

Civic Education and Liberal Democracy

At first glance, the relationship between liberal democracy and civic education (or its more formal and politically more ambitious cousin citizenship education) seems straightforward enough. As a solution to pressing societal problems, the emerging civic turn in citizenship and migration studies is clearly fuelled by the presumption that education can be of much service to liberal democratic states and populations by teaching people how to think and act appropriately about cohabitation, interaction, and integration. And who can dispute the encouraging notion that public education in contemporary liberal democratic society should be tweaked to ensure that citizens and residents—new as well as already present—are as well-equipped as possible to navigate the waters of communal life? Surely this is a good thing, deserving broad endorsement? Surely those who spend their lives in certain communities need to master the cognitive and normative skills required to (properly) live there? How could there be anything amiss with this standard rendering of a core condition for civic belonging and conduct?

As this study suggests there is actually much amiss. If not, no drama would ensue concerning states' and stakeholders' struggles to design or implement certain kinds of 'soft' identity learning rather than others in general education. There would be no commotion as to whether any—and if so, exactly which—educational programmes and national imageries should be presented to newcomers to identify with (cf. Pasieka 2015, p. 46; cf. also Liem and Chua's 2013, p. 287 remarkably blunt argument for civic education as a tool to foster patriotism) in schooling.

Nor would ideologically or culturally rivalling frameworks in liberal democratic polities clash over the importance to include or exclude various elements, topics, or worldviews in civic and citizenship education. In fact, no other quotidian institutions for polity and citizen reconstruction hit populations harder than public normative, civic, ethical, and religious education. Other societal and cultural environments that foster identity of course exist, but none characterised by similar goals or levels of political and institutional comprehensiveness. Families, peers, social and old media, associations, workplaces, churches, popular culture, social movements, or political parties do not bear down on entire populations in the way public education does. The demographic reach of each of these is by necessity restricted and local, whereas that of public comprehensive education is not.

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Few institutions are thus able to compete with public education when it comes to providing states and political communities with comprehensive structures for imparting identity-enabling skills and frameworks to the young (cf. Callan 1997, p. 221; Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 26; Walzer 1983, p. 197; Gainous and Martens 2012, p. 234; Bankston III 2013, p. 629; Janmaat and Mons 2011, p. 37; Baumann 2004, p. 1). As MacMullen (2011, p. 872) succinctly notes:

Intentionally and otherwise, through both private and public schooling, each society raises its children in ways that predictably and lastingly impact their political beliefs and values and therefore help determine the future laws and political institutions of the society.

On MacMullen' argument, educational systems are thus necessarily biased (cf. also Bankston III 2013, p. 629; l'Anson 2010, p. 115). This is interesting today, considering that the field of visible worldviews is changing so rapidly, bringing new options to the fore and multiplying the moments when views collide—causing social stress and reopening the ancient issue of how sufficient solidarity and cohesion may be achieved within nation-states. Put differently: as imagined national communities multiply (cf. Dagger 1997, p. 102; Nelson 2011, p. 115; Valk 2007, pp. 280–281) their normative and ethical ideals, it becomes increasingly difficult to agree on—or even define—which identity and which kind

of civic conduct and belonging goes with being a resident of a certain country, that is, a member of a certain polity. Of course, in the context of the continued development of the European Union, these issues increase manifold (cf. Baumann 2004, pp. 1–2; Çayır 2011, p. 22; Ross 2012, p. 22). The Rousseauian ideal (cf. Dagger 1997, p. 93; Liem and Chua 2013, p. 290) of administrative and cultural convergence between nations and states is, arguably, in some disarray.¹ Cf., however Connolly's (1991, p. 90) critical assessment that the 'gentle rhetoric of articulation, realization, community, purpose, attunement, fulfilment, integration, and harmonization'—that is the core logics by which communities see and organise themselves on a communitarian understanding—may also be construed as 'arbitrary, cruel, destructive, and dangerous'.

To depict people in terms of unidimensional, all-encompassing identities that trump all others (as populist political movements, parties, and even governments are at times prone to do) becomes all the more difficult under these circumstances (cf. the cases for a complex and dialogic view of identity offered by writers like Taylor 1994, p. 32; Benhabib 2002, p. 147; Assmuth 2015, p. 54; Pasieka 2015, p. 31; Kiwan 2008a, p. 49; Cush 2011, p. 82). Many sources of this proliferation of available identity patterns are identified in public and specialist discourses, and a wide range of emerging enactments and trends are held to cause, assuage, or resolve the needs experienced in its wake. All in all, it is easy to note that the business and contents of civic, ethical, and religious education in liberal democracy are in ferment.

But the field still remains in search of a coherent critical-theoretical framework (or, minimally, a set of core definitions and concepts). There is strong need of a nuanced analytical framework targeting the level between empirical assessments of elements in states' educational solutions and received macro-understandings of the political-educational imperatives intrinsic to recognised faiths, cultures, traditions, moralities, and values on which public worldview and identity production may be based. On the one hand, all liberal democracies cultivate a keen interest in the structure and conduct of civic, ethical, and religious education (even when arguing for neutralist, secularist, unbiased, and universalist stances and goals). On the other, there is the conjecture that these activities have little bearing on normative matters since the identity of the liberal democratic citizen is normatively independent. On a similar note, de Groot and Veugelers (2015, p. 33) identify a certain

blindness to the normative frames [italics in orig.] underlying current democratic narratives, practices and procedures [...] typical for passive and thin democratic engagement types.

Wherever governments and stakeholders assign responsibility for curricula or design programmes for teacher training, there is a proclivity for doing this without recourse to strong normative argumentation. Instead, a default argument for *universal man* is offered that pre-empt and dislocates civic-normative pluralism and critique.²

Contrary to the modernist, Hobbesian argument for negative liberty (cf. Kiwan 2008b, p. 62; Taylor 1996, p. 481)—that is that in the final analysis individuals are autonomous in relation to normative environments—even in liberal democratic thinking notions of ‘the good life’ arguably undergird civic, ethical, and religious education. Furthermore, the liberal democratic emphasis on normative neutrality and detachment is deliberately construed not (as the standard argument holds) to balance oppositions, but so that a range of perfunctory accommodations and hard choices between incommensurable values, political-ideological approaches, and normative orientations that could threaten the post-normative fabric of society can be skirted. This does not, however, automatically imply that normative disruption ends (as surmised by advocates of secularism, tolerance, and neutralism). Another logical possibility is that there is, in a given society, a dominant model for civic normativity that excels at displaying itself as post-normative and independent and a range of dependent, lesser models without the same influence struggling to make their marks. MacIntyre (1996, pp. 403–404) provides some support for this view of the propensity to ‘forget’ that speech is always articulated from within culture, and not without, by his compelling argument that each of us

characteristically views and describes [a] situation only from the specific point of view of his or her own commitments, judging the success and failure of other points of view from the standpoint afforded by standards of justification internal to our own; and by so doing we render our overall cultural situation invisible, at least for most of the time.

Strong discursive and conceptual links clearly operate between post-normativity, political tolerance, and social cohesion, highlighting the need to critically revisit the unfolding logic of civic education in liberal

democracy. In the all but dominant narrative, the liberal democratic state is considered free of restrictions tied to its own normative heritage. This is particularly visible in the standard goals of normative schooling—Halstead and Pike (2006, p. 43; cf. Dimitrov 2011, p. 13; Smart and Hutchings 2008, p. 412; Jensen 2011, p. 147) see these as to ‘produce autonomous, critically reflective moral agents’—as opposed to Rousseauian ideals of ‘cultivating the cooperative attitude of the citizen-subject’ (Dagger 1997, p. 94). As argued already in pivotal early modernist contract and Enlightenment theory, one of the cardinal purposes of disenchanted rationality is to pre-empt normative (‘obscurantist’, as Enlightenment philosophers referred to irrational epistemological approaches) political and social reasoning (cf. Valk 2007, p. 276; Stråth 2003, p. 188; Petersen 2008, p. 233). However not, as one might perhaps infer, by replacing one normative principle with another but by ostentatiously transcending normative, value-laden reasoning altogether in what then becomes a ‘normative’ (rather than a directly normative) sphere. There are different orders and levels of normativity at play here. I will return to this in subsequent chapters.

Taken seriously, this classical argument means that a sufficiently rational and autonomous subject in a liberal democratic polity will not regard her actions and decisions as normatively spurred—merely as the fruits of reason. The value sets that operate within modern rationalism are those emerging from and conducive to reason, not to engagement with contested (cf. Connolly 1991, p. 94) civic or political worldview production in a more usual sense of the word. Correspondingly, rational politics aspires to disentangle itself from contestation on the basis of rivalling ‘good-life-arguments’. Of course this manoeuvre only works if politics is theoretically provided with the ability to purge itself of power, interest, bias, hierarchy, subjugation, dominance, and violence. This is a tempting, technical solution to ancient theoretical problems of conflict and contestation. But it is nonetheless historically false in the sense that no ‘liberal democratic’ states or societies (the perhaps best candidates for modern mass politics devoid of value arguments) are ever or have ever been truly liberal or democratic. Even the most assertive and forward liberal democracies are marinated in tenuous, contingent, multi-layered, fuzzy, and inchoate compromise between badly matched political agendas and operations. Andreescu (2011, p. 132) argues in a similar vein that the ‘view that state action, and education in particular, should be value-neutral or ideologically impartial’ is both untenable and

unnecessary (cf. Valk 2007, p. 283). And Splitter (2011, p. 17) reminds us (cf. Chap. 5) that the

muddled idea of ‘moral neutrality’, while pretending to offer protection to vulnerable youngsters, actually threatens to impose on them—if only by default—the moral agenda of the dominant *status quo* and other interest groups.

It follows that liberal democratic political arrangements thus normally—but contrary to the liberal democratic self-image—draw on non-neutralist institutional, legal, and ideological frameworks a far cry from ‘pure’ liberal democracy (cf. Dahl’s (1956, pp. 73–74) early but failed introduction of ‘polyarchy’ to resolve the problems caused by this distance between ideal and practiced liberal democracy). But even though this is such a basic (Kwayu (2011, p. 133) even refers to it as ‘perennial’) aspect of the liberal democratic legacy, it is rarely acknowledged—particularly not in public or scholarly discourse sympathetic to the ideal itself. For this core tenet to actually work, we would have to envisage a totalitarian liberal democratic state without any particular ideological past or cultural context but with absolute power over societal, educational, and ideological life. But this is a seemingly absurd idea (cf. Rawls (1971) however, who is inspired by this de-contextualised, instrumental rationalist liberal approach in his seminal theory of justice; see also Valk 2007, p. 279; l’Anson 2010, p. 108; and cf. the ‘specification’ of Baynes et al. (1996, p. 68) ‘of modern Western culture as fundamentally rationalist and subjectivist’). On this philosophical view, values pertaining to differentiated social and cultural experience stay on the outside of liberal democracy’s normative purview. They may only be admitted into it if they pertain to humanity as a conceptual whole (cf. however Mills’ (1997, p. 77) scathing critique of Rawls’ universalist/rationalist theory of justice for not making ‘a single reference to American slavery and its legacy’).

One conceivable reason why this misconceived logic has nevertheless been possible to maintain is liberal democracy’s unparalleled success during the post-war—and especially post-Soviet—era to purge itself of any sense of ideology, and—although it is clearly the representation of a set of core political beliefs and convictions that sets it apart from other alternatives (cf. Mouffe 1992, 1993; MacIntyre 1988; Connolly 1991; Barber 1984; Rancière 1999; Monteiro and Ferreira 2011)—thus of socially and culturally biased participation in political conversation

and contestation. As Taylor (1994, p. 62; cf. Dagger 1997, p. 127; MacMullen 2011, p. 875) aptly phrases it:

Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges.

Approached from this angle (and mindful of its links with rationalist epistemology), liberal democracy tends to become the embodiment of a political technology, rather than a call for civic mobilisation on the basis of strongly argued normative images of society. As a political philosophy, it does not address issues of cohesion, sociality, or communality but provides unsurpassed levels of conceptual and civic momentum for the opposite: individuation and social fragmentation. It is more machine than contestation; more institution than mobilisation; more routine than innovation; and more custodian than game changer. This aloofness is a prerequisite for the theoretical as well as the political claims for liberal neutralism. The driving element is universal, not contextual wo/man, and citizens' patterns of allegiance are directed towards an institutional-regulative mechanism rather than towards something that encourages them to reflect on, define, share, argue about, and work out their interconnections and personal commitments within a shared normative space different, by definition, from other normative spaces and languages (cf. Putnam's (1996, p. 227) assertion that 'a claim's being right and someone's being in a position to make it—are relative to the sort of language we are using and the sort of context we are in').

Consequently, citizens in mature liberal democracies need not bother with political engagement in a more disturbing sense than ordering their rational preferences and trying to meet them. As has often been argued by its critics, this effectually drains liberal politics of 'the political'. As Dagger (1997, p. 107) bluntly notes a 'politics as interest-aggregation is incapable of generating allegiance'. If the political and social vocabulary has no words to describe local, contested political spaces or communities, this is profoundly challenging for people wishing to understand their connectedness, their relations to, or share in political authority. In normative education, this creates problems the roots and effects of which extend far beyond what goes on in individual schools and particular educational settings. This is why critical analysis is clearly invited not only on the logic and purpose of normative schooling but also on the liberal

democratic order itself as out in education. Following the argument outlined above, the question emerges how states in the liberal democratic fold cope with the serious problem of conducting post-normative civic, ethical, and religious education in normative political spaces. Even if the philosophical question is large, it seems clear that their core stance precludes normative civic commitment. The universalist ethos requires issues of normative education to be addressed from a position of neutrality (cf. Pike 2009, p. 137; l'Anson 2010, p. 106). Differing world-views, competing normative matrices and strong notions of the good life should thus be expected to be approached symmetrically. As will however be shown, this is not the general case in today's Europe. Instead liberal democratic states are deeply enmeshed in scripting and promoting educational setups that tend to drive identifiably national and cultural bargains (cf. Baumann 2004, p. 3; Bankston III 2013, p. 632; Splitter 2011, p. 18). And educational systems struggle to close the gap between an abundance of normative and an elusive post-normative view of the good life. The rest of the chapter is devoted to sorting out the logic and ramifications of civic, ethical, and religious education as tools of comprehensive, public identity-making.

CIVIC EDUCATION AND MECHANISTIC STATEHOOD

Civic educational orientations do not only vary greatly in and across educational and political settings, but there is also significant variation regarding how social and educational scholarship approaches civic education as a theoretical– analytical problem. Two main perspectives are discernible here. On the one hand, there is the entrenched technocratic view that the effort by states' educational departments and various agencies to craft and implement programmes for civic, ethical, and religious public education is coherent and effective (cf., however, Biesta et al. 2009, p. 21; see also Berglund 2015, p. 8). The inference is that studying educational programmes and priorities will also enable us to appraise the effects of those same programmes. If states or stakeholders require adjustment of whatever educational goals and values (or teacher, pupil, denizen, or citizen behaviour) are in place, this may be done by revising educational programmes and curricula. From this perspective, the distance between states' rhetoric and directive-making and actual schooling across large societies is construed as remarkably short. Scholarship based on this assumption tends to regard the realisation of centrally decided

goals, norms, setups, frameworks, and values as a minor and manageable issue. This matches the view taken by states themselves, who are naturally wont to overestimate their power to control education and via education the disposition of the general public.³

Governments thus produce what are sometimes—to borrow the adjective used by Bankston III (2013, p. 632)—‘brehtaking’ lists of values and value-related items to impart to pupils (cf. Law 2004, p. 259; Çayır 2011, p. 24). To set up normative goals of this kind seems intrinsic to statehood itself. Like a range of virtues, as Dagger (1997, p. 120; cf. MacMullen 2011, p. 874; Callan 2015, p. 9) remarks, the notion of civic virtue that provides the backdrop for civic and citizenship education relates to

a character trait or disposition that is not likely to thrive without encouragement and cultivation. This cultivation can occur in a number of ways, but there is a widespread expectation, especially in the United States, that schools will be responsible for much of the civic education a person receives.

It is worth noting (and will be touched on further in the following) that Dagger’s endorsement of ‘virtue’ as a key term here arrives with a certain conceptual luggage, heavy with a distinguishable European account of the good life. The imagery of ‘virtuous’ persons as better equipped to choose the moral high ground (and avoid sinful behaviour) is obviously garnered from Christian thinking. It is unclear how much purchase it has on the issues under investigation here. A core rationale behind my argument is to move beyond the old-school conception of civic and citizenship education as intimately connected with or typically congruent with Christian or post-Christian doctrine. Dagger’s analysis is sharp and theoretically easy to identify, but not all that promising in this context. It remains questionable to which extent it clarifies the range of available options for contemporary liberal democratic educational statehood. As critically noted for instance by Grammes (2011, p. 2), even though especially late nineteenth and early twentieth century European civic education was directed at ‘the virtuous citizen who [was] well aware of public interests and welfare’, this model was no effective antidote to colonialism, wars, persecution, or eventual genocide on European soil.

States’ official proclamations of what should or needs to happen in certain policy sectors (like education) of mass society, however, have to

be assessed cautiously. Not only because goal implementations may fail but also because the logic and identity of the liberal democratic state itself are less coherent than we usually assume it to be. Some critics note that the link between programmatic state rhetoric and what actually goes on in societal or institutional life is weak—particularly in areas where the level of complexity and amount of involved stakeholders and parameters for action are multiple or imperfectly aligned. Assmuth's (2015, p. 44; cf. Thornberg 2009, p. 247; Mosher 2015, p. 29) view that 'it would be a serious mistake to read the macro-level of political and state actors into the micro-level of people's experiences and memories' sounds a cautionary note here. Although Assmuth reserves her objection for 'hugely heterogeneous' countries like Russia (cf. Gogin's 2011, p. 2 critique of Russia's renewed interest in religious/spiritual education as spurred by the state's perceived need to 'maintain control of Russia'), the same point arguably applies to states and polities of any size. There is no reason to expect any state to be overly adept at accomplishing its normative educational goals, particularly (a) when these are formulated fuzzily and (b) when they target 'soft', non-easily hemmed in societal areas like communities' normative reproduction of themselves—in itself a fuzzy educational and political object. In principle, this is not an effect of state size, but institutional logic. Unless they are totalitarian monoliths, they cannot be viewed as consolidated and coherent political subjects. Following the logic of the paradox unpacked above liberal democracies wishing to enhance their performance in civic-normative education would do well to first make themselves significantly less liberal and democratic.

On this line of argument, state policies are typically never as unequivocal or coherent as the mechanistic view requires (cf. Taylor's (1996, pp. 466–467) similar use of the term 'mechanistic' in relation to modern science). In parliamentary democracies coalition governments, for instance, have to take many things into consideration when coming together over policy. And the life expectancy of any liberal democratic government is not excessive. States' policy positions are therefore strong in the sense that they are codified and expressed through the legal and power structures states and state agencies control but weak in the sense that they are inherently volatile and always contingent, that is, subject to withdrawal or revision after the next general elections—if not sooner—and often phrased elusively in order to cater to and accommodate a range of plural non-aligned political-ideological views and critiques. In federal states such as Germany, Spain, or Belgium, there is, furthermore, a built-in

division of legal and administrative competences between the regions and central government that deeply affects—sometimes impedes—policy cohesion as well as implementation of political and institutional goals. Policy is thus rarely if ever substantively congruent and educational policy is no exception. Still, there are a number of ways to try (and fail) to make states politically and legally coherent, each with their own civic-normative conceptions and emphases (see for instance the elucidating Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in Modood and Meer 2012, pp. 43–45). Liberal democratic political leadership is thus not as much about directing and implementing coherent core agendas as about dealing with ideational sprawl, ideological tension, and institutional inadequacy and resilience. Symptomatically, over the last two decades, European states' ability to govern has been reconceptualised, as the idea of 'government' has receded and the notion of 'governance' ascended in European, international, and global studies.

The mechanistic approach thus seems to encounter severe difficulties as a starting point for educational analyses already by virtue of its crippled theory of the state. In educational studies, states' normative dispositions usually tend to be treated as majestic background tableaux or black boxes: they are significant because they provide input for and frame education. This superficial take on statehood veils the complex logic and structure of politics in contemporary society. Let me be old-school and compare it to tailoring. If the teacher is the tailor and the school the tailor shop then it is surely insufficient to refer to the tailor to appraise the quality or style of the manufactured garments. If the fabric used to make them consists of threads weak and strong, rough and fine, thick and thin, old and new, then all these elements will recur in and affect the quality and function of the garments independently of the tailor's best efforts.

In the same vein, states are not best addressed as somehow general, independent providers of educational content and guidelines. The philosophical positions and normative solutions they emulate for educational 'tailoring' are there, but we have to keep in mind that they are always and necessarily ambiguous, unstable, contingent, and tenuous, that is, expressive of views and ideals—not non-views or non-ideals. Applying them therefore implies reproducing the logic, flaws, and quirks of the original thought material. States' political logics and theoretical flaws and quirks will reappear in and make up part of the logic of civic education (and other state strategies to mass condition and reproduce the identity patterns of its populations). They clearly cannot be regarded as

neutral input-providers, but need to be seen as politically active and relevant (cf. Bankston III 2013, p. 632). To elaborate on a given model for civic education is pointless if civic education is treated as independent of power and politics, at least where civic education is a comprehensive public responsibility. Whether educational systems apply the input states, stakeholders, or vested interests provide well or badly is another issue altogether. But we have to move beyond the simplistic view that visions of the good life may be articulated innocuously and in principle independently of politics and culture.

But a perhaps even graver problem for educational analysis is discernible here; namely the image conveyed by political ‘mechanism’ of the pupil/student/citizen. Now, in earlier times, the idea that pupils (as well as any general populace) were cognitive and moral vessels to be filled with proper content by those authorised to do so was a beacon for state, social, and educational philosophy. But how compatible is this notion with contemporary educational and political ideals? Possibly not very much. To consider pupils passive receptacles or empty vessels goes against the grain of contemporary educational as well as social and political thinking, where young people as well as adult citizens are expected to be anything but passive, dependent receivers of knowledge and values but educated to become astute, critical, independent, self-mobilising, and active. When Halstead and Pike (2006, pp. 41–43; cf. Taylor 1996, p. 471; Connolly 1991, p. 74) write about ‘producing’ informed, committed, active, autonomous, and critically reflexive moral agents, they demonstrate a built-in dilemma for the educational state (activist civic education is addressed more fully in Chap. 6). Even as the agent part of this proposition is easy to concur with since it taps visibly into prevalent cultural ideals of self-responsible and disengaged individuals, the word ‘produce’ connects to the same difficulties of political mechanism, which are raised in this study. States clearly aspire to do exactly that: produce citizens of certain normative dispositions. The question, however, remains to what extent they are able to do so, precisely which orientations should be promoted, if citizenship should be universally or parochially inclined, and whether the educational setups they drive are legitimate and realistic or not.

There are no guarantees that pupils will actually progress along the educational lines worked out by the involved states and stakeholders, either cognitively or morally. It is not inevitably the case that—as Biesta et al. (2009, p. 7) phrase it—‘what is being taught will be identical to

what is being learnt'. Callan (1997, p. 222; cf. Kennedy et al. 2007, p. 88; Monteiro and Ferreira 2011, p. 5; Walzer 1983, p. 197) points to the same problem in common education:

The unavoidable risk is that our children might be shaken in their commitment to values we cherish and have good reason to cherish, and the depth of our expressive interest in child-rearing makes us recoil from that possible outcome. But if that is so, our ambivalence is not directed towards some inessential educational process that we might prudently discard to keep everyone happy; its object is rather the unpredictable and disturbing variety of conclusions and choice that human reason will reach under conditions of freedom.

It is hard to reconcile this attractive view of critical individualism with a mechanistic understanding of state/stakeholder → school/teacher → pupil/citizen relationships. In principle, the fit will be better in social and educational settings where ideas of individuality and independence are considered irrelevant or residual. To cite an extreme example, Applebaum (2012, pp. 319–320; cf. Dimitrov 2011, p. 14; Jeliaskova 2015, p. 31), in a renowned recent study of post-war Eastern Europe's transformation, describes the lengths the Soviet Union went to in order to re-educate Poles, Hungarians, and East Germans for the measurements of *homo sovieticus*. Compared to pluralist educational systems, the high Stalinist approach of the early post-war period would have had no conceivable difficulties with the mechanistic approach. The task of Soviet educators and civil servants alike was unequivocal and to drift off educational targets and formulae provided by the government extremely dangerous.

But the same caveat may be formulated more mildly, without reference to Stalinism. In normatively diverse and pluralist societies, we cannot assume that all educators share their states' enthusiasm and guidelines for the dissemination of certain value sets in schooling. Being overconfident in mechanism—a common practice in educational scholarship—thus also requires that we assume educational systems to be organised in ways resembling Stalinism's. It is worth noting here that patterns of European parliamentary representation (at the time of my writing this parliaments in Sweden, Finland, the UK, France, The Netherlands, Romania, Hungary, Italy, and others illustrate this point) indicate that parts of national electorates clearly consider the politics of

multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, tolerance, neutrality, or equal gender opportunities repulsive. On the reasonable default assumption that there are comparable proportions of educators in these segments of the respective electorates as in other segments, a formidable problem for mechanistic interpretations of civic education emerges. In individual countries, this means that a tenth, a fifth, or even a third of all teachers responsible for implementing a given value set in everyday education are personally ideologically opposed to all or parts of those values. As MacMullen (2011, p. 874; cf. also Martens and Gainous 2012, p. 972; Dejaeghere 2008, p. 358) points out ‘the selections and judgments that educators make will always be influenced by their values’. High Stalinism was not required to deal with problems of this kind. The notion that either professional educators or the general citizenry—or even the highest echelons of the state’s hierarchy, as argued by Taylor (1989, p. 236; cf. Walzer 1983, p. 226)—was able, even in principle, to entertain other views of the good life or the political or moral values associated with it than the Stalinist state’s would have been seen as preposterous.

Even on this brief expose, the mechanistic case for a technocratic interpretation of statehood appears weak, since its underlying assumptions are remarkably difficult to defend. A robust philosophical framework has to acknowledge this weakness and look to other strategies. If states’ policy rhetoric and social–educational realities cannot be expected to mirror one another, the notion that they do must be discarded. One common objection to this reasonable argument in political analysis is that the rhetorical activity of states and governments should be treated as quasi-real and potentially policy active all the same. Even if states and policymakers are not today at the point where their ideals come true, the purpose of their rhetorical efforts is still to move society (or education) in certain directions. As scholars we may therefore disregard the fact that not all implied good things have yet come to fruition because in time they will. But even as this is an understandable political-ideological position, it does not ease the progress of social and political analysis. The world is jammed with propositions on how society best should be arranged, which routes to follow, laws to make, thoughts to think, and ends to reach. Political parties, social movements, debaters, think tanks, and ideologues do little else than produce new propositions; concurrently positing that the visions on offer will be instantiated down the road. It is essentially impossible to imagine the opposite: that they do not believe their visions to be accomplishable. Even very

radical, extremist, violent, outcast, and marginal groups seem to take this immanent logic for granted, be it the present day's ISIS, *die Rote Armee Faktion* of the West German 1970s, or fringe xenophobic and new nationalist movements. But to seriously contribute to qualified assessments of social, political, and educational life, quasi-realist theory should be discarded in favour of more concrete, manifest political perceptions. There has to be some level of social and political realism in the arguments, stances, and propositions we consider important to appraise.

If there were only two levels to take into consideration when assessing civic, ethical, and religious education—say, the level of the programmatic state and the level of the concrete classroom—it is obvious that these cannot be interpreted as mirroring each other. Neither the idea that the state is a coherent rational subject with a cohesive and unambiguous view of civic, ethical, and religious education (or of itself), nor the notion that education is mainly a matter of consistent implementation of state rules and guidelines in practical schooling make for convincing analytical starting points. In addition, the sympathetic notion that public schooling should be geared towards nurturing critical and independent subjects clashes directly with the idea of pupils as passive receivers and embracers of standardised worldview devolution. But these issues are seldom at the forefront of educational studies.

THE ARRESTED LOGIC OF EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Drawing on the above, it seems as if there is a core theoretical void in educational studies as they normally do not cultivate a sufficient (or sufficiently critical) focus on the logic of governments, states, and institutions in their scientific setups. This makes it difficult to achieve critical leverage in relation to states', stakeholders', and other agencies' proclamations and work over educational identity formation. But the lack of sound theoretical and conceptual grounding also restricts the ability to push through various civic-normative claims and models in comprehensive education. In the scientific literature, claims and critical points tend to be formulated independently of the horizons of institutional success, regardless of whether or not educational states and stakeholders are able or willing to heed the formulae presented in research or take scholarly conclusions of different kinds into consideration when configuring educational setups.

Halstead and Pike (2006) provide one example of research that approaches citizenship and normative education as though the primary difficulties to address here were pedagogical, and researchers, schools, teachers, and students mainly needful of good manuals on how to implement it well. The more decisive question whether British (or European) liberal democracy is organised in ways that enable accommodation or development of citizens' and residents' political involvement or not is simply not raised (cf. Kiwan 2008b, p. 17). Even as Halstead and Pike take a sympathetic interest in diversity, they are silent on this score, indicating an empty theoretical space in normative educational studies. The converging values they point to (2006, p. 23) as informing citizenship and driving moral education are adamantly liberal (cf. Kiwan 2008b, p. 50; Pike 2008, p. 114). There is no question as to which orientation they prescribe; Halstead and Pike apparently regard their first duty to be to strengthen liberal civicism and affirm the view of the good life predicated on it. Exactly how they believe this translates to strengthening young peoples' skills of navigation in a pluralist and multidimensional civil society where liberal thought provides only one alternative in an array of partly incommensurable sets of values is unclear. To a significant degree, Halstead and Pike's analysis is congenial with what MacMullen (2011, p. 872) refers to as 'the status quo bias in civic education'—that is affirming the educational state's commitment to received civic-normative patterns in liberal democratic society.⁴ ter Avest et al. (2011, p. 95) offer a similar view of the logic and goals of educational statehood when they posit that to

create a different world, a world that makes a difference, governments should respond to the need of pupils with regard to their development as future citizens [and also that:] in these days, government has to answer to the needs of the children for edification ('Bildung') with regard to their participation in a future world.

Even as these magisterial admonishments may (or may indeed not) be sensible from a moral or pedagogical perspective, the image of 'governments' and their purview is remarkably straw-like; predicated on the uninterrogated belief that states are stable and coherent normative entities that know what they are and what they want, and—importantly—that should pay meticulous attention to educational scholars' policy prescriptions. How these prescriptions attain the supreme level

of authority that makes them fit for educational policy guidance remains somewhat obscure. Here, ter Avest et al. provide a good illustration of the mainstream approach to educational statehood and practice that this study aspires to decompose and re-theorise. On a more critical perspective of the logic of society, polity, and education, the avowed ambition to ‘create a different world, a world that makes a difference’ is difficult to read as motivated by scholarly knowledge-seeking.

Contemporary educational scholarship on the transmission of values and norms from societies to young people thus usually acquires an intra-system orientation, where political government and liberal democratic statehood play too uncritically scripted roles. But to ensure that the ideational transportation of civic, ethical, and religious content from states to governments to schools to teachers to pupils unfolds in line with whatever values and programmes receive political blessing at any given time, an extremely unified, coherent, and monolithic state technocracy is required that allows for this to happen. Autocratic systems of government may at least claim to be capable of producing regulated flows of ideational content from one level to the next, top-down. But then, if they are autocratic they cannot be liberal or democratic (cf. Bankston III 2013, p. 633, who turns exactly the same logic half circle when suggesting that liberal democracies court totalitarianism when they attempt to create educational structures of this kind). For contemporary European societies, this is not what we look at (cf. Wexler et al. 2011, p. 123).

Let us now, for the sake of argument, assume that three empirical construct levels are active and relevant in this context: the state, the educational apparatus, and the pupil. It is worth pointing out that the model introduced below departs from standard methodological practice in educational (or other) policy studies in the sense that it does not invoke a logic of input → output, where the level of the pupil is seen as the object of the normative concerns and administering efforts at worldview dissemination driven by the educational state and its institutions.⁵ Albeit this is one (possibly the most, and for many policy analysts the only conceivable) established way of referring to the relationship, which enables a certain range of conclusions to be drawn, I suggest here that pupils in principle be regarded as integrated parts of the structure of civic-normative education. In this way, the *SEP* model below avoids overemphasising or reifying the psychological setup of individual pupils, in favour of systemic consideration. A core flaw in standard methodological approaches to policy-making that will then become less embarrassing is that if we

are adopting a systems approach, we cannot plausibly presume—as standard policy analysis is prone to do—that the logical workings and social influence of the system under consideration mysteriously stops when it encounters individuals (pupils, users, citizens, consumers, voters, professionals, teachers, customers, etc.). To my mind, this take on policy-related phenomena is perhaps more ideological than scientific. It seems to be inadvertently aiming to place a core logic of autonomous individuality out of critical range, which higher object makes the methodological inconsistency that follows acceptable. On a different note, I suggest that if social, institutional, and cultural systems are seen to affect or determine social conduct, ideas, or practices, we cannot reserve a sacrosanct space in explanations of these systems for non-systemic items and entities. This all but nullifies the analysis.

We thus cannot at the same time conceive of everything institutionally prior to the presence of autonomous individuals and their thoughts/actions in civic-normative education—such as governments, bureaucracies, associations, schools, universities, municipalities, international normative organisations and NGO's, courts, curricula, churches and other houses of worship, corporations, cooperatives, teacher training colleges, etc.—as constitutively systemic but pupils as non-systemic. Yet this approach figures widely in policy analysis, where it however should be transcended or at least bracketed. For one thing by virtue of the inconsistently applied postulate that if individual people are to be seen as independent and autonomous, there is no reason to restrict this perspective to the category of pupils in educational systems. As institutional environments and employers/mobilisers, all the other levels and sectors are obviously also populated by independent and autonomous people—granted that independent and autonomous people are construed as systems resilient. The methodological reasons for singling out pupils as bearers of independence and autonomy in this multi-layered matrix are thus opaque.

The alternative view proposed here does not entail empirical non-variation in terms of how rigid or malleable are social and institutional systems. But working from a systems perspective implies a reasonably defensible application of systems-attentive frames of reference. To hazardously impose limits that disallow the inclusion of certain elements or events in the systemic structure does not make sense. Of course people are not merely structural elements in an underlying ontological sense, but as designated parts of a system of education (or healthcare,

conscription, social service, law, industry, tourism, morality, consumption, sports, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, or kinship—to give a few analogies) they most definitely are. They may therefore be treated as structural elements when addressed in such circumstances. Removing the structured logic inhibits understanding. What matters in analyses of civic-normative educational setups is then not the extent to which people/pupils are *not* elements of this particular system, but the extent to and ways in which they are. To tacitly imply that the category of pupils is exempt from inclusion in analyses is therefore almost epistemologically fraudulent, for want of better term. It is clearly bad research since it risks causing the analytical apparatus and any epistemological claims derived from it to break down. Still, to assess the social or educational world from a critical systems perspective does not require us to assert that there can be no autonomy on any construct level. It merely questions how relevant this observation is for the investigation at hand. The most conspicuous alternative if we are unhappy with a critical systems approach of this kind is surely to replace the entire methodology by another, not to break it apart by treating certain elements in the totality by one logic and other randomly picked elements by another. By treating, as I do in this study, the level of the pupil as an integrated component of the structure of civic-normative schooling I believe that opportunities for learning and clarification increase—and that the analysis will be stricter and more focussed.

A CRITICAL THEORY OF PUBLIC NORMATIVE EDUCATION

As already explicated, the presumption that any state fully controls civic-normative teaching and learning seems far-fetched. To further confound things, states that are not fiercely autocratic as well as educationalist are usually not able to mobilise around sufficiently precise objectives for the received logic to play out according to prescription. These kinds of governing simply do not match the elemental nature of liberal democratic statehood. Furthermore, and contrary to what is often assumed in current edge European policy research, policy is seldom cogent or finite enough to be ‘diffused’. Technocratic political, state, and policy analyses clearly tend to work under the assumption that it is, but as I will argue here it actually is not. The logic of state and political thinking is always ideologically and ideationally complex—never fully describable in itemised terms. In liberal democracy, the constitutional and legal end results

of political processes always carry their negotiated and power-dependent origins within them. Any proclaimed or promulgated consensus on the meaning of things like social cohesion or civic order is by necessity conditional and unstable. And as the main purpose of civic-normative education is to define and disseminate societal stands and solutions on contested issues like these the same tension will be produced in educational form, however adding schooling–learning complexity to what was already civic–political–ideological complexity.

Let me describe the model relationships here in more formal terms. Let us, firstly, assume that a given state S —the sole agent responsible for comprehensive public normative schooling in the fictive nation-state of *Civicstan*—is so adept at doing this that we cannot imagine how its goals could be more transparently, cogently, or precisely articulated. Let us then assume that the educational apparatus E at the disposal of S is so comprehensive and sophisticated that its levels of efficiency and clarity surpass anything else we are possibly able to imagine in terms of successful implementation of the directives and content articulated by S . Let us lastly assume that the generic pupil P who is subjected to the educational and normative rigours of S and E is so adept at processing and truly absorbing the desired worldview into her personal normative setup and notions of the good life that we cannot imagine how this could be better or more thoroughly done, barring the exchange of P for a robot.

Hence, in *Civicstan* S , E , and P are maximum performers. Let us accord a perfect level of performance for each construct the value of 0.9 on a nominal 0.1–0.9 scale, where 0.1 indicates the worst possible performance. The *Civicstan* scenario is thus a maximum $SEP_{0.729}$ scenario, because the multiplied perfect values

$$S_{0.9} * E_{0.9} * P_{0.9}$$

produce the perfect value $SEP_{0.729}$. But this is unrealistic. No state \leftrightarrow educational apparatus \leftrightarrow pupil interaction or relationship has ever played out in this way (not even that of high Stalinism in the Soviet sphere of influence; or the massive post-war effort at civic and ideological re-education of the German people connected to West Germany's reception of restructuring aid from the US; or the influential twentieth century Progressive American educational tradition (cf. Bankston III 2013, p. 630); or even the high hegemonic efforts represented by the standard clerical approach to civic–religious education that used to be the rule in most European countries). What I am getting at here is simply

that as soon as we acknowledge (as we clearly should) the presence of multiple interdependent acting constructs in complex policy areas and processes we need to recognise that overall performance scores will inevitably decrease with each multiplied factor when performance ratings are imperfect. There is no escaping this logic; even if its technical minutiae remain open for operational calibration and refinement.⁶

Let us now in a second example assume that the performance in the neighbouring and otherwise superbly comparable *Civic Republic* is only moderate, say midway between perfect (0.9) and catastrophic (0.1) on all three construct levels. According to the *SEP* scheme, this would generate the sequence

$$S_{0.5} * E_{0.5} * P_{0.5}$$

which adds up to an aggregated value of $SEP_{0.125}$, that is, a mere 17% of the educational performance in perfectly scoring *Civistan*. The clarification I am interested in here is that in complex systems and multi-tiered processes of the kind seen here, imperfections on one level will necessarily exacerbate performance on all other levels. Even with perfect performances on one level aggregated end scores will rapidly fall when others are not.

Improving the performance rating significantly on one level—in this case perfecting either the civicness-optimising conduct of states, educational apparatuses, or pupils—can thus only partially improve imperfect systemic performance. One important issue here is in which performance bracket real educational systems may actually be expected to perform. It is not inconceivable that all contemporary liberal democratic educational systems would cluster somewhere in the bottom half of the scale. But my business here is heuristic and theoretical, not benchmarking. The relationship between acting construct levels in civic-normative education thus plays an essential role for systemic performance. But this observation—simple as it is—is no salient theme in the literature on civic education, where consideration of the basic logic of institutionalised statehood is generally absent.

With few levels of acting constructs things are still fairly manageable (even though there are probably no societies where only two or three levels obtain—and definitely no liberal democratic societies), but they rapidly become less so as additional levels are introduced to the system. Following the same logic, total scores will be minute already in a model that identifies five distinct, separate, half-decently performing levels. As is readily surmised, the introduction of each new moderately performing

(i.e. scoring 0.5) systemic level will reduce the overall performance of the entire system by half. With five separate levels instead of three end, *SEP* scores will shrink by three quarters, that is to about 0.031 instead of 0.125. To align and implement civic-normative goals and agendas from the top to the bottom in the *Civic Republic* above is thus no simple task. Many countries' actual institutional setups display four, five, or even more acting construct levels. This is clearly the case in federal systems such as Australia, the US, Germany, or Spain or confederal systems such as Switzerland or Belgium. Moreover, vertical separation of educational responsibility and powers of direction between parallel political-administrative structures according to religious, geographical, or linguistic fault lines also obtains, as in the Netherlands. But also centralistic and monolithic liberal democratic states such as Sweden and France comprise more than a few acting construct levels. (The notion of 'acting construct levels' is not used here in the sense of states' officially designated chains of command and policy devolution, but as an independent analytical systems-describing concept, subject to revision and calibration.) For these reasons, it seems ill-advised to uncritically approach the educational state in mechanistic terms. In countries where educational systems contain large numbers of institutional levels, a more effective means to enhance the quality of civic-normative teaching might be decreasing the number of levels active in regulation and operation before developing the content of civic teaching itself.

In rudimentary form, the *SEP* model draws on the simple assumption that states are the only authoritative organisers of civic education. If, on the contrary, educational control, responsibility, or conduct is dispersed between states and other stakeholders (such as churches, civil or voluntary associations, corporations, coops, or NGOs), the logic becomes more complicated. To assess levels of educational performance in such cases requires that calculations are repeated for every stakeholder and structure of acting constructs. It also requires that the power balance and degree of autonomy and authority in the system of each active sector is carefully assessed. I do not quite see how this would jeopardise the critical integrity of the *SEP* model; rather that complexity and greater empirical realism would then be added to it. As it stands, the model is sufficiently elaborated for my purposes here. In the face of institutionally dispersed educational landscapes, however, we must surely acquiesce the point that the idea of authoritative direction of civic-normative teaching-learning loses much of its strength. Thus, institutional environment is

arguably a vital ingredient in the assessment of civic education, as the liberal democratic model of government and statehood allows for an array of viable distributions of power and control.

To understand this sector of contemporary society, we must, however, refrain from thinking that because states' and governments' power over education is not full or systematic, *it does not follow* that it is non-existent. The same goes for all sectors of governmental and other political action. Powerful public (and private) agencies, institutions, and associations clearly subscribe to some power, even when they are not in possession of all power. Likewise, we should be mindful of the fact that just because schools, teachers, and pupils are institutionally bound to directives issued by states and governments regarding normative education, *it does not follow* that their dependence is all-encompassing. To gauge the actual quality and extent of this dependence is a separate empirical issue. Somewhat distressingly there are no theoretical tools that allow us to easily deal with this dimension of state ↔ education ↔ pupil interrelationships. From a critical epistemological perspective, one step forward is therefore to forgo the assumption that there are.

Hence, to conclude that states have no influence whatsoever over public educational systems seems as preposterous as to insist that they have full authority. Instead, I suggest that state power should be regarded as inchoate, elusive, and dispositive. It is shared with other stakeholders; it cannot reliably mould the minds of those it addresses; it is often opposed, adjusted, and transformed; its goals are multiple, unformed, and partly irreconcilable; it circulates permanently between the abstract and the concrete and the hidden and the overt; and we can never be certain that what states claim to project is also what they actually project (or even that it expresses what they actually want to achieve—states and governments are clearly as capable of and susceptible to deception and evasion as individuals, limited companies, or civil associations). Rather to the contrary: we can actually always be sure that it is not or only partly is. In this sense, education must not be thought of in law-like regulative terms. Legal (as apart from educational) strictures, norms, and goals are ideally articulated clearly and coherently enough for it to be reasonable to expect people to live and act in such a way as to avoid culpable behaviour. This does not resemble the logic of the public normative—or any other—field of education. Legal normativity is furthermore enforceable, whereas educational and ethical normativity are not. Still, every comprehensive system of public schooling pursues

normative agendas with a view towards making (certain) citizens out of (certain) values.

A more conditional theory of the state will guide discussions in subsequent chapters. In terms of value and knowledge transportation from one level to the other through the channels and models available in individual societies, it offers no clear-cut causal explanations of how educational or political setups should be revised in order to abandon old or develop new models for applied civic-ethical-religious education. It aims for the middle ground in the sense that it does not deny states' influence over civic education but considers the scope and sustainability of this troubled influence a question for empirical assessment at any given point and not an *a priori* theoretical or dogmatic element. Let me summarise the mechanistic and the conditional theories of the educational state before moving on.

The **mechanistic theory** of the educational state expects directives, programmes, and actions undertaken by governments to express coherent, intentional, and legitimate agendas that are (or should be) implemented in the field of normative schooling and citizen-making. On this view, there is scant need to address (a) states' intrinsic normative setups or (b) the *a priori* assumption that their stated objectives are in fact disseminated in concrete schooling.

The **conditional theory** of the educational state expects directives, programmes, and actions undertaken by governments to express complex, ambiguous, and contested agendas that are seldom (and should not be expected to be) implemented in the field of normative schooling and citizen-making. This view invites critical analysis both of (a) states' intrinsic normative setups and (b) the extent and success of dissemination of their stated objectives in concrete schooling.

Even as the mechanistic framework seems to dominate contemporary educational—and much social and political—scholarship, it promises things it cannot keep (a similar essentially Hobbesian critique is mounted by Runciman (2003, p. 29) who contends that the state is 'an association that cannot be identified with its members, its constitutions, its powers, or its purposes'). This requires us to turn to other frameworks, of which conditional theory seems to be one cogent alternative. This contribution thus moves beyond the more usual critical habit of merely pointing out problems inherent in existing theory and analysis without essentially

working out any positive alternative.⁷ The conditional theory as stated above plays a nodal role and will largely guide the subsequent analysis.

THE LOGIC OF CIVIC COMPETENCE

Some further questions warrant elucidation. A corollary issue in this context is why, in contemporary liberal democracy, citizenship formulae, citizen–state and citizen–citizen relationships have to be described in terms of competence. This is clearly an addition to the classical tradition of democratic thought where political equality is the cardinal principle for communal decision-making (cf. Bankston III 2013, pp. 632–633). As I have argued elsewhere (cf. Strandbrink 1999, p. 33, 2009, p. 183; Strandbrink and Åkerström 2010, p. 32), the relationship between political equality and political knowledge needs to be seen as adversary, not complementary (cf. Brennan 2016; Landemore 2013; Urbinati 2014; Somin 2013). In more elite, Schumpeterian versions of democratic (read: ‘democratic’) theory, competence has primarily worked as a means to counter exaggerated mass political participation or (cf. John Stuart Mill’s (cited in Mills 1997, p. 60; cf. *ibid.*, p. 94) view that non-white races “‘in their nonage” were fit only for “despotism”’) too effective or extensive mass suffrage. The same caution is a core factor in the thinking of James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and other ‘founding fathers’ (that is Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, and George Washington) behind the American declaration of independence and later the American constitution. In his often-cited work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), Schumpeter essentially replaces classical democracy’s radical egalitarianism [*isegoria*—*isonomia*—*isopoliteia*] in the demos with the corporatist idea of democracy as power competition between elites, regardless of simple or complex political equality (cf. Dagger 1997, pp. 104–105; Callan 2015, p. 7; Walzer 1983, p. 304). However, to accord to elite groups, the privilege of competing between (and only between) themselves for power effectively means to abandon the ethos and legacy of democratic thinking. It remains obscure to which extent political orders may be referred to as ‘democratic’ in the absence of sufficient levels of political equality between members of the demos—and sufficient levels of authority by *demos* over state action.

The main rationale behind Schumpeter’s suggestion is the argument that people in general lack the cognitive and intellectual faculties (in other words: the competence or reason) required to form sound political or societal opinions, or discern and judge strategic alternatives and policy

options against each other or against pressing societal needs in a qualified manner. As Mills (1997, p. 59) succinctly notes the ‘paradigm indicator of subpersonhood has been deficient rationality’ (cf. Walzer’s (1983, p. 285) point that all ‘arguments for exclusive rule, all anti-democratic arguments, if they are serious, are arguments from special knowledge’; cf. moreover Strandbrink 2016a, pp. 11–12; 2016b, p. 315). For his part, Schumpeter uses words like ‘infantile’ and ‘rabble’ when attacking what he sees as a bizarre focus on ‘people’s’ political reasoning and naïve volition-formation in democratic life. This argument in favour of differentiation provides an important backdrop to the idea that citizens have to be sufficiently ‘competent’ in order to be real citizens. Even as ancient democrats would frown on Schumpeter’s and other elite democrats’ attempts to subsume political equality under political competence, the contemporary notion of civic (and citizenship) competence treks the same same political-epistemological trail.

On the face of it, Baumann (2004, p. 4) offers a more promising idea of competence. According to him, ‘civil competence’ and ‘civil enculturation’ in public schooling refer to ‘a capacity to conform to or reject, play along with or undermine dominant representations in a socially shareable way’. Sympathetic as this activist reading is it is questionable if it matches what any states aspire to accomplish in civic education. I doubt if the rejection or undermining of all or any prioritised value sets will ever be a mark of public education in liberal democracies (cf. Dagger 1997, p. 42; MacMullen 2011, p. 872; Kiwan 2008a, p. 42; Monteiro and Ferreira 2011, pp. 7–8). Critically and progressively inclined readers would possibly welcome it, but no educational system is organised to operate or evolve in this direction. Thus, Baumann’s argument may be ideologically appealing—but again the institutional constraints and political logic of statehood are conspicuously overlooked. Dagger (1997, p. 122) provides a sharper image, highlighting the duality I also point to here. Even as Baumann arrives from a more constructive angle than much current scholarship on civic and normative education in liberal democracy, his remarkable level of critical-progressive activism is possibly paid for by heightened levels of irrelevance from the perspective of the educational state. But of course, this objection is not grave.

Incidentally, there is another interesting element in Baumann’s account (2004, p. 5) worth noting here: the inherently conservative, historically doubtful proposition that ‘long-standing nation-states have had a long time to calibrate their dominant civil cultures as they are reproduced in schools’. This core argument is made to support the research

team's focus on four long-established (even century-old) schools in four European countries: France, Germany, Great Britain, and The Netherlands. But to infer that, for instance, Germany's last century of civil enculturation or civic education has been a long and steady process of refinement and calibration appears somewhat problematic. It would perhaps be more appropriate to talk of a violent educational history of abruptly colliding processes, revolutionary change, existential havoc, extreme ruptures, ideological ascendance and decline, militarism, pacifism, critique, hybridisation, and hegemonic struggle between incompatible pedagogical and political ideals and orientations. I suspect that what was being taught and promoted in terms of normative behaviour and worldviews before, during, and after the Second World War is far from characterised by continuity. (I seriously doubt if the purported view of perpetual calibration and systematisation applies to the French, British, or Dutch systems either.) Baumann thus constructs a paper state, characterised by clearly unrealistic levels of coherence, reason, unity, subjectivity, continuity, mechanism, and intentionality.

This rationalist and instrumentalist state perspective illustrates a widely embraced view in the social sciences of act rationality; visible in rationalist political studies, business administration, and sociology, where the notion that 'acts' are only really acts if they are goal-directed and sufficiently well-informed prevails. Here, actors are considered to strive for factual knowledge and order their preferences according to factual circumstances which may then be subjected to proper evaluation and drive new action effectively. This is how limited companies, CEOs, boards, entrepreneurs, consumers, and citizens are expected to behave, and in accordance to which epistemological scheme they may later be assessed and researched upon. In the rationalist world, the notion that different versions of the good life and the values and cultures that nurture and emerge from them could in fact be incommensurable and therefore bad objects for symmetrical rational comparison and evaluation does not come into play. Nor does the reasonable world-political observation that different versions of the good life relate to rationalist tenets in intractable, non-computable, or non-systematic ways (cf. Pike 2009, p. 141).

Again, if we consider certain civic requirements to be intrinsic to democratic life, the objective of civic education is still elusive. As shown in Chap. 1, it is easy to point to a range of reasonable but different society-guiding democratic principles such as democracy-as-emerging-from-the-demos, democracy-as-ensuring-human-rights, and democracy-as-representation.

Each of these however places different demands on citizens and pupils in comprehensive education. In the first case, the primary civic virtues to be inculcated have to be associated with the status of being a politically equal member of a radically sovereign demos. But (as shown regarding Schumpeter) the mere idea of having to formally educate members of any demos to somehow become more authentic would have been anathema to Greek democrats. Here, you either partook in the constitutive association or did not. Nobody could override the autonomy of a confirmed citizen, or the ultimate sovereignty of the people's direct assembly. To argue in favour of the existence of a body of superior knowledge available to educators and state officials (as Plato famously does in *The Republic*) and not to the people in general would have been considered audacious. Barring this objection, it is perhaps still logically possible to spell out sets of qualities and qualifications that would enable individual citizens to better perform the tasks required from them by the democratic state in this sense. I suppose it would not have hurt to know when the *isegorian* [meaning: uncountable equality of all in the freedom of speech] citizens of Athens were expected to turn up at the Pnyx hill and deliberate, who was presently in charge of the army, the fleet, welfare arrangements, public baths, or education; or how to strengthen your voice or brains to become a more adept rhetorician or democratic sophist. Better institutional knowledge of the machinery of the state would probably also have been an overall good thing here.

In the second democratic scenario, the ethos of civic education would typically concern the rights of the individual citizen against the powers of the state. As the human rights discourse at its core is more liberal and universal than democratic and community-oriented, there are problems defining civic goals under this heading as supportive of intrinsically democratic needs. The needs and capacities called to attention by this position encircle the life of the private person and occasional participant in politics. A certain civil demeanour and civic logic is possible to read into this view, but there is no escaping the fact that, here, democratic society becomes more of a service and goods democracy than an arena for active political engagement, and the citizen consequently more of a private citizen–customer than a political agent. Mastering the skills and capacities required to lead this kind of life will necessarily involve learning the scope and extent of current institutional and legal rights. Normatively, this is mainly an expression of a liberal social view, not a democratic one.

Which concrete civic skills and abilities to affiliate with the third scenario is yet another issue. If representation is seen as the main democratic

logic, then civic life and participation only become understandable horizons for civic education as a means to familiarise people with and encourage them to involve themselves in the institutional logic of democratic representation. People should thus be educated in what it means to engage themselves in party work. But to be a party activist, civil servant, or professional politician is something other than to be a democratic citizen sharing a common civic space. This surely cannot be a standard goal of European efforts at civic and citizenship education.

As no neutral matrix for normative and cultural evaluation is available, educational states are presented with significant problems. How, in an increasingly differentiated world, is a multifarious normative landscape of partly incommensurable worldviews defined for educational purposes and transmitted to populations in terms of a single ethos? Which scope and range of civic competence is preferable, and which is not? What of those who fail to become more competent? Should requirements to prove themselves civically competent be directed only to newcomers to a certain polity or should also under-achieving in-groups already present (perhaps since generations) be urged to improve their competence by means of additional schooling? To put not too fine a point on this civic dilemma: should highly professionally qualified and socially competent newcomers with advanced academic backgrounds be encouraged to have their civic mettle officially monitored in this way whilst professionally and educationally unsuccessful or socially and politically marginalised groups with the ‘right’ ethno-cultural background and passport whose understanding of their civic and cultural place in society or in the world is exceedingly unqualified or downright wrong be exempted? Is it not reasonable in the context of civic enculturation to argue that peoples’ present levels of qualification or intelligence be assessed before they are required to enrol themselves in civic education to develop their cognitive skills and normative thinking about their society and the world they are part of?

It is clearly the case that levels of civic and citizenship competence—if we for a moment go along with the argument that these should be used to differentiate between residents’ degrees of membership—in European national populations are extremely varied. Moreover there are, as Bankston III (2013, pp. 633–634) aptly points out, no magical normative, philosophical, or bureaucratic formulae for how civic skills, competences, and goals should be inculcated in populations. As asserted in this contribution, nor are there any standardised European core values

that everyone agrees have to be disseminated on a massive scale or—if that were indeed the case—by which means we would be able with confidence and precision to separate desirable from undesirable values. As pointed out elsewhere in this contribution, the European normative mosaic is far too complex, multi-layered, contentious, and ambiguous for this to be done in any straightforward manner.

The only constructive way out of this conundrum is by thinking of and approaching it as conditional state theory does: that is, *apparently* the educational state (and the cultural and political environment supported and inspired by it) spend a great deal of time and resources on designing and monitoring civic education. This is a sufficient reason for us to subject it to critical analysis, regardless of outcomes. This is, however, where a fair number of scholarly contributions from educational studies fall short. Instead of mainly approaching the field in empirical terms—that is rendering it as a problem in and of itself in need of social scientific investigation and analysis—a core concern in these studies seems to be to facilitate and assess specific prescriptions of civic-normative education as they (ought to) unfold. Educational analysis of this kind seems to presuppose that the role of scholarship is to help—or: *re-state*—state and stakeholder definitions of normative content to be developed and devolved. This makes for an unfortunate overlap of scholarly and political agendas.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The depths of this debate have to be sounded further. The idea that full membership in a given political community should be seen as predicated on certain levels of civic competence is complex. There are two main considerations here: education of young people in public schooling and education of newcomers to a certain polity. All European countries are active in both areas. Still, the policy problems posed in each area are fundamentally different. In no countries are newcomers primarily the responsibility of educational systems. Under national as well as European legislation, people first have to be naturalised and allowed to reside for other issues to come to the fore. Civic competence can thus not appear on the policy agenda until this cycle has been fulfilled. Nevertheless, in many countries, discourses of civic education and citizenship competence seem to be closely tied to those of migration. In principle, however it cannot pertain to absolute newcomers of the first immigrant generation

to any society (cf., however, Mosher 2015, p. 20; Fellin 2015, p. 31; McGinnis 2015, p. 67). A more pertinent view is that it relates to immigrant populations of subsequent generations; granted both that these are administratively kept track of and that they retain substantial cultural elements and life expectations formed by their countries of origin that only partly match their new societal circumstances. But as children and adolescents from these groups enter into public education, they are not designated by educational doctrines or curricula as different. They may of course still be unfairly treated, abused, harassed, or discriminated against by reference to divergent cultural backgrounds, practices, or creeds, but educational systems are generally not formally designed or practically expected to disadvantage ‘deviant’ groups or minorities in the populations of liberal democratic societies. The cardinal understanding of civic-normative education is, rather, that it should work to transcend ‘culture’ altogether in favour of secularist and neutralist post-normative patterns of social co-existence.

Following the above, to analyse and assess civic education of adult newcomers is best done in other analyses than in connection with comprehensive public schooling. Issues of civic alignment, reproduction, and iteration clearly also apply in relation to newcomers, but the institutional fundamentals are different. Even if large numbers of adolescent newcomers show up in European schools (like in Germany, Austria, or Sweden in 2014–2015), they will remain a very small minority of enrolled pupils. I will return to this issue below; suffice it to note here that if states deliberately target these newcomers when introducing, reworking, or reinforcing their setups and content for civic-normative education, this is clearly a result of poor deliberation. The horizons for success of reforms of this kind are infinitesimal. Given education’s institutional inertia, tectonic character, and seeing that every European system of comprehensive public education already contains vast volumes and long and wide legacies of civic and normative engagement, the addition to the system of new doses of better civic education to the totality is like splashing a bottle of Rose’s lime into a tub full of gin and expect it to seriously transform it. Of course, adding some cordial will affect neither the taste, relative level of alcohol, weight, smell, nor appearance of the gin in any dramatic way—regardless of whether you bathe in or drink it.

As explained above, this study focuses on the educational state as an articulator, transmitter, promoter, and defender of civic, ethical, and religious education’s orientation and content, but from the perspective

of conditional (as opposed to mechanistic) state theory. Much of the debate on multiculturalism and migration falls outside this remit. Still, this approach allows broad treatment of education. As my main interest is the reproduction of liberal democratic society and culture in civic-normative education, it does not bar me from visiting other than formally designated civic/citizenship school subjects or any practices or initiatives undertaken by states and governments as long as they are conducive to this purpose. For states, civic education is mainly a screen for worldview and value projection. From the perspective of pupils and citizens, civic education exerts continuous cognitive and normative pressure, although in unpredictable, varying, unreliable, and fragmented ways.

Conditional theory of the educational state starts out from the rejection of strong causal conceptions of the relationship between what states' claim to prioritise and actual conduct and practice of civic and normative schooling. Patterns of influence are understood as fuzzy and patchy. On this rationale, studies of civic and normative education as well as liberal democratic statehood should avoid conjuring up strong causal relationships of this kind. On the conditional model, causality is not absent, but the diffusive logic and steps available to the educational state are seen as inherently unstable. As Dagger (1997, p. 118) stresses, public schooling is arguably imbued with social-political-normative postures and purposes. But these are not coherent or uniform; as we will see there are no core rationalities or well-defined subject constructs at any level of educational systems where causal moments may be firmly anchored and normative purposes thus easily served. With this in mind, we must bracket and deconstruct analytical frameworks that rest on that false premise. Given their weak logic in this sense, educational regimes are soft systems—such as markets, sports associations, clans, national communities, or research networks. Not hard systems—such as courts, bureaucracies, unions, churches, medical associations, executive boards, aircraft manufacturers, armies, or welfare institutions. Still, they are often rendered as if they were hard in this sense, that is, reliable, stable, unambiguous, lucid, legitimate, well-anchored, authentic, and historically extensive. But even if they were hard, in complex multi-tiered settings, institutional-logical restraints will—as shown by the *SEP* model above—make them remarkably ineffective conduits of civic articulation and conditioning. This means that even on benevolent interpretations, educational statehood cannot be expected to disseminate civic-normative education very roundly.

On the conditional view, grander causal questions thus need to be left to one side and different construct levels of the educational state approached separately, laterally. In subsequent chapters this is exactly what I attempt to do, on the basis of accounts and material from public, scholarly, state, and other sources. I will investigate cases, norms, and clusters of contemporary European civic/normative education, touching on epistemologies, ideologies, politics, discourses, and practices of civic schooling as the analysis unfolds, but deliberately refrain from overemphasising any causal linkage or appraising degrees of functionality between different acting constructs in different educational systems. Instead, the thrust of the analysis is logical. In the study, a range of crucial conceptual, semantical, ideational, political, societal, institutional, and educational elements are subjected to logical decomposition and evaluation with an eye to unpacking the structure and typical political and scholarly rendering of European community- and identity building through civic, ethical, and religious education. The key interest here is rather to understand the dynamics and ongoing logic that undergird this area of contemporary political and educational life than to prescribe what ought to be done.

NOTES

1. Dagger's compelling discussion of civic virtue and education (1997, p. 121) enables us to make another interesting observation: that by the time of publication of his work it made sense (at least in the US) to say that although 'the term itself is seldom used, the attempt to foster civic virtue, or citizenship (in the ethical sense) is also incorporated into the curriculum. Indeed [he continues] civic virtue seems to receive more explicit attention than autonomy, since state laws in the United States typically require students to study American history and government, to pass tests on the state and national constitutions, and to take courses in social studies and "civics"'. Obviously, today's attention on civic-citizenship education was not there in the 1990s. The main philosophical discourses Dagger engages with are those of classical and liberal republicanism, arguably dating this standard scholarly reference as a pre-globalisation work.
2. Here, Halstead and Pike (2006, p. 17) inadvertently illustrate the tacit eurocentrism inherent in liberal universalism in current educational thinking when they explain that against moral absolutism 'it is claimed that moral values clearly change over time: slavery, which is morally abhorrent to us, was once almost universally accepted'. Really? Even by those

in slavery? I doubt it. Here, Halstead and Pike by what I assume is an accidental slip actually show us who they consider were real members of universality at the time of slavery. Not slaves, apparently (cf. George 1999, pp. 192–193; Mills 1997, pp. 24–25). It is a commonplace that at least American political culture remains profoundly marked by the overt omission of black people (originally in slavery and later, until the late 1960s, in the meticulous segregation maintained in many American states) from the circle of people enjoying citizenship and civil liberty. A range of critical political theorists and historians has argued that the hallmark American emphasis on political freedom is intimately entangled with and conceptually dependent on this separation. On a genealogical view of the meaning of political words and concepts, it is of course entirely plausible to propose that since the late eighteenth century introduction of ‘liberty’ as a core political value, it has absorbed and renewed itself in many different social and political strata of meaning—not all of which have been morally non-abhorrent. The concept has evidently circulated widely in otherwise unabashedly racist, misogynist, colonial, homophobic, and repressive societies without imploding or losing momentum. Even presumed emancipatory political circles have often used it as a political yardstick to measure progress and at the same time been content to consider slavery and other kinds of social segregation, differentiation, and persecution acceptable (cf. Vega 2003, p. 123). From a genealogical point of view, the concept presumably still encapsulates this legacy. Sidney Kramer’s 1967 movie *Guess who’s coming to dinner* is emblematic of this history; as the liberal parents brilliantly played by Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy in the film struggle to accept that their fine blond WASP daughter’s met a swaggering black—extremely civil, handsome, internationally successful, and well-educated—man (Sidney Poitier, who that same year also starred in Norman Jewison’s thematically related *In the heat of the night* on a murder investigation in a small racist southern American town—for which bizarrely not Poitier himself [non-white] but co-actor Rod Steiger [white] trawled in an academy award in 1968 for best actor in a leading role) whom she plans to marry at an historical moment when ‘interracial’ marriage was only on the verge of becoming decriminalised in a large number of states. Incidentally, Spencer Tracy of course starred and was nominated for an academy award [snatched by Tracy’s co-actor in the film Ernest Borgnine for his soon-forgotten leading part in Delbert Mann’s soon-forgotten *Marty* the same year] but won the Cannes prize in 1955 for best actor also in an earlier as emblematic movie about American racial violence and bigotry: John Sturges’ *Bad day at Black Rock* (1955). Here, however, the early post-war core theme was prejudice and the cover-up of the murder of an American-Japanese farmer who had served in the American armed forces. In 1955 to

question the post-slavery legal framework keeping black Americans from full civic status was conceivably not as high on the agenda as a decade later; whereas questioning racism against Asians was (the summary internment in prison camps beginning in early 1942, after Pearl Harbour, of some 100,000 Americans of Japanese descent, the majority of which with American citizenship, is a key backdrop here). The interesting semantical question is, however, to which extent a concept like 'liberty' can be used without conceptually re-expressing or at least echoing this history. Do not words and concepts contain their origins and whatever earlier use they've been put to? Is that not the reason why pejorative language (to refer to a coloured person as a 'nigger'/'negroe' in the US, a 'kaffer' in Southern parts of Africa, or a 'neger' in Scandinavia) is rightly recognised as offensive precisely because the words themselves are violently tainted by their historical discriminatory meaning (cf. Mills 1997, pp. 16–17). If this (which I believe it should) is considered appropriate; then why should not the same logic apply to other words and concepts? For the American state to amply argue for 'liberty' before the violence-preceded installation of full civic rights to all of its citizens in the 1960s was thus radically hypocritical. The world ought clearly not to have taken this rhetoric seriously.

3. As Baumann (2004, p. 1) pointedly writes, nation-states 'love to dress up as stable, organic, and self-perpetuating entities'.
4. As Dagger (1997, p. 99) points out even the republican-liberal idea of citizenship—that is 'a way of life that required commitment to the common good and active participation in public affairs' diverges from this model. Incidentally, the five items by which Halstead and Pike (2006, p. 25) exemplify values: 'equal opportunities, democracy, tolerance, fair competition and the rule of law' are not all values in a philosophical sense. Equality and tolerance might be values, but democracy, fair competition and rule of law are certainly not. They are rather theories of power or redistribution, control mechanisms, or institutions (cf. Dagger (1997, p. 121) who refers to virtues such as 'empathy, trust, benevolence, and fairness'—stressing how these help making 'cooperation in general and democracy in particular possible').
5. I am indebted to Torsten Svensson for drawing my attention to this.
6. The choice of a 0.1–0.9 range scale is deliberate. There are of course other possibilities (such as 1–10 or 0–1) but I have settled for this range in order to avoid the extreme effects caused by the unique numerical logic of '0' and '1', respectively. Neither allows for any cogent sequence of multiplication (or comparison of multiplications), which it is my heuristic intention to convey here. One remaining problem with the chosen range is of course that the products of the cubed sequences I use fall away and diminish extremely fast at the lower end of the range.

Beginning with the $0.9 * 0.9 * 0.9$ sequence and moving stepwise down to $0.1 * 0.1 * 0.1$ results in the end value series $0.729 - 0.512 - 0.343 - 0.216 - 0.125 - 0.064 - 0.027 - 0.008 - 0.001$, respectively. Here, the second highest score still produces some respectable 70% of the highest score, whereas the lowest score only manages a niggard 12.5% of the second lowest. And the relationship between the top and bottom values is an easily spotted 1:729. An enormous difference indicating how the logic of the scale is exponential: which characteristic of course becomes even more pronounced with each new empirical construct level added to the model. Bearing this in mind, I still find it to be a decent model of multiplication and comparison for my purposes here. I do, however, ask the model reader to not treat it as anything more than a conceptual tool for making a particular theoretical point regarding (educational) statehood.

7. I am indebted to Johan Eriksson for pointing out this strength, which he is kind enough to consider laudable.

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