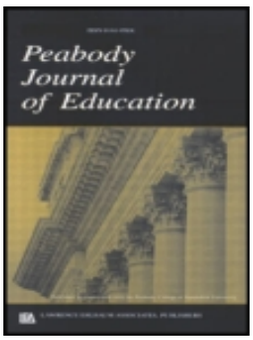

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SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING, DISCOURSE, AND DISPUTATION

Saving Democratic Education from Itself: Why We Need Homeschooling

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We need homeschooling to save education in a liberal democracy from taking a religious form—what I call Democratic Education. Democratic Education emerges when the democratic identity and narrative become elevated to the highest priority when thinking about educating human beings. This elevation becomes particularly dangerous when other nonpolitical ends and aspects of our humanity are ignored, downplayed, or, worse, delegitimized. This article argues that three signs of this danger currently exist in educational theory and practice. First, Democratic Educators are offering a reductive view of human persons in which undue focus is placed upon those skills or educational justifications that relate to students' political identity and capacities. Second, the liberal tradition of education that seeks to show justice to the diversity of narratives or comprehensive reasonable worldviews that exist in America is being undermined. Third, educational alternatives outside the public system are attacked by Democratic Educators and even considered politically problematic. If we want to recover more human forms of education, we need to reinvigorate more pluralistic forms of humanistic education, such as homeschooling, that nurture philosophies and practices of education that allow for a wider focus upon human flourishing. Ultimately, this is why liberal democracies need homeschooling.

> "Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained and corrupted?" (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 97)

When John Dewey wrote *Democracy and Education* in 1916 it was one of the first books to use the two words together in the same title. Today, it appears to be the norm for education scholars think and write about education from the vantage point of our identity as citizens and not from the vantage point of our larger human identity or other nonpolitical identities. Some recent

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titles give evidence of this tendency: Eamonn Callan's (1997) *Creating Citizens*; Amy Gutmann's (1999) *Democratic Education*; John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Bonnie McDaniel's (2008) *Education and the Making of a Democratic People*; and E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s (2010) *The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools*. Within this genre, our political identity provides both the orientation for educational discussions and the ultimate context when considering educational answers.

Although a concern with the political dimension of our human personhood is understandable and necessary in education, we are more than political citizens. Our political system recognizes this point. The beauty of liberal democracy is that it is meant to be an instrumental good that allows for the flourishing of a variety of religions and philosophies. At the same time, liberal democracy is not meant to be an all-encompassing, exclusive life philosophy or functional religion (as opposed to say communism in the former Soviet Union). Yet the increasing tendency of educational philosophers, leaders, and practitioners to think about education primarily in terms of our political identity signals a potential danger that we need to consider, especially when scholars write about "the primacy of political education" (Gutmann, 1999, p. 282).

One might argue that this approach is merely a sign that we should view democracy as a tradition. As Stout (2004) noted in his book *Democracy & Tradition*, a democratic tradition seeks to pass along substantive moral content:

> It inculcates certain habits of reasoning, certain attitudes toward deference and authority in political discussion, and love for certain goods and virtues, as well as a disposition to respond to certain types of actions, events or persons with admiration, pity or horror. This tradition is anything but empty. Its ethical substance, however, is more a matter of enduring attitudes, concerns, dispositions, and patterns of conduct than it is a matter of agreement on a conception of justice in [John] Rawl's sense. The notion of state neutrality and the reason-tradition dichotomy should not be seen as its defining marks. (p. 3)

Although liberal democracy can function as a healthy and robust tradition that respects the variety of voices in America, it can also be corrupted so that it fosters dangerous habits of reasoning, vices, and misdirected loves. It can become something it was never meant to be—a religion.

Of course, I do not mean that liberal democratic institutions may suddenly promote substantive religious beliefs about God or various gods. The democratic identity and narrative *functions* as a religion, I suggest, when these elements become elevated to the most important identity and narrative in all human beings' lives and the most important identity and narrative when thinking about educating students. Using Tillich's (1957) definition of a functional religion, political identity and ends become the "ultimate concern." By political identity and ends, I simply mean that humans are mainly defined according to their political function as citizens and not by wider human identities and capacities related to human personhood (see, e.g., Smith, 2010). For instance, critical thinking proves an important end primarily because it is useful to voters in a liberal democracy and not one's development as a human being. This elevation of political identity and ends becomes particularly dangerous when other nonpolitical ends and aspects of our humanity are ignored, downplayed, or, worse, delegitimized. This article argues that signs of this danger currently exist in educational theory and practice. Most important, I make the claim that maintaining robust protections for homeschooling can protect us from this danger.

The first part of this article describes the danger signs for both human well-being and liberal democracy. The first danger sign is the tendency to elevate political identity and purposes while neglecting, downplaying, or disparaging other aspects of our humanity. I call this approach Democratic Education, and I capitalize it to emphasize the way it functions as a kind of substitute religion. I suggest this way of discussing education has led to three particular problems. First, Democratic Education contributes to a reductive view of human persons in which undue focus is placed upon those skills or educational justifications that relate to students' political identity and capacities. As a result, broader humanistic forms of education, by which I mean those that focus on our broader human flourishing and not a narrow ideological vision such as secular humanism, have suffered a decline. Part of this decline, I argue, occurs when other more humanistic approaches or subjects are justified largely by political rationales. Not surprisingly, such justifications are proving ineffective.

The second danger sign is that the liberal tradition of education, by which I mean an educational tradition that seeks to show justice to the diversity of worldviews and human identities that exist in a political community, is being undermined throughout America's publicly funded forms of education, particularly with regard to religion. Instead of exposing students to both secular and religious ways of viewing the world, American schools give preference only to secular views of the world. Most often this favoritism exists because a secular approach to education is mistakenly understood as consistent with the democratic tradition. From this perspective, educators must exclude alternative religious ways of reasoning.

A third danger sign is that educational alternatives outside the public system are increasingly critiqued using democratic categories in the place of broader humanistic ideals of education concerned with human flourishing. Instead of recognizing what McClendon (1986) identified as the tournament of narratives that exists within our system of education, or what Rawls (1996) called a plurality of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, as well as the need to protect the right of those traditions or doctrines to exist and compete within a liberal democracy, Democratic Educators primarily worry about taming and neutralizing the threats to liberal democracy that may emerge from the tournament.

The final section of this article proposes that a liberal democracy must nurture philosophies and practices of education that allow for a wider focus upon human flourishing. This focus produces a healthy limitation upon political identity in educational thinking so that it does not become a functional religion. Ultimately, this is why liberal democracies need homeschooling. Liberal democratic leaders should not unduly fear the diversity of visions for human flourishing and treat them primarily as dangerous competitors to a particular political conception of humanity. A thriving system of homeschooling enables parents to educate their children so that political identity does not become the *ultimate* organizing identity for education. In other words, it allows parents to create forms of education where children's religious, family, individual, gender, ethnic, or other identity can be prioritized in different ways. These are merely various expressions of humanistic education. The homeschooling option allows for alternatives to the public system of schools, which holds the majority of power and money, a factor that can lead it to the (intentional or not) oppression of the rich visions of human flourishing parents may wish to pass along to their children. Furthermore, true democratic education must demonstrate consistency by allowing critique if it wishes to remain robust and grow stronger. The leaders of liberal democracies, including educational leaders, need reminders of liberal democracy's limits and the fact that the child is not the mere creature of the state.

WHEN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION BECOMES THE ULTIMATE CONCERN: THE REDUCTION OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

Democratic Educators are often quite sensitive to reducing the purpose of education to getting a job or helping the economy. What they often fail to realize is that this same reduction in the purpose of education can be made in the name of political citizenship. An example of this failure can be found in an article by Mark Slouka (2009), which criticizes the current conversation surrounding education. Slouka lamented, "Education in America today is almost exclusively about the GDP" (p. 34). The solution, Slouka emphasized, can be found by focusing upon the role of education in producing democratic citizens. We teach, he claimed, to create various capacities that "thereby contribute to the political life of the nation" (pp. 33–34). "Our primary function, in other words, is to teach people, not tasks; to participate in the complex and infinitely worthwhile labor of forming citizens" (p. 34). Oddly, Slouka thinks identifying "forming citizens" as the major purpose of education is less reductionist and more important than forming future entrepreneurs, managers and workers. It is important to note that both types of language are limited.

In contrast, consider visions that focus on our broad human identity. Paulo Friere (2002), in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* argued that humanization should be the primary goal of education, and the United Nations (1948) Declaration of Human Rights states, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Of course, the difficulty with Friere's proposal or the first part of the U.N. statement is that great disagreement exists about what "humanization" or "the full development of the human personality" entails. After all, any idea of development must have in mind some human *telos* or final result and any broad community of humans will be full of a diversity of visions of human flourishing.

A healthy education system in a liberal democracy respects the diversity of human visions of flourishing by cultivating and protecting a diversity of educational approaches. An unhealthy system of education, especially for a liberal democracy, is when political identity begins to dominate the educational system and the wider aspects of human identity are ignored, downplayed, or disparaged in the curriculum and structure of education. Unfortunately, we are beginning to see danger signs of this unhealthy approach, what I call the religion of Democratic Education, in American educational thinking and practice.

A Reductive View of the Humanities

One danger of Democratic Education is that it relies upon narrow political justifications to validate certain subjects. For instance, recent data show that interest in the humanities is declining, with the share of bachelor's degrees in the humanities dropping from 17.7% in the late 1960s to 8% in 2004 (Geiger, 2009). Recently, this decline—or what some have called a "crisis"—has received a tremendous amount of attention, as have the ways we justify study of the humanities (Fish, 2010). Not surprisingly, academic treatments about the demise of the humanities often identify the culprit as capitalism or "corporate interests." Again, they rarely seem to notice or mention the effects of the political takeover of education, particularly in higher education. Whereas once the vast majority of college students enrolled in privately funded institutions of higher education, over three fourths of all students in America now enroll in public educational institutions (*Digest*

of Educational Statistics, 2011). This trend indicates that the humanities have become subject to the political controls enshrined within democratic liberalism, as state schools are expected to defend or support the humanities using only arguments and premises acceptable to the wider public. As a result, educational leaders have developed the habit of only theorizing about the humanities in a way that elevates our political identity to such a degree that it dominates our thinking about education.

Slouka (2009), who teaches in the humanities, provided a second helpful example in his essay that criticizes the economic justification for the humanities while defending the political justification. For example, he contended, "By downsizing what is most dangerous (and most essential) about our education, namely the deep civic function of the arts and the humanities, we're well on the way to producing a nation of employees, not citizens" (p. 33). Instead of helping Americans get jobs, the humanities, Slouka argued, can help individuals become good citizens and defend "political freedom" and "democratic institutions" (p. 36). He reminds us that the humanities are "inescapably, political" and are "a superb delivery mechanism for what we call democratic values" (p. 37). In Slouka's hands, the humanities become little more than a handmaiden for promoting Democratic Education. In fact, according to Slouka, the problem with math or science is that "one of the things they don't do well is democracy" (p. 38).

Why is justifying the humanities as an instrumental good for creating democratic citizens any less problematic than justifying the value of the humanities by claiming it makes us better economic participants? Slouka (2009) never answered this question. He arbitrarily elevated our political selves above our economic selves without clear justification, claiming that we should scoff at *New York Times* editorialist Brent Staples for suggesting that clear writing will help the new economy. After all, Slouka asked, "Could clear writing have, perhaps, some political efficacy?" (p. 34). That writing may actually have some other human efficacy beyond politics or economics he never mentioned.

In reality, merely using education to produce either future employees or future citizens can dehumanize us. A broader understanding of education does include democratic and professional purposes, but it also includes more. Exactly what that more should be remains an important question. It may include acquiring skills and knowledge in art, music, poetry, and literature that perhaps helps us get a job or become better citizens, but most important it might make life more true, good, or beautiful for every human being. Or, as Robin Williams's character in the film *Dead Poet Society* said, "We write poetry because we are human" (Haft, Witt, Thomas, & Weir, 1989). It also might help us be better mothers or fathers, better sons and daughters, better friends and neighbors, better women and men, and just better people—those other identities that comprise our humanity.

A Secular Democratic Education Instead of a Liberal Education

A second danger sign concerns how the functional religion of Democratic Education, as a jealous god, does not allow other gods into the curriculum. In other words, it enforces only "approved" political ways of reasoning and thinking. According to Democratic Education, public forms of education should be secular, and secular is understood to mean that religious perspectives should be excluded from the curriculum. Under the auspices of Democratic Education, educators are denying the reality that liberal democracy was designed to nurture a robust form of religious

freedom that includes allowing religious forms of reasoning a role in our political and educational thought (Stout, 2004).

The consequences of this view for our K-12 system can be found in Warren Nord's (2010) book *Does God Make a Difference? Taking Religion Seriously in Our Schools and Universities*. Nord observed that public education textbooks as a whole fail to encourage students to consider alternative paradigms of interpreting life and subject matter that would provide students a liberal education. For example, "economics texts and courses teach students to conceive all of economics in entirely secular, nonmoral categories" (p. 51). Nord is particularly concerned about religion, which he contended serves as a live intellectual option for the majority of Americans. Furthermore, although religion relates to numerous important questions in every discipline, it receives little attention in America's educational system.

To prove this point, Nord (2010) undertook the heroic task of analyzing the nation's K-12 educational standards and textbooks. Nord hardly found a smidgen of religion. In history texts, religion largely disappears after the 18th century. When mentioned, it was usually due to its role in political conflicts (e.g., the Iranian Revolution, the partition of India, 9/11 and Al Qaeda). Authors missed chances for positive inclusion. For instance, they credited Martin Luther King's views on nonviolence to Thoreau and Gandhi and said nothing about his Christian theology or that fact that he was an ordained minister in the Baptist tradition. Not one textbook even mentioned that Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Economics and science texts proved worse. Nord found only three references to religion in 6,700 pages of economics text, and a total of one page of references in 7,356 pages of science texts. Overall, less than 1% of textbook content dealt with religion and its role in the reasoning of economists, scientists, political leaders, and others (pp. 41–60).

This led Nord (2010) to ask a provocative question: What would we think of a fundamentalist Christian school that required no course work in science and only mentioned science briefly in a few brief pages, and taught science solely from the Bible? We would call this practice indoctrination, even if the teachers thought they were teaching the truth. Why then, Nord asked, should we think differently about public schools that never teach a religion course and do not even consider religious knowledge, texts, perspectives, and ways of reasoning? We shouldn't. We should call it secular indoctrination. Such a charge is quite serious, as Gutmann (1999) noted a society is undemocratic "if it restricts rational deliberation" (p. 96).

A liberal education, Nord (2010) insisted, should initiate students into classic and contemporary academic conversations in which religious voices are actually live options, as they are clearly live options for both scholars and the population at large. Students need to be taught to think religiously and not merely "to think in secular ways about religion." For instance, students are illiberally "educated," Nord maintained, "if they learn to think about sexuality only in secular categories" (p. 277). Currently, the victory of the dominant secular culture over religion and the failure to consider religious options is so complete, he argued, "that it may even make sense to talk now about the educational oppression of religious subcultures" (p. 139). For example, through character education, public school students are merely socialized into common democratic virtues instead of being taught about the variety of thick moral traditions, both secular and religious, that people use to make moral sense and meaning of their lives.

Nord's (2010) evidence should make us realize the threat that Democratic Education poses. A tradition that cultivates the habit of limiting valid forms of reasoning and content to the secular and extends that principle to public education threatens both liberal education and the free exchange

of ideas. Nord's work makes clear why parents who wish their child to receive an education that includes religious ways of thinking as live options must look to nonpublic forms of schooling as K-12 textbooks are now corrupted or dominated by secularized Democratic Education. In place of the liberal arts educational tradition, which introduces students to the wide-ranging conversation about what it means to be fully human, we have substituted Democratic Education.

The Fear of Educational Alternatives that are Not Democratic Enough

In light of the danger just discussed, many Americans have recognized that an effective way to foster both different educational visions of human flourishing and to protect fundamental human rights is to support a variety of educational options such as public schooling, private schooling, and homeschooling. Such an approach allows parents to expose their children to religious ways of reasoning, and it protects the parental right that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations,1948) describes: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

A third danger sign, however, is that those with a religious allegiance to Democratic Education demonstrate an inordinate fear of other narratives or reasonable comprehensive doctrines in not only public school curriculum but also other forms of education. Thus, today a growing group of educational thinkers have questioned the wisdom of granting too much educational freedom to private schooling or home education (e.g., Badman, 2009; Callan, 1997; Dwyer, 1998, 2002, 2006; Feinberg, 1998; Gutmann, 1999; Levinson, 1999; Macedo, 2000; Reich, 2002). In general, these scholars argue that in the current American situation, children's and the state's educational interests and the protection of human rights would be best achieved by highly regulating (or even outlawing) homeschooling and private schooling. The major threats to liberal democracy, the good of children, and basic human rights, according to these authors, are illiberal or incompetent parents and communities. Thus, these authors place the burden on parents or the elements of civil society running nonstate educational institutions to demonstrate why they should be allowed to educate children. Of course, this fear has a long history. Horace Mann worried that those in private instead of common schools would be a poisonous influence on the rest of society, and many Nativists wanted to outlaw Catholic schools for what they saw as their undemocratic influence (Abrams, 2009).

Although I have addressed particular problems with some of these scholars' views about autonomy and state regulation (Glanzer, 2008, 2012), I want to note certain characteristics of the arguments as they relate to this article. First, the authors either present their arguments from the standpoint of democratic identity or assume that the democratic identity has a fundamental priority over and against universal or humanistic claims grounded in natural rights. For example, Gutmann (1999) declared, "A democrat must reject the simplest reason for sanctioning private schools—that parents have a 'natural right' to control the education of their children" (p. 116).

Second, Democratic Educators defend heavily regulating or eliminating private or home educational options based upon the fear that these historically once-common options will fail to foster the virtues and capacities needed for liberal democracy (e.g., critical thinking and autonomy). These arguments are made with little empirical evidence or without sufficiently clear comparisons (Glanzer, 2012). For example, Dwyer (1998), who favors severely restricting the freedom of private schools and home-based education, admitted that he does not provide a

comparison of private with public schools when evaluating private school harms to freedom of thought and expression, as he believes the harms of private schools can speak for themselves. Going further, he also believes that the regulatory burdens placed on public schools are sufficient to prevent such harms.

Third, the failure of these scholars to provide evidence of the harms of homeschooling (or a balanced appraisal of the harms of home and public schooling) reveals the ideological nature of these authors' commitment to Democratic Education. Instead of acknowledging that any type of schooling option, whether public, private, or home, has the potential to restrict a child's flourishing (and it should be noted that what exactly human flourishing is will prove a matter of deep debate), the adherents to the Democratic Education at best downplay, and at worst appear blind to, the ways that public schools can impede or warp the humanity of children. As Nord (2010) made clear, public school textbooks may also leave children with a very limited view of the various options regarding what may be considered a meaningful, purposeful, or successful life. Moreover, public school students can become servile to peer groups when they are primarily exposed to the options of hedonism and crass forms of individualist utilitarianism (Hunter, 2000). Peer groups may encourage students to drink excessively, use drugs, engage in bullying, or participate in the hook-up culture for simplistic reasons such as maximizing their own pleasure or being accepted. Although these thinkers raise concerns about the lack of socialization in homeschooling, they fail to acknowledge the numerous negative forms of socialization that can occur in a public school.

Fourth, what is more disturbing about arguments among this group of scholars is the way they imitate justifications for limiting educational freedom offered by totalitarian governments such as those found in communist countries (Glanzer, 2008, 2012). In many of these countries, both private education and homeschooling have been severely restricted or eliminated for political reasons, and not because of a concern about promoting educational freedom that can foster diverse visions of human flourishing. Similarly, one can find a scholar such as Sandra Levinson (1999) lamenting American education for even allowing alternatives outside the public system, because she contended that it limits the coherence and emphasis upon one's civic or public identity required for her politicized vision of "liberal" education (pp. 120–122). Advocates of Democratic Education prove amazingly eager to limit educational freedom to achieve their political goals and visions. In contrast, as Galston (2002) pointed out,

> the proposition that X is instrumental to (or even necessary for) the creation of good citizens does not, as a matter of constitutional law or liberal democratic theory, warrant the conclusion that X is right or legitimate, all things considered. There may be compelling moral and human considerations that prevent the state from enforcing otherwise acceptable policies on dissenting individuals or groups. (p. 107)

I now turn to discussing what those compelling moral and human considerations might be.

PROTECTING DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION FROM ITSELF: WHY WE NEED HOMESCHOOLING

The three danger signs just described should raise concerns about what happens when a focus upon political identity and capacities starts to dominate educational thinking and practice. By prioritizing students' political identity in a way that ignores, excludes, or denigrates the other

aspects of their humanity, Democratic Education can become dangerously religious. It also threatens broader humanistic visions of education. In the next section, I argue that a robust system of home education provides one way to protect parents, children, and liberal democracy itself from these dangers.

Protecting More Human Forms of Education

When it comes to describing what education for human flourishing might mean we cannot rely upon a narrow scientific understanding of humanity. As C. John Sommerville (2006) wrote,

> The question about the human is not exhausted by telling us where our bodies come from, or even about where human consciousness comes from. It is about the meanings we give to the human, what an ideal of humanity might be, or what we could aim at. (p. 27)

Although these ideals will vary tremendously, we can possibly find some common human capacities that education could develop that might aid this quest. Christian Smith's (2010) recent book *What Is a Person?* attempts to provide this understanding of human personhood. He identified 30 different human capacities that, when developed, allow for human flourishing.

The danger of any educational system controlled by a nation-state is that this system will develop only those human identities and capacities that it sees as necessary for the nation's flourishing. Often, it will only focus upon creating good citizens (Glanzer, 2001). Liberal democracies, although more attuned to the need to protect individual liberties than other forms of government, still face the danger that the individual student may become another "brick in the wall" of Democratic Education. For example, Democratic Educators tend to focus on autonomy and critical thinking, two aspects that might be found in a number of Smith's (2010) characteristics. For instance, two of Smith's listed capacities, "self-transcendence" and "acting as efficient causes of own actions and interactions," could be understood as elements of autonomy. Similarly, "abstract reasoning," "self-reflexivity," and "truth seeking" could be said to involve critical thinking. Yet Democratic Educators place less of an emphasis upon some of the other capacities listed in Smith's work, such as "aesthetic judgment and enjoyment" or "interpersonal communion and love" (p. 54). In addition, Democratic Educators may focus exclusively upon the political aspects of a capacity such as "forming virtues" or "identity formation."

An educational system that treats our political identity and practices as important but also limits dimensions of our humanity would seek to protect broader forms of education with wider visions of human flourishing. I have been calling such visions humanistic forms of education. Humanistic forms of education seek to enrich every aspect of a student's identity. After all, we are born encumbered selves that inherit and then take upon ourselves multiple identities and not just that of citizenship. Moreover, most people do not seek to be a good professional, spouse, parent, friend, and so forth, to be a good citizen. For many human beings, being a citizen is not their meta-identity. Thus, a humanistic education rejects educational approaches that may ignore or discount certain parts of human identity.

A robust system of homeschooling supports humanistic forms of education and protects liberal democracy from developing overly politicized forms of education with a narrow focus. Its presence acknowledges what Galston (2005) described as a basic principle of political pluralism: "Because so many types of human associations possess an identity not derived from the state,

pluralist politics does not presume that the inner structure and principles of every sphere must mirror those of basic political institutions" (p. 2). Supporting a robust system of homeschooling that is not made to imitate the structure and content of public education supports this principle. It demonstrates a willingness to grant greater freedom and even encourage alternative humanistic forms of education outside those controlled by the public that do not necessarily follow the norms of the Democratic Education.

This freedom allows parents to develop a wider range of human capacities and prioritize certain capacities over others. Homeschooling parents may be more interested in addressing the two highest order capacities that Smith (2010) placed at the top of his list of human capacities—"interpersonal communion and love" and "aesthetic judgment and enjoyment"—than a public school. Or they may engage in want to cultivate "identity formation," "moral awareness and judgment" or "forming virtues," three of Smith's listed capacities, quite differently than public schools. After all, depending upon the guiding worldview, educators may encourage students to direct their love toward different people, entities and things in different ways that will make it a virtue to some and a vice to others (e.g., love for God and one's neighbor). Or to use another example, although a public school system may be more concerned with forming political virtues or "democratic character," homeschooling parents can form virtues that one will not find emphasized in a public school system. It was no surprise, then, that I did not find any mention of the three important theological virtues in Christian ethics—faith, hope, and love—or other important virtues for human flourishing such as forgiveness (found only in Arizona's law) and humility in my study of the virtues found in character education laws in the United States (Glanzer & Milson, 2006; for a description of virtues for human flourishing, see Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Such an absence may be a good thing, because Democratic Educators appear to want students to, first and foremost, place their faith and hope in Democracy.

In contrast, homeschooling parents can also engage in greater creativity than public schools regarding the visions of human flourishing in which they might seek to educate children. Just as private businesses can often respond more quickly to human needs in the economic sphere, homeschooling (as well as private education) can engage in a similar sort of creative educational freedom to foster human flourishing. Of course, ever since the Greeks, societies have always worried about the freedom of creative artists and their influence on children (e.g., Plato's concern for the Poets). The case of homeschooling parents may well prove no different. Yet a society that truly values freedom will avoid unnecessary censorship of parents' influence over their children.

The range of visions for humanistic education will depend upon how parents conceptualize and prioritize various identities that they wish to develop in their children. Fundamental to such an education is the notion that learning necessitates a discussion of the proper ordering of one's loves and desires, whether it be to particular beings (e.g., various communities, God, parents, etc.) or one's own identities (e.g., Jewish, female, Latino, American, Californian, etc.). For instance, every form of education chooses to prioritize some forms of identity and knowledge (e.g., requiring a course in Latino, California, or American history instead of a course in Jewish, women's, or world history, etc.). We find such visions in grand metanarratives that provide a guiding vision to what it means to be fully human. As Postman (1995) reminded us, this kind of story "tells of origins and envisions a future, [it] constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority and, above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose" (pp. 5–6). For example, if people believe humans are made in God's image, then they will want to consider God's story, character, and being when contemplating what will lead to the flourishing of their children.

State educational leaders or institutions can never explicitly proclaim a particular metaphysical story as true; however, the curricular and pedagogical approaches featured in American public education favor secular stories (Nord, 2010). We must find ways for our education system to be freer, clearer, and more honest about how these kinds of grand metanarratives about humanity inform educational thinking and practice if we really want to take humanistic forms of education and diversity seriously. Imposing an education on as many as possible that promotes Democratic Education's favoritism toward the unencumbered self and supports a view of the nation-state that separates humanity from these grand narratives weakens or undermines such traditions.

Democracy Support and Critique from Various Epistemic Communities

Liberal democracies that support the rights of individuals and minority groups, such as the freedom of religion, speech, and assembly, demonstrate openness to critique. They recognize that these freedoms allow alternative communities with different purposes and virtues to flourish. These communities can also provide counter examples and critique that will even allow the democratic community itself to grow and improve. One does not find this freedom in more totalitarian societies. Allowing and encouraging homeschooling allows this sort of alternative flourishing and critique to occur at the educational level.

Homeschooling also provides a check upon public education. One of the most well-known features of a liberal democratic society are the checks and balances provided among different branches of government and the checks and balances against majority rule. Such limits provide the leaders of liberal democracies, including the educational leaders, reminders of liberal democracies limits. Homeschooling provides a continual reminder to democratic leaders and citizens that the child is not the mere creature of the state.

CONCLUSION

To preserve more humanistic visions for education that are not captive to the religion of Democratic Education, we must create a system of education that nurtures the humanistic visions that will spring from civil society. We do not need another secular religion similar to Soviet Communism or German Fascism that feared giving educational freedom to humanity. Of course, the democratic tradition can only help us make room for them—it cannot produce them. Humanists and liberal democrats must remind Democratic Educators that we are more than citizens of a particular nation-state and the most human forms of education do not always treat the needs and interests of the nation-state as the highest priority.

AUTHOR BIO

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