
Democracy & Education

Challenging Freedom Neoliberalism and the Erosion of Democratic Education

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Abstract

Goodlad, et al. (2002) rightly point out that a culture can either resist or support change. Schein's (2010) model of culture indicates observable behaviors of a culture can be explained by exposing underlying shared values and basic assumptions that give meaning to the performance. Yet culture is many-faceted and complex. So Schein advised a clinical approach to cultural analysis that calls for identifying a problem in order to focus the analysis on relevant values and assumptions. This project starts with two assumptions: (1) The erosion of democratic education is a visible overt behavior of the current U.S. macro-culture, and (2) this is a problem. I intend to use this problem of the erosion of democratic education as a basis for a cultural analysis. My essential question is: What are the deeper, collective, competing value commitments and shared basic assumptions that hinder efforts for democratic education? The purpose of this paper is to start a conversation about particular cultural limitations and barriers we are working with as we move toward recapturing the civic mission of education.

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PRODUCING ECONOMIC GROWTH does not mean producing democracy" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 15). Yet the discourse of United States' education today is dominated by economic rationality with scant attention paid to the democratic purposes and civic functions of education. It is the aim of this paper to explore the current marginalization of democratic education by interpreting this phenomenon as reflecting one competing value and three basic philosophical assumptions that are shared by a majority in our culture. I conduct this interpretive analysis using Schein's (2010) model of culture and his method of cultural, clinical analysis.

Schein's Method: A Cultural, Clinical Analysis

Imagine you are at a card table, and a dealer deals you five cards. She then states two rules for the game:

1. Ranking of hands is (lowest to highest) one of a kind, two of a kind, et cetera, with aces high (no straights or flushes).
2. You can exchange zero to five cards once.

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When I conduct this game with volunteers, no one ever comes up with four aces and a king in one hand. Why? The most likely answer is “Because the probability of getting that hand is extremely low.” I then ask, “Why did not anyone pick up the deck of cards and filter through them to find the aces and the king when conducting the exchange of cards? After all, nothing in the rules specifies or prohibits *how* to go about exchanging the cards.”

This little demonstration illustrates one way to think about culture. In the case above, we participate in the card-playing culture. Many of us have played enough games of cards that we now play with an implicit set of rules, in this case rules that determine the way we exchange cards. These rules have been ingrained into our performance and are largely subconscious. Thus, one way to define culture is: an implicit set of rules that govern behavior. Consistent with this description of culture is the simple yet complete one offered by Quinn (1992): “A culture is a people enacting a story” (p. 41). Both of these views of culture imply that the story (the implicit set of rules) supplies the meaning to the action, and as such is the key to the performance.

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) rightly point out that a culture can either resist or support change. Kegan and Lahey (2009) explain more specifically that resistance to change can take the form such that even if groups ostensibly commit to a goal they may still participate in behavior that is counterproductive because of deeper competing commitments and assumptions. These deeper commitments and assumptions, the implicit rules or story that is being enacted, can either aid the change process or hinder it.

Similarly, Schein (2010) identifies three levels of culture (see Figure 1). On the surface are *artifacts*: including observable overt behaviors, the actual performances of a group. In the case of our card-playing culture, the artifact is the observable behavior of exactly how the cards are exchanged, such as putting three cards down on the table and waiting for the dealer to disseminate the cards from the top of the deck to the player. Beneath the artifacts are *espoused values*: These are the stated goals and philosophies, the public statements of identity and what is considered right and good. For example, perhaps the card players value fairness and not cheating. Thus, values are part of the story and give meaning to the ostensible behaviors. Finally, more deeply are *basic underlying assumptions*: the taken-for-granted shared beliefs. These are also part of the story that is enacted. For the given example, most likely the person exchanging cards has the core belief that it would be cheating if she or he picked up the deck to look at the cards.

The point of Quinn’s (1992) definition, Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) analysis, and Schein’s (2010) model of culture is that observable behaviors can be explained and understood by exposing the relevant underlying values and basic assumptions.

As asserted, culture is important because its power may either help or hinder change. Yet “fish discover water last.” It is hard to uncover our shared basic assumptions because they have become taken for granted and are operating outside of our awareness. Furthermore, Schein (2010) notes, cultures are complex and

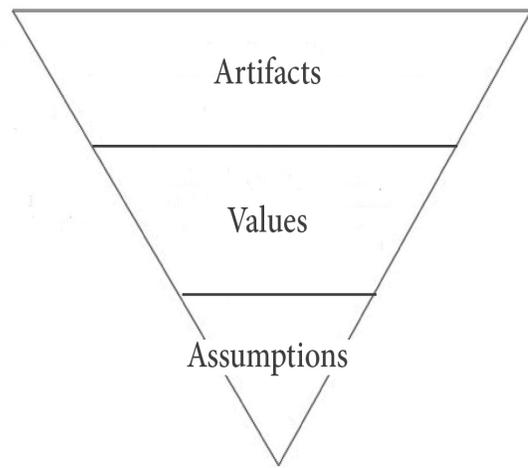


Figure 1. Schein’s 3 Levels of Culture (n.d.)

involve many dimensions of assumptions. We cannot uncover all of the assumptions and dimensions of culture concurrently. For this reason, Schein (2010) does *not* propose a more ethnographic approach of attempting to describe the whole of a culture but rather a clinical approach that looks at a specific problem to be addressed—to evaluate the degree to which basic assumptions aid or hinder some strategic purpose that the group is concerned about (p. 323). By focusing on a problem, we can start the interpretive process of uncovering values and assumptions that relate to that specific problem so they may be brought to our awareness and possibly challenged. A problem to be addressed is both a reason for the cultural analysis and a focus for a specific set of assumptions to be revealed. Thus a clinical cultural analysis begins by identifying a problem that a group is concerned about and then uncovering the underlying story—the shared values and assumptions that are relevant to the issue at hand.

The Problem: The Erosion of Democratic Education

Democratic aims in United States education are marginalized. Consider this artifact of our culture as summarized by Engel (2000).

Current-day discussions about the future of education are conducted almost entirely [emphasis added] in the language of the free market: individual achievement, competition, choice, economic growth, and national security—with only occasional lip service being given to egalitarian and democratic goals . . . market ideology’s virtually unchallenged dominance threatens the very existence of public education as a social institution, because its logic ultimately eliminates any justification for collective and democratic control of the schools. (pp. 3–6)

When Rod Paige (former secretary of education, Republican) and Senator Tom Daschle (Democrat) debated in 2006, not once were the words *democracy* or *citizenship* uttered (NCLB debate, 2006). Economic rationality has taken over. As Spring (2008) observes, “In fact, by the twenty-first century most Americans seemed to accept business as a natural partner in the control of

schools,” and this “has made economic goals the number-one priority of public schools” (p. 32). A cursory look at media reports and political discussions reveals that school officials and politicians justify “investments” in education as a way to compete in the global economy and as a way to grow a local economy to develop a larger tax base. The banality of headlines such as “Schools a Strong Investment, Universities to Tell Law Makers” (Kurtzman, 2005, p. A1) and “Award Lauds Efforts to Prepare Students for Workforce” (Wright, 2005, p. A12) corroborate and provide verity to Engel’s depiction of the marginalization, if not complete lack, of democratic discourse in education. The value, role, and goal of schooling are not the building of a strong democratic community but, rather, the fostering individuals who can engage effectively and individually in economic pursuits. And it is to this goal that accountability measures aim.

Of course, the history of American public schooling is rife with contestation over schooling’s goals, representing conflicting values, ideals, and beliefs. It is debatable whether United States public education ever held a central role for its civic purposes. Callahan’s (1964) *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, Haley’s (2006) *The Factory System*, and many other analyses have shown capitalistic values often take precedence over democratic ones in our system of schooling. Yet our current era is especially troublesome because whatever discursive space for democratic purposes of education existed beforehand have become scarily marginalized.

Thus, I start with two assumptions: (1) The erosion of the civic purposes and aims of public education is a visible overt behavior (i.e., artifact) of the current U.S. macro-culture (see Figure 2), and (2) this is a problem. Under Schein’s (2010) model and clinical cultural analysis method, the essential question becomes: What are the deeper, collective, competing value commitments and shared basic assumptions that conflict with and hinder efforts toward a more central role for democratic education?

I propose one key value and three shared basic assumptions that help give meaning to our macro-culture’s behavior of the marginalization of democratic education. I do this so we can at least recognize the cultural limitations and barriers we are working with and potentially challenge them as a way of recapturing a civic mission of education.

Neoliberal Freedom versus Democratic Education

What Engel (2000) called “market ideology” and Dewey (1935) coined “economic liberalism” (p. 18), can also be known as

neoliberalism.¹ Neoliberal philosophy is rooted in the general tradition of liberalism. The terms *liberal* and *liberalism* as a particular social philosophy appeared at the beginning of the 19th century, yet the ideas they refer to go back as far as ancient Greece (p. 15). This liberalism began as a response to the oppressiveness of the tyrannical governments, as articulated by Locke in 1688 (p. 15). It was liberalism’s original goal to free the individual from those oppressive states, including religious and economic hierarchies. From this common ground sprung two different schools of thought as to how to achieve that goal. “American liberalism involves both a laissez-faire theme that maximizes individual liberties and a social welfare theme that encompasses principles of equality of opportunity and justice” (Knight Abowitz, 2000, p.24). The social welfare theme Knight Abowitz(2000) is speaking of comes from a utilitarian concern for increasing the greatest amount of good as expressed by 19th-century Benthamites (Dewey, 1935, p. 19). Accordingly, that strand of American liberalism is known as utilitarian liberalism.

Neoliberalism blossomed from the laissez-faire strand of liberalism. Hayek (1960) is the oft-cited father of neoliberalism, and it was his book *The Constitution of Liberty* that Margaret Thatcher slammed down on a podium while proclaiming, “This is our Bible!” (Ranelagh, 1991, p. ix). In this book Hayek contributes a quintessential representation of neoliberalism, including the primacy of the value of a particular notion of freedom. Thinkers such as Friedman have imported his ideas to America, where they have found fertile soil and taken root (Friedman, 1962). But it is Hayek’s (1960) formulation and articulation of “freedom,”² the clarity and detail of his philosophical language in *The Constitution of Liberty*, which make his expressions the ones I will use to describe neoliberalism, the neoliberal version of freedom, and the problem it creates for democratic education.

One cautionary note must be made clear: I am not arguing that Hayek’s philosophical language *causes* our culture to make sense of freedom in a particular way, for it is equally likely he merely articulates what was already happening. This is not to deny that philosophical articulations may instigate new directions. I simply wish to state that I am not offering a causal explanation for current cultural discourses of freedom, but rather using Hayek’s language to represent how a main strand within our shared cultural identity makes sense of freedom and why this account of liberty is so appealing to that identity.

1 In other words, I am equating laissez-faire economic liberalism with market ideology and neoliberalism.

2 I agree with Hayek (1960) that there is no useful distinction between liberty and freedom; hence I will use the terms interchangeably (p. 421).



Figure 2. Artifact of Current U.S. Culture

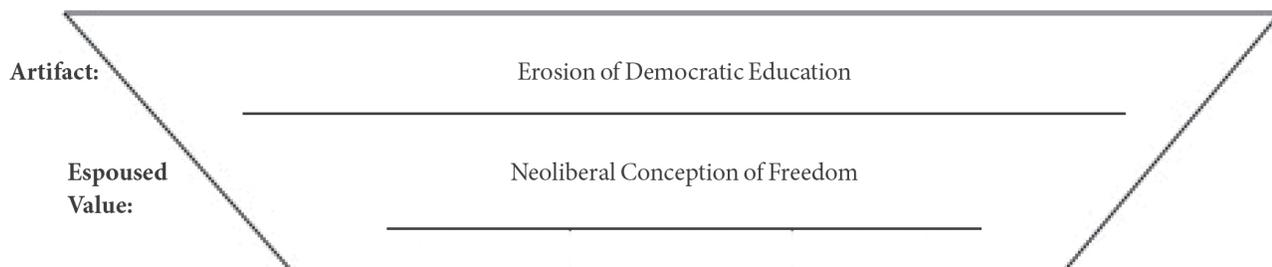


Figure 3. Shared Underlying Value

Hayek's clarity is revealed promptly on the first page of the first chapter in his seminal work: "The state in which a man is *not subject to coercion by the arbitrary will of another or others* [emphasis added] is often distinguished as 'individual' or 'personal' freedom, and it is in this sense that we are using the word 'freedom'" (p. 6). This definition's essences are twofold: (1) Freedom is defined negatively (i.e., as "freedom from"), and (2) it is freedom from "coercion of the arbitrary will of another or others." So, Hayek persuasively defines *liberty* as the *individual* being free from infringements from other people, whether collectively or individually. As such, a primary aim of liberty is to protect the individual from infringement by other people and the social, public sphere.

It is important to note that Hayek's (1960) neoliberalism is congruent with the utilitarian strand of liberalism in the sense that it still seeks the same goal of maximizing the greatest good. Hayek sincerely believed he was charting a path toward the greater good and social progress (see pp. 39–53). Yet for him, the path to social progress is undesigned, individual pursuit of private interests and goods. This is, in part, because those with wealth have the luxury to invent new things, such as the refrigerator, museums, and golf, which will eventually make their way down to the masses. In true trickle-down fashion, Hayek approvingly quotes Tarde: "For the luxuries of today are the necessities of tomorrow" (p. 43). Hence, for Hayek, maximizing individual freedom maximizes the greatest good.

By corollary, concern for the social good is seen as the greatest threat to liberty (p. 262), since to engage in social planning is an infringement on freedom. In other words, the more we try to enhance democratic public goods³ as a way to collectively decide how to live together, the more we detract from the greater good of individual freedom. As Sandel (2005) so deftly summarizes, "Tying freedom to respect for the rights of freely choosing selves dampens old disputes about how to form habits of self-rule" (p. 27). According to Hayek (1960), abandoning concern and action for public goods, including the formation of habits for self-rule, although seemingly callous, is necessary because concern for the public good is contradictory to the greatest good of individual freedom. Thus, a paradox arises in the neoliberal philosophical framework.

3 I use the term *democratic public goods* throughout in the Deweyan sense as collective, associative, and public goods, such as social welfare and robust public spaces. See especially Dewey (1993).

Stated pointedly, neglecting the public good maximizes the public good (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010).

Soder, Goodlad, and McMannon (2001) and a host of others rightly require us as educators to think about the conditions, attitudes, and character required for self-rule. These would be the characteristics that democratic education seeks to foster, such as valuing the common good and open and free communication, among a host of others. As such, this *is* a form of social planning and inhibits individual freedom. Within neoliberal logic, social planning policies, even if for democratic ends like those designed by democratic education proponents, are seen as infringements on freedom.

Thus, the neoliberal conception of freedom creates an ethical dilemma between the two values of freedom and democratic education. Not only is it that both ideals cannot be pursued at the same time, but they are contradictory; achieving one necessarily detracts from attaining the other. At best, a cost/benefit analysis is performed, and the two values are weighed against each other. Most often for the neoliberal, the value of individual freedom trumps that of democratic public goods. So we are left with a situation in which the dominant shared understanding of "freedom" and our shared commitment to this value not only inhibits democratic education, it erodes it.

Three Basic Assumptions of Neoliberal Freedom and the Modern Western Identity

The neoliberal conception of freedom was not just foisted on the American public; its roots lie deep in the cultural developments of the modern Western worldview. Throughout his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Taylor (1989) traces some of those historical and cultural developments that have helped form our modern Western identity.⁴ Although fractious, Taylor asserts there are certain general dominant strands of thought, or shared basic philosophical assumptions, that make up the "inescapable framework" (p. 18) that help us make sense of our world and our life. These beliefs are part of culture, and as part of culture, they are aspects of our personal identities and are learned

4 Taylor (1989) used the term *modern identity*, which I slightly modified to *modern Western identity*. All uses of this term correspond to Taylor's usage.

(Hofstede, 1991, p. 6). They are the stories which are enacted, whether consciously or not.

The success of the neoliberal conception of freedom is partially due to the internal consistency of its specific meaning of freedom with three core assumptions operating powerfully in the background of the modern Western identity: one about the nature of self, one about knowing, and one about the source of morality (see Figure 4). I intend to show how Hayek's (1960) neoliberal notion of freedom is logically consistent with these three core beliefs. As a result, the crux of our problem is that the neoliberal conception of freedom will not be easily supplanted with an alternative notion of freedom because the neoliberal conception coheres with these three deeply entrenched shared philosophical assumptions. I hope to illuminate these beliefs in order to recognize the cultural limitations and barriers they create for democratic education. In conclusion, I also suggest an overall strategy of critiquing and concertedly challenging these assumptions as a way of enhancing prospects for democratic education.

Individualizing Freedom: A Western Conception of Self

Both Hayek's (1960) philosophy of freedom and the modern Western identity share a particular belief about the "self," namely that the self is separate from the society that it inhabits. This is to say that individual selves are seen as ontologically distinct from society but together comprise society. This individualistic sense of self did not arise from a vacuum, but, as Taylor (1989) traces, is enmeshed in the historical and cultural developments of the West.

Recorded Western philosophies of self began with Plato and the ancient Greeks, and in Plato's formation, although all human selves share participation in the form of humanity, there are certain characteristic essences that make me "me," you "you," and every individual self "itself." These eternal essences define each individual soul and are seen as objective; our "selves" are not created through our actions but, rather, discovered.

With Descartes, the Western world moved into modernity, and the separate and distinct self became subjectified. What this subjectification means is that the self "can't be easily conceived as just another piece of the natural world. It is hard for us simply to list souls or minds *alongside* whatever else there is" (Taylor, 1989, p. 175). In Western culture, we do not like to think of ourselves as subject to the causal laws of nature. Our bodies may be part of the external, material, or "noumenal" world, but we would like to think that our souls, and therefore our "selves," are not. The body and soul exist on different ontological planes.

Cartesian dualism's split between the self and the external world, including other selves and society, does not necessarily mean subjectivism. Although it may be true that Cartesian subjectivism posits ontologically distinct selves, the converse is false. Tauber (1992), for example, examines numerous naturalistic accounts of an individual self from the biological discourses of genetics, evolutionary theory, and neuroscience. He traces these naturalistic accounts of the self back to Locke's *tabula rasa* that is objectively in the world being acted upon by sensory data. These reductionist accounts of the self are also consistent with the

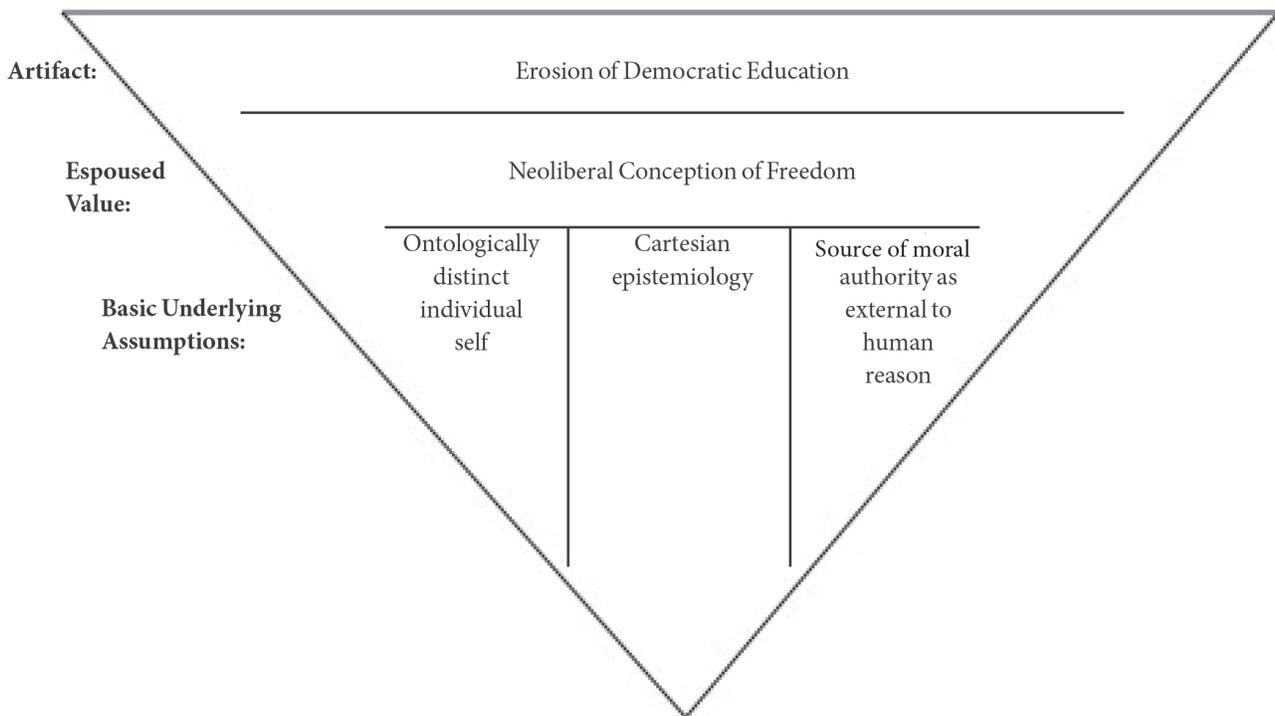


Figure 4. Shared Basic Underlying Assumptions Source of moral authority as external to human reason Cartesian epistemology Ontologically distinct individual self

tradition of liberalism because they still posit an individual, in this case a material individual, as separate from the society that groups of individuals form.

Thus, from Plato's ontologically distinct sense of self arose two developments, both seeing the self as separate and distinct from others: Descartes's subjective self, and Locke's objective, material self. While recognizing these multifarious views of humans and society within the liberal tradition, Adams (1958) highlights the "basic tenets that have been widely accepted which may be taken as defining the position with the first tenet being 'everyone is capable of being a free, responsible person in society'" (p. 214). By using the prepositional phrase "person in society," as opposed to person of society, Adams reflects liberalism's central ontological concept of a dichotomy between the self and society. Either subjectively or objectively, the self is seen as "in society" rather than "of society." These positions do not deny the social aspects of the self but maintain that the social influences of self do not exhaust the entirety of the self; that is, society does not constitute the self in any meaningful way.

And when the self is conceived as *separate* from society there becomes:

[a]n inevitable antagonism between the individual and society. The individual is not taken as someone who is essentially a social being, but rather as an atomistic, vulnerable being who needs to be protected from an abstract entity called "the society." (Silier, 2005, p. 9)

Hayek (1960) derives his conception of individual freedom by means of this central philosophical assumption of an ontologically distinct self, one which is separate from society. And the previously referenced "inevitable antagonism between individual and society" is reflected in Hayek's definition of liberty as freedom from "coercion by the arbitrary will of another or others" (p. 6). Furthermore, this way of conceiving of freedom inevitably leads to a conflict between societal, democratic public goods and individual freedom. As previously shown, establishing individual liberty as the prime value leads to the dismantling of the more robustly civic purposes of public education, namely democratic education.

Naturalizing Freedom: Cartesian Epistemology and the Laws of Liberty

"The average man on the street is a Cartesian" (Searle, 1998).

Searle's (1998) quote refers to an epistemological assumption both within the modern Western identity and within Hayek's (1960) philosophy of freedom. Because the self, as knower, is separate from that which is to be known, the epistemological goal is to "discover" what is "really" real (as opposed to apparent) about the external world's properties and then to make true statements about those properties. This project of seeking truth about the world—that is, Cartesian epistemology or the correspondence theory of truth—has, like our shared ontological assumption of self, deep roots in our history. And it is the Cartesian notion of knowledge, as opposed to, say, feminist epistemologies or pragmatism, which is dominant in our culture today.

The correspondence theory of truth is evident in Hayek's (1960) philosophy of freedom as well. He recognizes his goal as contributing to the "science of liberty" by "discovering" the natural "laws of liberty" (p. 148). In other words, Hayek's ontological project is to express the truth about freedom. He locates freedom where he locates all social mores, as objectively existing in the natural order that, in principle, can be observed and discovered. Hayek echoes the views espoused by Adam Smith and the Humean tradition, which assumed that "psychological laws, based on human nature, are as truly natural as any laws based on land and physical nature" (Dewey, 1935, p. 21). Thus, he locates the laws or properties of "real" freedom in human psychology that, in turn, is rooted in fixed essences of human nature. He then seeks to discover these "natural" laws of freedom by retrospectively (*a posteriori*) observing human behavior. The properties of freedom are not socially constructed but, rather, are objectively in the world waiting to be discovered. When Hayek views freedom objectively in the world, he "naturalizes" it.

Hayek (1960) uses the following observation of nature to argue that social mores, including freedom, are not created but discovered by observing social action because social rules and mores exist without rational consciousness; they are unconscious habits that are merely grasped by intelligence and subsequently articulated.

A degree of order, preventing too frequent fights or interference with the search of food, etc., here arises often from the fact that the individual, as it strays farther from its lair, becomes less ready to fight. In consequence, when two individuals meet at some intermediate place, one of them will usually withdraw without an actual trial of strength. Thus a sphere belonging to each individual is determined, not by the demarcation of a concrete boundary, but by the observation of a rule—a rule, of course, that is not known as such by the individual but that is honored in action [emphasis added]. (pp. 148–149)

For Hayek, this example of the abstract rule of territorial defense proves that social rules of behavior exist whether or not there is consciousness; that is, action conforms to social rules before the articulation. So, the rules and mores that guide society are not the product of rational design but, rather, have developed from a course of nature, like the evolution of a species. He writes:

From these conceptions gradually grew a body of social theory that showed how, in the relations among men, complex and orderly and, in a very definite sense, purposive institutions might grow up which owed little to design, which were not invented but arose from the separate actions of many men who did not know what they were doing [emphasis added]. (pp. 58–59)

In sum, social rules are followed, even if they are not consciously discovered and articulated. The source of social mores is in "Nature" (or part of the providential plan ordained by God),⁵ not

5 Things that are positioned as objectively in the world most often take the form of being either part of nature or part of the providential

reason or social construction. The result is an inevitable dichotomy between Nature and reason. It is not reason's place to "create" or "invent" mores, such as freedom, but rather to grasp the principles of freedom that reveal themselves in the interrelations (i.e., observable behavior) among people.

From this perspective, a distinction arises between inability and unfreedom. For instance, because we are not Naturally flying animals, it is not for a lack of freedom that I cannot jump out my bedroom window and fly down to the office. For Hayek (1960), when action is restrained by the Natural order, then that restraint is not an unfreedom but an inability. It is only when action is restrained or coerced by *other humans* that inability becomes unfreedom. Therefore, only human reason and will, as dichotomous with Nature, are constraints and threats to freedom; Nature cannot be. As such, Hayek defines coercion, as stemming not from Nature but from the "arbitrary will of another or others" (p. 11). For Hayek, Nature only provides inability; reason is the lone cause of coercion.

This does not mean that Hayek advocates for no legislation. He states that meta-laws of *Lex Rex*, or the "true" principles for the rule of law are ones that support the Natural laws of freedom. For example, one law of liberty Hayek "discovers" is equality (p. 209). What Hayek means by this is that all must be treated equally under man-made law. Although this attribute of a law of freedom has necessary, albeit sometimes problematic, distinctions the meta-law of equal treatment is "aimed at equally improving the chances of unknown people" (p. 210).

The logical consequence of this law of freedom is that material equality and equality under the law are mutually exclusive notions.

Equality before the law and material equality are therefore not only different but are in conflict with each other; and we can achieve either the one or the other, but not both at the same time. The equality before the law which freedom requires leads to material inequality [emphasis added]. (p. 87)

Any law that redistributes wealth to aid in social welfare and equality is not treating people equally under the law. In this case, we would be taking from one class and giving to another, and this classification harms one class while benefiting another. It is not aimed at improving the chances of unknown people but, rather, at improving the chances of a particular class of people. Hence, Hayek declares, "If the state further takes on positive duties, such as providing welfare services and adopting redistributive policies, then it would transform from a friend to a foe of individual freedom" (as cited in Silier, 2005, p.15).

In addition to inculcating certain democratic dispositions as a form of social planning, democratic educational policies also require redistribution of resources to provide for equality of

order. For the sake of brevity and to be consistent with my terminology of "naturalizing" freedom, from hereafter I use a capital *N* and forgo qualifying the term *nature* with God or God's plan in parentheses, even though it may be construed as either. Hence, I use a capital *N* to reflect nature becoming equated with God's design.

educational opportunity. Yet these policies, as Hayek states, are seen as contradictory to, and must be justified against, the value of liberty. Inequality in school resources is seen as an inevitable result of adhering to the Natural value of freedom. Naturalizing freedom has a certain appeal in that freedom becomes something to be observed and discovered with a kind of certainty that absolves us of responsibility. We may not like material inequality, but if we follow the Natural laws of liberty, that is just the way it is. Once again, within the neoliberal framework, the preeminence of the value of "freedom" trumps the competing value of democratic public goods, including democratic education. And all of this makes perfect sense within the dominant strand of the modern Western identity, hence its insidiousness.

Submitting to Freedom: The Source of Moral Authority

So far, I have shown how Hayek's (1960) view of liberty coheres with two core philosophical assumptions shared with the dominant strand of the modern Western identity, the ontologically distinct individual self and a Cartesian epistemology. I have also used Hayek to represent how our cultural identity makes sense of freedom, and this happens in such a way as to be inimical to democratic education. Yet, once again, Taylor's (1989) depiction of the modern Western identity as fractious but with certain dominant trends means certain beliefs that have developed in mainstream Western thought are embedded generally, not universally, in our identity. Furthermore, Hayek's articulations do not necessarily cause but, rather, reflect how that identity makes sense of freedom.

The astute reader may have realized Hayek's (1960) Naturalized version of freedom has an ethical assumption that Nature is the source of moral authority which prescribes what humans ought to do. It should come as no surprise, then, that I will claim this assumption has a history rooted in the Western tradition as well, albeit less dominantly than the first two: namely, the source of moral authority is external to human reason. In other words, the location of moral authority is in God or Nature or God's design that reveals itself through Nature but not humanity itself.

Taylor (1989) maps three dominant beliefs about the sources of moral authority within Western cultural and philosophical history: original theistic grounding, scientism (or the naturalized world), and creative imagination of Romantic expressivism. Original theistic grounding posits the source of moral authority out "there," objective and external to humanity, whether stemming from Plato's external source of the light of the "Good" or, theistically, "God." With the Protestant Reformation came an affirmation of ordinary life in which nature (including human nature) was seen as reflecting the providential order of things. This was the beginning of what Taylor calls scientism, or the belief that the source of morality is in the design of Nature. Dewey (1935) wrote about this dichotomy between man and Nature as well: "Natural law was still regarded as something more fundamental than man-made law, which by comparison is artificial" (p. 20). Under this view, humanity and reason's sole role is to grasp morality, not to be the source of it. Only in the case of the creative imagination of Romantic expressivism is the source of morality in humanity itself. So, in the

Western tradition of thought, there are two strands of belief in the source of morals as external to human reason.

This ethical assumption of moral authority is also evident in Hayek's (1960) notion of freedom. His purpose for discovering the "laws of liberty" is, ultimately, to obey those laws:

While this applies to all our values, it is most important in the case of moral rules and conduct. Next to language, they are perhaps the most important instance of an undesigned growth, a set of rules which govern our lives but of which we can say neither why they are what they are nor what they do to us: we do not know what the consequences of observing them are for us as individuals and as a group. And it is against the demand for submission to such rules that the rationalistic spirit is in constant revolt [emphasis added].
(pp. 64–65)

Hayek is saying we must have faith beyond our reason and follow the social mores that are embedded in Nature and have evolved, even if we are not privy to the reasons why. Because morality is found in Nature and is above human understanding, we must have faith and submit to the undesigned rules that evolve through the trial and error processes of Natural evolution. We must trust in the Natural order because we do not and cannot know it all. Morals are discovered, they are part of Natural processes and order, and social planning is to participate in the arrogance that man knows best, not Nature. "We have thus no choice but to *submit* to rules whose rationale we often do not know, and to do so whether or not we can see anything important depends on their being observed in the particular instance" [emphasis added] (pp. 66–67). Thus, another seeming paradox arises: resigning ourselves to the laws of liberty or submitting to freedom.

Once again, it seems obvious how this thinking leads to the negation of social planning and implementation for the enhancement of democratic education. As Hayek reveals, within the neoliberal framework human reason and will are threats to the Natural laws of freedom. To plan society is to believe that the rational powers of humanity are superior to those of Nature. Because of the limited capacity of reason, social planning results in unintended consequences, and therefore, should be shelved. Even if for democratic aims, using reason to intelligently attempt to design society is misguided.

The current marginalization of citizenship, moral, and character education, and the displacement of talk about the civic purposes of our public schools, is consistent with the neoliberal philosophy of freedom that locates the source of moral authority outside of shared deliberation, since curricula that are intended to pursue these aims are interpreted as participating in social planning. There is distrust in humanity as a source of moral authority, and a civic education that seeks to foster some form of the associative good life is antithetical to the more treasured value of the neoliberal conception of freedom.

Summary and Conclusions

Using Schein's (2010) model of culture and method of clinical cultural analysis, I have interpreted an artifact of our culture, namely, the erosion of democratic education, as reflecting a deeper competing commitment to the neoliberal conception of the value freedom. Furthermore, I have analyzed neoliberal freedom as reflecting three core philosophical assumptions shared with the modern Western identity: an ontologically distinct self, a Cartesian epistemology in which the onto-epistemological project seeks to discover facts that correspond to the objective world, and a belief in the source of morality as external to human reason.

As an interpretative analysis, my purpose is not so much to prove these connections as it is to start a conversation (Burbules, 2006) about the possible cultural elements that inhibit progress toward more democratic forms of education. Yet, if agreed that, in fact, the value of neoliberal freedom and its associated basic assumptions is part of the story that is enacted resulting in the marginalization of democratic education, then it would behoove those of us interested in democratic education to be conscious of these; for "shared assumptions derive their power from the fact that they begin to operate outside of awareness" (Schein, 2010, p. 12).

Another reason to expose cultural values and assumptions related to our problem is for critique (Burbules, 2006)—to critically reflect and examine the extent of those assumptions' truth or usefulness. Testing basic assumptions is one way of catalyzing cultural change (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). In other words, my analysis implies that technical changes alone, such as teaching teachers how to conduct democratic education, will not enhance democratic education, since our current challenge is an adaptive, not a technical, one (Heifetz, 1994). Adaptive change points to strategies of changing mind-sets, not skill sets. And one method to foster adaptive change is to expose competing commitments and assumptions in order to test them. For the advancement of democratic education, we would do well to find ways to challenge the deeper, collective competing commitment to the value of neoliberal freedom and its three associated philosophical assumptions.

For example, Kegan and Lahey (2009) explain why individuals and groups participate in behavior that is counterproductive to their stated goals. They have observed organizational cultures performing actions contrary to ostensible aims because of deeper, shared, *hidden* commitments and assumptions. Using the example of a medical school faculty that aspired to incorporate more active learning in their pedagogy, Kegan and Lahey found that even though the faculty had the technical knowledge of how to incorporate active learning, the collective faculty were continuing to "teach to the tests" and not providing opportunities for students to apply acquired concepts (p. 109). Through the unveiling process it was revealed that the faculty held a deeper commitment to maintaining the school's reputation and accreditation status. Further, there was a more deeply held assumption that licensure exams stressed factual retention rather than concepts and that students' acquisition of core facts would be compromised by new teaching methods. Not until this assumption was intentionally tested did the organizational culture start to change. Thus, Kegan and Lahey's

method consists of exposing and then purposely testing the extent of truthfulness of shared assumptions as a way to alter and enhance both individual and organizational performance (i.e., observable behavior).

Similarly, even if there is a professed cultural commitment to more democratic educational policies and practices, the neoliberal notion of the value freedom plays a complicit role in preventing action toward these stated aims. Therefore, both the neoliberal conception of freedom and its three associated basic assumptions need to be challenged.

How can we deliberately challenge the story of the ontologically distinct individual self? What can we do to foster a more social conception of self? Palmer (2011) echoes this sentiment by lauding the tension between communalism and individualism with the advice of “allowing each to check the other’s darker potential” (p. 43). Yet the American emphasis on individualism has skewed the equilibrium. We must launch a concerted effort in testing the belief of the ontologically distinct individual that is so entrenched in our cultural identity if we are to strike the balance Palmer is looking for.

How can we purposefully interrupt Cartesian epistemology and foster beliefs in other ways of knowing? How can curriculum become more, or at least equal to, knowing for rather than knowing about? The dominant epistemological belief of the quest for certainty and discovering knowledge about the world used by Hayek (1960) in his philosophy of freedom is only one theory of knowledge; we forget there are other ways of knowing, for example knowing for (i.e., wisdom). Palmer (2011) also argues against the over-reliance on Cartesian epistemology. I cannot phrase it better than he:

But many educated Americans who rise to positions of responsibility believe they must operate almost exclusively on the basis on what can be observed and measured because they are educated in a system that mistakenly defines reality that way. And yet, everything human is driven by the invisible powers of the heart. From falling in love with a person who changes the course of your life to distrusting people of a different race, from acts of astonishing courage to the most barbaric of cruelties, from the curiosity that animates science to the fears that paralyze the mind, the human heart is the backstage directing the action. Ignore that simple truth, and we put ourselves and our world at risk by missing critical clues about real life.

Once again, I am using the word heart to refer to an integral way of knowing . . .

When we learn to think with the “mind descended into the heart”—integrating cognition and emotion with other faculties like sensation, intuition, and bodily knowledge—the result can be insight, wisdom, and the courage to act on what we know. (pp. 54–55)

Thus, in addition to challenging an individualized conception of self, we must also disrupt the assumed correspondence theory of truth and foster the acceptance of other ways of knowing.

For those interested in fostering democratic education, it seems appropriate to incorporate an additional strategy of challenging the third central philosophical assumption shared by the neoliberal framework and the modern Western identity. How can

we intentionally foster faith in humanity’s reasonableness as the source of moral authority for collective action (see Pritchard, 1996, for a distinction between rationality and reasonableness)? How can we facilitate discussions about moral matters and encourage a trust in our collective reasoning as a way to inquire and act for self-governance? We must develop ways to intentionally question the source of moral authority as outside humanity and to foster a confidence in human reasonability as a source of moral authority.

Neoliberalism’s success in infiltrating the national discourse shuts out alternative discourses and appears to render them irrelevant in everyday American culture (R. Quantz, personal communication, Summer 2006). If we care about the prospects of democratic education, we must take neoliberalism’s success seriously, for it is a philosophical framework in which freedom and democratic education are mutually exclusive. Dewey (1993), in all his wisdom, warned:

And let those who are struggling to replace the present economic system by a cooperative one also remember that in struggling for a new system of social restraints and controls they are also struggling for a more equal and equitable balance of powers that will enhance and multiply the effective liberties of the mass of individuals. Let them not be jockeyed into the position of supporting social control at the expense of liberty [emphasis added]. (p. 160)

Yet, that is exactly the situation in which we find ourselves today. Democratic education is viewed as a social control policy, as an infringement on the supremacy of the value freedom. We witness a lack of democratic citizenship, moral, and character education in our schools. We see a lack of redistributing resources for equality of educational opportunity. We observe a lack of talk about education’s civic mission, roles, and goals. Democratic education is viewed as tangential, secondary, and mutually exclusive from the prioritized value of “liberty.” How can we foster alternative notions of freedom, such as Lincoln’s republican sense of liberty as collectively inquiring and deciding how we rule ourselves? We must intentionally challenge the neoliberal notion of the value freedom and the usefulness of its associated philosophical assumptions.

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