

Integral Education and Richard Pring's Liberal-Vocationalism

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A central strand in Richard Pring's philosophical work has been the rejection of the "false dualism" between the liberal and the vocational; between, as he puts it (Pring, 1995, p. 183) "the intrinsically worthwhile and the useful." In articulating a critical examination of this dualism, Richard Pring's work has been oriented not just to the world of academic philosophy of education, but to the world of educational policy and practice, particularly in relation to shifts and innovations in the area of vocational education and training. His role as Lead Director of the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training both reflects his broad social commitments and exemplifies the value of bringing careful philosophical analysis and deliberation to bear on pressing issues of education policy. It is a pleasure to be able to contribute to this volume in honour of a philosopher of education whose work has been of such value to the world of education, and who has always been so unstinting and generous in his support for students and junior colleagues.

In my own work, I have been concerned to explore the broader social and political context of both educational practice and ideas and I therefore see much to admire in Pring's work. Likewise, given my own research into the history of anarchist and libertarian education, where "integral education" is such a central notion, I have found it interesting to uncover the similarities between this notion and Pring's attempt to reconcile the liberal and the vocational ideals of education. It is this theme that provides the focus for the following discussion.

Brain Work and Manual Work

The idea of integral education was a central feature of the writings of leading Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century anarchist thinkers, and of the educational experiments associated with the anarchist tradition.

Thus Kropotkin, in his classic 1890 essay "Brain Work and Manual Work", argued against the false dichotomy between these two ideas, in a manner echoed in Pring's own rejection of the dichotomy between the liberal and the vocational. Kropotkin declared: "Instead of 'technical education,' which means the maintenance of the present division between brain work and manual work, we advocate the *éducation intégrale*, or complete education, which means the disappearance of that pernicious distinction." (Kropotkin, 1890, p. 458) Kropotkin's argument was not confined to the theoretical level but involved a detailed consideration of pedagogical practice. Children's experience, he argued, must involve an encounter with the world of work, for distancing children from this world in an academic environment would cut them off from the experience which lay at the basis of social and political consciousness. Both the quality of intellectual life and the progress of society would stand to gain from breaking down the "pernicious distinction" between brain work and manual work. As he wrote:

How much better the historian and the sociologist would understand humanity if they knew it, not in books only, not in a few of its representatives, but as a whole, in its daily life, daily work, and daily affairs! How much more medicine would trust to hygiene, and how much less to prescriptions, if the young doctors were the nurses of the sick and the nurses received the education of the

doctors of our time! And how would gain the poet, in his feeling of the beauties of nature, how much better would he know the human heart, if he met the rising sun amidst the tillers of the soil, himself tiller; if he fought against the storm with the sailors on board ship; if he knew fine poetry of labour and rest, sorrow and joy, struggle and conquest! (ibid).

These ideas were translated into practice in many early anarchist and libertarian schools, where the commitment to integral education was reflected in the curriculum, pedagogy and ethos of the school. Sebastien Faure, for example, an anarchist activist who was inspired by reading Kropotkin and other anarchist theorists, made integral education the central feature of his experimental libertarian school, La Ruche, established in France in 1904 (see Smith, 1983, p. 41). All children at the school studied a general programme of academic activities alongside learning a craft in a series of workshops. The aim, however, was not just to ensure that children left the school equipped with both a sound academic education and a useful trade. There was a concerted attempt to break down the academic/vocational divide at all levels of the curriculum, integrating the intellectual with the practical wherever possible. Louzon (quoted in Smith, 1983, p. 42) gives the example of a lesson in arithmetic that was based on children's experience of work in a foundry, where the children were given information about the number of employees, their status and their earnings, and then asked to work out the answers to questions about their yearly average and difference. Similarly, in the Escuela Moderna in Barcelona, perhaps the most famous anarchist educational experiment, established by Francisco Ferrer in 1904, a large part of the curriculum consisted in practical training, visits to factories and laboratories, and field-trips to study physical geography, geology and botany (see Suissa, 2006, p. 80). Nearly all anarchist schools had a communal garden, where the children worked at planting and harvesting their own vegetables, learning in the process about food production and preparation as well as biology and related academic areas.

In part, these kinds of pedagogical practice can be seen as an early example of the Deweyan idea of "learning by doing", which Pring is obviously sympathetic to in his discussion of the false dichotomy between theory and practice, where "theory is portrayed as the world of abstractions, of deep understanding of the accumulated wisdom set down in books, of liberation from the 'here and now'. Practice, on the other hand, is identified with 'doing' rather than thinking, with the acquisition of skills rather than knowledge, with low level knowledge rather than understanding" (Pring, 1995, p. 189). It is because of this false dichotomy that "science teaching, rather than be contaminated with the label 'vocational' enters into a mode of symbolic representation which loses the vast majority of young people – cuts them off, from an early age, from an understanding of the physical world in which they live" (ibid). Pring's argument that, as a result of this dichotomy, schools reinforce the message that "real science is for the able; craft is for the rest", so that "the science within the craft goes unrecognised, and for that both the able and the less able suffer" (ibid) is anticipated in Kropotkin's essay:

Under the pretext of division of labour, we have sharply separated the brain worker from the manual worker. The masses of the workmen do not receive more scientific education than their grandfathers did; but they have been deprived of the education of even the small workshop, while their boys and girls are driven into a mine, or a factory, from the age of thirteen, and there they soon forget the little they may have learned at school. As to the scientists, they despise manual labour. How few of them would be able to

make a telescope, or even a plainer instrument? Most of them are not capable of even designing a scientific instrument, and when they have given a vague suggestion to the instrument-maker they leave it with him to invent the apparatus they need. Nay, they have raised the contempt of manual labour to the height of a theory. 'The scientist,' they say, 'must discover the laws of Nature, the civil engineer must apply them and the worker must execute in steel or wood, in iron or stone, the patterns devised by the engineer.'

(Kropotkin, 1890, p. 458).

In challenging this division, Pring's project is to articulate an expanded notion of liberal education that preserves the idea that knowledge and understanding can be liberating, but incorporates these insights into the world of work rather than carving them off from it. Thus vocational training, rather than being narrowly conceived as learning a set of skills, can itself be part of this broad notion of liberal education. As Pring puts it: "vocational training might or might not be educational; it depends on how one is trained – critically or narrowly, encouraged to understand the processes one is trained in or focused solely on the practice; questioning the values of the activity or concentrating on the efficiency of the action". (Pring, 1995, p. 135). The idea that "the vocationally useful can be taught in an educational and liberating way" (ibid, p. 183) was embodied in the educational practice of many early anarchist schools.

Paul Robin's experimental libertarian boarding school for orphans, Cempuis, founded in France in 1880 and one of the models for Faure's school at La Roche, combined physical and intellectual education with learning a trade in one of nineteen different workshops (including a bakery, printing press and carpentry). The content of the academic curriculum, as Smith notes, "was seen as essentially complementary to manual and physical training. Questions, problems, needs arose out of the day-to-day practice of the workshops, but not in a mechanical, over-programmed way. Robin believed that practice should stimulate theoretical inquiry. If manual training was carried out in the right way, the child would want to know more of the principles behind it." (Smith, 1983, p.34). This last point is surely a clear example of Pring's idea that the vocational, if "properly taught", can be liberating – "a way into those forms of knowledge through which a person is freed from ignorance, and opened to new imaginings, new possibilities: the craftsman who finds aesthetic delight in the object of his craft, the technician who sees the science behind the artefact, the reflective teacher making theoretical sense of practice" (Pring, 1995 p. 189)

Behind the anarchist notion of integral education lies a view of human flourishing in which, following Proudhon, "the work a man does was something to be proud of, it was what gave interest, value and dignity to his life." (Smith, 1983, p. 25). Paul Robin, a follower of Bakunin, was one of the founders of the Association Universelle d'Education Integrale, the manifesto of which stated that education should "strive for the parallel and harmonic development of the entire being" (Molz and Hampson, 2010, p. 37). This is a view which, on the face of it, seems remarkably similar to the humanistic approach behind Pring's plea for a broadening out of the liberal ideal to reflect the idea that "assistance with how to live one's life, in which the sort of job one does plays such a significant part, is the most important of all educational experiences." (Pring, 1995, p. 190).

Yet as the above examples suggest, anarchist educators saw the pernicious division between brain work and manual work not just as an unfortunate false dualism which "bedevils our deliberations on education" (Pring, 1995, p. 183) but as an inevitable reflection of the

structural inequalities inherent in the capitalist state. To seriously challenge this pernicious distinction is, crucially, to challenge the socio-economic structures which support and sustain it.

Kropotkin and Bakunin's analysis of capitalist, industrialised states and their inherent inequalities convinced them that it is the capitalist system itself which divorces manual work from mental work and thus creates the false dichotomy between the two. The only way to break down this dichotomy and the associated inequalities was to provide an education in which, in the words of Proudhon, "the industrial worker, the man of action and the intellectual will all be rolled into one." (Edwards, 1969, p. 80).

In the historical context in which early socialist and social anarchist thinkers like Bakunin, Proudhon and Kropotkin were writing, the distinctions between brain workers and manual workers were embodied in the overt divide between property owners and "those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power" (Bakunin, 1953, p. 181) and were reflected and reinforced through a vastly unequal system of educational provision. Thus in defending the idea of integral education, Bakunin and Kropotkin, like other early socialist thinkers, were primarily driven by a concern for equality - a value which, for Bakunin, was bound up with the commitment to individual freedom. As Knowles explains, Bakunin's views on education were "informed by his beliefs in freedom, justice and equality as well as the subservient social and economic plight of those who were not educated compared to those who were educated" (Knowles, 2004, p. 190) and the educational experiments that anarchists set up outside the state system, primarily catering to children of the working class, were therefore partly intended to ensure "that in the future *no class* can rule over the working masses, exploiting them, superior to them because it knows more." (Graham, 2005, p. 221).

The anarchist ideal of integral education for all was thus an ideal of a "respect for labour, reason, equality and freedom" (Bakunin, in Hirsch and van der Walt, 2010, p. 401) intended not just to articulate a philosophy of education that reflected a conception of the whole person, but to challenge a political and economic reality in which a whole class of children were excluded from academic education and condemned to a life of labour under conditions that threatened individual freedom and dignity.

In a historical context in which the social and economic divisions between the liberal and the vocational were far more starkly constituted than they are today, it is perhaps tempting to see anarchist calls for integral education as an instance of the aspiration to "extend a grammar school education to all", a position that is in contrast with Pring's defence of the comprehensive ideal (see Pring, 1997). Yet the flipside of this anarchist idea, in the context of an education system structured along such clearly demarcated lines, is noted by Smith: "What ultimately was distinctive about anarchist concepts of integral education, especially in the British context was the centrality it ascribed to vocational education. [...] Technical education was not an inferior education, a training, to be given to just one class of society while a more restricted social group received the benefits of classical, grammar school 'real education'. It was something for all children." (Smith, 1989, p. 220).

Faced with such obvious correspondence between different kinds of education and unequal positions in a stratified economic system, breaking down this inequality was an urgent educational task for early socialist and anarchist thinkers. As Hirsch and van de Walt put it (2010, p.401), "In societies where access to education and culture were the preserves of

elites, and strict divisions existed between manual labourers and intellectuals, the concept of integral education has popular appeal”.

Challenging the System

What the above account makes clear is that the anarchist demand for integral education cannot be reduced to a demand for a more holistic vision of the educated person, combining the vocational and the liberal. The wider context of the anarchist position was a vision of a society not structured by hierarchies or inequalities of wealth, and founded on the moral principles of self-governance, individual freedom, fraternity and mutual aid. In this respect, these early experiments in integral education constituted one important facet in the project of prefiguring, through different kinds of social relationships, a radically different mode of social organization to that embodied in the capitalist state. So “while challenging the existing system, and trying to minimise its damaging effects on future workers, social anarchists never lost sight of the radical new reality that they wanted to create” (Suissa, 2006, p. 105).

It is here, I think, that the important contrast with Pring’s work can be found. For whereas Pring acknowledges the social and economic context of education, his orientation is towards existing society: “The key question, therefore, is: what are the knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes – the mental powers - which a person needs in order to act and behave as an educated person in our society” (Pring, 1995, p. 109). Anarchists, in contrast, started from the position that there was something deeply wrong with society as they saw it, and that this required a radical challenge – not to be achieved by the organized strategy of a revolutionary vanguard but through enacting different modes of organizing communal life.

While the anarchist ideal was of a society in which the division between manual labourers and intellectuals would be totally broken down, it is important to note that Bakunin and Kropotkin were writing at a time of growing industrialization and they, like many socialist thinkers of this period, believed it possible to embrace industrialization as part of a more equal socio-economic system. Knowles goes so far as to argue that Bakunin’s entire educational programme of combining “general teaching” and specialist vocational training in fact “revolved around industry” (Knowles, 2004, p. 191).

Socialist educators in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century were acutely aware of the fact that the children they were educating were likely to take up roles as workers within the newly industrialized economy. What they wanted, in this context, was to ensure that they did so in a way that preserved the dignity of labour and guaranteed an equal standard of living for all. Where the anarchists differed from the Marxists was in their conviction that such a radically free and equal society would only be possible without the state. Yet they shared the conviction that education was not just about preparing children to take up their role in the existing social structure, but about questioning and challenging that structure, to the extent that it was deeply destructive of core human values.

This conviction is shared by many contemporary radical educational theorists and practitioners; and surely, in today’s political reality, it is more pertinent and its task more urgent than ever. While Pring is right to criticise an exclusive ideal of traditional liberal education cut off from “the world of work”, the worry at present is not just that many children will be condemned to a life-time of mundane, dehumanising work in an unequal economy, but that many face the very real prospect of not finding any work at all. Indeed, the Nineteenth Century social anarchist aspiration to provide all children with “an overview of

industry and the profound significance of human labour” (Knowles, 2004, p. 191) seems somewhat naïve in a world where traditional jobs in industry are rapidly disappearing. While estimates vary as to precise ratio involved, there is no question that the gap between the poor and the wealthy is widening in the richest industrialized states, with a shrinking minority of the wealthy at the top remaining unaffected by rising unemployment. In the UK, the unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds has risen from 15% in 2008 to 20% in 2010, with two-fifths of all unemployed now aged under 25 (<http://www.poverty.org.uk/35/index.shtml>). A recent Oxfam report shows that 1 in 5 people in the UK live below the poverty line, while the UK’s five richest families now earn more wealth than the poorest 20% of the population (The Guardian, 17th March, 2014). Nor is this situation likely to change in the near future for it is arguably symptomatic of the kind of shifts in the relationship between the state and corporations that characterise the period often referred to as “late capitalism”.

The structural unemployment now characterising many advanced capitalist states is, as several theorists have noted, “causally linked to processes of restructuring in the world economy and the tendential emergence of a global labour market.” (Overbeek, 2003, p. 11) In this context, “‘jobless growth’ [is] the norm rather than the exception” (ibid). Given this reality, Ainley, commenting on the current UK situation, suggests that even if there is an economic recovery, it will happen “on the new social basis of a reconstituted reserve army of labour that will include many of those displaced by graduates trading down in the job market.” (Ainley, 2013, p. 50) In the mean time, many young people are joining the ranks of the new ‘precariat’ – “a growing class of people internationally who, while not being in any way homogeneous, share a common sense of ‘economic insecurity’, lacking any permanent workplace identity”. (ibid, p. 51).

This reserve army of labour, a salient category for understanding the relationship between individual employment trajectories and economic structures at both the national and the global level, is the result of several interconnected developments that, as Overbeek explains (2003, p. 4), have radically altered the physical location and nature of traditional industry-based jobs. Many labour-intensive aspects of traditional production processes have been relocated from the older industrial economies to low wage countries in the developing world in order to cut production costs. At the same time, new transport and communication technologies have made it possible to spatially separate the labour intensive parts of production processes from their financial centre, with the result that the sites and processes of production have become far more globally dispersed and thus reliant on a far more transient, mobile and temporary workforce.

In this new, flexible and increasingly global labour market, unemployment is redefined as “a personal defect of the unemployed who is incapable (or unwilling at the prevailing wage rate) to avail him- or herself for the labour market.” (ibid, p. 15), rather than as a structural problem within states, to be addressed either by redistribution of income, greater public investment, or industrial restructuring at the state level. (ibid).

Zygmund Bauman has provided a stark analysis of the likely effects of these developments on individual lives:

[T]he most consequential, dimension of the planetary-wide expansion of [neoliberal capital] has been the slow yet relentless globalization of the production of human waste, or more precisely ‘wasted humans’— humans no longer necessary for the completion of the economic cycle and thus impossible

to accommodate within a social framework resonant with the capitalist economy. The ‘problem of capitalism,’ the most blatant and potentially explosive malfunction of the capitalist economy, is shifting in its present planetary stage from exploitation to exclusion. It is exclusion, rather than the exploitation suggested a century and a half ago by Marx, that today underlies the most conspicuous cases of social polarization, of deepening inequality, and of rising volumes of human poverty, misery and humiliation. (Bauman, 2004 pp. 39–40)

David Blacker’s recent work has spelled out the consequences of this reality for the institutional provision of education within late capitalist states. Even if one is not convinced by his unremittingly bleak pronouncement that, as far as education is concerned, children and young people are now faced with “the era of elimination” (Blacker, 2013, p. 101), Blacker is surely right in pointing out that the narrative, often the target of left wing educational theorists and researchers, of “working class kids getting working class jobs” (ibid) seems far less relevant in an age when so many young people face a future of precarity in an ever-shrinking labour market; a situation that, as Blacker remarks, is very far removed from Marx’s “ultimate existential nadir for industrial capitalism’s proletariat,” namely having to sell their labour power. As he goes on to say, quoting Joan Robinson, “the misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all” (Blacker, 2013, p. 102).

Richard Pring has long been a vocal critic of the increasingly dominant language of instrumentalism haunting educational policy and linking education narrowly to economic productivity and measurable outputs. In consistently voicing this critique, he has eloquently defended the liberal idea that “to be educated, therefore, is at least this - to be in possession of those understandings, knowledge, skills and dispositions whereby one makes sense of the world around one.” (Pring, 1997, p. 84) Yet the world around one, for many children, is a pretty bleak one; one where their future adult life looks increasingly precarious. Given this situation, Pring’s question: “What, given the particular economic context in which we live, are the aims of education?” (Pring, 1995, p. 103) should perhaps be replaced by the question “What kind of education can best address the serious problems inherent in the economic context in which we live?”

The language of measurable outcomes and narrow instrumentalism that so worried Pring when he wrote his 1995 book continues to dominate educational policy discourse. Yet in today’s neo-liberal economy, as Ainley notes, the major problem facing young school leavers is the total lack of work, rather than ‘employer demand for skills’. It is in this context that we see an increasing emphasis on the educational aim of inculcating ‘entrepreneurial’ attitudes in pupils; an aim that, as Ainley notes, is clearly geared towards providing “trainees for flexible employment in the new service-sector proletariat.” (Ainley, 2013, p. 50).

Thus while Pring has argued for the need to challenge “the disconnection between liberal education and its economic base” (Pring, 1995, p. 116), it is the economic base itself that, as the above analyses make clear, has created a reality for young people that raises urgent moral and political questions – questions which, as Pring’s own work suggests, should be at the heart of our educational thinking and practice. Given the current economic reality, the recommendations of the Nuffield Review that “Clear, well-funded policies, involving further education and public and private employers, are required so that otherwise disengaged young people might be trained for future employment and remunerated during that training” are

likely to be at best ineffectual. Keep and Mayhew (2014) have noted the serious problems with repeated policy demands for “upskilling” in a socio-economic reality where the top end of the labour market “is characterised by increasing positional competition for a finite supply of good jobs, [while] the bottom end is marked by the barriers to equality presented by a superfluity of ‘bad jobs’” (Keep and Mayhew, 2014, p. 770).

However, in questioning Pring’s policy recommendations I am not siding with Blacker in arguing that there is nothing to be done. Education, as anarchists have long argued, can be one of the sites in which both teachers and students can engage in a critical process of understanding, questioning and challenging prevailing social and political structures and ideas. This involves a different perspective from that reflected in Pring’s statement, in the Nuffield Review, that

Social and economic conditions inevitably impact upon the attempts of schools, colleges and work-based training providers to raise standards, to develop citizens and to mitigate the ill-effects of disadvantaged circumstances. (Pring et al, 2009 (summary) p. 6).

The approach reflected in the anarchist tradition and, I argue, the approach now required, is not merely one of mitigating the ill-effects of disadvantaged circumstances, but of addressing the structural causes of these circumstances. Pring goes on to say, in the above summary of the report of the Nuffield Review, that “History shows, however, the limits of educational reform in attempting to solve problems which have a deeper social and economic source.” (ibid).

This is undoubtedly true; but it is also true that the costs of this socio-economic source are so damaging that they need to be radically questioned, and they can be done so partly by an education which challenges the underlying values of competition, entrepreneurialism and individualism. For while I agree with Pring about the need to defend a broad account of liberal education, this must involve more than the attempt to “bring to our attention a range of skills, understandings and qualities which an educated person in this day and age should require” (Pring, 1995, p. 195). The current education system is already steeped in a discourse in which the relevant “range of skills, understandings and qualities” is deemed to be those required to survive in a neo-liberal economy. Typical of the way the social imagery of the corporate and business world is reflected in educational discourse is the current emphasis in educational policy and popular literature on the need for children to develop entrepreneurial skills and character traits that will enable them to thrive in an increasingly competitive and deeply precarious economic future. Popular calls for teaching children resilience, for example, make explicit reference to the ideal of the entrepreneur in their appeals to educators and parents, as in this extract from a highly popular TED talk entitled “Let’s raise kids to be entrepreneurs”:

Many of the jobs that are commonplace today, won’t be around tomorrow, and the jobs that will be around tomorrow, don’t even exist today. So how can we educate our kids for these jobs? The current model of vocation-specific training won’t cut it. However, you can teach kids skills that they can use in any environment — skills like creativity, innovation, the ability to improvise, adaptability and resilience. (<http://women2.com/2014/03/06/6-ways-raise-kids-entrepreneurs/#BVm3iebVXzLbsOOi.99>)

The assumed goal for educators in the current climate is not to radically challenge a society characterised by massive inequalities, with quantifiable educational outcomes linked to differential positions in a competitive labour market, but to give individual children the skills to succeed in this competitive system - a system in which, by definition, increasing numbers of children are bound to lose.

In this reality, the status quo to be challenged is not just an educational discourse that, as Pring rightly points out, is technicist, instrumentalist and obsessed with measurable outcomes, but also the underlying social and political imagery; an imagery in which social disadvantage is an inevitable feature of society; in which “the poor” are here to stay, and in which the crucial questions for educators are how to equip children born into poverty to develop the resilience to cope with disadvantage, while nurturing, in a vision of “the big society”, the moral dispositions necessary to mitigate the effects of such disadvantage

Conclusion

Pring notes in his articulation and defence of a broadened version of the ideal of liberal education that “The life worth living is within a particular set of social and economic relationships” (Pring, 1995, p.132). Yet why should we assume that we know the definitive answer to what the best such social and economic relationships are? Surely, in the spirit of the Deweyan outlook which motivates so much of Pring’s own work, it is important to hold onto the idea, in our educational practice as in other areas of life, of the constant perfectibility of our social life. There are many possible configurations of social relationships, and if the ones we have now do not afford a life worth living for large numbers of people, then an education which does not confront this is seriously falling short of the liberal ideal itself. In today’s socio-economic reality, Bakunin and Kropotkin’s vision of integral education as an essential element of an emancipatory education for the children of the working-class may seem somewhat anachronistic. Yet if anything, I believe the overall educational message of anarchist educators is even more relevant than ever; namely, that what should drive our educational thinking is not just questions about what kind of society we have, but of what kind of society we want to have. If the underlying structures of post-industrial capitalism are so damaging and destructive of individual freedom, dignity and the social values of cooperation, maybe the most urgent task for educators is to defend and articulate those values, and, in doing so, to challenge and the system itself while nurturing the belief in our collective ability to construct something radically different and better.

For anarchist educators, such radical educational processes involved an ongoing practical experiment in imagining and prefiguring an alternative social reality through the structure, pedagogical relationships, curriculum and ethos of the school. Yet such processes also reflected a rigorous intellectual process of critical engagement with the world of ideas and values. In calling for an education that embodies a more radical challenge to our political and social reality, then, I am not suggesting that we abandon the ideal of liberal education that Pring has so eloquently defended. On the contrary, “the spirit of deliberation and of criticism” is, as Pring notes (1995, p. 194), intrinsic to the liberal tradition and it is within this tradition that we can find many of the resources to help children to ask - and to answer - “more fundamental moral questions about what it is to live fully human lives” (ibid). Maxine Greene has provided a compelling account of the idea of the social imagination in her defence of the role of art and literature in education. As she writes, expressing an educational aspiration that I believe is central to the social anarchist educational tradition, where social and political institutions are conceived of as essentially malleable and subject to constant

experimentation and change: “We also have our social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools... That is, we acknowledge the harshness of situations only when we have in mind another state of affairs in which things would be better.” (Greene, 1995, p.5)

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