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## Education as initiation into social practices – the case of democracy

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### ABSTRACT

In this essay I scrutinize the challenge Paul Hirst set to educational philosophers in rejecting rational autonomy as the central aim of education and proposing initiation into social practices instead. Although I disagree with some dimensions of Hirst's argument, I find his main idea of utmost importance in answering some burning challenges of contemporary democratic education. Contrary to Hirst's thinking, I argue that this theoretical development can be best done within the framework of philosophical pragmatism, on which appropriate interpretations of the concepts of democracy, social practices and habits can be based. In this framework, it is also possible to preserve as educational ideals the pragmatist interpretations of the notions of rationality and autonomy. Based on my theoretical development relying both on early pragmatist and contemporary thinkers, I argue that education for democracy should start from the aim of providing children with emotionally rewarding experiences of participation, membership and belonging.

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## Introduction

This essay continues my work on the challenge Paul Hirst set to the philosophers of education by rejecting his earlier key idea of promoting rational autonomy as the central aim of education. In its place, he proposed 'progressive initiation into those social practices in relation to which each individual can find their greatest satisfaction and fulfilment' (Hirst 1999b, 90). Although I disagree with some dimensions of Hirst's (1999b) argument (cf. Holma 2023), I find his main idea of the utmost importance in answering some of the burning challenges of contemporary democratic education. Contrary to Hirst's (1999b) own thinking, I argue that this theoretical development can best be undertaken within the framework of philosophical pragmatism, on which appropriate interpretations of the concepts of democracy, social practices and habits can be based. In this framework, it is also possible to

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preserve as educational ideals the pragmatist interpretations of the notions of rationality and autonomy.

In the first section, I scrutinise the educational challenge that Hirst, in my interpretation, is aiming to solve: how to foster through education not only the knowledge and skills needed for moral life, responsible membership or democratic citizenship, but also persons who, in their everyday lives, act according to this knowledge. In his argumentation, Hirst (1999a, 1999b, 2008) departs from Kantian ethics and turns to virtue ethics, whereas I utilise the framework of philosophical pragmatism.<sup>1</sup>

In the second section, I turn to pragmatist concepts of habit, practice and democracy. I demonstrate how these concepts are linked to the pragmatist theory of knowledge as revised considering evolutionary theory. I utilise contemporary thinkers such as S. Scheffler (2005) and Zembylas (2021) in developing these concepts along the lines of pragmatist thinking. I demonstrate that when the concepts of habit, practice and democracy are interpreted in the pragmatist framework, it becomes evident that the formation of democratic habits is where education for democracy should begin. Moreover, it emerges that the formation of habits is possible only in shared practices where emotional and embodied aspects of human knowledge are taken seriously.

In the third section, I discuss one of the most controversial claims in Hirst's (1999b) later thinking: the rejection of rational autonomy as an educational aim. I am not rejecting the notion that the ideals of rationality and objectivity are important for democratic citizenship, and on a closer reading of Hirst, neither does he (Hirst 2008, 119–120; Hirst and Carr 2005). I will demonstrate that pragmatist epistemology has conceptual resources for rejecting two potential misconceptions of rationality: the dichotomy of reason and emotion, and the fallacious assumption that it is possible to us to be fully aware of our own processes of belief formation.

In the final section, I first discuss how the account I am defending may answer a central critique of Deweyan-based visions of democratic education, namely, the critique that Dewey's philosophy is not sensitive to issues of power and injustice. I stress that the pedagogical approach I am defending is conducive to democracy only in a wider normative framework. I will then provide some examples, at the level of pedagogical practices, about the differences between, on the one hand, my account and other accounts that stress the importance of democratic procedures in education and, on the other, accounts that stress the role of democratic habits without emphasising the emotional and affective dimensions of the development of habits. Based on my theoretical development which relies both on early pragmatist and contemporary thinkers, I argue that education for democracy should start from the aim of providing children with emotionally rewarding experiences of participation, membership and belonging.

## Initiation into social practices as a central aim of education

When a philosopher of education with a long and distinguished career openly changes his mind about what had earlier been the central theme of his work, the situation is worth scrutinising. In this particular case, Hirst's change of mind resonated with my initial views of what is incompletely addressed in our philosophical ideas of moral and democratic education.<sup>2</sup> Hirst (1999a, 103) writes: '(i)f we unstick moral reasoning and moral virtues from the very practices in which they are necessarily embedded, we put our personal and social lives in peril.' To save us from this peril, Hirst (1999b, 90) stresses that the central aim of education should be 'progressive initiation into those social practices in relation to which each individual can find their greatest satisfaction and fulfilment.'

What kind of peril, then, is the peril against which Hirst's solution might work? In my view (Holma 2023, 136), some of the fatal problems faced by our societies have their roots in people's disconnection from (good) social practices. For example, increasing mental health problems can be seen as related to changed social practices among young people. Radicalisation is often interpreted as a way of fulfilling the need to be a member of a shared social practice.

In my view, Hirst is searching for solutions to a key challenge in democratic education. It is not sufficient that students have the knowledge and skills necessary for democratic citizenship; rather, they must be democratic citizens in their everyday lives. As I. Scheffler (1960, 98–99) put it:

(W)e talk of 'citizenship' as it were a set of skills, whereas our educational aim is, in fact, not merely to teach pupils *how* to be good citizens but, in particular, to *be* good citizens, not merely *how* to go about voting, but *to* vote. We talk of giving them 'the skills required for democratic living,' when actually we are concerned that they acquire democratic habits, norms, propensities. To take another example, we talk of giving pupils the 'ability to think critically' when what we really want is for them to acquire the habits and norms of critical thought.

In my view, Hirst is correct in identifying the solution to this problem as the initiation into social practices and stressing that the fulfilment of our needs, wants and desires is important (Hirst 1999b, 1999a). That is to say, I also agree with Hirst (2008, 19) about the need to break with some tendencies of Kant's philosophy.<sup>3</sup> In my reading, Hirst seeks a way out of the Kantian tendency to see our needs and wants as potentially opposing the moral ends of a genuinely free and autonomous person<sup>4</sup> (Holma and Huhtala 2014, 2024; Kant [1785] 1964, 66; [2014] 2014, 134).

Of course, merely fulfilling our needs and desires cannot be a justified basis for moral theory or moral education; the fulfilment of whatever needs, wants and desires I happen to have is no guarantee that I will behave morally and responsibly. The difference between Kantian ethics and both the virtue ethics approach taken by Hirst and the pragmatist approach I utilise here<sup>5</sup> is that in these philosophical approaches, virtuous

or morally praiseworthy action is seen as being in coherence with one's personal and social well-being and flourishing.<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this article, it suffices to say that neither of these traditions holds that all needs, wants and desires one happens to have should be fulfilled, but only that certain important needs and desires must be fulfilled to ensure, for example, the growth into morally responsible membership in a democratic society.<sup>7</sup>

I will next demonstrate how the pragmatist framework provides fruitful conceptual tools for developing a view in which education should turn its attention to offering emotionally rewarding experiences of participation, membership and belonging to responsible communities. This is, in my view, how the fulfilment of our needs, wants and desires can be connected to growth into responsible membership of a democratic society.

### **The concepts of habit, practice and democracy in pragmatist epistemology**

My argument that providing emotionally rewarding experiences of participation, membership and belonging is one of the most important aims of democratic education relies on my interpretation and development of pragmatist epistemology and the notions of habit, practice and democracy, as interpreted within this epistemological framework. The term 'pragmatism' can be used to refer to very different philosophical frameworks. There is definitely some truth in Arthur Lovejoy's (Lovejoy [1908] 1963, 2) famous criticism of pragmatism that there are

at least thirteen pragmatisms: a baker's dozen of contentions which are separate not merely in the sense of being discriminable, but in the sense of being logically independent, so that you may without inconsistency accept anyone and reject all the others, or refute one and leave the philosophical standing of the others unimpugned.

The same holds, to some extent, with John Dewey's philosophy with its different periods (e.g. Jackson 2009, 54–66), texts written for different audiences (Hildreth 2009, 786), and Dewey's own inconsistency or even the controversy that many scholars have identified in his texts (e.g. Bernstein 1961; Santanaya 1925).<sup>8</sup> A potential source of misunderstanding in terms of this essay is that, although it concerns democratic education, this article does not draw specifically from *Democracy and Education* (1916).

What, then, is the 'pragmatism' utilised as a theoretical framework of this essay, and what is the role of Dewey's philosophy in it? The central ideas of pragmatism utilised in this article are firstly, Charles Sanders Peirce's main epistemological ideas of the fallibilist and socially oriented apparatus of formulating our beliefs, and secondly, the role and interpretation of the notion of habit in this philosophical constellation. From Dewey, my approach utilises the development of the notion of habit introduced, in particular, in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922).<sup>9</sup>

The concept of habit is of the utmost importance for both Peirce's and Dewey's epistemology. The roots of the concept are in Peirce's theory of knowledge, where he aimed to take Charles Darwin's evolution theory seriously.<sup>10</sup> In this framework, human knowledge is seen as being developed through interactions with material and social reality, which implies some fundamental epistemological premises. We cannot rely on any source of certainty; reason and emotion are parts of the same (fallible) apparatus of achieving information about the world, and we cannot be entirely aware of our processes of belief formation. As Dewey (1922, 125) puts the central role of habit in the pragmatist theory of knowledge, 'man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor instinct.'

This is to say that for Dewey (1922), 21–32), habits range from technical skills such as walking to complicated abstract functions such as philosophical thinking. Furthermore, Dewey stresses that habits – not our conscious thoughts, values or choices – form the self even though we are not ourselves conscious of the processes of their formation, which happens in the adaptation to particular material and social environments (Dewey 1922, 173, 216). Once adopted, habits direct all our thinking, acting and feeling.

From the viewpoint of education, the most important thing is, of course, in what conditions it is possible to learn new habits (e.g. Holma and Huhtala 2024; Holma and Kontinen 2020; Holma, Tiina, and Blanken-Webb 2018; Holma et al., forthcoming). As human knowledge is achieved through interaction with material and social reality and channelled through habits, one condition for learning new habits is a self-evident change in social and material conditions. This is why our primary educational focus should be on renewing social practices in education: the development of new (democratic) habits is a process possible only in social practices that enable and encourage such development. Furthermore, Dewey, 1927, 337–338) stresses that 'habits of opinion' are the most difficult to change, which evidently has some implications for democratic education.

While I scrutinise in greater detail the characteristics of educational practices for fostering a change of habits, my view stresses, in the Deweyan spirit, the emphasis on the emotional response these practices provide to their participants.

In terms of the concept of emotion, it is important to keep in mind that in the pragmatist epistemological framework, emotion is not reduced to individual psychology (Dewey 1922; Zembylas 2021) but is part of our holistic apparatus of achieving knowledge of our material and social environments. In terms of how the collective nature of habit and the microlevel emotional and affective sides of the development of habits relate to each other, I find Zembylas's (2021) view of interpreting the pragmatist notion of habit in light of contemporary affect theory promising. In my view, Zembylas's (2021) theoretical development resonates perfectly with Dewey's (1922, 21–22) statement:

All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they *are* will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity.

In terms of education for democracy, my account, of course, relies on a particular notion of democracy. This view is Deweyan in not seeing democracy merely along the lines of the democratic procedures of equal voting rights and a parliamentary system, but rather as a way of life that enables its members to grow and flourish (Dewey 1922). Moreover, my account is committed to the idea of grounding principles that place limits on what the majority can decide for a system to still be called a democracy. This is to say that in the notion of democracy I am defending, certain ideals are so central that democratic decisions cannot overrule them and the system still be defined as democratic (Christiano and Bajaj 2024).

Equality is one of the concepts that provides normative constraints for democratic decision-making. For example, even if the majority votes for the oppression of a citizen or group of citizens, this decision cannot be defined as democratic. Of course, the definition of the very concept of equality is under enormous philosophical dispute. In terms of the aim of this essay, I want to point out that in addition to what I am suggesting for concrete pedagogical settings (providing emotionally rewarding experiences of membership and belonging to responsible practices), the wider normative concerns and formulations of equality and justice developed within this philosophical discussion are necessary to formulate the responsible practices into which students are to be initiated.

In addition to the normative philosophical discussion dimension, resonating with the starting points of philosophical pragmatism, philosophical ideals should be connected to empirical knowledge. As S. Scheffler (2005, 24) stresses, 'the egalitarian conception of justice must be complemented by a serious psychology of egalitarianism' including:

(F)or example, an account of the motivational structures and resources that egalitarian institutions could be expected to engage, a demonstration of how egalitarian norms would support the reactive attitudes and emotions that are an important part of human relationships, and a description of the psychological processes by which egalitarian social forms would sustain individuals' self respect and their sense of themselves as free and effective agents. (S. Scheffler 2005, 34)

This is to say that humans' search for the best way to construct a society of equals (see S. Scheffler 2005) needs both the normative vision that is under discussion and development, and an appeal to psychological and other relevant empirical knowledge.

To sum up, when the concepts of habit, practice and democracy are interpreted in the pragmatist framework, it becomes evident that 1) the formation of democratic habits is where education for democracy should begin and 2) the

formation of habits is possible only in shared practices where emotional and embodied aspects of human knowledge are taken seriously. Therefore, education should start by providing emotionally rewarding experiences of participation in responsible practices. Before I discuss these practices in more detail, I will turn to the role of the educational ideal of rational autonomy in this view.

## Rationality and autonomy

In this section, I discuss Hirst's (1999b) claim that initiation into social practices *instead of rational autonomy* should be the central educational ideal. Of course, as rational autonomy is the ideal shared by so many philosophers in the field of democratic education, this claim necessitates further scrutiny. A closer reading of Hirst (1999b, 1999a) illustrates that he is not, in fact, rejecting the value of either rationality or autonomy altogether (Holma 2023). Rather, he is stressing their connectedness to social practices and thus urging that in education, we should start from the practices. Again, whereas Hirst searches for tools from virtue ethics (Hirst 1999a; 1999b; 2008; Hirst and Carr 2005), I develop this idea within the pragmatist framework.<sup>11</sup>

In its simplest interpretation, autonomy refers to the capacity 'to govern oneself, to be directed by considerations, desires, conditions, and characteristics that are not simply imposed externally upon one' (Christman 2020). At this level pragmatism, as interpreted in this essay, is in coherence with this idea; the idea of democracy as shared (and free) inquiry contradicts any externally imposed conditions. However, pragmatism is sceptical about the idea of rational autonomy as independent of cultural and historical contexts and preconditions. Pragmatist epistemology rejects the possibility of the certainty of any human knowledge and stresses that we must begin the improvement of our knowledge and understanding from the conditions in which we find ourselves. The same idea applies to knowledge of both material and social reality.

In terms of the concept of rationality, the pragmatist account defended in this article implies that its overall rejection leads to a philosophical dead end. Relying on reason and evidence is one of the most important means human beings have at their disposal to improve their conceptions of the world in their shared practices. However, there are many persistent misconceptions of the concept of rationality that are not acceptable within the pragmatist framework I am defending.

The concept of rationality in the pragmatist framework needs at least two elaborations: the rejection of the reason – emotion dichotomy, and the admission that we cannot be fully conscious of our belief formation processes and thus cannot say with certainty that our belief formation meets some particular criteria of rationality.

As mentioned, a pragmatist, starting from an evolutionary understanding of human knowledge, sees emotion as part of our cognitive apparatus. This apparatus can make errors, but we have some means of reflecting on and correcting



these errors.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, any interpretation of rationality as opposed to emotions is mistaken. Although this theme has been discussed in both philosophy and the empirical sciences for decades, this dichotomy has persistent roots in Western philosophy, and it is related to some misconceptions in education that the approach introduced in this article tries to avoid. Plato argued that the suppression of irrational emotions is needed for appropriate moral judgment. For (Kant [1788] 1997a, 98, 134), reason produces both the moral deliberation and the motivation and force to act morally, whereas if we follow our emotions, drives and instincts, we are doomed to follow the deterministic laws of nature; thus, only reason can free us to be autonomous moral agents (Holma and Huhtala 2014, 375). David Hume accepted the same dichotomy, although he turned it upside down; for him, the role of reason was only instrumental, whereas the motivation and force to act came from emotions and desires (Holma 2012, 406–407; Nussbaum 1990, 79–82). Although the pragmatist view of emotions as part of our epistemic apparatus is in coherence with contemporary empirical knowledge, in philosophical and educational conceptions, there is still theoretical work to be done to understand the consequences of rejecting this dichotomy.

In terms of conceptualising rationality, the fallacious dichotomy between reason and emotion is related to another problem: our tendency to think that our processes of belief formation are transparent to ourselves. In my interpretation of three seminal essays (Peirce [1868a] 1934a, [1868b] 1934b, [1877] 1934c), one crucial but little discussed consequence is that we should also apply fallibilism to our own thinking processes. Peirce ([1868b] 1934b, 225–237)<sup>13</sup> stresses that we do not have any kind of ‘intuitive self-consciousness’ or ‘an intuitive power of distinguishing between the subjective elements of different kinds of cognitions’ (Peirce 1868b 1934b, 238–243). He reminds us that our beliefs as well as the conclusions we draw from certain premises are based on the habits of mind (Peirce 1877 1934c), 367) and that once we reach a firm belief, ‘we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false’ (Peirce 0000a, 375). However, again, fallibilism in Peircean thinking proves its strength. This partial transparency does not imply that we would not be able to gain a better and more adequate understanding of these processes; the only thing it implies is that we can never claim that we are certain that we have reached the final truth about them.

After identifying these potential misconceptions of rationality, it is possible to see that within the pragmatist framework, there is still room for an appeal to reason and evidence in the processes whereby we improve our understanding of material and social realities – or ourselves – during the processes of shared inquiry and dialogue.

### **Initiation into democratic practices**

A democratic way of living requires a sense of belonging to a community that adheres to democratic principles and a moral commitment to support and

promote democracy. This educational aim requires educational settings that take the emotional and social dimensions of acquiring democratic habits seriously. This is why one of the most important aims of democratic education should be to provide emotionally rewarding experiences of participation, membership and belonging to a particular kind of social practice. In this section, my aim is to clarify my view by juxtaposing it with some ideas of democratic education that have similarities with mine but differ from it in their main emphasis.

One of the central criticisms of Deweyan-inspired accounts of democracy is their emphasis on the social at the expense of providing theoretical tools for critique and change of the existing political order with its structures of domination (e.g. Festenstein 1997; MacGilvray 2000). For example, Margonis (2009) interprets Dewey as potentially seeing nations as being at different stages of evolutionary development and thus regarding as justified the different educational settings depending on this stage of development. Another example is Papastephanou (2016, 627) who demonstrates how Dewey shut his eyes to the Armenian Genocide and argues that this is 'a major challenge to Dewey scholarship.' Of course, there is also a vast number of responses to these criticisms, some of them combining Deweyan theory with other, ethico-politically-oriented sources (Stuhr 2003; White 2004),<sup>14</sup> some of them reconstructing Dewey's own writings in relation to this challenge (Eldridge 2010; Hewitt 2007; Hildreth 2009; Rogers 2009).

How much the view introduced in this article carries with it the problems criticised in Dewey's philosophy depends on the wider normative framework accepted beyond the aim of providing emotionally rewarding experiences of membership and belonging to responsible social practices. Rewarding experiences of membership and belonging can be provided in ethico-politically more or less adequate environments in terms of, for example, teachers' awareness of the implicit mechanisms of racism or epistemic injustices. This is to say that the vision defended in this article stresses that providing emotionally rewarding experiences of membership and belonging is a necessary condition for educating citizens who are committed to a democratic way of living but holds that that condition is far from sufficient. Rather, genuinely democratic education requires a certain normative framework which, while subject to constant debate and renewal (cf. Dewey 1937, 182–183), incorporates certain democratic boundary conditions of equality and justice.

Instead of the level of normativity, in the focus of this article is the view that I (along with Hirst) have seen as somewhat neglected in the practices of contemporary democratic education at both the theoretical and practical levels. An example of practical pedagogical application and its problems from the viewpoint I wish to defend is the view that democratic practices should be brought into educational contexts in terms of such democratic procedures as equal voting rights or representativeness. Rather than being democratic in its

formal sense, the social practices offered by education should meet the criteria of developing not only the skills and knowledge that are central to democratic citizenship, but also commitment and the sense of belonging to good social practices. In pedagogical settings, this aim can even run counter to following the formal procedures of democracy.

For example, Tujula (2023, 4) has demonstrated how school councils, which 'have been seen as the solution in increasing children's and young adults' civic participation and interest in societal issues,' although elected through democratic procedures, have failed to promote equal participation. In fact, participation in these councils seems to concentrate on students who already have good capabilities for participating and influencing (Tujula 2023, 27–29; Männistö and Moate 2023). In the same vein, it is easy to see that the danger of teaching deliberative practices can be rewarding for those who have good rhetorical and argumentation skills and exclusive of those who lack these skills.

Therefore, the pedagogical guideline for these practices is not that they are democratic (or even deliberative) *per se* but that they strengthen the development of the democratic habits of all students. This means, of course, that these practices strengthen students' capabilities for shared inquiry, for example, by advancing deliberation capabilities. However, this should be done by applying the procedures of dialogue (e.g. Alhanen 2019) and respect for everyone's contribution in a way that provides emotionally rewarding experiences of this very participation.

The same difference can be seen if my approach is compared to approaches stressing – in the Deweyan spirit – the development of democratic habits. For example, I entirely agree with Stitzlein's (2014, 71–78) analysis of the importance of such democratic habits as collaboration and compromise, deliberation, analysis and critique, and hope. However, in my view, it is of crucial importance to closely scrutinise the processes whereby new habits can be developed – that is, in social practices that are not only rational but also emotionally rewarding.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusions

In this essay, I searched for an answer to Hirst's (1999b, 1999a, 103) warning that we are putting our social and personal lives at peril by unsticking the education of moral reasoning from social practices and bypassing the importance of the satisfaction of our needs and desires in these practices. I have argued that the framework of philosophical pragmatism, especially its interpretation of the concept of habit, provides us with conceptual tools for developing a theory of democratic education in a way that connects some of our central social needs and desires to a view of social practices as a central arena of moral and cognitive development. Although providing emotionally rewarding experiences of membership and belonging is an essential starting point for pedagogical practices that aim at developing democratic habits, education for democracy also

requires a wider normative framework discussing and defining the practices that are conducive to democracy.<sup>16</sup> As a philosophical framework, this very framework and its definitions of such concepts as democracy, education, equality and justice should be under constant discussion, critique, negotiation and renewal (cf. Dewey 1937, 182–183).

As habits are learned in social practices where people do things together and in processes where emotions are strongly involved, the most important feature of an educational practice fostering a democratic way of living is that it provides every student with the emotionally rewarding experiences of belonging, contributing and being valued as an important member of the community. This implies, for example, that any shared practice where one's own beliefs or ideas are questioned and developed or a community's principles and rules are decided should be conducted by following the rules of responsible dialogue.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, depending on the age of the children, various – empirically adequate – methods of learning to respect oneself and each other as persons should be adequately put into practice. Only by starting with emotionally rewarding membership in responsible social practices can we aim at the development of genuine democratic habits.

## Notes

1. On why I consider the framework of pragmatism more convincing, see Holma (2023).
2. There is, of course, a wide variety of conceptualisations of democratic education in contemporary discussion in the field. One of the most cited analyses of these views is provided by Gert Biesta, who criticises various views of democratic education from different angles: the Kantian view as individualistic, and the Deweyan as – although answering to some of the problems of Kantian individualism – still somewhat individualistic. In general, Biesta (2006), 117–145; Biesta 2013, 110–113) criticises most of the recent views for being instrumentalistic and developmentalist in seeing education as preparing students for future democratic citizenship. At the same time, if I interpret Biesta' correctly, he criticises these views for not critically assessing the very concepts of democracy and education. This article does not contradict Biesta's general argumentation: Biesta does not deny that education also has the function of preparing students for the future, and I do not deny the importance of a wider ethico-political or normative framework beyond the pedagogical practices I am suggesting. Biesta himself develops an Arendtian-inspired account of democratic education, based on Arendt's vision of the core of democracy as a particular way of 'being-together-in-plurality' (Biesta 2006, 117–145; Biesta 2013, 104, 113–118). Whether Biesta's solution is the best or most suitable in defining the concepts of democracy and education appropriately would be the topic of another essay (as an example of criticism of Biesta's conceptions, see Leiviskä (2020)).
3. Hirst writes about the importance of departing from Kant's philosophy in the development of his thinking (Hirst 2008, 119). Of course, this refers only to Hirst's interpretation of Kant, not to Kant's philosophy in itself.
4. Kant's philosophy contains various discussions and conceptualisations of freedom. This article focuses on the interpretation Hirst seemed to regard as problematic, that is,

- seeing needs and desires as connecting us to deterministic laws of nature and thus opposite to genuine moral freedom based on reason (Kant [1785] 1964, 66; [1788] 1997, 134).
5. In my view, philosophical pragmatism avoids some of the philosophical problems of virtue ethics (Holma 2023) and provides better conceptual tools for educational developments.
  6. For Kant, too, emotions and desires have a role in human morality (e.g. Baynes 2007; Prinz 2009), and he also believes in the possibility of feeling pleasure about following our moral duties (Kant 2009 1996, 160) and argues that it is our duty to promote the happiness of others (Kant [1885] 1996, 162). However, it is central to Kant's philosophy and moral theory that only reason can free us from the deterministic laws of nature (Kant 1785 1964, 66).
  7. To fulfil this aim, normative constraints are also necessary in defining what kind of social practices are practices worth promoting in education. One necessary, yet not sufficient, criterion is that these practices allow shared inquiry and development at the levels of both the individual and the community (Holma 2023, 143; cf.; Stitzlein 2014).
  8. For texts that summarise some of these critiques, see Hildreth (2009) Hildebrandt (Hildebrandt 2003) and Jackson (2009).
  9. Dewey's relationship to Peirce's philosophy is complicated (cf. Margolis 2009, 1–10; Jackson 2009, 59–62). He shares, however, Peirce's ideas of revising epistemology through the lens of evolutionary theory as well as the role of the notion of habit in this philosophical attempt.
  10. This starting point also reflects one of the main commitments of pragmatism: to be in dialogue with the findings of empirical sciences.
  11. I disagree with Hirst about virtue ethics being the best solution for the tension between the educational ideals of initiation into social practices and rational autonomy, as I see the distinction between theoretical and practical rationalities as untenable (Holma 2023). As regards how the theory of virtues and pragmatist theory of habits are related, I agree with Sarah Stitzlein's (2014) interpretation. There, some habits can be defined as virtues, but they are strongly connected to the web of other habits (Stitzlein 2014, 64), and thus, by concentrating only on these, the theory is insufficient (Dewey 1916, 367). My rejection of both two different rationalities and Stitzlein's (2014) argument on the relation of habits and virtues resonates with one of the starting points of pragmatism: to be in coherence with the scientific worldview.
  12. For a nuanced elaboration of the role of emotions in our cognitive apparatus, see Elgin (2016, 33–49), and for the potential sources of errors of emotions, see Goldie (2016, 149–165).
  13. The numerical references in this passage refer to the paragraph numbers in Peirce (1934).
  14. In the field of the philosophy of education, Biesta can be interpreted as following the path of combining Deweyan insights with other, ethico-political sources, in his case, Hannah Arendt's philosophy (Biesta 2006, 2011, 2013).
  15. For two examples of drawing inspiration from this kind of educational setting, see Mendonça and Cadilha (2023) and Huuki and Renold (2015).
  16. On the discussion of the normative criteria of educational practices, see Holma (2023).
  17. For elaborations of this kind of dialogue in the pragmatist framework, see Alhanen (2019).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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