Introduction

An education is a modern human right (United Nations, 1948), yet the rationale applied to define and structure education has been a matter of debate dating back to time of the Greeks (Dewey, 1916), and continues today. Marples (2010) outlines the perceived dichotomy between the reason-centric "liberal" education, with a primary aim to develop the individual mind "for it's own sake" (Hirst, 1965, as cited in Marples, 2010, p. 37), versus the skills-centric "vocational" education, with directly relevant aims informed by the specific needs of society. At its core, the debate parallels the political dichotomy between liberal individualism and communitarianism with differing "conceptions of the relationship of the individual to society" (Carr, 2003, p.169); namely, whether the individual serves the state, or vice versa. This essay will consider the appropriate synthesis of these divergent views in the context of the Australian educational system, discuss education's relevance in terms of citizenship, and argue that in order for education to fulfil its stated objectives, the teacher is obligated to consider social use and promote an "open-minded realism" (Harding & Hare, 2000) in the classroom.

In the preamble of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008), education is framed as "knowledge, understanding, skills, and values" (p.4). Knowledge and understanding are broad terms and can be interpreted as both the epistemological study of truth and reason in the liberal context, and as the necessary complement to skills in the vocational context. Skills, on the other hand, imply vocational talents and abilities and are eschewed by the philosophers of liberal education due to their "relevance" (Pring, 2005, p. 46). Values appears as a separate line item in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008), though in the Aristotelian tradition ethics falls within praxis--the "practice" category of knowledge. Overall, the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) is written with an instrumental bent--"training" and "employment" occur frequently in the document, yet the overall goals are clear: to promote equity and excellence with creative, confident, successful learners who are active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008).

The Liberal/Vocational Divide

Two qualities to consider are the sequence and relative weight of liberal and vocational attributes that manifest in the curriculum. In terms of sequence, as Hirst expressed in his early views, "theory (e.g. academic disciplines) is inevitably prior and fundamental to practice" (Hirst, 1993, as cited in Misawa, 2011, p. 691). R. S. Peters also emphasised that the first stage in the process of education is "characterised by teachers initiating students into worthwhile forms of thought and awareness" (1966, as cited by Becket, 2011, p. 244), with only the second stage involving any shared learning experiences. Pring, on the other hand, states, "skills training is not the opposite of understanding, but very often a precondition of it" (Pring, 2005, p. 58).   These are clearly divergent views, yet perhaps the focus on sequence is a red herring. Chapman and McBride (1992) explain that the development of reason benefits from cognitive conflict; in light of this, both academic and skill-based learning involving disequilibrium that subsequently results in cognitive equilibrium (and thus within the individual's zone of proximal development) can develop both reason and understanding. For Piaget, "reason is an ideal equilibrium" (1995/1965, p. 275). Thus, bridging the theory/practice divide becomes less dependent on content, and more influenced by pedagogy. Pring reinforces this conclusion when he advises to question the divide between the "educationally liberating and vocationally useful" (Pring, 2005, p. 59). Here, Csikszentmihalyi (1995 and 1997) and Freire (1992/1970) offer guidelines on a interdisciplinary pedagogy that focuses on the process of creative problem finding (and solving), rather than mere problem solving.

A more controversial question is the relative weight of the intellectual vs. practical in the curriculum. One of the implied premises of the liberal view is that the broader abilities to reason and make moral judgements is predicated by intellectual development, and is diluted by vocational preparation, as expressed by John Stuart Mill : "Their [universities] object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings." (Mill, 1867, p.4). Mill considered education as "not designed solely for the many: it has to kindle the aspirations... of those who are destined to stand forth as thinkers above the multitude" (Mill, 1867, p. 65). Carr describes this liberal concern as "educational levelling" (2003, p. 176). At its root, the argument involves the order of rights versus duties in the social contract. Liberalism in the form of individualism focuses on the

"unencumbered self" (Sandel, 1984, p. 86) and a priority of rights over duties (Carr, 2003, p. 174). The deontologist view, on the other hand, is that social duties determines rights, as expressed by Carr: "Any feasible conception of human autonomy or citizenship would need to embody some appreciation of the social duties and responsibilities upon which any and all individual rights and entitlements depend" (2003, p. 175). The deontological view obligates an active promotion of justice and equality (in contrast to the laissez-faire atmosphere). On the premise that intellectual pursuits seek a priori truths while practical pursuits are derived from the de facto needs of society, the educational system, therefore, is obligated to manifest the practical aspects of education in the curriculum relative to social needs. The implications are twofold: that educators must be aware of the implications and consequences of any potential social levelling, and that specific meta-qualities of education such as "critical thinking, lifelong learning, and reflective practice" (Standish, 2007, p. 335), become especially vital components (and, as Standish [2007] argues, their granular objectives more fundamentally and clearly addressed). In summary, education is a component of our social contract, requires the development of both the practical and the intellectual, and is informed directly by our dynamic roles as citizens.

Obligations of the Teacher

The teacher is obligated to promote active and informed citizenry. Citizenship involves individuals contributing to their local and broader community. Dewey explains, in the Platonic educational philosophy, in "society is stably organised when each individual is doing that for which he has aptitude by nature in such a way as to be useful to others (or to contribute to the whole to which he belongs); and that it is the business of education to discover these aptitudes and progressively train them for social use" (1916, p. 88). A significant obligation of the teacher is to discover each pupil's aptitudes, interpret their social use, and best determine the methodology employed to develop ("train") such aptitudes. But as Kant describes, "children ought to be educated, not for the present, but for a possibly improved condition of man in the future" (Kant, 1899/2003, p. 14). Thus, the pedagogy not only demands contemporary content knowledge, but also a mindfulness of the undetermined future in order to maintain a broad perception of aptitudes applicable to social use.

"Education is ... constantly remade in the praxis" (Freire, 1992/1970, p. 72), and the pedagogy informed by both the present and evolving future needs of society.

Within the guidelines of the curriculum--crafted within the democratic system and malleable by the collective will--we as teachers are obliged to believe in its present efficacy (Warnock, 2004). But teachers have considerable latitude as to *how* to teach within these guidelines, and to what degree we preference the meta-qualities of education (e.g. critical thinking and ethical behaviour) that appear in the "general capabilities" in the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). Active and informed citizenry also requires a strong moral perspective, and here the dangers of relativism appear. The *Melbourne Declaration* provides the directive to "act with moral and ethical integrity" (MCEETYA, 2008), which describes virtues. But virtues derive from values, which in turn are derived from moral choices of the principles embodied in the non-relativistic concept of "universal moral rights" (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 57). The pedagogy here is especially critical, as the ability to define universal moral rights is doubtful, and the moral development process is dependent on autonomous choice, as Piaget describes in the development of reason, "any disequilibrium tends to be eliminated if the individual corrects himself by converting to reciprocity" (1995/1965, p. 243).

It could be argued that the inculcated and heteronomous individual who lacks internalised values is the primary fear of the liberal view, and a prime concern (if not addressed) of communitarianism. The open-minded realism outlined by Harding & Hare (2000), though referenced in relation to teaching science, provides a framework for teaching the meta-aspects of education: instead of the relativistic view that because truth cannot be universally defined and accepted, divergent views have equal validity, we instead focus on the "progress in approaching truth" (Harding & Hare, 2000, p. 226) while strengthening credence in the present conceptions of truth. This concept differs from the pragmatic neutrality options outlined in the Crick Report (Crick, 1999, as cited in McCowan, 2010, p. 92), as it obligates the teacher to explicitly provide opportunities for guided reasoning when presenting consensus conceptions. In summary, challenging a pupil's ability to reason and to develop as

active and informed autonomous citizens using an open-minded approach becomes a
primary obligation of the teacher.

Conclusion

In some respects, the liberal/vocational debate resembles the empiricism/rationalism
epistemological debate. Just as rationalism does not preclude an empiricist approach
for certain realms of knowledge, a liberal/vocational educational approach does not
necessarily preclude the benefits of liberalism, namely, the development of the
autonomous individual who retains the ability to reason and choose within a
democratic society, and indeed can be strengthened by the vocational inclusions with
the appropriate pedagogy. And just as the concept of constructivism is individual
constructed and thus diversely presented, knowledge, skills, and values are
individually constructed and the primary role of the teacher is to provide direction
and the appropriate raw materials and tools at the appropriate time of a pupil's
development. The concepts of social use and an open-minded realism provide
guidance for the role of the teacher within the directives of the broader educational
aims in forming active and informed citizens who are empowered to critically assess
and shape their future.

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