Rational deliberation, embodied communication and the ideal of democratic participation

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In conceptions of citizenship education as the exercise of democratic decision-making, much attention has been focused on the theme of deliberative democracy. In this paper I acknowledge the significance of the value of deliberation as an ideal but argue that certain of its characteristics are problematic, namely that of its tendency to disembody participants and to ignore the role of emotion and empathy. In the course of a brief examination of Iris Marion Young's 'corrective' to deliberative democracy, that of communicative democracy, I identify several of her arguments as significant for an enhanced account understanding through discourse. I then turn to questions of meaning in relation to what citizenship may signify in an age of globalisation and 'market democracy'. Drawing upon the work of political theorist Zaki Laïdi, I briefly explore his claims about the loss of meaning that seems to characterise social life at present, and suggest what significance this may have for citizenship education.

Recent initiatives in citizenship education have highlighted the need for ongoing critical theorising about the nature of democracy itself. In Australia, emphasis over the past decade lay initially in strengthening the knowledge base of citizenship education, but then moved to considerations as to how education in the practice of democracy might be addressed in the classroom. The question encapsulating this shift is: what is involved in *participation* in the democratic process? Frustrated with a narrowly knowledge-based citizenship education programs, teachers are attracted to the idea that education for democratic citizenship involves the development of attitudes and democratic dispositions. They have continued to ask themselves how transformatory classroom practices can be incorporated into citizenship education, the assumption being that through such practices democratic values and attitudes may be formed. In implementing new curricula in citizenship education, various forms of deliberation have been devised which enable students to canvass opinions, argue points of view, and 'play out' the democratic process in the classroom.

Political and social theorists have written extensively about the concept of 'deliberative democracy' as a significant advance on 'interests-based democracy', in which individuals express their preferences by means of a vote and in which they remain essentially concerned with their own interests and perspectives on the political process (Benhabib 1991; Cohen 1989; Walzer 1987). Deliberative democrats see in the interests-based model an unfortunate tendency to fragment both policy and the interests of citizens, but what they seem to lament most is the lack of a sense of immediacy for the individual in the actual shaping of democracy. As they see it, in an essentially privatised process effected through the deal-making of party politics and the dominant role of regulatory agencies and other institutional structures in shaping policy and practice, the individual citizen appears to have no role other than to identify his or her own interests and to register a vote. There is in effect no actual democratic process in which a citizen is concretely engaged, no joining together to discuss the common weal and opportunities for testing out one's point of view in the to and fro of rational discourse.

There is now a very large and influential body of literature which focuses specifically upon the processes of citizen participation in the ongoing development of their democratic institutions through the articulation of 'public reason'. As Iris Marion Young describes this process:

> In participatory democratic institutions citizens develop and exercise capacities of reasoning, discussion and socialising that otherwise lie dormant, and they move out of their private existence to address others and face them with respect and concern for justice.[1]

This idea of active participation of the citizen in deliberating upon critical civic issues is one which enshrines the institutionalisation of genuine public discussion. By implication it is inclusive and multiculturalist in that it acknowledges diversity of point of view based on the acknowledgment of the differing situation of groups and individuals who are party to the discussion.

Most discussions of deliberative democracy owe a great deal to the work of Jürgen Habermas, who argues that the legitimacy of a particular line of political action or policy lies precisely in the processes by which it has been created and put into practice. Habermas's theory of communicative rationality has been crucial to discussions about deliberation in the public sphere. His account of discourse aimed at understanding, his insistence on the plurality of participants' positions, and his focus on the crucial link between conceptions of knowledge and conceptions of community are key insights which furnish a basis for further exploration of the processes of deliberation in democratic contexts. Communicative rationality as articulated by Habermas is in tune with notions of human autonomy arising from within social relationships and, perhaps most significantly, with a specific conception of community, that is, one consisting of the communicatively competent. His communicative theory of epistemic justification gives content to a theory of individual autonomy as the ability to engage in argumentation, this being the bedrock of communicative competence. Social relationship in his work is

depicted as the mutuality of shared grounds for belief and attitude. It is the concept of consensus upon which this all of this turns, and which lies at the heart of Habermas's account of how socialisation should take place in an ideally just society – a society grounded in justified belief.

Habermas locates his ideal of the consensually governed society within an ethics of discourse. Among other things, this ethic requires that participants assume specific attitudes to one another in the process of deliberation, namely they must take up a stance that is productive for the discourse and not one which will hamper its progress. It is important to acknowledge that Habermas is not talking about some kind of collective agent speaking with one voice, which is ultimately produced out of a shared social ethos, but rather about the articulation of (rationally) institutionalised procedures and conditions governing institutional decision-making with public opinion, itself informally but rationally moulded. His ethics of discourse supplant the view of public debate as 'a marketplace of ideas between elites' in which group interests and interpretations of the social world and political opinion jostle each other for supremacy in the public realm. Instead, public discourse is 'a democratised forum in which we co-operatively construct common meanings and work through our differences'[2] (Chambers, p.176).

Hence the urgent need to expand opportunities for participation in discourse on the part of all, but especially among those who for whatever reason have previously been either marginalised or excluded altogether.

Amy Gutmann's work has been highly influential in considerations of deliberative democracy. Her writing reflects the sorts of concerns encountered in Habermas. In an important work with Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, she has argued that since moral conflict is unavoidable in the political realm then a specific policy is only justified by means of the deliberative process by which the specific policy is selected. In the view of these authors, deliberation is the most appropriate way for citizens to resolve their moral agreements, not only about policies but also about the process by which policies should be adopted. Denying that there exists some foundational knowledge of what is socially just, they place the responsibility upon the deliberative procedures themselves to ensure just outcomes. This account of deliberative democracy is distinguished by the insistence on the *moral quality* of the *arguing* (not the validity or otherwise of the arguments) which goes on within democratic politics.

With this insistence on the crucial issue of the nature and quality of the deliberative process, Gutmann and Thompson then advance three principles which for them constitute what they refer to as the 'conditions of deliberation': reciprocity, publicity and accountability. Reciprocity has to do with the attitudes and abilities citizens demonstrate (or not) as they go about the process of deliberation, while publicity and accountability refer largely to the performance of one's duty as 'representative'.

Reciprocity is the one of most interest to the present discussion because it requires that the individual bring a particular kind of attitude to the deliberative forum. Its basis is 'the capacity to seek fair terms of social co-operation for their own sake' (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, pp.52-53).[3] Accordingly, reciprocity requires two things. Firstly, that

when citizens make moral claims they are obliged to support these with reasons that are acceptable in principle by others whose commitment is also to finding fair and just terms for social co-operation. The claim is that individuals must be able to argue from other than purely self-interested moral premises, so the search must be for those premises which at least could be accepted by all involved and which avoid the pitting of one set of interests against another. It is the development of a set of mutually agreeable moral premises from which to deliberate that permits the moral disagreement to be resolved. So citizens must have the ability to determine which of a number of premises may or may not be the legitimate ones, by discovering which of them are agreeable to all parties to the discussion. This is not unlike Rawls' understanding of the notion of 'overlapping consensus'.

Further, as Gutmann and Thompson make clear, when moral reasoning calls upon empirical claims, reciprocity requires that they be consistent with methods of inquiry that are as reliable as possible. Therefore individuals must be in a position of being able to evaluate such empirical claims, whether by having recourse to authoritative sources or by directly examining the evidence itself. Reciprocity thus *presupposes* two broad skills: a capacity to discover whether or not a moral claim is compatible with the beliefs of others, and a grasp of the general rules to be applied when determining the adequacy of empirical evidence. Even then, however, some disagreements will persist, that is, they will not be amenable to deliberative solution and may fall back into non-deliberative antagonism in which mutual respect for positions is ultimately abandoned.

For Gutmann and Thompson this situation can only then be salvaged if individuals have already somehow been inculcated with certain attitudes which for them go under the broad heading of 'moral accommodation'. These are articulated as that of 'civic integrity', requiring that the citizen desires to be consistent in word and deed and at the same time accept the implications of their chosen moral principles; and 'civic magnanimity', which requires that opponents' positions are treated as reasonable and morally worthy and that the citizen be willing to accept them given appropriate argument. Ultimately, in the face of continuing moral disagreement citizens should be willing to seek to maximise agreement concerning the position which is finally accepted.

THE DELIBERATIVE MODEL AND EDUCATION

There is much that is compelling about deliberative democracy, especially at a time when the political sphere is remote from everyday lives and the individual citizen's view seems to matter little, if at all, to those who make decisions. Translated into the education curriculum it purports to give the kind of practice in thinking skills which will enhance and develop the relationship between deliberative judgment and democratic decision-making. There have been a variety of curriculum programs constructed with effective deliberation as a major educational aim. Though dealing with much more than just citizenship education, the *Philosophy for Children* program is undoubtedly one of the most powerful examples of the attempt to teach deliberation in a systematic way and with attention to the social context in which such discussion takes place. The educative func-

tion of participation as it is set out in this program has strong Deweyan influences but is also informed by the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who believed that knowledge is generated through a process of imposing meanings (which are always value-laden) on phenomena in the context of a community of inquirers who are engaged in collaborative discussion.[4] It is only through this process that self-correction takes place and through which ideas are exchanged or modified, positions developed and so on. It was Peirce's view that participants to this kind of discourse became immersed in purposive, critical and self-improving inquiry and in so doing generated the norms, ideas and values required for making decisions, not only about how as an individual one should attempt to live the good life but also how social life should be organised and managed. Both Peirce and Dewey expected that certain tendencies or dispositions will arise over time within individuals who have participated deeply in such deliberative processes. This theme is taken up by Gutmann and Thompson, who suggest that there is a *specific kind of citizen* who can be called democratic, precisely because she or he has developed a genuinely deliberative character.

Among the qualities such a citizen should exhibit are the following: she must seek the best solution to social problems and issues rather than focusing upon her own interests to the exclusion of other individuals and groups; therefore, she must always make available for public scrutiny and argument her own position, and must likewise be prepared to engage in that sort of discussion of all positions. Because the 'ideal' citizen wants to have available to her all possible choices, she therefore will desire that all voices be heard in the process of the search for the best solution. Therefore she must also respect each participant's views and take their positions seriously. Further, in order to arrive at the best of the many possible options, she will need to be skilled in moral reasoning. So this is a picture of an 'ideal' citizen who not only has strengths in reasoning (is rational) but who has developed certain desirable character traits which, taken together, merit the description 'moral' or 'virtuous'. In sum, it seems that for deliberativists such as Gutmann and Thompson, rationality and a virtuous character are essential to the proper practice of democracy.

Now on the face of it such a formulation seems admirable and the task might therefore appear a relatively straightforward one for citizenship educators interested in having students experience democratic deliberation first hand. There is the promise that, through 'right thinking', deliberators will eventually develop such civic virtues as honesty, tolerance and respect for others' viewpoints. The impartiality of the deliberative process undoubtedly makes it an attractive proposition for citizenship educators envisaging a community of classroom deliberators who, through exposure to the process, become independent in thought, universal in outlook and respectful of difference but also sceptical of dogma. But, like all such accounts of human activity, the deliberative model is anchored within a particular intellectual tradition and is derived from particular institutional arrangements in the modern West. As such it makes certain key assumptions about human communication, the nature of the thinking, and what reason is

understood to be. In my view these assumptions invite careful scrutiny if the deliberative model is to retain its usefulness.

In the following section of the paper I will raise a number of criticisms of the deliberative model which in my view need to be acknowledged in order to strengthen its efficacy in citizenship education. In the final section I will turn to the problem of what citizenship might mean in the face of social and political change and in light of globalisation in its many forms.

DELIBERATORS ARE EMBODIED AND HAVE EMOTIONS

The exercise of reason is central to the notion of deliberative democracy, the end point of participation being arrival at consensus which overcomes the perspectives of the particular (either one's own or that of others whose position may differ significantly) and achievement of the 'best solution' to problems. In this manner individual self-interest is transcended and eventually, through deliberation, all positions are incorporated into the 'general will'. So it is that 'civic participation' on the deliberative democracy model assumes the presence of rational beings who adhere to the demands of reason, while the actual participation reaffirms them as free, autonomous deliberators.

The identities of participants have been formed over their lifetimes in webs of social relationships through the assumption of a variety of roles but most particularly by the taking up the perspective of 'the generalised other'.[5] The latter is operant when the individual is able to distance herself from her own particular roles and understands that all roles are shaped and conditioned by commonly held norms and values. The perspective of the 'generalised other' is that of the neutral spectator who brings to bear objectivity in analysing what has gone into the production of such roles. When this occurs, the intersubjectively produced nature of social norms which mould actions and expectations is revealed. Out of this process arises the kind of rational reflection that underpins deliberation in the public sphere.

But if rationality is actively constructed within individuals in the manner just described, I want to argue that its 'disembodiment' occurs at precisely the point at which it is engaged in deliberation. Since the very ideal of reason is that which transcends bodily specificity, then the specificities of differently embodied deliberators must disappear. In a discourse that has privileged universal reason as separated from the peculiarities of embodied selves, it is this disembodied reason's particular task to provide moral precepts for the will. So we give moral precepts – notions of the right and the good – to ourselves; this is how we become autonomous, and therefore how we come to be rational in deliberation. By obeying the dictates of reason we are no longer under the sway of any external influences – certainly not those of our troublesome bodies. Our rational deliberations thus remain free of emotion, habits and desires. Put like this the account of reason becomes absurd, and surely no sensible person wants to claim that bodies are not required for rational deliberation.

But this simplification misses the point: it is not sufficient to merely claim that one must have a body in order to reason. Rather what one wants to get at is this: the very

structure of what we have been calling reason can only arise from the complex details of our own embodiment. It is developed and shaped by the specifics of each individual's embodiment (including neural structures of the brain) and each one's lived (embodied) experience in an habituated world.[6] Therefore any intelligible account of the embodied individual must encompass the role of emotion. The philosopher John Dewey provided a powerful description of emotion as bodily 'adjustment' and described its deepening into dispositions as a cluster of 'felt' orientations and attitudes within the individual. That dispositions are obviously partly what we have been here describing as 'rational' would not have been disputed by Dewey, but then he would have acknowledged at the outset that there is no account of reason that does not start from the premise that minds (and hence reason) are embodied and not vice versa.

There is absolutely no doubt that emotion is essential to the functioning of intellectual judgment and of valuing in the human individual. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty emotion is always tied up with content that is usually thought of as non-emotional, that is, with ideas. Human concepts, far from being the concepts of a transcendent reason, are emotionally infused precisely because they are shaped by 'body-subjects' (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Both Dewey and Merleau-Ponty show how a certain emotional 'depth' is essential for each person's appreciation of his or her social situatedness. Not surprisingly this can only occur when there is a growing awareness in individuals of their sociality. As I have stated elsewhere (O'Loughlin 1997), individuals come to matter to each other through experiencing the emotional expressions of others who are tied up in various ways with their own life project.[7] Contemporary writers on citizenship education, Eamonn Callan and Patricia White, have argued convincingly for conceptions of citizenship education to take account of emotional dispositions (Callan 1994; White 1995) because they see the problems which arise for deliberative democracy when embodiment is ignored.

Understanding the part played by emotion in the dialogue allows us to think of the deliberators as concretised subjects of knowledge and to ask these questions: In *this* particular context *who* is deliberating? What are her emotional investments in what is being said? What specific set of interests motivate her deliberations? And what are the consequences for her of the direction the discussion is taking? Such concerns remind us that deliberations do not take place in some sort of rarified dimension of abstraction unconnected to the emotion-embedded and value-laden material world of everyday embodied experience.

Embodiment also has a social dimension which is not simply understood by the assertion that individual bodies relate one to another, or even by the acknowledgment that bodies are somehow socially constructed (or socially 'represented'). There is a deeper sense in which societies have entrusted to bodies (not just to 'minds' or 'consciousness') the values and categories they are most anxious to conserve (Connerton 1989). Memory is embodied in individuals but also in a broader sense in the social body. A linguistically communicated canon about the culture and what goes into the socalisation of a citizen is not the only thing that is remembered. There are always corporeal practices which are not only discursive in character (though they are undeniably that)

but which form, over time, bodily habits that are nonetheless much more than mere bodily habits. Because they do not enter into discursive consciousness (indeed it seems to me that they are quite explicitly ignored in deliberation) as openly political values, such corporeal practices bypass that consciousness and thus are lost to awareness. What people have been taught to forget, by those who have identified what should be forgotten, is now not easily 'remembered' precisely because through our habits, our institutions and our way of life generally we have indeed forgotten it.

On the issue of social embodiment, Nietzsche depicted both societies and individuals as being under certain circumstances, unable to 'will', thus being like the dyspeptic 'who cannot have done with anything' and so cannot begin to will afresh. Thus the habits of the heart live on though deeply buried in present generations, shaping present attitudes to ourselves as a community and to political and social issues and problems. Perhaps an understanding of this in an Australian context may assist us in better grasping the reasons for the apparent lack of empathy which some Australians have in appreciating the sufferings of indigenous people in the recent past. It may also shed light on that 'willed forgetfulness' of Australia's colonial and convict past that has been linked by many writers to the 'locking up' of that emotional energy to issues of emotional depth, particularly as it relates to questions of Australian identity.[8]

IMAGINATIVE AND EMPATHETIC DELIBERATORS

Attending to others in the deliberative model involves listening to what they have to say. But this may often be reduced to a mere formalism and we can develop a proceduralist attitude to the deliberative process, such that we fail routinely to genuinely attend to others' efforts to communicate their perspectives and needs to us. Indeed this sort of behaviour is probably the norm rather than the exception in institutionally and corporately embedded discourse in which notions of sharing ideas and genuine listening have a largely rhetorical and self-serving function. In order to fully recognise a participant to the discussion we are required to show genuine interest in another. But this not a purely emotional affair; it is rather what Dewey identified as 'sympathetic understanding' and, like every other act of thought, it is replete with reasoning and feeling. For Dewey, as for many others, all inquiry begins in desire, a 'felt' need. To attend to someone is to answer a felt desire within oneself. Reason begins in emotion; the latter stirs us to act in concern and solicitation for the other and their perspective. Having attended in a particular direction, we call upon our interest, concern and imagination to assist us in understanding the other. In listening we need to ensure that our commitment to hear does not waver, for it is too easy to allow doubts to prematurely block the flow of the others' thoughts and feeling to us. We do need to suspend critique until the process has completed itself. Seyla Benhabib's conception of 'enlarged thinking', Gemma Corradi Fiumara's 'hermeneutics based on listening' and John Dewey's sympathetic understanding and process of inquiry all illustrate the ways in which the communicative process is always and unavoidably grounded in what are basically moral concerns which in their genesis can never be sepa-

rated from human emotion. Reasoning morally in relation to others, and social life generally, always involves recognising others in all their specificity and their concreteness.

Iris Marion Young has mounted what seems to me a convincing critique of the deliberative democracy model. In what follows I want to briefly examine the case for what she call 'communicative' democracy.

BEING DELIBERATIVE AND BEING COMMUNICATIVE

The deliberative model assumes that if we put to one side the political and economic power participants to deliberation may have we then have equality of participation. But, as Young points out, this will only be the case if we can also eliminate cultural differences and differing social positions. There may well be reasons why certain social groups stand in a different relation to the actual process of deliberation in particular to questions of who speaks, who gets the floor, who appears to have the right to speak and so on. There is now an enormous literature on, for example, the differences in the performance of males and females in speech situations, particularly those in the public realm. As Young points out:

> Norms of assertiveness, combativeness and speaking by the contest rules are powerful silencers or evaluators of speech in many actual situations where culturally differentiated and socially unequal groups live together (Young 1997, p.64).

Those who have skill in the agonistic norms of debate will frequently be unaware of this 'devaluation and silencing', or may view the non-participants with contempt for their failure to master the techniques. As Young also remarks, speech that is general and formal is also privileged, proceeding from premise to conclusion in an 'orderly' manner.

A particular feature of such debates and discussion is their appeal to the general rather than the particular. The norm for being articulate in much of institutionalised and formal deliberation is a highly abstract one which is culturally specific and is learned as a key feature of positions that have power and privilege attached to them. As Young points out, deliberation therefore does not accept as having equal status all ways of 'making claims and giving reasons'. Often speakers must acknowledge their 'deficiencies' in very public ways that humiliate them. Young emphasises the embodied nature of speakers – the entrance of the body into speech – as gesture, displays of agitation or nervousness, appeals to feeling, which will frequently be read as signs of weakness, lack of confidence, ignorance of the rules and so on. The ideal of objectivity in presentation is widely accepted, so that expressions of outrage, injury or passionate involvement with one's subject matter are discounted.

Argument is more often than not the privileged form of communication in the deliberative model, one which ignores the characteristic speech cultures of women, people of other ethnic backgrounds and indigenous people. Young believes that discussion-based notions of democracy must attempt to broaden its understanding and acceptance of various forms and styles of speaking to encompass an expanded theory of communicative

which is much more comprehensive and inclusive of styles than deliberative theorists have usually allowed. Hence her use of the term 'communicative democracy'.

Young's second criticism of the deliberative model is that it assumes a certain unity of purpose or goal in the deliberative process. Indeed she sees the notion of unity in the work of some theorists (notably Habermas and Walzer) as being a prior condition of deliberation. Consensus is seen as being something which may have been submerged but is restored in the process of developing understanding through discourse. The notion of already-existing shared understanding is something Young would reject, as she claims we cannot assume this in pluralistic societies. Further, as she points out, the assumption of prior unity of understanding simply defeats the purpose of the deliberation – people coming together through genuine interchange and modifying, indeed perhaps even overturning, their previously held views. The aim is to arrive at the position of the common good through the process of first acknowledging difference and *then* working at transcending the differences. The difficulty with this is that it may prematurely install a privileged position of consensus, which can be imposed precisely because it is espoused by those who have the power to do so. As Young writes, 'the perspectives of the privileged are likely to dominate the definition of the common good' (Young 1997, p.66). The less privileged or less powerful may be asked to forgo the expression of their own experience (which may even be couched in a different idiom) and to embrace a version of the common good which does not reflect their reality and which in fact may not be in their interests.

The problem of the dominance of argumentative and combative modes in the field of deliberation is addressed by Young, who advocates three modes which she believes recognise the particularity and embodiment of participants to discourse. These are greeting, rhetoric and storytelling.[9] In her view, such modes of communication help to preserve the plurality which is necessary to the meaning and continued existence of polity. It should be noted that Young does not advocate the removal of the argument mode, merely that it should be supplemented by these elements, so that argument is assisted in providing ways of speaking 'across difference' when there is a significant absence of shared understandings.

I agree with Young that deliberativists often overestimate the strength of unity which is found in a polity. In reality, members of a polity are thrown together geographically (corporeally) and become economically interdependent such that the activities and pursuits of some affect the ability of others to conduct their own activities, chiefly economic but also social, cultural and political. We are in a fundamental sense 'stuck with each other' in all of our messy diversity. All the more reason, then, why we need to develop greater unity, in order for the polity to flourish. If this is to happen we must learn to listen actively to each other and to respect the right of each to speak from his or her own position, no matter how different from our own. It is precisely here that Young identifies a crucial difference in the deliberativist and communicative positions. The deliberativist sees differences as needing to be (eventually) overcome in the process of the to and fro of dialogue; in other words the attainment of public reason is achieved pre-

cisely through the transcendence of divisions based on social differences. Communicative democracy, on the other hand, sees differences of social position and identity perspective functioning *as a resource for public reason.* The two are very different.

Young's preference for communicative over deliberative democracy is in my view most persuasive. The deliberative model, while fulfilling the aims set out for it by theorists such as Gutmann and Thompson, nonetheless is in need of a supplement which communicative democracy can supply. The aims of democracy are to solve the collective problems of the polity, and therefore what is required is a plurality of perspectives, and diversity of speaking styles and ways of expressing the particularity of social situations, as well as the general applicability of principles. A theory of democracy, if it wishes to appeal to the broadest possible constituency across vastly differing cultures, must canvass all modes of communication if it is to be successful. As Young concludes,

> '... a theory of democracy needs a broad and plural conception of communication that includes both the expression and extension of shared understandings where they exist, and the offering and acknowledgment of unshared meanings ...' (Young 1997, p.63)

COMMUNICATIVE DEMOCRATS AND THE PROBLEMS OF MEANING

Chief among the 'unshared meanings' which face communicative democrats is that of citizenship itself and what it might mean at the present time.

As the political analyst Zaki Laïdi notes, the various dimensions of globalisation, and issues of nationalism, ethnic loyalties and the fragmentation and suppression of cultures, have lent an urgency to debates about how democracy is forged in an ever-changing world. Laïdi asks a number of questions: What meanings are available to the citizen in a globalising world who is more uncertain than ever about what sort of life may be lived in the future, particularly in relation to one's roles and functions as a citizen? Does 'market democracy' or the ethos of the 'cosmopolitan' citizen, who at least in some sense has transcended the confines of national boundaries, furnish a sense of viable and communicable meanings about what it is to be a citizen today? What is an account of citizenship if not (in part at least) a consciousness of the future as a dimension of change and development in the polity to which one belongs?

I commented earlier in this article on the idea of democratic dispositions and their deepening through emotional/embodied involvements with others. I have emphasised that emotion must be attended to in the development of meanings which deepen into attitudes towards a democratic way of life. This surely involves the idea that there is skill in knowing what to feel at particular times. As Aristotle knew, there is an 'appropriate' emotion for a particular occasion towards the right object and in the right degree. Further he understood, as did Dewey and others, that the exercise of this skill is at once individual and social. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the development of those dispositions organic to a democratic way of life in which the 'objects' of knowledge/feeling involved are simultaneously concrete and specific on the one hand, and abstract and universal on the other.

But just as there may be appropriate or inappropriate emotions on the one hand, we may also want to say that the objects of such emotional dispositions as honesty and integrity may be inappropriate, even unworthy. The philosopher Franz Brentano held that discrimination was required in relation to feeling, such that there is 'right hating' as well as 'right loving'. Another way of saying this is that there are indeed objects of knowing/feeling to be rejected and others striven towards. We may feel impelled to ask how individuals make such discriminations in relation to the polity, the nation, the post-national state and so on. What guiding 'recipe', if any, infuses the complex feeling-judgments involved in meaning-construction around the theme of citizenship and democracy in an age of ever-increasing consumption?

Individuals, nations and corporations alike are involved in the making of new interpretative paradigms and definitions of new identities. Many social actors have experienced a shrinkage of their sense of agency, partly because they no longer have a larger picture into which can be fitted their present and future choices, but also because the 'fragmentation of reality' appears so great that they doubt their understanding of it and can see no means by which they can act. For Laïdi, what is lacking is a 'symbolic representation of human destiny'. He argues that, in the realm of theory, neither realism, neo-liberalism nor pragmatism are seen as adequate to the task of engaging positively with this 'crisis of meaning', precisely because none of these are able to reconstruct 'global meaning' in an age when there has been a 'drying up of reference points' that could have provided the basis for constructing a renewed social order (Laïdi 1998). What all of this signifies for him is an 'exhaustion' of meaning, an 'almost paralysing fatigue' for which no amount of rejoicing over new economic freedoms or fluidity of identities can compensate (Laïdi 1998).

Laïdi claims that the western version of democracy is at present placed in a weakened position to debate its founding principles even within the older, established democracies – let alone engaging in terms of setting up a genuine debate with those who are critical of their form of democracy (usually, but not always, ex-colonial peoples) and who challenge outright their claims to universal applicability. This, he has argued, occurs because the newly globalised order, despite what some proponents of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' might want to claim, prevents most of us from interpreting it for ourselves, in investing in it personally, emotionally and collectively, other than from economic necessity. As Laïdi puts it, 'globalisation is a state, it is not a meaning'. It is doubtful, therefore, that economic globalism has little within it that corresponds to the notion of *aspiration*. In his view, this loss of meaning arises out the end of the Cold War, struggles for representative democracy, and the accompanying dismantling of former ideological, social and political reference points in the face of the inexorable march of economic and technological globalisation. If he is right, deliberative democracy needs to do a great deal more than merely sharpen its deliberative instruments, and citizenship education needs to go back to some basic interrogation of what exactly its object is.

This 'failure of meaning' has led in many places to a collapse into the politics of identity – sometimes ancient notions of identity which are narrow and often destructive of

the rights of whole sections of the population (e.g. women, or racial or religious minorities). Such identities have always been problematic for any account of citizenship that claimed to be inclusive or universalist in its membership, and recent events have revealed the problematic nature of ideas of citizenship which foreground ideas of race or ethnicity as their basis. The failure of meaning, because it divorces power from meaning, leads to a kind of immobility when confronted with the demands to accept the challenges of social transformation. Indeed, increasingly the idea of social transformation, which had provided a treasury of meanings in earlier times, appears paralysed in the face of the continuing failure to understand and interpret the phenomenon of globalisation and in the face of the enormous amount of attention world-wide being paid to increasingly strident identity demands.

In reflecting upon the notion of the failure or loss of meaning in relation to social life and culture, certain ideas derived from Nietzsche's work are useful. One way of understanding a demise of meaning is to think in terms of a rerouting of social energy. To understand this one needs to conceptualise human energy and its embodiments. In Nietzsche's formulation, individuals will exert energy in pursuit of a goal, and this phenomenon cannot be cast as either a purely mentalistic or bodily (physical) activity. This is demonstrated clearly by the fact that when one has a sense of enervation this is not just a description of one's physical condition but also signifies one's sense of lack of a goal or of something which may be achieved, a future project. According to Nietzsche, human beings are distinguished by the fact that the human will ('will to power') exhibits *horror vacui*, that is, it abhors a vacuum. The important point, however, is that the *horror vacui* is in fact an integral part of the will to power, not something that exists outside of it. Therefore the solution to the problem of lack of goal lies within the sphere of action of the particular social group, not beyond it.

In the social realm there is amongst people a general need to have goals, as distinct from having *a* specific goal. As both Nietzsche and Dewey recognised, human beings cannot avoid meaning, and the act of meaning-creation is at the same time an act of power. But this power is to be conceptualised as the consciousness of *agency*, not merely the sense of domination over the natural world or other people. Without meanings we are unable to will anything. Meanings, therefore, are integral to (social) energy. Without meanings societies are, in Laïdi's view, left bare, variously blocked, dislocated or disintegrated. In that intensification of power that is economic globalisation, collective action other than the most nakedly economic on the part of multinationals has no goal. And, as Nietzsche reminds us, intensification – in his words 'duration in vain' – without goal or end is the 'most paralysing' idea. How then are populations to be enabled to *will something* towards the realisation of communal goals? What content can the idea of citizenship recover and what role can an enriched notion of deliberation play in this?

The turning away from utopian projects and the pervasiveness of versions of globalisation which focus exclusively on the economic realm has had profound effects in moving previously engaged sections of populations away from political expression to the pursuit of (often) private economic objectives. For many the pursuit of political objec-

tives has lost its urgency, possibly even its relevance. Likewise the previously powerful identification with work has declined.[10] One area which is still expanding is that of the politics of identity, the playing out of which continues to have both positive and negative consequences for many societies. The desire for meaning is, of necessity, wider than one's professional or ethnic identification. But what else does it encompass, and how might this be understood? These are some of the questions that need to be asked in an expanded view of citizenship education.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

If the aim is the production of mature democratic character in individuals, students need to have practice in being deliberative and communicative. They need to become aware of such aspects of their communicative practice so that the role of emotion in human understanding, values formation and action in the formation of the citizen may be fully grasped. Hence the importance of the humanities and social sciences in fostering such understanding and skills. But citizenship needs to involve practice, not merely talk. Practical education in the broadest sense involves working together on all kinds of projects and in the process coming to know each other through communication.

As I have argued previously (O'Loughlin 1997), there is a need for a continuing interrogation of those ideas which underpin current views about citizenship and citizenship education. Here I reiterate that, but want also to emphasise the importance of what Laïdi calls the 'reconquest of meaning' in the face of a 'substantial loss of meaning' which has accompanied global social change. Citizenship education needs therefore to direct its attention to the issue of meaning. Questions of meaning will obviously be central to a redefining of knowledge concerning what citizenship may be and how it may be approached within education. Such knowledge must take account of the different dimensions of human existence, those involving not just the procedural but also those deep cultural anchorings out of which meanings are generated. Finally, since meanings, knowledge and consciousness only arise from the need of embodied subjects to communicate, then it seems that citizenship education, like education in general, must attempt to better understand what recognising human embodiment in the fullest sense actually means.

NOTES

1. Iris Marion Young's account of communicative vs deliberative democracy is outlined in Ch 3 of *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy* (see below).
2. Chambers is one of a number of feminist writers who, while seeing the significance of Habermas's account, nonetheless raise concerns about the obstacles to production of discursively formed public opinion. Her discussion is contained in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, edited by Joanna Meehan, pp.163-179 (below).
3. For the authors' discussion of reciprocity, see Gutmann and Thompson pp.52-53 (below).

4. Peirce anticipated Derrida in his emphasis on the contextual nature of meaningfulness. For him, as for Dewey, it is generated by human activity, not as a result of some inner thought or individual intention.
5. The term is one which comes from the work of G.H. Mead but is used by Habermas to refer to the organised set of expectations of a social group. This account has been challenged by feminists such as Jodi Dean, who claims there is not one but rather many 'generalised others' (see Dean pp.206-209 in Meehan, below).
6. Here I draw upon the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who, in a major work, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, remind us that the mind is 'inherently' embodied and reason is shaped by the body. It is the commonalities of our bodies that give reason whatever 'universal' aspects it may have.
7. For a fuller discussion of the role of emotional dispositions see an earlier article 'Education for citizenship: integrating knowledge, imagination and democratic dispositions' in *Forum of Education: A Journal of Theory, Research. Policy and Practice*, Vol 52, No 2, November 1997.
8. Forgetting of the colonial and convict dimensions of Australia's past and has been a constant theme in the writing of some historians and others who have attempted to draw links between present attitudes towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and the displacement of suffering on the part of convicts, to indigenous people. Such claims have their strong critics but nonetheless may go some way to explaining the bitterness buried deep within the 'habits of the heart' of frontier Australia. See Miriam Dixson's *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity – 1788 to the Present* (below).
9. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss these in detail, but in my view they are of considerable importance in the development of a broader notion of what constitutes effective communication in the public realm.
10. Richard Sennett, in a recent work, *The Corrosion of Character*, approaches this issue of meaning from a somewhat different angle but reaches rather similar conclusions reached. His focus is the significance of work. In his view the changes brought about by the flexible workplaces of late capitalism have diminishes many individuals' ability to make sense of the shape of their career, of the significance of a working life. He describes the fragmentation of narrative time as one of the characteristics of modern experience in which there is a ceaseless rotation of elements (a term borrowed from Jameson) but little understanding and certainly no personal engagement.

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