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Patriotism and Democratic Education

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23

Patriotism and Democratic Education

Richard Dagger

23.1 Introduction

To take a stand on the value of patriotism for democratic education is to enter thrice-contested terrain. Not only is patriotism the subject of much scholarly dispute, but so too are democracy and education. To be sure, few scholars doubt that democracy and education are in general good things, and both have been largely free from the suspicion and scorn sometimes directed against patriotism. Beyond this general agreement, though, there is much disagreement about exactly what counts as democracy or education, and the question of how to realize the worthy aims of each is also highly contentious. Other contributors to this volume will explore these matters, however, and their efforts will allow this chapter to concentrate on the part of the contested terrain that bears most directly on the question of whether patriotism has a valuable part to play in democratic education. My task, in short, is to make a case for the value of patriotism for democratic education, taking "democracy" and "education" to be, for the most part, well-understood and uncontroversial terms.

The argument takes this form. First, democratic societies are not frictionless devices or machines that will run of themselves. On the contrary, they face many challenges and they require much effort, including the support of their citizens, in order to survive and prosper. Second, this support must be more than passive acquiescence, for democracy is a regime in which the people in some sense rule themselves. For the people to rule, they need an education that prepares them for the self-government of democratic citizenship. Among the many elements of such an education is the encouragement of patriotism. The conclusion, then, is that patriotism does indeed have a valuable part to play, through democratic education, in the preservation of democratic society.

In developing this argument, I shall proceed from the idea of democracy as a cooperative venture. Ventures or practices of this kind cannot rely entirely on the spontaneous cooperation of their participants, but neither can they survive without a high degree of uncoerced cooperation. Coercion has a part to play in a democracy, in other words, but it cannot be an overwhelming part. Like other cooperative practices involving more than a few people, democracies require

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rules to provide the reasonably clear expectations necessary to coordinate public activities, and rules do not enact or enforce themselves. Like other cooperative practices, moreover, democracies face collective-action problems. For these reasons, democracy requires the rule of law. If patriotism is a valuable reinforcement to a democratic society, it will be in large part because patriotism, properly understood, reinforces the rule of law.

23.2 Democracy

To speak of democratic society is to indicate that democracy is as much a way of life as it is a form of government. This twofold conception of democracy is what Tocqueville had in mind when he declared, in the Introduction to *Democracy in America*, that a "new political science is needed for a world itself quite new"; for this new world would be dramatically different from the ancien régime of France and Europe (Tocqueville, 1969, p. 12). The hallmark of this new world – a hallmark he took to be most evident, albeit imperfectly realized, in the United States – was "the equality of conditions," which Tocqueville saw as a "basic fact" that exercised "dominion over civil society as much as over the government" by creating opinions, giving birth to feelings, suggesting customs, and modifying "whatever it does not create" (Tocqueville, 1969, p. 9). Democracy, as the Greek origin of the word indicates, is thus a polity in which the people rule themselves, but this they can do only when there is a high degree of both social and political equality.

Underpinning both kinds of equality is what Robert Dahl called the "principle of intrinsic equality," a fundamental conviction that holds, "We ought to regard the good of every human being as intrinsically equal to that of any other" (Dahl, 1998, p. 65). Establishing democratic relationships in society and government is the best way to act on this principle, according to Dahl. In the case of political equality, he identified five defining features of democracy, understood to be the rule of political equals: (i) equal opportunity for *effective participation* in policymaking; (ii) *voting equality* in decision- making; (iii) equal and effective opportunities to gain an *enlightened understanding* of relevant policy alternatives; (iv) equal opportunity to exercise *final control* over the public agenda; and (v) the *inclusion of all*, "or at any rate most, adult permanent residents" in the matters covered by the first four features (Dahl, 1998, pp. 37–38; emphasis in original). Sustaining a polity that meets these criteria, however, is a challenging task. It requires a citizenry that is willing not only to engage in political activity but to set aside differences, overcome disagreements, and regard one another as equally entitled to have a say in the direction of the polity. That is, they must exhibit a high degree of cooperation among themselves and accept the need for an occasional resort to coercion on the part of their government.

This is to say that a democracy is a cooperative practice secured by the rule of law. But what is a cooperative practice? And how does it relate to the rule of law?

To begin with the former, we may discern four basic aspects to a cooperative practice (Dagger, 2018, ch. 2). The first is that there must be some sense in which the cooperation is both beneficial and burdensome to those who engage in it.

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Two gladiators who are fighting to the death are not engaged in a cooperative activity, for they are not cooperating to achieve some mutually beneficial end. A group of musicians must cooperate if they are to play a song or symphony together, but their playing will not constitute a cooperative practice or enterprise if it is all benefit to them and no burden. There must be some hardship to bear – at least some restriction of the participants' liberty, in H. L. A. Hart's terms (Hart, 1970, p. 70) – that is necessary to the achievement of the goal or benefit that the participants hope to achieve. In the case of the musicians, there must be occasions on which one or more of them would rather not play a certain piece or would prefer not to rehearse so often or so long. Something similar is true of all cooperative practices.

A second feature is that cooperative practices are ongoing. They may begin with spontaneous activity, but they will need rules or laws if they are to continue. In some cases, these rules are nothing more than informal and perhaps unspoken norms. In a very small group, when the point of the activity and the need for cooperation are obvious, the rule may be nothing more than "you do your part, I'll do mine, and no shirking." In larger groups, and especially when the cooperation is supposed to extend well into the future, formal rules that specify the nature of the required cooperation will be necessary.

A third element of a cooperative practice is that it will produce one or more public goods that leave it susceptible to collective-action problems. Public goods such as clean air and national defense are indivisible, nonexcludable, and nonrival, which is to say that one person's enjoyment of the good does not deprive another of an equal opportunity to enjoy it. Indeed, non-cooperators often may enjoy the public good or benefit as fully as those whose cooperative efforts produce the good in question. This leaves cooperative practices vulnerable to free riders who hope to reap the benefits of others' cooperative labors and sacrifices without bearing those burdens themselves. That is why coercive measures are typically necessary to discourage free riding and ensure the survival of the cooperative endeavor.

Coercion or some other means of discouraging free riders thus speaks to the fourth key aspect of cooperative practices, which is the need for assurance. The point is not that everyone is always seeking to be a free rider at the expense of others. On the contrary, the point is that even people who are willing to make cooperative sacrifices will be foolish to do so when their sacrifices will be futile. For that reason, cooperative practices must find some way to assure those who would willingly cooperate that their cooperation will not be in vain. They must have security, in other words, against those who would take unfair advantage of their cooperative good nature. Coercion, in the form of preventive measures and punishment, is thus necessary to provide that security and assurance.

Conceiving of democracy in this way reveals that democracy, in both its social and political aspects, rests on the willingness of its citizens to cooperate with one another, but this cooperation itself requires the assurance afforded by the threat of coercion. Another way to put the point is to say that democracy relies in two ways on the rule of law. In order to rule themselves as a cooperative body, citizens need the guidance of laws that establish expectations and clarify norms.

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Indeed, in a democracy, the principal way in which the people rule is through their cooperation in the enactment of laws, whether this is done directly by the citizens themselves or through the actions of their elected or appointed officials. Once laws are enacted, then civic cooperation continues in the form of law abidance, which must be secured by the coercive force of law.

There is, of course, much more involved in the rule of law, which stands, according to one commentator, "in the peculiar state of being *the* preeminent legitimating political ideal in the world today, without agreement upon precisely what it means" (Tamanaha, 2006, p. 4; emphasis in original). Nevertheless, three themes seem fundamental to the rule of law, beginning with the conviction that government must be limited by law. That is, the duty of government is to serve the people by protecting their rights and interests, which entails that the authority of those in government must be confined within established bounds. Those who hold power must act in accordance with public reasons and recognized procedures. From the democratic point of view, such reasons and procedures must be in some way enacted and enforced by the people themselves, for if the government is to protect their rights and interests, it must answer to them.

The second theme is legality, a term legal scholars use to indicate that certain formal conditions must be met before the elements of a legal system are truly lawful. According to John Rawls, for instance, one of the key precepts of the rule of law is that similar cases are to be treated similarly; another is that there is no offense or crime without a law (Rawls, [1971] 1999, sec. 38). Rawls acknowledges the influence of Lon Fuller here, as do many others who trace their conceptions of legality to the eight principles Fuller elaborated in chapter two of his *The Morality of Law* (1969). As conveniently condensed by John Finnis, Fuller's principles hold that:

> A legal system exemplifies the Rule of Law to the extent that . . . (i) its rules are prospective, not retroactive, and (ii) are not in any other way impossible to comply with; that (iii) its rules are promulgated, (iv) clear and (v) coherent one with another; that (vi) its rules are sufficiently stable to allow people to be guided by their knowledge of the content of the rules; that (vii) the making of decrees and orders applicable to relatively limited situations is guided by rules that are promulgated, clear, stable, and relatively general; and that (viii) those people who have authority to make, administer, and apply the rules in an official capacity (a) are accountable for their compliance with rules applicable to their performance and (b) do actually administer the law consistently and in accordance with its tenor. (Finnis, 1980, p. 270)

As Finnis's summary indicates, some scholars take legality to be the sum and substance of the rule of law. This, however, is to overstate its importance. To be sure, we need to know what counts as law before we can count on the rule of law; but we also need to know something about the kind of ruling that will take place under the rule of law. For that reason, it would be a mistake to allow the second theme, legality, to eclipse the first – that is, limited government – or the third, which I shall call "impersonality."

There are at least three reasons for using this term. The first is that law is supposed to be impersonal in the sense that it is no respecter of persons. Like the

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blindfolded image of Lady Justice, the aim of law is to serve and protect equally all those who come before it regardless of their wealth, power, connections, or social status. That this is an ideal seldom attained is a reason for striving harder to ensure everyone an equal standing before the law, not to grant exemptions or privileges to some without a justification grounded in the common good. Second, the rule of law is impersonal because it rejects the rule of autocrats, their families, and the factions to which they give rise. By assuming the arbitrary right to hand down the rules, autocrats place themselves above the law. They may profess to live under the "laws" they have made, just as everyone else in the regime must do, but they will retain the authority to revise and rescind laws at their discretion. Moreover, they are likely to hold those who serve within their administrations to the standard of personal loyalty and, in so doing, to ignore the distinction between personal interest and public duty. Such conduct is inimical to the rule of law.

Livy's classical formulation of the rule of law as "the empire of laws and not of men" is in effect a compressed statement of these last two themes, legality and impersonality (Sellers, 2003, p. 29). Taken together, they imply the first theme, limited government. Taking all three together, they form the basis for a democratic society as a cooperative practice of self-government secured by coercion. Law can have no empire, however, if it has no place in the hearts and minds of the men and women it is supposed to rule impersonally. Personal loyalty to autocrats and would-be autocrats is surely contrary to the rule of law, but there must be loyalty or fidelity to the law itself and to the polity it is supposed to govern. This form of impersonal loyalty is, in Gerald Postema's words, "the animating soul of law's commonwealth." It is loyalty to other persons, in a way, for "fidelity is owed by individuals *not to laws or government*, but *to each other*, that is to fellow members of law's commonwealth" (Postema, 2014, p. 20; emphasis in original). Fidelity to law is thus a kind of loyalty that individuals owe to one another as citizens – a kind of civic loyalty that opposes the insistence on personal loyalty that undermines the rule of law. To appreciate the importance of civic loyalty is to grasp the third reason for thinking that impersonality is one of the basic features of the rule of law.

There is, however, a further implication to this way of thinking about democracy and law, and it sounds a cautionary note. If a democratic polity is a cooperative practice that depends on the assurance secured by the rule of law, as I have claimed, and if the rule of law itself depends on the civic loyalty or fidelity of the citizenry, as Postema argues, then we must be deeply concerned with the good health of "the animating soul of law's commonwealth." The most promising way to address this concern is likely to be through education. To see why, it will help to turn again to Tocqueville.

23.3 Education

In the paragraph preceding his call for a new political science for a new world, Tocqueville proclaims that the "first duty" of those who direct society is "to educate democracy" (Tocqueville, 1969, p. 12). By this curious phrase, he

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means that the people who are to assume democratic power must be prepared for a life of social and political equality. This would be less a matter of training, however, than of education in the original sense of the word. That is, "education" derives from the Latin *educere*, which means to lead or draw out and from which we retain, in English, "educe." Originally, then, education involved drawing out or developing the potential within a person – or, for that matter, within other animals (Peters, 1973, p. 53). Tocqueville believed that people in general have the potential to live democratically, but he also believed that this potential must be drawn out of them. In particular, the people must learn to be self-governing in order to forestall the tyranny of the majority. Hence the need "to educate democracy."

Tocqueville's concern, in effect, is that a polity may meet Dahl's fivefold criteria for democracy without cultivating the civic qualities necessary to a successful and stable democracy. That is, democracy does indeed involve political equality and popular sovereignty, which entails some form or degree of majority rule, but it also requires protection against arbitrary rule. Just as the rule of law protects the people against the arbitrary rule of despots, so too must it protect against the reckless rule of an impulsive, short-sighted populace. Better still, though, is to educate the people so that they will be willing and able to govern themselves. Citizens must be prepared to govern themselves, that is, not only by exercising their political equality through effective participation in policy-making and control of the public agenda, among other things, but also by recognizing the need to curb their impulses and enthusiasms. Recognizing this need will lead them to consider carefully the likely consequences of various policies, listen to those who disagree with them, and generally act as responsible citizens concerned to promote the common good. The majority must be heeded, but it must also heed those who disagree with it.

Educating democracy in this sense is not only the responsibility of schools. In fact, Tocqueville says relatively little about the formal education of children. He directs his attention, instead, to activities that take place among adults within civil society, such as those involving voluntary associations and a free press, and to activities that straddle and elide the distinction between civil society and official government, such as juries and town meetings. Such activities presuppose some prior education, of course, in so far as they assume some degree of literacy. But they also serve an educative purpose by drawing out and informing the capacities necessary for democratic self-government. For Tocqueville, one might say, democracy is in some ways a matter of learning by doing. The same point holds for one of Tocqueville's earliest admirers, John Stuart Mill, who praised representative government that involves extensive civic participation as the "ideally best" form of government because of its promotion of "active character" (Mill, [1861] 2015, ch. 3). Giving the individual "something to do for the public," he argued, "supplies, in a measure, all [the] deficiencies" of the routine and narrowly circumscribed work to which most people are subject. Serving on juries and in "parish offices" must make people "very different beings, in range of ideas and development of faculties, from those who have

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done nothing in their lives but drive a quill or sell goods over a counter. Still more salutary," Mill adds,

> is the moral part of the instruction afforded by the participation of the private citizen, if even rarely, in public functions. He is called upon, while so engaged, to weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in case of conflicting claims, by another rule than his private partialities; to apply . . . principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the common good . . . He is made to feel himself one of the public, and whatever is for their benefit to be for his benefit. (Mill, [1861] 2015, pp. 223–24)

As this discussion of "the moral part of the instruction" indicates, Mill has in mind something approaching the cooperative-practice conception of democracy, according to which the individual members of the public are engaged in a mutually beneficial enterprise that requires everyone to look beyond their individual interests. The same is true of Tocqueville, who deplored the tendency of "individualism" to dispose "each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends" (Tocqueville, 1969, p. 506). To combat this isolating individualism, he argued, it is necessary to turn to the doctrine of "self-interest properly understood," which may not "inspire great sacrifices, but every day it prompts some small ones; . . . its discipline shapes a lot of orderly, temperate, moderate, careful, and self-controlled citizens" (Tocqueville, 1969, pp. 526–27).

In large part, then, educating democracy amounts to encouraging engagement in public affairs in order to foster cooperative dispositions among "self-controlled citizens." But that is not to say that formal schooling has no part to play in this endeavor. On the contrary, formal education has a preparatory, an informative, and a reinforcing role in the cultivation of cooperative citizens. It has a preparatory role because participation in public affairs requires literacy and other basic skills; it has an informative role because it helps students understand the workings of democracy; and it has a reinforcing role because it contributes to the development of the critical and analytical skills that are vital to effective public participation. As a cooperative practice, moreover, democracy is an ongoing enterprise, and schooling is essential to its maintenance. John Dewey put the point this way: "Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife" (Dewey, [1916] 1993, p. 122).[1]

As many have recognized, formal schooling is important to democratic education as much for *how* students are taught as for *what* they are taught. Preaching the virtues of democracy to the young will do little to cultivate democratic citizenship if the way they are taught – what is sometimes called the "hidden curriculum" – encourages them to be passive consumers of knowledge and followers of authority. Education, according to this view, must proceed democratically if it is to promote democracy. Whether this view requires schools only to include modest elements of democratic government, such as election of class

[1] See Crittenden (2002) for an extended reflection on the implications of this way of thinking about democracy and education.

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officers and student councils, or whether it demands a thoroughly democratic curriculum (Crittenden, 2002, ch. 6), or something somewhere between these poles, is a matter of much debate – and a subject best left to the other contributors to this volume.

The question of particular importance here is whether attempts to teach patriotism are a proper part of schooling that aims to support democracy understood as a cooperative practice secured by the rule of law. Is a patriotic education necessary, in other words, to the health of Postema's "animating soul of law's commonwealth"?

23.4 Patriotism

Whether patriotism is a virtuous sentiment to be praised and promoted or a vicious one to be deplored and discouraged is a matter of much dispute among scholars. In this respect, as noted in the Introduction of this chapter, it differs dramatically from democracy and education. To some, patriotism is clearly a virtue, at least when it is distinguished from jingoism or chauvinistic nationalism. Prominent examples in this category are Alisdair MacIntyre's "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" (1995), Maurizio Viroli's (1995) *For Love of Country*, and Steven Smith's (2021) *Reclaiming Patriotism in an Age of Extremes*. To others, though, patriotism is a dangerous "mistake" (Kateb, 2000)), a kind of "bad faith" (Keller, 2005), and even akin to racism (Gomberg, 1990). Those who fall into the latter camp will have no desire to entertain the possibility that patriotism may have an important role to play within democratic education.

But what is patriotism? On two points there is widespread agreement. The first is that patriotism is the love of one's country – Thompson (2008) and Gilbert (2009) are rare exceptions – and the second is that patriotism is not to be identified with nationalism (e.g., Dietz, 1989; Smith, 2021, pp. 106–22). The difficulty, though, lies in the words "love" and "country," each of which covers a vast swath of vaguely bounded conceptual ground. With regard to "love," perhaps the best we can say is that patriotism is a sentiment – in particular, a form of affection – that is rooted in familiarity, gratitude, and "above all," according to Steven Smith, loyalty (2021, p. 12). But what of country?

Responses to this question tend to interpret "country" in one of three ways.[2] The first interpretation takes one's country to be one's fatherland or ancestral home; the second takes it to be one's nation, a term that usually carries ethnic and/or cultural connotations; and the third takes it to be the polity or political society of which one is a citizen. These three lines of interpretation are not altogether distinct from one another, but they do mark significantly different points of emphasis in the understanding of patriotism. According to Viroli, for instance, all authentic patriotism falls into the third category, which he calls "republican patriotism," and he insists on the need to forswear the

[2] The following paragraphs draw on Dagger (2020).

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interpretation that regards patriotism as fundamentally the love of one's nation. Etymology, he suggests, is telling in this regard:

> Latin authors made a clear distinction between the political and cultural values of the republic and the non-political values of nationhood; in fact, they used two different words: *patria* and *natio*. Which of the two was considered more important is rather obvious. The bonds of citizenship, as Cicero put it in *De Officiis* (I.17.53), are closer and more dignified than the bonds of the *natio.* (Viroli, 2000, p. 268)

One might observe, of course, that the appeal to the origins of "patriotism" in the Latin *patria* and beyond that in the Greek *pater*, could speak in favor of the understanding of patriotism as love of one's fatherland. And so it might, Viroli says, as long as we conceive of this sentiment in essentially political terms; for love of the fatherland "is a specific affection for a specific republic and its citizens. It is found especially among citizens of free republics who share many important things – laws, liberty, public councils, public squares, friends and enemies, memories of victories and defeats, hopes and fears" (Viroli, 2002, p. 80). For republican patriots, at least, the claims of one's nation and one's forebears must be understood in almost exclusively civic terms.

This desire to keep patriotism free of the taint that nationalism brings with it, particularly in view of its association with Nazism and ethnic cleansing, is understandable and widely shared, as I have noted. Nevertheless, the distinction Viroli would have us draw between *patria* and *natio* is too sharp. His attempt to confine the ancestral aspect of patriotism largely to its political features is also suspect. In fact, there is evidence in the passage Viroli cites from *De Officiis* to cast doubt on his strictly political understanding of patriotism. Cicero does indeed proclaim in this passage that the bonds "of race, nation [*nationis*] and language" are among "man's closest," but "closest of all is that of city [*civitatis*], for fellow-citizens have many things in common." He soon insists, however, that "above all these it is between members of the same family that the greatest bonds are to be found"; and familial bonds lie "at the root of every city," where they form, "as it were the seedbed of the state [*rei publicae*]." Indeed, "[b]lood relationship then is the prime factor in uniting men in bonds of love and goodwill" (Cicero, 1967, p. 58).[3]

Whatever Cicero's intentions may have been, it seems clear that Viroli overstates the point when he claims that Cicero took "the bonds of citizenship" to be "closer and more dignified than the bonds of the *natio*." At this point, however, it is enough to note how the three ways of interpreting the "country" in "love of country" may be distinct analytically yet nevertheless blend together in powerful appeals to patriotism. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address provides a dramatic example of their connection in its opening sentence, in which Lincoln evokes all three senses of "country": "Four score and seven years ago *our fathers* brought forth on this continent, a new *nation*, conceived in *Liberty*, and

[3] For related evidence from other works of Cicero, see Dagger, (2020), sec. 3.

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dedicated to the *proposition* that all men are created *equal*" (emphasis added throughout). That so respected a republican as Lincoln could intertwine appeals to ancestry and nationality with the civic ideals of liberty and equality reveals that the force of patriotism extends beyond its narrowly political or civic aspect. So, too, does Lincoln's invocation, in the conclusion to his first inaugural address, of the "mystic chords of memory, [which] stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."[4]

Beyond the interpretations of love of country as love of fatherland, nation, or polity lies a fourth but less often appreciated sense or aspect of "country".[5] This fourth aspect is country in the geographical sense of landscape, terrain, and inhabited space. In this case, one's country is a visible thing, or a vast set of visible things that can never be seen all at once. This love of country as countryside figures, alongside other senses of "country," in well-known poetic tributes to patriotism. John of Gaunt's speech in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (Act II, Scene 1) is a case in point, with its celebration of England as "this sceptered isle, this earth of majesty . . ., This other Eden, demi-paradise . . ., This precious stone set in a silver sea which serves it in the office of a wall or as a moat defensive to a house . . ., This blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England . . . ." Another example is Canto Six of Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel,* which begins with the minstrel asking, "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, Who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land!" Then after consigning any such dead souls to "the vile dust . . . Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung," the poet goes on to yearn for his own native land: "O Caledonia! Stern and wild, Meet nurse for a poetic child, Land of brown heath, and shaggy wood, Land of the mountain and the flood, Land of my sires! What mortal hand Can e'er untie the filial band, That knits me to thy rugged strand!"

To be sure, neither Shakespeare's Gaunt nor Scott's minstrel speaks only of the country as countryside. The minstrel's apostrophe to the land of his sires, with its "filial band," clearly invokes the ancestral aspect of "country," and John of Gaunt's troubled apprehension of the fate of the England he has loved – "This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land, Dear for her reputation throughout the world" – contains traces of a conception of a country as nation in the sense of a people apart from others. Even so, the notion of one's country as a physical place or territory carries a distinctive force in these poetic expressions of patriotism. This is a force not only worth remembering but also, perhaps, of reinforcing through patriotic education.

Before turning directly to patriotic education, however, there are two further conceptual matters to consider. One concerns adjectives and the other morality.

Adjectives are significant in this context because patriotism comes in various forms and degrees, and its scholarly defenders typically want to make clear what they are – and perhaps more often, are not – defending. In his survey article in

[4] See Smith, (2021, pp. 149–56), for further thoughts on Lincoln's conception of patriotism.

[5] Nussbaum, (2013), is an important exception; see, for example, pp. 14, 209, 238.

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The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Igor Primoratz (2020) distinguishes among four degrees of patriotism, ranging from “extreme,” which he associates with Machiavelli, to “robust” (MacIntyre, 1995), “moderate” (Baron, 2002; Nathanson, 1989), and “deflationary,” which covers attempts to justify patriotism not in itself but only in so far as it follows from gratitude, fairness, the good consequences it produces, or some other independent ground (Primoratz, 2020, sec. 2.2). Other varieties include what Primoratz calls “ethical patriotism” (Baron, 2002), what Jürgen Habermas and others have called “constitutional patriotism” (Habermas, 1996, Appendix II; Müller, 2007), Viroli’s (2000) previously noted “republican patriotism,” and Steven Smith’s “enlightened patriotism” (Smith, 2021, ch. 5). Smith is in some ways typical of those who think it wise to use a qualifying adjective when advocating patriotism, for he is well aware of the simplistic “love it or leave it” caricatures to which patriotism is often reduced and of the horrors committed by nationalists who have been mistaken for patriots. In fact, Smith argues, patriotism stands as an Aristotelian mean between two extremes, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, with nationalism being “an excess of patriotism” and cosmopolitanism its “deficiency” (2021, pp. 106–7). Contrary to its caricature, moreover, patriotism “can be self-correcting”; rather than “blind obedience,” it “entails judgment and discrimination“ (Smith, 2021, p. 41). Genuine patriotism, in a word, is enlightened.

Whether Smith has hit upon the right adjective is not my concern here, but the larger point is. That is, some qualification of this kind is necessary to make it clear that patriotism is not an unquestioning commitment to “my country right or wrong.” But what, then, is the nature of the patriotic commitment? In particular, is it a moral commitment?

There is disagreement on this point. On the one hand, many who defend patriotism clearly believe that it has moral value, or that the only defensible form of patriotism is one that “makes compatible the demands of national loyalty and the requirements of universal morality” (Nathanson, 1989, p. 551). On the other hand, some commentators believe that patriotism is devoid of moral content. In Amy Gutmann’s words, “patriotism is a sentiment rather than a moral perspective” (Gutmann, 1999, p. 312). Lad Sessions agrees when he states that patriotism “as such is *a*moral, neither morally right nor morally wrong in all cases,” however morally worthy or reprehensible it may be in particular cases (Sessions, 2010, p. 105; emphasis in original). He goes on, though, to make the following general claim: “Without patriotic loyalty, countries survive (and do not thrive) only by use of coercion, threat or bribery, a tenuous project for the long term” (Sessions, 2010, p. 111). This claim bears directly on the argument of this chapter. It bears, that is, on the relationship of patriotism to the cooperative-practice conception of democracy. For if patriotic sentiment is widespread, so that citizens are confident that their fellows generally are willing to bear the burdens of a polity secured by the rule of law – that they are willing to do what they regard as their patriotic duty – then social trust will reduce the need to rely on coercion to provide the assurance that one’s cooperative efforts will not be wasted. Patriotism in this sense encourages citizens to meet their

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moral responsibilities to one another. Put more broadly, patriotism has a moral dimension in so far as it takes people outside of themselves and leads them to think and act less as self-absorbed individuals and more as people concerned with the wellbeing of their compatriots.

To this claim about the moral dimension of patriotism, the critics have an obvious reply. Patriotism may overcome the individual's partiality for their particular interests, they can say, but concern for the wellbeing of one's country and compatriots itself falls short of the impartiality that morality demands. Morality is a matter of doing what is right or just, in other words, and it respects no political or geographical boundaries. This obvious reply, however, is not obviously compelling, for it may rest on too simple or narrow a conception of morality. The nature and definition of morality are matters too complicated to try to settle here, but it should suffice to say that David Hume, Adam Smith, and other important philosophers have found room for sentiments, sympathy, and local attachments within their conceptions of morality. Steven Smith's understanding of patriotism as a mean between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is worth considering in this light, as are the essays of Marcia Baron (2002) and Stephen Nathanson (1989), which make the case for the importance of patriotism within liberal morality. They and other authors give us reason to believe, in short, that patriotism is a moral disposition, and thus no reason to dismiss it from the outset as an immoral attitude at odds with a democratic education.

23.5 A Patriotic Education?

The opposition of patriotic partiality to moral principles has its counterpart in recent debates over the teaching of patriotism in schools. These debates are frequently framed as a contest between patriotism and autonomy, or sentimental attachment versus critical reasoning, with William Galston's *Liberal Purposes* (1991, ch. 11) and Amy Gutmann's *Democratic Education* (1999) cast as leading representatives of the opposing sides. In an oft-quoted passage, Galston puts the case for teaching patriotism forcefully:

> Few individuals will come to embrace the core commitments of liberal society through a process of rational inquiry. If children are to be brought to accept these commitments as valid and binding, the method must be a pedagogy that is far more rhetorical than rational . . . Civic education . . . requires a nobler, moralizing history: a pantheon of heroes who confer legitimacy on central institutions and are worthy of emulation. It is unrealistic to believe that more than a few adult citizens of liberal societies will ever move beyond the kind of civic commitment engendered by such a pedagogy. (1991, pp. 243–44)

As this statement indicates, Galston's focus is on the teaching of history, and the ongoing debate has continued to concentrate on the wisdom of teaching patriotic history. There is also the challenging question of whether history can be taught both patriotically and truthfully. The practical problem, as one critic

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says, is “how to encourage patriotic identification while teaching history with integrity” (Costa, 2009, p. 108).

There are, I think, two responses to this challenge. One is to note that the focus on history is reasonable, but it should not divert our attention from the possibility of fostering patriotism in other parts of the curriculum, including the so-called hidden curriculum. The second response is to give due attention to the gradual nature of formal education.

Regarding the first response, David Archard has argued that “the way forward” – that is, the way to resolve the debate between an education for patriotism or for autonomy – “lies in recognising that we should not teach patriotism because *we do not need to*” (Archard, 1999, p. 167; emphasis added). After all, he says, “we are members of our *patria* in advance of our education,” and “any education must be particularistic in ways that, without explicitly teaching it, favour the acquisition of patriotism” (1999, p. 167). There are, in other words, numerous aspects of every child’s environment, even before schooling begins, that contribute to the formation of a national identity and thereby foster an attachment to one’s country. In school, moreover, children are almost certain to find “a national, though not a nationalist, curriculum,” and they will find it not only in history classes but in those focused on the geography, language, literature, and culture more generally of their own country (1999, p. 168).[6] Archard’s observations are well founded, but do they support his claim that “we should not teach patriotism because we do not need to”? Is it perhaps more accurate to say that our schools are teaching patriotism whether they intend to do so or not? If so, is it perhaps possible that they could do a better job of teaching patriotism if they gave more careful thought to the task?

This possibility probably explains why the debate concentrates so often on history, for it is there that the question of intention – to cultivate patriotic attachment or critical thinking – seems most obvious. This controversy has proceeded, however, without due attention to what I called the gradual nature of formal education. The contrasting views of Robert Fullinwider and Harry Brighouse help to make my point. In his “Patriotic History,” Fullinwider takes the “core idea” of such a history “to do not with *pride* but with *duty*: what projects over time, begun by others, am I duty-bound to take on (or resist)? Our answers to that question fix our moral identities” (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 222; emphasis in original). To support his argument, Fullinwider draws on examples from textbooks written for American students in the eighth grade (that is, 12 or 13 years old). In his rebuttal, “Should We Teach Patriotic History?,” Brighouse (2003, p. 174) supports his argument – that “the primary attention of liberal authors of textbooks should not be on directly encouraging identities in, or teaching values to, readers, but on teaching them what happened and teaching them the skills essential to figuring out why” – by referring to books written for high school students (that is, 16 to 18 years old). What is appropriate for students at one age, however, may not be appropriate for students at the

[6] As Archard notes (1999, p. 162), one of Galston’s critics, Eamonn Callan, believes that the study of literature may be more valuable as a form of civic education than “‘conventional historical scholarship’” (citing Callan, 1997, p. 123).

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other. This point is especially important in view of the fact that the teaching of history typically begins at a much earlier age than either Fullinwider or Brighouse considers in their examples. In general, we should expect that Galston's "pantheon of heroes" approach may have its place in the elementary grades, but it should gradually give way to a more critical approach to the history of the students' country as they grow older.

Smith's invocation of G. W. F. Hegel as a philosopher who made significant contributions to the understanding of patriotism is also valuable in this context. "Hegelian patriotism," Smith says, "is a form of *Bildung* or moral education that may begin as a matter of trust and habit, but it gradually passes over into rational self-awareness" (Smith, 2021, p. 52). Smith himself believes that patriotism is something that can and should be taught, and he maintains that "the best teachers are old books." In the case of American patriotism, these "old books" include Locke's *Second Treatise*, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, *The Federalist*, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Frederick Douglass's autobiography, "and Lincoln's great speeches and letters" (Smith, 2021, pp. 188–89). These are not works we can expect young children to read, of course, and they are likely to prove challenging even to those in their teenage years. The challenge, though, is not inimical to patriotism, and it is certainly something that a democratic education should encourage students to confront in appropriate ways at appropriate ages.

To be sure, not everyone will accept Smith's contention that old books are, at least in the American context, the best teachers of patriotism. Nor will everyone agree that he has identified the right set of books, whether old or new. In our postcolonial times, for instance, some surely will object to holding up such supporters of colonialism as Locke and Tocqueville as exemplars of a proper patriotism. But there are at least two responses to this kind of concern. The first is that removing a book or two – in this case, Locke's and Tocqueville's – from the reading list will create space for the reading and discussion of other valuable works. There may be a place, for instance, for an exploration of the anticolonial words and deeds of Mohandas Gandhi, of whom Martha Nussbaum maintains that there "was no more canny creator of critical patriotism" than he (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 242) The second response is to note that finding something objectionable in an author's writings is no reason to dismiss everything they have to say. On the contrary, learning to distinguish the valuable insight from the wrong-headed conclusion and the biased assumption is an ability we should want a democratic education to cultivate.

Reading old books can be helpful also when they are seen as rising out of or relating to historical controversies, as would be the case with most of the items on Smith's list and many others we could include, new as well as old. Not only can such texts help to inform historical understanding, but reading them can illustrate the importance of preparing for life in a society in which deep disagreements among the people must be addressed and accommodated. To the extent that patriotic history can help people to meet these demands of democratic citizenship, it has a vital role to play in democratic education. We must remember, though, that an education in patriotism must proceed

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gradually, and the reliance on old books will be appropriate, at best, only in its later stages.

23.6 Conclusion

> We need scarcely say that we do not mean [by the principle of nationality] a senseless antipathy to foreigners; or a cherishing of absurd peculiarities because they are national; or a refusal to adopt what has been found good by other countries. In all these senses, the nations which have had the strongest national spirit have had the least nationality. We mean a principle of sympathy, not of hostility; of union, not of separation. We mean a feeling of common interest among those who live under the same government, and are contained within the same natural or historical boundaries. We mean, that one part of the community shall not consider themselves as foreigners with regard to another part; that they shall cherish the tie which holds them together; shall feel that they are one people, that their lot is cast together, that evil to any of their fellow-countrymen is evil to themselves, and that they cannot selfishly free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connection. (from J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic*; quoted in Viroli, 1995, p. vi)

Maurizio Viroli chose the passage above from Mill's *System of Logic* as the epigraph for his own *For Love of Country*, a book that extols the merits of patriotism, and particularly of republican patriotism. Evidently Viroli saw a close connection between Mill's "principle of nationality" and patriotism, even though Mill did not refer to "patriotism" in the passage. Not only was he right to do so, in my view, but Mill's words are even more appropriate to the argument I have advanced – that patriotic education can provide vital support to a democracy conceived as a cooperative practice secured by the rule of law. Some sense of being part of a polity must be nourished if people are, as Mill said, to "feel that they are one people" from whom some sacrifice is rightly required – even if it is only the sacrifice of paying taxes or devoting some of one's time to participation in elections or other forms of civic self-rule. Without this sense of being part of a polity in which burdens are to be borne for the common benefit, we must expect that individuals, again in Mill's words, will "desire selfishly to free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connection." If appeal to patriotism as love of one's ancestral homeland, or countryside, or nation, will supplement the educative force of participation in collective self-government, and thus enhance the sense of membership in a cooperative endeavor, then such appeals are to be encouraged.

The final question is whether patriotism is truly necessary to the solution of this "civic motivation problem," as Ian MacMullen calls it (2015, pp. 149–56). The problem is genuine, according to MacMullen, and some "sense of connection to

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one's polity" is required to overcome it (2015, p. 156). But that sense of connection is afforded by civic identity, which avoids the unpleasant associations attached to appeals to patriotism. For similar reasons, Victoria Costa also regards "civic identity" or "civic identification" as a superior alternative to patriotism (Costa, 2009, pp. 109–10). But how strong a sense of connection is needed to provide the civic motivation that a democracy understood as a cooperative practice requires? There is no obvious answer to this question, in part because there is no clear line of demarcation between civic identity and patriotic devotion. MacMullen and Costa believe that civic identity is a cooler and less emotional attachment to a polity than patriotism is, but whether that is an advantage is not obviously true. After all, one need not be an extreme or even robust patriot, in Primoratz's terms, to believe that an abiding love for one's country is a far safer response to the problem of civic motivation than relying on the less intense civic identification. For one may well doubt the capacity of such identification to provide "the animating soul of law's commonwealth." Patriotism, even in its moderate and critical forms, may be a deep and abiding emotion, but it is valuable to democracy for precisely that reason. For "patriotic emotion," as Nussbaum has observed (2013, p. 207), "can be a necessary prop for valuable projects involving sacrifice for others." Paramount among such projects is the maintenance of the cooperative practice of democracy.

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