
Introduction

What kind of education is suitable for citizens of modern democratic and culturally diverse modern societies? This is the question that has troubled me most while writing this book. Notably, as we shall see, it has also puzzled a number of the leading writers on education. There is, however, no one simple answer to this question. How we respond to this issue inevitably depends upon the point in time and space within which we seek to address questions of cultural development and democracy. Indeed, one of the arguments I shall be making here is how we might locate ourselves in terms of some of these debates, but at the same time reconstruct these arguments in new times. There is no 'neutral' answer to this question despite the agnostic view offered by some liberals. That we seek to positively identify the values of democracy will inevitably mean that we prefer certain ways of organising, living and practising education to others. For the most part this book adopts an approach that is often referred to within critical theory as 'immanent critique'. The aim of critical theory is not only to produce self-reflection and criticism, but also to argue that if education is to become meaningful then we would need to revise our current practices and seek to struggle for a more democratic society. However, in this process we have to start from where we currently stand and recognise that the realisation of a democratic education could only take place in a reconstructed society. Such a society is unlikely to arrive in any pristine form but will depend upon citizens and social movements seeking to combat social and cultural forms that aim to close down the possibility of the emergence of a culturally pluralistic, dialogic and learning education system and society. Here we will need to understand 'education' not only as a diverse set of practices that takes place within formal settings of learning like schools, colleges and universities, but also more broadly involves the media of mass communication, popular culture, literature and social movements. Here I would follow Antonio Gramsci (1971: 40) who argues that for education to be described as democratic it 'must mean that every "citizen" can "govern" and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this'. This would mean that our democratic 'education' as citizens does not end at the school gates but includes relationships inside families, in front of the television, on the computer, inside the workplace and within civil society more generally. In this respect questions of education face in a number of directions all at once.

In making these claims I am inevitably drawing upon my own experiences and intellectual preferences as a British academic working in an

institution of higher education. My own intellectual journey from the working class to the educated middle class undoubtedly colours many of the arguments discussed within this volume. This does not mean of course that many people who have made a similar transition will necessarily understand this experience in the same way that I have done. Further, I have tried as hard as possible to argue from the point of view of a critic who is keen to preserve and extend the practice of democracy in increasingly difficult times. It is just that I am aware that had I encountered education differently I might have written a different kind of book.

My argumentative strategy is to defend both a democratic form of education and one that seeks to include a wide variety of cultural experiences that are compatible with these values. There is no vision of education or understanding of its practice that is not based upon a view of the good society. Much of the debate that goes on within education it seems to me deliberately obscures this argument by reducing the role of education to overly instrumental and technical criteria. Often it seems there is no vision of the good society to defend but simply a view of education as raising 'aspirations' or of people gaining access to more and better employment. What this book seeks to achieve is to clarify the principles that are at stake in these arguments, and suggest the different ways in which the practice of democracy might become enhanced through education. In this book I want to look more closely at the meaningful practice of education and how it might serve a democratic as opposed to an authoritarian or consumerist ethos.

This book does not seek to argue from the position of scientifically conceived neutrality. This is because I doubt that such a position exists, and I think that education and the practice of democracy are more closely linked than many currently think. Indeed, part of the task I have taken on here is to rethink a number of complex and often overlapping traditions of thinking that can help us understand how education is linked to democratic forms of practice. However, before proceeding any further I had better explain what I mean by democracy and why I think it is important.

If I might at this point be allowed a personal story. My own initial education was fairly unremarkable. The infant and junior schools I attended were authoritarian places where a minor breach of the rules could often lead to harsh punishments. The schools were well ordered and disciplined but offered little by the way of creativity or imagination. With football and comic reading being my only escape these were not on the whole (with some notable exceptions) places of enjoyable learning. If anything they were mostly disciplinary institutions that passed on basic skills, but expected very little of their students. At my secondary school most of my male peers were encouraged to specialise in certain subjects (mainly wood work, metal work and technical drawing) so that they could gain employment in the wider economy. Many of the other boys were targeted by the armed services and most of the girls were taught cookery and needlework as preparation for a life of domesticity. Despite these features most of my education disallowed any critical discussion of the wider world that myself

and my classmates would soon be moving into. Other than an occasional discussion within say Geography, History or English there was little sense that I was a democratic citizen in the making. This meant no discussion of labour history, feminism, racism, multiculturalism, the peace movement or any of the intellectual questions raised by these particular concerns. There was indeed very little discussion of questions that might be called ethical or moral or that asked us what kinds of people we wished to become. Education as it was practised was about passing exams to gain access to either craft apprenticeships in industry or office work. It did not seem to be about the development of curiosity, asking difficult questions or the wider development of our interests.

However, soon after leaving school I was to encounter a number of sub-cultural (namely punk, soul, Mod and the New Romantics), political (labour movement, feminism and peace) and literary (mainly Camus, Kafka, Orwell and Sartre) concerns that seemed to be asking what was it ethical to become and how I might live a meaningful, passionate and democratic life. In other words this discordant collection of cultures (not all pulling in the same direction) asked questions in a way that I had never encountered in school. Indeed, while at work I was sent on a day-release course and despite my initial sense of excitement was soon to realise that this was less about learning than training. However, this proved to be an important time for me as I was to meet other similarly alienated young people who introduced me to a world of books, music and ideas that I had not previously encountered. Much later, after eventually entering university, I discovered that education could be a place of critical inquiry and questioning in a way that did not seem to be the case in school. By this time I had formulated a number of questions that I wished to pursue and was lucky enough to find a university that offered the literary, philosophical, sociological and historical courses that might enable me to find some answers. Later, when thinking back over my life, I was struck by the difference between my early formal stages of learning and the sense of cultural vibrancy I had encountered within at least some aspects of politics, popular culture, literature and later higher education.

Since this period I have now become a parent. My children's education is of course quite different from my own, mainly due to the new class position I now occupy. Theirs is a world of books, new technology, school league tables, multi-channel television and numerous after-school clubs that is quite alien to the world in which I grew up. There is no sense that they are being prepared for life on a factory floor and the school seems genuinely interested in them as people. Yet if my early education was to prepare me for the labour market I am not sure that my children's education is any different. There is a deep concern amongst educationalists that the current focus upon passing exams, teaching to test and increasingly instrumental modes of learning is failing to develop the educational capacities of citizens in the making. In other words, if I 'learned to labour' I sometimes think that my children are being trained for the knowledge economy. If the modern

economy no longer requires unskilled and skilled labour in the same ways that it did in the past the new requirements of the knowledge economy are for workers who have mastered basic literacy and keyboard skills, who are positive, hard-working, and whose idea of the good society is successful upward mobility. Here I would like to ask if these are the kinds of educated citizens required by a modern democracy? Are there indeed dangers in the context of the 'knowledge society' of education losing its value, as the economy mostly requires useful knowledge? If children are increasingly being taught to test (as seems to be the case) what happens to the ability to be able to think more independently and develop your own passions? If the needs of the economy continue to be the defining feature within education what space is there for what might be called a citizen's education? Educational institutions are undoubtedly places of learning, but which identities are made available to us there, and how important are they in making us into the kinds of people we later go on to become? To what extent is it legitimate to use education as a means of training for the labour market, and what should be the limits of this imperative? To what extent should education simply be about itself, and what are its responsibilities to the wider community? These are just some of the questions I aim to investigate within this book.

Obviously these are important questions for any society that calls itself democratic. If by democracy we mean a society that simply allows for competition between different points of view then this probably only makes minimal claims on the organisation of education. However, if what we mean by democracy includes the possibility of participation, listening, the capacity to change your mind or at least form an opinion, cultural inclusion and a society where we can deliberate on roughly equal terms then this would suggest certain forms of education rather than others. Further, if these ideas are to be meaningful then this would mean the development of an approach to education where young people were not simply 'objects' to be weighed and measured, but where they were subjects in their own right with their own ideas and passions. Here my argument is not that education should have no link to the economy (this does not seem to be possible) but that the primary driving force of education should be one that gives a priority to learning and not training, freedom and not prescription, and initiative and not conformity. Democracy in this argument is a practice as much for the classroom as it is for more public encounters. These are not new ideas. As we shall see, that democracy relies upon the critical and thoughtful nature of its citizens to govern both themselves as well as the societies in which they live lies at the heart of a long tradition of educated thinking.

However, please note that I have used the term cultural citizenship rather than democracy. This is because the idea of democracy is often associated with different systems of representation and voting procedures. By adopting the term cultural citizenship I was more concerned to group together a number of different questions that were not simply focused on questions of procedure but also on the development of cultural competencies,

sensibilities and capacities within future and current citizens. In particular, the word 'culture' is important here as a way of signifying the different ways in which we might be said to participate meaningfully and critically within the broader society. It is not by virtue of our humanness or our individuality that we understand our place in the world but this can only be done through a diversity of cultural perspectives that make the world meaningful for us. Here I follow a hermeneutical tradition of argument that suggests there is no human life without the capacity to make meaning. This does not limit the inquiry to a particular view of human nature, and yet it is hard to write on education unless we believe at some level that human beings are capable of learning and of interpreting both their own and others' actions in different ways. As cultural beings then we are always caught in multiple webs of linguistic meaning. Following Clifford Geertz (1973) culture might be thought of as a web of significance spun by human action and interpretation. The task of interpreting meaning does not require us to get inside people's heads, but to understand instead the intersubjective nature of linguistic practices. We have no choice but to try and make sense of our lives in the context of the cultures in which we live. We are all, following Paul Ricoeur (1991), compelled to create a sense of our selves through particular cultural stories or narratives. How we construct and remake these narratives depends upon the meeting point between our agency, cultural context and of course wider social structures. For Ricoeur in order to construct ourselves we need access to different traditions of thinking so that they might be remade or indeed re-interpreted in the context of our own lives. How we create our lives and fashion our narratives has both a poetic and a moral component. Refusing the separation between morality and aesthetics, Ricoeur argues we are responsible for the choices we make in fashioning our personal narratives and how these then become connected to the wider community (Wall 2005).

These arguments provide one of the ways we can link questions of 'culture' to those of 'citizenship'. By 'citizenship' I mean our connection to particular social and cultural locations, the possibility of a participatory involvement in shaping our society and our understanding of our rights and responsibilities. Much has been made of the idea of citizenship in recent times, and here I would seek to defend an active, republican concept that is not neutral about the role of the citizen in democratically participating in the common life of our society. The idea of cultural citizenship therefore seeks to look at the diversity of competencies and capacities that need to be available within a democratic context to enable acts of public criticism, compassion or concern. My sense in this respect is that the cultural realm remains absolutely central to the ways in which the vast majority of people understand their role within the wider community. Returning to Ricoeur, how we choose to live our lives in relation to global injustices or oppressive systems of domination inevitably invites us to be creative agents. We can seek to reshape larger and more collective narratives as well as those connected to our personal lives. This might involve us defending the difference

of the Other, arguing for justice, seeking to democratise powerful social structures, making a stand for what we believe to be 'right' or indeed living lives of service in respect of the wider community. The creativity of our shared moral lives requires not only a capacity to challenge the collective wisdom on particular issues, but also a broader understanding of the different human possibilities and a diversity of ways of living our individual as well as collective lives. Education as we shall see remains a vital resource in connecting questions of culture to those of citizenship.

We live in a time of transition. The relatively recent arrival of a consumer, technologically literate, diverse and largely politically disengaged society is changing the ways in which citizenship is experienced by the vast majority of the population. However, we also live in a world that is becoming more multicultural, unequal, global and environmentally uncertain. This means that the way we think about education needs to change, but that it also needs to do so by re-engaging with different cultural traditions and not by simply starting again. More specifically I would seek to return to the traditions of liberal socialism. This is for two main reasons. First, liberal socialist arguments recognise there is no 'Big Bang' theory of emancipation and remain as sceptical of authoritarianism on the political Right as the political Left. If liberal socialism historically sought to combine the values of liberty and equality it did so without believing in utopian solutions to social and cultural problems. Instead there is a concern that much of the Marxist Left are as authoritarian as the capitalist society they justifiably seek to criticise. Rather than arguing for a revolutionary transformation of society liberal socialism has sought to promote the idea of a common civic culture that is both relatively egalitarian and liberal. Historically this has meant support for an interventionist state that sought to contain the market, address inequality and protect civil rights. And yet the political Right sought to remake mass education in the interests of employers while preserving an elite education for the privileged. R.H. Tawney (1961) argued that capitalist society in this respect seeks to emphasise rights as opposed to responsibilities. This ultimately lead to a destructive form of individualism that simply ends with the right to secure for yourself a privileged education and high levels of personal consumption. Tawney, by reconnecting rights and responsibilities, sought to emphasise a sense of obligation to the wider community. Such a move, as we shall see, opens up the possibility of citizens not only being offered relatively equal opportunities, but also an educated culture that could enable them to develop themselves as cultural beings and not simply as raw material for 'use' in the workplace. The demand that ordinary working-class people have the right to an intellectual life and that the education system should prepare its citizens for a life within a shared community has had a long history within liberal socialist thinking. The historian Jonathan Rose (2001) has demonstrated how within the working class during the twentieth century before the rise of the mass media there existed a culture of mutual improvement based less upon reading radical texts, and more upon understanding complex works of literature. This history

often found expression within the labour movement. Here many trade-union leaders spoke of their sense of exclusion from opportunities to engage in a culture of learning. What I continue to find valuable about the liberal socialist tradition is the idea that education should not be reduced to the needs of the economy and its suspicion of authoritarianism of all kinds. As Tawney (1964) was to argue, the liberal socialist critique of capitalism was just as concerned with questions of inequality and poverty as it was with the possibility of developing a new politics of citizenship. This new politics was concerned about the effects of atomised individualism and sought to connect rights, community and responsibility. Tawney recognised that economic power could undermine democracy and the quality of civic life by converting education into a means of training for the economy. Tawney (1964: 168) argued that the struggle for a democratic society promoted the argument that if 'to lead a life worthy of human beings is confined to a minority, what is commonly called freedom would more properly be described as privilege'. For Tawney a community that made life worth living would need to be built upon a sense of mutual responsibility and the freedom to develop the self. Here the question that begins to emerge is what a democratic as well as a genuinely inclusive education might be like. However, as I have indicated, there is no simple return to these ideas; instead, as we shall see, the idea of a critical and inclusive education produces a number of different problems and questions.

Liberty, equality and culture

While my own personal educational story began in the 1960s I want to return for a short while to the 1860s. Here I shall investigate a dispute between two English liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century. The 1860s no less than the 1960s were a key decade in respect of the argument of this book. Mathew Arnold and John Stuart Mill shared a good deal (amongst other things a love of the work of Marcus Aurelius) in that they both argued for the progressive potential of a democratic as opposed to an aristocratically dominated society. Further they sought to identify the appropriate culture for a democratic society. Both were formed by an Enlightenment-based culture that valued freedom of thought rather than the imposition of authority, as well as the idea of equal rights and democratic rule (Todorov 2009). And both were seeking to argue how these principles might best be established through education and political culture more generally. Democracy they each agreed would need to be different from an aristocratic society where the ability to rule was a matter of status and rank rather than discussion and persuasion. Arnold and Mill continue to remain important not only for the ways in which they chose to answer these questions but also because of the huge influence that they had in terms of defining the terms of the debate. They both asked what kind of shared culture was appropriate for democracy, and what role might the

education system have in helping to shape our shared understandings? Their writing during this period seeks to answer the question of what it means to be a moral self and how we might live as democratic citizens. There are of course numerous other places to begin here, and yet it seems to me that Mill and Arnold connected questions of culture and democracy in ways that continue to have relevance for the ways we understand these debates. Further, both predated and directly influenced the work of Richard Hoggart, R.H. Tawney, John Dewey, Raymond Williams and others. Indeed I would also take George Orwell to be a direct inheritor of much of the dialogue that takes place between Mill and Arnold. Orwell (1999), who is perhaps best remembered for his nightmare vision of the Big Brother society of state control, remained a liberal socialist. For him the state was charged with the responsibility to introduce the public to an intellectual culture based upon free debate and discussion. Freedom was not simply preserved by maintaining abstract rights but had to be placed within everyone's grasp by introducing people to new ideas and concepts. For Orwell (2001) this could only conceivably be delivered by a liberal state that did not seek to press the mass working-class population into a vocational education, but instead introduced them to ideas of debate, argument and disagreement. This could, only be ensured as we shall see, by encouraging those within education to participate within democratically inspired conversations.

Central to both Mill and Arnold's concerns was how education could be related to ideas of freedom. What is crucial within a democratic context is that individuals are 'free' to become themselves, make up their own minds, and follow their own interests and passions. Freedom in the context of a democratic society means something other than what it has come to mean in a market driven and progressively state regulated society. It clearly does not mean rote learning, always offering back what the teacher wishes to hear, training, or indeed selling courses to the public in order to enhance their future earning potential. A life that is worth living instead depends upon citizens who are driven to make up their own minds, who will jealously cling to liberal freedoms and be willing to explore ideas and perspectives that they might initially find strange or threatening. Yet as both Arnold and Mill in their different ways understood how we do this needs to be a matter of careful debate and discussion. And what remains central to this discussion in our own time is a recognition of the centrality of questions of liberty. In this respect, education in a democratic context is primarily concerned with questions of freedom rather than, say, happiness, class mobility or indeed any other value that I would care to mention. Of course what we mean by 'freedom' has to be more precisely described and culturally located. What Arnold and Mill took to be 'freedom' has undoubtedly changed over time. In our society the word 'freedom' is often connected to neoliberal versions of capitalism where it has come to mean the cutting of state welfare, economic individualism, an attack on trade unionism and progressive consumerism (Harvey 2005). However, there continue to exist other definitions of freedom that are concerned with the possible extension

of liberty of thought and more autonomous ways of living for everyone. This has over the course of the twentieth century become a staple of democratic socialist and liberal modes of thinking. George Orwell (2001) argued that it was only when socialism and liberalism were combined that we could talk of freedom in any meaningful sense. That is, 'freedom' would not be meaningful if we feared unemployment, if work was insecure, if citizens were treated unequally and had inadequate resources to live a meaningful life. The problem was that working-class people often desired economic security while it was intellectuals who wanted individual liberty. It was the project of liberal socialism to bring these two aspects together. The coming together of a social state, an equal society and liberal freedoms would convert the idea of freedom into a value that was lived rather than simply remaining an abstract idea. While neither Mill nor Arnold took these arguments as far as Orwell they would both have resisted the idea that freedom was simply market freedom.

Like Orwell, Mathew Arnold recognised that the state had a crucial role to play in the formation of democratic citizens. Arnold's trip to post-revolutionary France had convinced him of the desirability of state-run schools to lift the level of civilisation for the majority. Arnold (1861/1970) had noted how the French state-run schools had successfully raised the cultural standards of both the middle and lower classes. In the liberal culture of the time these views were not popular as the state was seen as acting as a device that restricted personal forms of liberty. This was perhaps most evident in the view of John Stuart Mill (1859/1974: 59), who perceived the central struggle of the age as between 'liberty and authority'. The key principle at stake in his work was to establish the culture of liberty as the culture that could best serve the wider democratic society. For Mill, state-run schools could not be trusted not to impose uniformity upon private individuals (Collini 1998). It was the despotic power of the state that most liberals of this period feared would undermine a shared culture of liberty. Without a shared culture of active citizens who were capable of forming their own views and unafraid of being out of step with mass opinion there could be no democracy worthy of the name (Ginsborg 2008: 45). Hence, while Mill focused upon the repressive power of the state, he was also concerned about how the forming of mass opinion could become a kind of external coercion (Ryan 1970). Such was Mill's concern to defend personal liberty he defended the 'right' of parents to choose an education that was best suited to their children and upheld the view that 'attempts by the state to bias the conclusions of its citizens on disputed subjects are evil' (Mill 1859/1974: 178). This meant that he opposed state education and thought it should for the most part remain in privately run institutions, although these were in need of considerable reform.

Mill's (1873/1924: 25) account of his own education makes for interesting reading in this context as he describes how his father impressed upon him an educated culture of logic, Greek and Latin, 'making his opinion the ultimate standard'. Mill identified his own education as being that which

we might deem appropriate for the upright and public-orientated figure that he was to become. Mill, however, also talked engagingly about his own self-education after a period of formal instruction. He describes a moment of self-revelation when he read Jeremy Bentham's work on utilitarianism and later shows how his ability to read and reflect helped him find his way out of a depressive state. Mill realised that despite his work as a liberal reformer and public moralist his own education had provided him with certain analytical qualities and because of this he had little personal sense of sympathy and connection with others. Mill (1873/1924) admits that this left him with 'no delight in virtue, or the general good'. He went on to conclude, as he eventually found his way out of his depression, that he had previously underestimated 'the internal culture of the individual' (1873/1924: 121). Eventually he was to find in Romantic poetry (especially Wordsworth) the capacity to both connect with his own inner feelings and to experience an acute sympathy with others as well as nature. Notable here is the role that educated culture plays not only within public morality, but also in helping us make sense of our own inner world. Despite Mill's depressive state what becomes obvious in reading his work is the importance he places on personal forms of liberty. There is no sense that Romantic poetry is for everyone, but more that in the context of his own journey and struggle that this moment held particular significance. Indeed what is notable is that Mill was able to engage in the practice of self-education that values the constant search for ideas and different perspectives that would enable him to make sense of his own time. In this Mill's own story suggests that once he was able to free himself from his father's dominance he could authentically pose himself complex problems and questions that did not necessarily have any easy answers. Mill's stand for the liberty of the individual can work at both a personal as well as a social and cultural level where we are free to ask our own questions and discover our own solutions.

Raymond Williams (1958: 81) commenting on Mill's personal crisis objects that human feelings are too quickly relegated to the private sphere by Mill's account. Mill's impersonal insistence on a culture of individualised liberty leaves too much out of the public content of education. Here Williams makes the point that a public education requires more than simply instruction in the use of impersonal reason but also the cultivation of human feelings and compassion that should not be too quickly relegated to the private realm. Williams is here suggesting that public education is as much a matter of cognitive ability as it is of the development of different emotional capacities. This perhaps brings us to the work of Matthew Arnold who sought the public cultivation of the self through artistic, poetic and philosophical forms of expression.

Indeed when Matthew Arnold read Mill's great work on liberty he was duly impressed and found a great deal to agree upon. However, Arnold's notion of 'liberty' differed from that held by Mill. Arnold (1869/1970) was critical of the prevailing liberal thought of his time as it propagated a culture

of simply doing as one pleased. For Arnold this potentially led not only to poor behaviour that would often end in violence, but also to an indifference on matters of culture. As a classicist and a school inspector he argued that the English obsession with liberty as the primary value was preventing the development of a more democratic model of education that was concerned with the development of the self. This could only be achieved through the state sector given the inadequacy of the private institutions that currently governed the provision of education for the middle classes. As Arnold argued (1869/1970: 203), 'I am a Liberal, yet I am a Liberal tempered by experience, reflexion, and renouncement, and I am, above all, a believer in culture'. Culture for Arnold aimed at human perfection, the development of the self and the transformation of our identities. This was being undermined by the faith that many liberals placed in the free market, factory machinery and material progress. Industrial capitalism was no lover of culture, preferring to focus instead upon wealth and material success. A culture that valued liberty above everything else was readily translated into the individual right to remain ignorant. Culture, for Arnold (1869/1970: 219), should be valued above everything else and confront us with the fact that 'the truth of beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection'. Culture suggests citizens move beyond a celebration of liberty for its own sake in order to fashion themselves as more complex and sympathetic beings. Indeed it is a means of bridging the divide between social classes and of producing a society of cultivated selves. These cultured selves require access to education so we can engage in the development of 'our best self' that can only emerge once we recognise not liberty but the value of 'service' in producing 'perfected humanity' (Arnold 1869/1970: 291). Here we perhaps need to note that by using terms such as 'perfection' or more often 'sweetness and light' Arnold seeks to make a stand for the role of culture in the exploration of the self. Culture produces an educative self that offers the possibility of developing both aesthetic and moral selves.

However, as Williams (1958: 133) points out, Arnold in his enthusiasm to bring educated culture to the vast majority of the people ended up endorsing an authoritarian model of education. Here the state was granted the power to define what was meant by perfection and to offer a form of civilisation that would educate the masses. This was, as Williams implies, less a democratic model of education than the imposition of state control. Raymond Williams is an important figure within this argument as he admires Mill's emphasis upon the idea of the liberty of the individual (if not the split between an instrumental public ethics and a private realm of feeling) and Arnold's emphasis upon the critical potential of culture (if not his authoritarianism). Indeed both could be said to be defending the idea of the cultivated liberal individual against what might be called a fear of the masses. Behind Mill's insistent defence of liberal individuality as opposed to the conformity of mass opinion and Arnold's desire to bring the culture of civilisation to ordinary people lies 'the unfitness of the masses – they will riot, they will strike they will not take an interest – such is the nature of

that brute' (Williams 1958: 303). The fear here was that the coming culture of democracy would end in Mill's case in crushing individuality and in Arnold's in becoming indifferent to questions of cultural value. Instead Williams more optimistically sees within the culture of democracy the possibility of fashioning new identities and selves, and above all of reorganising the dominant relations of cultural transmission in such a way that did not simply reaffirm the atomised individualism of Mill or the authoritarianism of Arnold. This is not to argue that Mill and Arnold's fears were unreasonable, but that within a democracy new forms of authority and different kinds of educative relationship are required. A genuinely democratic education, Williams reasons, would need to steer clear of the idea that it was the state's role simply to impose civilisation upon its citizens and would need to respect the different levels of engagement offered by citizens. For Williams (1958: 304) education was involved in reciprocal human relationships and had the status of an 'offering' that was 'not an attempt to dominate, but to communicate, to achieve reception and response'.

Democratic education and liberal socialism

A democratic culture, argues Williams (1958: 305), should seek to reaffirm what he calls an 'equality of being'. Such a culture is one that seeks to build mutually respectful relations between teachers and the taught. This only becomes possible if intellectuals give up notions of simply imposing culture upon 'the masses' and admit that learning is not simply the realisation of the sovereign individual but more often than not involves the formation of complex human relationships. Education should be (as Mill's own experience bears out) less an instruction, and more what Williams (1958: 304) refers to as a 'living response'. This means that a democratic version of education needs to be open to the process of interpretation and complex engagements that is brought by teachers and the taught within learning relationships. Rather than seeing citizens as abstract individuals (as is characteristic of much of Mill's thought), Williams argues we need to be able to appreciate the diversity of ways whereby citizens can become themselves and form attachments to different communities. Here Williams (1958: 318) argues that educative culture should indeed seek to foster a sense of service or duty towards the community in a way that does not find a place within the dominant culture of individualism. Such a view would be outlawed by Mill given that it offers a particular way of life as being superior to another. However, we might question here whether education can actually be as neutral as Mill suggests. As Amy Gutman (1987) argues the view that the state has no right to bias in terms of suggesting how citizens should live has been used by liberals to defend the notion of 'neutrality' within education. In this not only schools but also parents must be warned against passing on their particular prejudices. However, such a view is quite impractical and probably impossible. Democratic states cannot really afford to be neutral about how citizens choose to live. Such states need to foster a sense

of connection to 'our' histories, cultures and of course democratic ways of life that are shared in common with others. This is not done because of a sense of innate superiority but simply because citizens are unlikely to feel a basic sense of duty otherwise. This of course does not mean that the state should be allowed to 'impose' particular understandings of historically significant public events as these should be open to a number of competing interpretations. This would suggest that not only do citizens need equal access to a high-quality education, but that citizens also need to form an understanding of history, politics and the culture of the nation and its relationship with the wider world. Here a liberal socialist argument would need to maintain that all members of the community need to make sense of the national story. A shared culture of democratic citizenship requires access to a number of competing narratives in respect of who 'we' are now and who 'we' used to be in the past.

Further, a liberal socialist view of education (as I indicated earlier) does not simply emphasise individual rights but also stresses the responsibilities citizens owe to the wider community. As Williams (1958: 317) points out ideas of service towards the community (without which education as a public service is hard to imagine) have been explicitly fostered historically by labour and socialist movements. In these the idea of service offers an alternative to the metaphor of 'the ladder' focusing upon individual escape routes. Instead of a culture of upward mobility, Williams (1958: 318) prefers the idea of 'common betterment' as it seeks to develop a commitment towards the education and development of others. Without a sense of duty to the community we are simply left with liberal individualism that under a dominance to the market can easily become translated into a form of indifference towards the suffering and unmet needs of others. Liberty is the primary value for democratic forms of education but it is not the only value. Thus we can note it seems perfectly legitimate for democratic states to foster a sense of connection to their own institutions and histories, but not in such a way that suggests that they can't be revised or interpreted differently.

While Arnold's writing still has much to offer it can seem anachronistic in the twenty-first century. While I would not wish to defend notions such as the perfection of the self or indeed the central importance of a classical education what I still find germane in Arnold's writing is his cosmopolitan attachment to European culture, the idea that the state through the development of public schools could be charged with the civilisation of the community and the notion that we can seek to transform ourselves through education. Further, I also think that Arnold correctly identifies some of the major flaws within mainstream liberal thinking. Namely that the liberal championing of the culture of individual liberty is connected to the dominance of the economic system over the cultural sphere. Arnold correctly identifies that by instilling the culture of liberty as our ultimate value there is nothing to prevent citizens becoming indifferent, disengaged and of course under-educated. As educators we need to remember that students are indeed at liberty to reject our arguments, disagree

with our conclusions and pour scorn over our judgements. Any education that refuses this challenge simply ceases to be worthy of the name.

If we judge the way that Arnold carries this out as not really appropriate for contemporary democratic societies this is hardly surprising. More recently Martin Ryle and Kate Soper (2002) sought to defend an Arnoldian definition of literary culture's role in realising the self as opposed to the one-dimensional culture of economic rationality and productivity insisted upon by capitalism. Arnold's work remains critical in the extent to which it cautions about a dominant culture that impresses itself through the fostering of competition, concern for wealth and instant transformation. However, as I have indicated, we need to be careful that it is not only a literary or (in Arnold's case) a classical culture that is capable of producing democratic forms of self-reflection and transformation. Much popular culture is also capable of taking on this role as well. Here I would suggest that we abandon the argument that a particular class of cultural objects better serves the process of producing critical forms of reflection than others. In this much recent work in cultural studies has wisely cautioned against making judgements about aspects of culture without carefully considering contexts of production, meaning and reception (Stevenson 2006). This discussion need not end in relativism. It's just that as democratic educators we are sometimes best placed when discussing reality television or the culture of celebrity rather than more 'worthy' cultural matters.

Charles Taylor (1979) hints at how this might be achieved when he argues that if mainstream liberalism offers a culture of individualism then because we are moral beings we require access to cultures of self-realisation. In other words, not only do we need space to make up our own minds, we also need to hear counter-arguments and viewpoints that at first may seem to be unreasonable. At this point I would add that we must grasp a sense of our own overlapping histories and traditions as well as a sense of how our own lives are linked to citizens of the past and future. Ultimately this is a liberal culture where we should all be granted adequate opportunity to become ourselves without the community seeking to manufacture us into being certain kinds of subjects. However, we will not be able to realise ourselves without the wider community making available to us a sense of our own 'living traditions' (MacIntyre 1981: 223). A genuinely liberal, democratic and moral education would need to hold in check vocationalism, the buying of educational privilege and attempts to impose ethical, political or religious doctrines. This is not a defence of liberal agnosticism, but offering instead an education that is suitable for democratic citizens. Further, such an education would need to offer students the possibility of being the producers of knowledge and a complex understanding of themselves and their role in the world as citizens of the future. As we shall see, the provision of a critical and public education that allows citizens to become the kind of beings they wish to become is currently under threat. If education is thereby being reduced to a means to gain access to the labour market then the traditional liberal

model that (in theory at least) allowed students the possibility of self and democratic exploration is in crisis. As Raymond Williams (1965: 168) argues:

Instead of the sorting and grading process natural to a class society, we should regard human learning in a genuinely open way, as the most valuable resource we have and therefore as something which we should have to produce a special argument to limit rather than a special argument to extend.

Williams' own radicalness lay in his insistence that a liberal culture of learning was for everyone and not just the middle classes. This argument necessarily pushes liberalism in a more social direction. A mass democracy, as Arnold was ahead of Mill in realising, requires democratic institutions that are capable of addressing questions of human welfare, learning and development. An educated and participatory democracy requires an education system that is both high quality and able to offer everyone the possibility of critical forms of reflection. League tables, standardised curriculums, teaching to test and the conversion of education into exam-passing factories do not best serve this purpose. Mathew Arnold himself was critical in his own time of proposals to pay schools according to their results and thereby risk narrowing the curriculum. Here a form of education that imposes on children a cultural of aspiration or narrow ideas of what it means to lead a successful life does not best serve a democratic society. Instead a genuinely liberal education would need to link education to knowledge about our diverse traditions, an understanding of the increasing complex global world in which we live, our ecological vulnerability, issues of cultural difference, questions of justice and complex moral problems. This could not of course discount the progress of people who simply want to live overtly consumerist lifestyles, but it might be able to offer other possibilities as well. Education, as I have insisted thus far, is intimately connected with questions of freedom and will continue to be so in the future regardless of how our dominant institutions are designed and developed. As we shall see over the course of this book, these ideals need to be radically reinterpreted in order to meet the complex challenges of the present.