistic, *democratic* demands, since they are the outcome of the translation of particularistic demands into collective concerns, are by definition nonparticularistic. As I have shown, this is not to suggest that such demands will result in an education that is all-inclusive, but that there is an important difference between exclusions that are the outcome of democratic processes and exclusions that are the result of the hegemony of one particular outlook in that the former can *in principle* be justified and be contested and renegotiated. From the point of view of democracy, therefore, the implementation of the principles of democracy does not necessarily have to result in a particularistic education. The further question, however, is whether such an implementation can at the very same time meet the requirements of education.

As I have shown, Oelkers discusses this issue primarily in terms of the qualification function of schools by putting a strong emphasis on the importance of the content of the curriculum and on subject-related learning. In contrast, I have emphasized the subjectification function of the school, arguing for a democratic conception of subjectification in which the coming into the world of unique individuals is understood

as a process that necessarily depends on the plural character of the world. Subjectification has to do with the ways in which our beginnings are taken up by others in ways that do not preclude them bringing their beginnings into the world as well. Along these lines, so I have argued, it becomes possible to meet the requirements of education in a way that at the very same time meets the demands of democracy. This is not to suggest that for the sake of democratic education we should reduce schools to their subjectification function. It is rather to understand that subjectification is itself a social, intersubjective and ultimately political process that can take place through engagement with knowledge and curricular content more generally.

How much do such ideas take us *beyond* Dewey? Perhaps the conclusion has to be that my suggestions stay closer to Dewey's intentions than Oelkers may have hoped for, since I do believe that democracy is *also* a form of life and that it is first and foremost through participation in the democratic form of life, inside and outside the school, that we become democrats (see Biesta 2008b). What I have shown in this chapter is the importance of thinking about the democratic form of life in a different way, one that emphasizes the importance of the transformation of private wants into public needs, and one that understands the democratic person in political terms. Seen from this angle the conclusion has to be that Dewey still provides us with an important starting point for our understanding of democratic education—and elsewhere Oelkers has argued that in relation to the German/ Continental tradition the starting point for democratic education can hardly be found anywhere else than in American education and in a discussion with pragmatism (see Oelkers 2005, 37)—as long as we remain aware that we need to update his ideas rather than simply try to implement them in the twenty-first century. It is to the latter task that I now turn.

6

Education, Democracy and the Question of Inclusion

The idea of democracy has played a central role in most of the chapters in this book. This is not only because developments that threaten the possibility to focus on the question of good education at the very same time seem to threaten opportunities for democratic participation, action and decisionmaking—an issue that I have discussed specifically in Chapters 2 and 3. It is also because the conception of education that I have put forward in Chapter 4 and utilized in Chapter 5 relies on a strong and, in a sense, intrinsic connection between education and democracy, based on the assumption that the coming into the world of unique individuals can only occur in a "worldly" world—a world in which everyone can act in the Arendtian sense and, therefore, a world characterized by plurality and difference. This may suggest that there is a simple but important task for education, viz., the creation of democrats and, through this, the creation of a democratic society. Although there is a strong tendency within the field of democratic education—and more specifically citizenship—to conceive of the task of education as that of the production of democratic citizens (see Biesta and Lawy 2006; Biesta 2007), such a view not only relies on a problematic understanding of what education

is and can achieve. It is also informed by the idea of democracy as a particular "order." Whereas there are elements of democracy that do indeed require order—for example the order of the law—this does not necessarily mean that democracy should *only* be understood in terms of order and also not that democratic education should only be seen as the effective socialization of "newcomers" in such an order. In this chapter I take up this question through a discussion of the role of inclusion in understanding democracy. I first show how the theme of inclusion has become prominent within recent discussions about democracy in attempts to make practices of democratic deliberation and decisionmaking more inclusive. Through a discussion of some ideas from the work of Jacques Rancière I then introduce a way to think about democracy that is precisely not about the construction of an ever more inclusive democratic order, but rather about the continuous renewal of democratic actors and the forms of their action (see Rancière 1995, 61).

Democracy and Inclusion

It could well be argued that inclusion is one of the core values, if not *the* core value of democracy. The "point" of democracy, after all, is the inclusion of everyone (the whole *demos*) into the ruling (*kratein*) of society. This is why Pericles defined democracy as the situation in which "power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people" (Held 1987, 16) and it is why Aristotle wrote about democracy as the "rule of all over each and of each by turns over all" (19). Inclusion also affects the legitimacy of democracy because, as Iris Young has pointed out, the normative legitimacy of democratic decisionmaking precisely depends "on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decisionmaking processes and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes" (Young 2000, 5–6).

Inclusion is not only the main point and purpose of democracy; it is also one of its main problems. The question that

has haunted democracy from day one (and in a sense already troubled democracy before it took off) is the question "Who are to be included in the (definition of the) demos?" This is the question of democratic citizenship, and we know all too well that in the city-state of Athens citizenship was a highly restricted affair. Only Athenian men over the age of 20 were eligible for citizenship. Women, children, slaves (who made up about 60 percent of the population) and immigrants, even from families who had settled in Athens several generations earlier, were simply excluded from political participation (Held 1987, 23).

On the one hand the history of democracy can be written as a continuous quest for inclusion. Some of the most powerful and successful social movements of the last century—including the women's movement and the labor movement—have precisely mobilized "around demands for oppressed and marginalized people to be included as full and equal citizens" (Young 2000, 6). But the history of democracy is at the very same time a history of *exclusion.* In some cases exclusion is justified in the name of democracy. This is, for example, the case with *liberal* democracy where the democratic principle of popular rule (expressing the principle of *equality*) is qualified by a set of basic liberties that take priority over popular rule in order to make sure that popular rule does not restrain or obstruct individual freedom (thus expressing the principle of *liberty*) (Gutmann 1993, 413). Whereas liberal democracy seeks to exclude certain *outcomes* of democratic decisionmaking (and thus would exclude those who would argue for such outcomes), there is also a more direct link between democracy and exclusion. The overriding argument here focuses on those who are deemed not to be "fit" for democracy, either because they lack certain qualities that are considered to be fundamental for democratic participation—such as rationality or reasonableness (see below)—or because they do not subscribe to the ideal of democracy itself.

As Bonnie Honig (1993) has argued, this is not only an issue for communitarians who wish to see democratic politics

organized around particular political identities. It is also an issue for liberals since they tend to restrict political participation to those who are willing and able to act in a rational way and who are willing to leave their substantive conceptions of the good life behind them in the private sphere. Such strategies not only result in the exclusion of those who are considered to be "subrational" (e.g., certain categories of psychiatric patients) or unreasonable. They are also used to justify the exclusion of those who we might call "prerational" or, in a more general sense, "predemocratic," and children are the most obvious example of such a category. It is here, then, that there is an important link with education, because democratic education is often seen as the process that should make individuals "ready" for their participation in democratic decisionmaking.

The Role of Inclusion in Democratic Theory

The question of inclusion plays a central role in discussions about political decisionmaking. In contemporary political theory there are two main models of democratic decision-making: the *aggregative* model and the *deliberative* model (see Young 2000, 18–26; Elster 1998, 6). The first model sees democracy as a process of aggregating the preferences of individuals, often, but not exclusively, in choosing public officials and policies. A central assumption is that the preferences of individuals should be seen as given and that politics is only concerned with the aggregation of preferences, often, but not exclusively, on the basis of majority rule. Where these preferences come from, whether they are valid or not, and whether they are held for egoistic or altruistic reasons are considered to be irrelevant. The *aggregative* model assumes, in other words, "that ends and values are subjective, nonrational, and exogenous to the political process" and that democratic politics is basically "a competition between private interests and preferences" (Young 2000, 22).

Over the past two decades an increasing number of political theorists have argued that democracy should not be confined to the simple aggregation of preferences but should involve the *deliberative transformation* of preferences. Under the deliberative model democratic decisionmaking is seen as a process that involves "decision making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants" (Elster 1998, 8) about the means *and* the ends of collective action. As Young explains, deliberative democracy is not about "determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but [about] determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons" (Young 2000, 23). The reference to "best reasons" indicates—and this is very important—that deliberative democracy is based upon a particular conception of deliberation. Dryzek, for example, acknowledges that deliberation can cover a rather broad spectrum of activities but argues that for *authentic* deliberation to happen the requirement is that the reflection on preferences should take place in a *noncoercive* manner (Dryzek 2000, 2). This requirement, so he explains, "rules out domination via the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, expression of mere self-interest, threats … and attempts to impose ideological conformity" (2). This resonates with Elster's claim that deliberative democracy is about the giving and taking of arguments by participants "who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality" (Elster 1998, 8) and with his suggestion that deliberation must take place between "free, equal and rational agents" (5).

In one respect the "deliberative turn" (or re-turn; see Dryzek 2000, 1–2) is an important step forward in democratic theory and democratic practice. On the one hand it seems to be a more full expression of the basic values of democracy, particularly the idea that democracy is about actual participation in collective decisionmaking. In the aggregative model there is, after all, little participation, and decisionmaking is mainly algorithmic. On the other hand, the deliberative approach seems to have a much stronger educational potential.

In the deliberative model "political actors not only express preferences and interest, but they *engage* with one another about how to balance these under circumstances of inclusive equality" (Young 2000, 26; emphasis added). Such interaction "requires participants to be open and attentive to one another, to justify their claims and proposals in terms of [being] acceptable to all; the orientation of participants moves from self-regard to an orientation to what is publicly assertable" (26). Thus "people often gain new information, learn different experiences of their collective problems, or find that their own initial opinions are founded on prejudice and ignorance, or that they have misunderstood the relation of their own interests to others" (26). As Warren has put it, participation in deliberation can make individuals "more public-spirited, more tolerant, more knowledgeable, more attentive to the interests of others, and more probing of their own interests" (Warren 1992, 8). Deliberative democracy, so its proponents argue, is therefore not only more *democratic* but also more *educative.* A third asset of deliberative democracy lies in its potential impact on the *motivation* of political actors in that participation in democratic decisionmaking is more likely to commit participants to its outcomes. This suggests that deliberative democracy is not only an intrinsically desirable way of social problem solving but probably also an effective way of doing this (see Dryzek 2000, 172).

The deliberative turn can be seen as an attempt to bring democracy closer to its core values and in this respect represents an important correction to the individualism and "disconnected pluralism" (Biesta 2006a) of the aggregative model and of liberal democracy more generally. However, by raising the stakes of democracy, deliberative democracy has also brought the difficulty of democratic inclusion into much sharper focus, and thus has generated—ironically but not surprisingly—a series of problems around the question of inclusion. The main issue here centers on the *entry conditions for participation* in deliberation. The authors quoted above all seem to suggest that participation in democratic deliberation

should be regulated and that it should be confined to those who commit themselves to a particular set of values and behaviors. Young, for example, argues that the deliberative model "entails several normative ideas for the relationships and dispositions of deliberating parties, among them inclusion, equality, reasonableness, and publicity," which, so she claims, "are all *logically* related in the deliberative model" (Young 2000, 23; emphasis added). Most of the proponents of (versions of) deliberative democracy specify a set of entry conditions for participation, although what is interesting about the discussion is that most go to great pains to delineate a *minimum* set of conditions necessary for democratic deliberation rather than an ideal set (see, e.g., the contributions in Elster 1998). Young provides an interesting example with her distinction between reasonableness (which she sees as a necessary entry condition) and rationality (which she doesn't see as a necessary condition). For Young being reasonable doesn't entail being rational. Reasonableness refers to "a set of *dispositions* that discussion participants have [rather] than to the substance of people's contributions to debate" (Young 2000, 24; emphasis added). She concedes that reasonable people "often have crazy ideas," yet "what makes them reasonable is their willingness to listen to others who want to explain to them why their ideas are incorrect or inappropriate" (24). In Young's hands reasonableness thus emerges as a communicative *virtue,* and not as a criterion for the logical "quality" of people's preferences and convictions.

This example not only shows why the issue of inclusion is so prominent in the deliberative model. It also explains why the deliberative turn has generated a whole new set of issues around inclusion. The reason for this is that deliberation is not simply a form of political decisionmaking but first and foremost a form of political *communication.* The inclusion question in deliberative democracy is therefore not so much a question about who should be included—although this question should be asked always as well. It is first and foremost a question about who is able to participate effectively

in deliberation. As Dryzek aptly summarizes, the suspicion about deliberative democracy is "that its focus on a particular kind of reasonable political interaction is not in fact neutral, but systematically excludes a variety of voices from effective participation in democratic politics" (Dryzek 2000, 58). In this regard Young makes a helpful distinction between two forms of exclusion: *external exclusion,* which is about "how people are [actually] kept outside the process of discussion and decisionmaking," and *internal exclusion,* where people are formally included in decisionmaking processes but where they may find, for example, "that their claims are not taken seriously and may believe that they are not treated with equal respect" (Young 2000, 55). Internal exclusion, in other words, refers to those situations in which people "lack effective opportunity to influence the thinking of others even when they have access to fora and procedures of decisionmaking" (55) that can particularly be the outcome of the emphasis of some proponents of deliberative democracy on "dispassionate, unsituated, neutral reason" (63).

To counteract the internal exclusion that is the product of a too narrow focus on argument, Young has suggested several other modes of political communication that should be added to the deliberative process not only to remedy "exclusionary tendencies in deliberative practices" but also to promote "respect and trust" and to make possible "understanding across structural and cultural difference" (57). The first of these is *greeting* or *public acknowledgment.* This is about "communicative political gestures through which those who have conflicts … *recognize* others as included in the discussion, especially those with whom they differ in opinion, interest, or social location" (61; emphasis in original). Young emphasizes that greeting should be thought of as a starting point for political interaction. It "*precedes* the giving and evaluating of reasons" (79) and does so through the recognition of the other parties in the deliberation. The second mode of political communication is *rhetoric* and more specifically the affirmative use of rhetoric (63). Although

one could say that rhetoric only concerns the form of political communication and not its content, the point Young makes is that inclusive political communication should pay attention to and be inclusive about the different forms of expression and should not try to purify rational argument from rhetoric. Rhetoric is not only important because it can help to get particular issues on the agenda for deliberation. Rhetoric can also help to articulate claims and arguments "*in ways appropriate to a particular public in a particular situation*" (67; emphasis in original). Rhetoric always accompanies an argument by situating it "for a particular audience and giving it embodied style and tone" (79). Young's third mode of political communication is *narrative* or *storytelling*. The main function of narrative in democratic communication lies in its potential "to foster understanding among members of a polity with very different experience or assumptions about what is important" (71). Young emphasizes the role of narrative in the teaching and learning dimension of political communication. "Inclusive democratic communication," so she argues, "assumes that all participants have something to teach the public about the society in which they dwell together" and also assumes "that all participants are ignorant of some aspects of the social or natural world, and that everyone comes to a political conflict with some biases, prejudices, blind spots, or stereotypes" (77).

It is important to emphasize that greeting, rhetoric and narrative are not meant to *replace* argumentation. Young stresses again and again that deliberative democracy entails "that participants require reasons of one another and critically evaluate them" (79). Other proponents of the deliberative model take a much more narrow approach and see deliberation exclusively as a form of *rational* argumentation (e.g., Benhabib 1996) where the only legitimate force should be the "forceless force of the better argument" (Habermas). Similarly, Dryzek, after a discussion of Young's earlier ideas (i.e., the work preceding the publication of *Inclusion and Democracy*), concludes that argument "always has to be central

to deliberative democracy" (Dryzek 2000, 71). Although he acknowledges that other modes of communication can be present and that there are good reasons to welcome them, their status is different "because they do not *have* to be present" (71, emphasis added). For Dryzek at the end of the day all modes of political communication must live up to the standards of rationality. This does not mean that they must be subordinated to rational argument, "but their deployment only makes sense in a context where argument about what is to be done remains central" (168).

Can Democracy Become "Normal"?

This brief overview of inclusion reveals the progress that has been made over the past two decades around the question of democratic inclusion. But this is not to suggest that there are no problems left with the direction in which the discussion about democratic inclusion is moving—and these problems, so I wish to suggest, are not merely practical but have to do with more fundamental assumptions that underlie the discourse about democracy and inclusion. There are two assumptions that, in my view, are particularly problematic.

One assumption is the belief that democracy can become a "normal" situation. In the discussion about inclusion the main challenge seems to be perceived as a *practical* one, i.e., as the question of how we can make our democratic practices even more inclusive (internal inclusion) and how we can include even more people into the sphere of democratic deliberation (external inclusion). The assumption here is that if we can become even more attentive to otherness and difference we will eventually reach a situation of total democratic inclusion, a situation in which democracy has become "normal." While people may have different views about when and how this situation might be reached and whether or not there will always be some "remainders" (Mouffe 1993), the idea that democratization means including more and more people in

the sphere of democracy reveals the underlying idea that the best democracy is the most inclusive democracy, and reveals the underlying assumption that democracy can and should become a normal political reality.

This relates to a second assumption, which is the idea that inclusion should be understood as a process in which those who stand outside of the sphere of democracy should be brought into this sphere and, more importantly, should be included by those who are already on the inside. The assumption here is that inclusion is a process that happens "from the inside out," a process that emanates from the position of those who are already considered to be democratic. The very language of inclusion not only suggests that someone is including someone else. It also suggests—and this, of course, is familiar terrain for those who work in the field of inclusive education—that someone is setting the terms for inclusion and that it is for those who wish to be included to meet those terms.

There is, of course, no need to throw out the baby of deliberative democracy with the bathwater of theoretical purity, and this is definitely not my intention. Deliberative democracy clearly has many advantages over other political practices and processes. But the question we should ask is whether the underlying assumptions about democracy result in the best and, so we might say, most democratic way to understand and "do" democracy. The first step in answering this question is to ask whether democracy can be understood differently. One author who has tried to approach the question of democracy in a way that is indeed different from the prevailing discourse about democracy and inclusion is Jacques Rancière.

Rancière on Democracy and Democratization

Whereas in the prevailing discourse democracy is seen as something that can be permanent and normal, Rancière argues for an understanding of democracy as *sporadic*, as

something that only "happens" from time to time and in very particular situations (see Rancière 1995, 41, 61). To clarify this point Rancière makes a distinction between politics—which for him always means *democratic* politics (democracy as "the institution of politics itself"—Rancière 1999, 101)—and what he refers to as *police* or *police order.* In a way that is reminiscent of Foucault, Rancière defines the police as "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and that sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task" (29). It is an order "of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise" (29). Police should not be understood as the way in which the state structures the life of society. It is not, in Habermasian terms, the "grip" of the system on the life world, but includes *both.* As Rancière explains, "the distribution of places and roles that defines a police regime stems as much from the assumed spontaneity of social relations as from the rigidity of state functions" (29). One way to read this definition of police is to think of it as an order that is *all-inclusive* in that everyone has a particular place, role or position in it. This is not to say that everyone is included in the running of the order. The point simply is that no one is excluded from the order. After all, women, children, slaves and immigrants had a clear place in the democracy of Athens, viz., as those who were not allowed to participate in political decisionmaking. In precisely this respect every police order is all-inclusive.

Against this background Rancière then defines *politics* as the disruption of the police order in the name of equality. This may sound simpler than what Rancière has in mind, so it is important to be clear about the kind of disruption politics represents. Rancière explains that he reserves the term "politics" "for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that

configuration" (Rancière 1999, 30–31). This break is manifest in a series of actions "that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined" (31). Political activity so conceived is "whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it" (Rancière 1999). "It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard [and understood; G.B.] a discourse where once there was only place for noise" (Rancière 1999). "Political activity is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogenous assumption, that of a part of those who have no part, an assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the sheer contingency of the order [and] the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being" (Rancière 1999). Politics thus refers to the event when two "heterogeneous processes" meet: the police process and the process of *equality.*

There are two points to add to this account. The first is that for Rancière politics understood in this way is always *democratic* politics. Democracy, so he argues, "is not a regime or a social way of life"—it is not and cannot be, in other words, part of the police order—but should rather be understood "as the institution of politics itself" (Rancière 1999, 101). Every politics is democratic *not* in the sense of a set of institutions, but in the sense of forms of expression "that confront the logic of equality with the logic of the police order" (Rancière 1999, 101). Democracy, so we might say, is a "claim" for equality.

But this raises a further question about Rancière's understanding of democracy, which is the question about *who* it is that makes this claim. Who, in other words, "does" politics or "performs" democracy? The point of asking the question in this way is not to suggest that there is no subject of politics, that there are no democratic actors involved in democracy. The point is that political actors—or subjects—do not exist *before* the "act" of democracy, or to be more precise, their political identity, their identity as democratic subjects, only comes into being in and through the act of disruption of the

police order. This is why Rancière argues that politics is itself a process of *subjectification.* It is a process in and through which political subjects are constituted. Rancière defines subjectification as "the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience" (Rancière 1999, 35).

Democracy—or to be more precise, the appearance of democracy—is therefore not simply the situation in which a group who has previously been excluded from the realm of politics steps forward to claim its place under the sun. It is at the very same time the *creation* of a group as group with a particular identity that didn't exist before. Democratic activity is, for example, to be found in the activity of nineteenth-century workers "who established a collective basis for work relations" that were previously seen as "the product of an infinite number of relationships between private individuals" (Rancière 1999, 30). Democracy thus establishes new, *political* identities. Or as Rancière puts it: "Democracy is the designation of subjects that do not coincide with the parties of the state or of society" (99–100). This means that "the place where the people appear" is the place "where a dispute is conducted" (100). The political dispute is distinct from all conflicts of interest between constituted parties of the population, for it is a conflict "over the very count of those parties" (100). It is a dispute between "the police logic of the distribution of places and the political logic of the egalitarian act" (100). Politics is therefore "primarily a conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it" (26–27).

For Rancière, therefore, democratization is *not* a process that emanates from the center and extends to the margins. It is not a process in which those who are already democratic—an impossible position from Rancière's point of view anyway— include others into their sphere. Rather democracy appears as a claim from the "outside," a claim based upon the perception

of injustice, or of what Rancière refers to as a "wrong," a claim made in the name of equality. Those who make the claim do not simply want to be included in the existing order; they want to *redefine* the order in such a way that *new* identities, new ways of doing and being, become possible and can be "counted." This means that for Rancière democratization is no longer a process of inclusion of excluded parties into the existing order; it rather is a transformation of that order in the name of equality. The impetus for this transformation does not come from the inside but rather from the outside. But it is important to see that, unlike in the prevailing discourse about democratic inclusion, this outside is not a "known" outside. Democratization is, after all, not a process that happens *within* the police order in which it is perfectly clear who are taking part in decisionmaking and who are not. Democratization is a process that *disrupts* the existing order from a place that could not be expressed or articulated from within this order.

It is, finally, important to see that for Rancière the purpose of democracy and the "point" of democratization is not to create constant chaos and disruption. Although Rancière would maintain that democratization is basically a good thing, this does not mean that the police order is necessarily bad. Although this may not be very prominent in Rancière's work, he does argue that democratization can have a positive effect on the police order. Democratic disputes do produce what he refers to as "inscriptions of equality" (Rancière 1999, 100); they leave traces behind in the (transformed) police order. This is why Rancière emphasizes that "there is a worse and a better police" (30–31). The better one is, however, not the one "that adheres to the supposedly natural order of society or the science of legislators"—it is the one "that all the breaking and entering perpetrated by egalitarian logic has most jolted out of its 'natural' logic" (31). Rancière thus acknowledges that the police "can produce all sorts of good, and one kind of police may be infinitely preferable to another" (31). But, so he concludes, whether the police is "sweet and kind" does not make it any less the opposite of politics.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have indicated two problems with the way in which inclusion has been thematized in recent developments in democratic theory. Both problems are related, since they both have to do with a particular understanding of the process of *democratization.* As I have shown, democratization is basically understood as a process through which those who are not yet part of the sphere of democracy become included in it. This, as I have argued, suggests that the envisaged end point for democracy is the situation in which *everyone* is included, the situation in which democracy has become the normal political situation. It also suggests a setup in which some are already inside the "sphere" of democracy and where it is up to them to include others in *their* practice.

I have shown that there are several problems with this understanding of democracy and democratization. The main problem is that it is premised on the idea that we—and the key question is of course who the "we" here is—already know what democracy is and that inclusion is nothing more than bringing more people into the existing democratic order. This is basically a colonial way to understand democratization and it is precisely the logic behind what I see as the imperialistic expansion of (a certain definition of) democracy, which is currently happening at the geopolitical level. The main problem with this approach is that the political order itself, the democracy in which others are being included, is taken for granted; it is the starting point that itself cannot be questioned. This is not only a problem for international politics. It is at the same time a problem for those forms of democratic education that operate on the assumption it is the task of democratic education to include children and other "newcomers" into the existing democratic order by facilitating a transition from a prerational and predemocratic stage to a stage at which children have met the entry conditions for their future participation in democracy.

The importance of Rancière's work lies precisely in the fact that he puts this way of thinking about democracy and inclusion on its head. For him democracy is not a normal situation, i.e., it is not a way in which the police order exists, but rather occurs in the interruption of the order in the name of equality—which is why he says that democracy is sporadic. Furthermore, democratization for Rancière is not something that is done *to* others; it is something that people can only do themselves. Rancière connects this to the question of emancipation. Emancipation, he writes, means "escaping from a minority" (Rancière 1995, 48). But he adds to this that "nobody escapes from the social minority save by their own efforts" (Rancière 1995; see also Biesta forthcoming[b]). Third, Rancière helps us to see that we should understand democratic inclusion not in terms of adding more people to the existing order, but rather as a process that necessarily involves the transformation of that order. As long as we restrict our inclusive efforts to those who are known to be excluded, we only operate within the existing order. This, so I wish to emphasize, is definitely not *un*important because, as Rancière reminds us, there is a worse and a better police. But what Rancière provides us with is an understanding of the need for a different kind of inclusion: the inclusion of what cannot be known to be excluded in terms of the existing order, the inclusion of what I have elsewhere referred to as the "incalculable" (see Biesta 2001).

Why and how do these ideas matter for education and, more importantly, for democratic education? In my view it is first of all of the utmost importance in the current political climate to have ways of thinking and "doing" democratic education that are precisely *not* informed by a colonial view of democratic education. Rancière at the very least shows us that it is possible to understand the relationship between democracy, democratization and inclusion differently, in a way that is far less tainted by a colonial frame of mind. Rancière also helps us to see that there is a choice. Democratic education can either play a role in the police order—and I

wish to emphasize that there is important work to be done there as well—or it can try to link up with experiences and practices of democratization that come from the "outside" and interrupt the democratic order in the name of equality. Instead of teaching children and young people to be "good democrats"—which, in my view, is a strategy that basically remains within the police order—educators may well have a role to play in utilizing and supporting the learning opportunities in those incalculable moments when democratization "occurs." That such moments might occur as the interruption of attempts to teach democracy—even if it is a teaching based on deliberative idea(l)s—is, in my view, something that goes without saying.

The End(s) of Learning

My ambition with this book has *not* been to offer a blueprint for good education but rather to stimulate discussion about what good education might look like and to indicate the parameters for such discussions. Starting a discussion about good education requires asking just one simple question: What is education *for*? Answering this question is, of course, not easy, but if the question never gets asked, then we can be sure that education will proceed in a directionless manner—or at least in a manner where the direction of education is not the result of deliberations about which direction is the most desirable one. In the preceding chapters I have indicated several reasons why the question about good education almost seems to have disappeared from the "radar" of educators, educationalists and educational policy makers. This is partly due to the rise of the language of learning and the more general "learnification" of education. Nowadays there is simply too much talk about learning and too little talk about what learning is supposed to be *for*. There is too little talk, in other words, about the ends of learning. This holds for the learning that goes on in schools, colleges and universities, but also for the notion of lifelong learning, which in itself is directionless and therefore basically meaningless—that is, without specification of the "what" and "what for" of learning.

Given that the question of good education is a normative question that requires value judgments, it can never be answered by the outcomes of measurement, by research evidence or through managerial forms of accountability—even though, as I have shown, such developments have contributed and are continuing to contribute to the displacement of the question of good education and try to present themselves as being able to set the direction for education. Answering the question of good education is, however, also not a matter of just expressing one's opinions and preferences. Under the condition of democracy, education is never just a private good. This means that any decisions about what is considered to be educationally desirable can never be based on the aggregation of individual wants and preferences but always requires the translation of such wants and preferences from what is actually desired to what is justifiably considered to be desirable.

To engage in such translation processes in a precise and focused manner requires recognition of the fact that education is a "composite" concept—that it is not one "thing," not a one-dimensional endeavor, but covers several different and, to a certain extent, even incompatible roles or functions. This is why I have suggested that in discussions about the aims and ends of education we should make a distinction between three roles or functions of education, to which I have referred as qualification, socialization and subjectification. Whereas the distinction between these three functions can be seen as an analytical device—for example if we wish to explore in what ways educational processes and practices impact or in what ways we would want educational processes and practices to have an impact—I have suggested that we can also use the distinction between the three roles or functions of education in a programmatic manner, that is, as a way to articulate programmatically and positively what we want education to achieve. Whereas analytically it can be argued that education always also impacts on the subjectivity of "newcomers," I have made the stronger case that education should always also *engage* with the ways in which it impacts

on the subjectivity of "newcomers" and that it should do so in a way that ultimately can contribute to a way of being a subject that is not simply about the insertion of "newcomers" into existing orders. This is a careful—and perhaps slightly complicated—way of saying that education should always entail an orientation toward *freedom.*

Particularly in Chapter 4—but also in Chapters 5 and 6—I have tried to argue that we should not think of freedom as sovereignty, that is, of freedom as just doing what you want to do. I have rather made a case for a "difficult" notion of freedom, one where my freedom to act, that is, to bring my beginnings into the world, is always connected with the freedom of others to take initiative, to bring their beginnings into the world as well so that the impossibility to remain "unique masters" of what we do (Arendt 1958, 244) is the very condition under which our beginnings can come into the world. This is why the notion of "subjectification" is more appropriate than a notion like "individuation," because it expresses that we are not only the subject of our own beginnings but are also subjected to how others take up these beginnings. "Subjectification" thus articulates that being and becoming a subject are thoroughly relational and also, as I have argued, thoroughly ethical and thoroughly political. This also explains why subjectification is not simply about expressing one's identity—not even one's unique identity, as uniqueness is not to be understood in terms of difference but in terms of irreplaceability in my ethical and political relationships with others who are not like me. By connecting the notion of education with the idea of freedom I situate myself explicitly within a particular educational and political tradition that has its roots in the Enlightenment. My "issue" with the Enlightenment tradition is not with its ambitions but with the modern means that have traditionally been used to bring about Enlightenment (see Biesta 2005). Whereas I would argue that these means are problematic—and in the previous chapters I have particularly argued that the idea of a fundamental and fundamentally rational human nature should be seen as

part of the problem—I do not want to give up the orientation toward what Michel Foucault (1984, 46) has so aptly referred to as the "undefined work of freedom."

To suggest that education not only has a role to play vis-à-vis the question of freedom but that there is actually an *intrinsic* relationship between education and freedom, to the extent to which we might even see education as the science and practice of freedom, is without doubt a challenging idea. I would maintain, however, that it is not an idea that is alien to what those who are involved in education on a day-to-day basis would see their work to be about. After all, teachers never aim for their students to remain dependent upon their input and effort but always have an orientation toward their students' independence and emancipation, even—or perhaps we could say particularly—when education, at least in its intentions, appears to be focused exclusively on qualification. That education carries an orientation toward freedom within itself is, therefore, not too difficult to grasp, although the crucial question, as I have shown in this book, is about how this orientation can be articulated, justified and "practiced." The engagement with this question is perhaps the point where we encounter the end of learning and the beginning of education.

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