Care as a Goal of Democratic Education

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ABSTRACT In this article I present behavioural analyses of particular constructions of democracy and the ethic of care, in order to determine whether care is a democratic virtue. I analyse Carol Gilligan’s concept of care as a complex of six virtues or behavioural dispositions: acquittance, mindfulness, moral imagining, solidarity, tolerance and self-care. I then describe democracy in terms of two divergent but compatible sets of practices: social non-interference and social co-operation. These behavioural analyses lead me to conclude that certain behavioural habits that partially constitute a person’s or a community’s caring also partially constitute that person’s or community’s democracy. Specifically, the caring virtues of acquittance, mindfulness, moral imagining and self-care also belong to the virtue of democratic co-operation, and the caring virtue of tolerance constitutes the democratic ideal of non-interference. However, solidarity of conscience and private purposes is not itself a democratic ideal, and to try to make it so would violate the democratic ideal of non-interference. Since most of the virtues of care I identified are also virtues of democracy, they are appropriate aims of public education. The enculturation of caring and democratic virtues requires that children practise the kind of inquiry in which these ideals are constructed.

1. Introduction: on behavioural analysis of concepts

The essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise. If beliefs do not differ in this respect, if they appease the same doubt by producing the same rule of action, then no mere differences in the manner of consciousness of them can make them different beliefs ...

[T]he whole function of thought is to produce habits of action ... for what a thing means is simply what habits it involves ... [T]here is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice (Charles Sanders Peirce, 1878 [1]).

Is caring a democratic virtue? Is education that is directed toward habituating teachers and learners to pursue democratic ends by democratic means thereby committed to fostering dispositions for empathy and solidarity as well? To answer these questions I will first present a behavioural analysis of care, and then show how
only certain caring behaviours are compatible with (indeed, are necessary for) certain democratic practises.

Charles Peirce’s famous contention that the ultimate meaning of a concept is some difference in our habits of behaviour, may effectively lead us to develop behavioural conceptions of virtues we prize enough to make them goals of public education; I mean the cognitive and social norms we have judged to be vital to our children’s preparation to become full-fledged citizens and people. Examples of such behavioural analysis may be found in the work of Lipman, Sharp and others whose studies of higher-order thinking involve the identification of “cognitive virtues” such as impartiality and consistency, which can be elucidated in terms of making certain kinds of moves or following certain procedures [2]. Behavioural analysis is one way to clarify the meaning of inherently vague concepts such as inquiry, democracy and care, especially in fields such as education, applied ethics and law, where philosophy is often consulted to guide practice. To formulate a behavioural conception of democracy, for example, is to operationalise principles such as “religious pluralism” and “equality before law” into procedures and behavioural dispositions. Another advantage of behavioural analysis is that it is a useful way to compare and relate the meanings of ideas, emotions, values, ethics, desires, relationships, commitments and so on, because it trades them all for the same currency: actions, procedures and habits. Also, as Peirce explained, since behaviour may be collective and collaborative, and since groups of people develop habits of interactive behaviour (including cognitive behaviour), our behavioural analyses will be useful in evaluating virtues practised by communities as well as by individuals. The pragmatic thrust of Peirce’s behaviourism is that a behavioural disposition is only a virtue or a vice in relation to some purpose, such as rational deliberation, scientific inquiry or democratic decision-making.

In this article I will attempt a behavioural analysis of the notion of care, in order to show in what ways and to what extent it constitutes a virtue in relation to the practice of democracy. I begin with a behavioural interpretation of Carol Gilligan’s concept of care, not because her conception is definitive, but because it is robust and multifaceted [3]. I present it as a somewhat arbitrary starting point against which other notions of care may be contrasted.

### 2. Caring Behaviours

Gilligan’s ground-breaking book, *In a Different Voice: psychological theory and women’s development* [4], reported the findings of her research in human moral development. Gilligan found that, on the whole, women and men in her culture aspired to different moral paradigms [5]. Gilligan was at one time an associate of Lawrence Kohlberg, whose paradigm of moral reasoning—characterised by dispassion, impartiality and universalised conceptions of rights and justice—Gilligan found to be favoured more by the men than by the women she studied. Kohlberg himself used his paradigm to diagnose the caring, relationship-based moral reasoning of many women and girls as immature. Gilligan’s thesis is not the simple reverse of Kohlberg’s—that his male-orientated paradigm is less mature than the paradigm
favoured by the women Gilligan studied. Rather, Gilligan discusses the strengths of both paradigms, and concludes that the two complement each other—that in fact, each paradigm needs the other to curb its excesses, correct its misdirections and compensate for what it lacks [6]. Men would do well, that is, to become mindful of what effect their blind calculations of rights and justice, and their fierce assertions of independence have on the network of human relationships in which they live, while women would do well to give their ideas, desires and interests (their “voices”) equal dignity, consideration and emphasis to the ideas, desires and interests of others, especially other men. The ethic of care constructed by Gilligan incorporates elements of both of these paradigms.

I will now describe six virtues that I take to be elemental to Gilligan’s ethic of care: acquaintance, mindfulness, moral imagining, solidarity, tolerance and self-care. I will begin a behavioural interpretation of these virtues: I will suggest a number of behavioural dispositions and procedures that realise them. Most of the behaviours I mention should be understood as sufficient but not necessary instances of caring virtues.

To be caring is, first of all, to be aware of the network of human [7] relationships in which one is involved and secondly, to consider the effects of one’s actions (including speech and very subtle actions such as facial expressions) on the people to whom one is socially related [8]. For Gilligan, the notion of atomistic individualism—that it is possible to live detached from others—is not only false but also dangerous. Even the articulation and the practice of justice require awareness of human relations [9]; and a caring person will not always exercise the rights that justice grants her: she will sometimes give others more than they have the right to expect from her [10]. Acquaintance becomes a virtue when it is instantiated in habitual behaviours such as noticing, imagining [11], naming, remarking on and communicating with others. The goal of acquaintance is simply awareness of the other people our conduct may affect. Therefore, the scope of this goal is indeterminate. There is no way to follow the ripple of effects caused by our conduct, to know who will be affected. In the law of torts, this obscurity gives rise to the standard of proximate cause, which we may adapt: a caring person is one who makes herself aware of the others she might reasonably expect to affect.

By mindfulness I mean consideration of the ways in which our conduct affects others. Mindfulness constitutes a continuum of attention, ranging from the attention we give to how our action may affect any random, generalised other, to the closer attention we give to how we affect the particular people we know well, e.g. our family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. General mindfulness requires that we regard others in their universality; close mindfulness requires that we regard others in their particularity. A more intense, more involved level of care is appropriate among people who know each other well, and requires special sensitivity—a closer mindfulness of one another’s special needs and interests. Gilligan notes that many of the games young girls play in her culture “foster the development of the empathy and sensitivity necessary for taking the role of ‘the particular other’ and point ... toward knowing the other as different from the self.” [12]

The virtue of mindfulness—of both the general and the close
varieties—is exercised in behaviours such as inquiring into and articulating others’ needs and interests, especially those that are different from one’s own. The aim of this virtue is understanding, which is only indirectly evidenced by the behaviours of mindfulness. Understanding is also demonstrated by behaviour that cannot be explained without it—such as behaviour that embodies the subsequent caring virtues.

It is one thing to understand the peculiar claims of suffering and ecstasy of those around us, and another to actually sympathise with those claims: to suffer with people who suffer differently, and to be happy with people who find happiness in ways very different from our own. Gilligan recommends a radical sympathy that is not measured in the liberal moral theory of equality. To respect a person’s autonomy, even to defend her right to pursue peculiar interests, is not the same as attempting to share those interests even long enough to help her pursue them. Rather, as Richard Rorty has observed:

Human solidarity ... is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people [13].

Solidarity means helping others to reach their goals, whether these be vital needs, urgent desires or pie-in-the-sky dreams. It is the element of solidarity—the commitment to act on behalf of others—that most people identify with the notion of caring, although our analysis shows this to be only one element and, as I will argue presently, not even a necessary element. The practice of solidarity presupposes the practices of acquaintance and mindfulness. The process of caring is the same for strangers and for intimates: we keep ourselves aware of when and how we interact with them; we seek to understand them as far as is practical, we attempt to empathise with what they must need or want from our interaction, and we act to fulfill that need or want, unless we decide that doing so would violate our own conscience. As Nell Noddings describes:

[W]hen we struggle toward the reality of the other ... [w]e also have aroused in us the feeling, “I must do something.” When we see the other’s reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream. When I am in this sort of relationship with another, when the other’s reality becomes a real possibility for me, I care [14].

Our solidarity with others means either that we have become converted to their ways of life—so that the same things make all of us happy or miserable—or that we empathise with them sufficiently to suffer and celebrate with them. The former is a solidarity of conscience, an example of which would be my conversion to your religious doctrines, so that I come to share your peculiar concerns about the morality of our community. An example of the latter would be a devout Christian who is happy to join in Jewish religious celebrations, and who observes relevant dietary
rules when entertaining devout Jewish friends. While these different types of solidarity are often realised in different types of behaviour, both are also realised in our pursuit of needs and interests claimed by others.

Moreover, both kinds of solidarity preclude didactic, paternalistic or pastoral care—the kind that presumes to address needs and interests of the person being cared for does not countenance—no matter how sincerely intended. Consider the brutal ministrations made by 16th-century Franciscans to Yucatan Mayans, in the name of Christian love, as related by Friar Diego de Landa:

After the people had been thus instructed in religion, and the youths benefited as we have said, they were perverted by their priests and chiefs to return to their idolatry ... Upon this the friars held an Inquisition ..., they held trials and celebrated an Auto, putting many on scaffolds, capped, shorn and beaten, and some in the penitential robes for a time. Some of the Indians out of grief, and deluded by the devil, hung themselves; but generally they all showed much repentance and readiness to be good Christians [15].

May [the Mayans not] return to their misery and vomittings of errors, thus falling into worse case than before, returning the evil ones we have been able to drive out of their souls, out of which with so laborious care we have been able to drive them, cleansing them and sweeping out their vices and evil customs of the past [16].

The distinction of the elements of care I have derived from Gilligan helps me be precise in my condemnation of the Franciscans in this case. Presumably, their failure was not one of acquaintance; and clearly, it was not one of mindfulness—for it seems the Franciscans appreciated, in qualitative detail, their impact on the Mayans. Nor do I believe it was a failure of care for the Franciscans not to embrace Mayan religion and morality. Rather, their breach of the ethic of care lay, first, in their failure to even attempt to see Mayan ways as legitimate, even for Mayans, and secondly, in using force rather than persuasion to change Mayan beliefs and behaviour. The first was failure of moral imagining, the second a failure of tolerance.

Gilligan’s ethic of care, in contrast to some others, only demands that solidarity be attempted, through moral imagining, and not that it actually be achieved. The requirement that we sympathise with all claims of suffering and happiness would rest on the absurd assumption that all private moralities are ultimately commensurable: that they can all be fitted together in a unified view of the good life. Since this is clearly impossible, it follows that to care for others requires only an honest attempt at solidarity, i.e. an effort to imagine that what others claim is good and bad, really is, or at least, is for them.

The virtue of moral imagining requires that we reserve judgement on the peculiarities of others brought to our attention by our practice of acquaintance and mindfulness, and that we exercise our reason, imagination and good will in the attempt to empathise with those peculiarities. Solidarity may be attempted by many means: imagining such peculiarities as belonging to ourselves; studying their causes;
seeing our own needs and interests as peculiar, broadening our exposure to the chaotic history of human purpose and desire. These means may be pursued in literature and art, in anthropology and history, in thought experiment, travel and intimate conversation.

When moral imagination fails to achieve solidarity (as it has failed for me, for example, regarding white and Christian supremacy, and certain forms of addiction), then we may still care for others by committing to use only persuasion and never force, to win their solidarity: to try to convert them to our own view of what is good for them. This commitment is the basis of the virtue of tolerance, and while it is not the kind of care we hope to share with intimates, it is precisely the kind that we may expect and demand from our fellow democratic citizens. Tolerance, then, is almost a negative virtue, in that it describes the quintessential democratic disposition to refrain from interfering with the pursuits and pastimes of others, no matter how abhorrent to us, that do not themselves prevent the same scope of liberty to others [17].

Behaviourally, tolerance is evidenced as much by the absence of repressive actions as by the practice of non-discriminatory procedures. Of course, arrangements for reciprocal political and social non-interference may be motivated more by self-regard than by care for others, but either motive is sufficient. The willingness to give all kinds—and very different kinds—of people the political and social room to pursue what is important to them, although we ourselves may not be able to appreciate those pursuits, because we see that otherwise we will cause them to suffer, is surely a kind of compassion.

Finally, to be caring is not to be completely selfless in every case for, as Gilligan observes, “to be selfless means not to be in relationship” [18]. Gilligan characterises “the age-old opposition between selfishness and selflessness” as a false dichotomy [19]. The ethic of care she constructs recognises the needs and interests of everyone in a relationship network (including the caring self) who must creatively balance the conflicting claims of “compassion and autonomy”, “virtue and power” [20]. Gilligan does not argue (as do some Taoists and Christians) that a sufficiently caring person will find a perfect balance to strike in every situation of competing needs; only that in such competitions the needs of the caring self should not be habitually slighted. It was this virtue of self-care, so strongly emphasised in Kohlberg’s ethic of justice and autonomy, that Gilligan found to be less habitual among the women than among the men of her culture. For these women, Gilligan recommended such practices as articulating their own needs, interests and desires and negotiating them on a more equal basis with the needs, interests and desires of others.

3. Two Democracies

I have described the ethic of care as a complex of virtues, or behavioural dispositions. Now, in order to relate care to democracy, I must also describe democracy in the currency of behavioural habits. I have found it useful to think of democracy as two systems of practices that are compatible but not necessary to each other: one a system of social non-interference and the other of social co-operation. Richard
Shusterman has written about these different conceptions of democracy, in defending John Dewey’s conception (which emphasises social co-operation) against Richard Rorty’s (which emphasises social non-interference) [21]. Although I disagree with Shusterman’s finding that these conceptions are incompatible, I have been instructed by his exposition of them.

Rorty’s democracy is characterised by the capitalist values of extreme individualism, vast personal liberty and freedom from too much association. Rorty uses the phrase “private morality” to refer to visions and pursuits of self-realisation, whether they be temporary or life-long, whether they be hobbies or whole ways of life (ways of whole lives), and whether they be pursued by individuals, clubs, congregations or entire cultures. “Public morality” means politics: the way one justifies using social power to coerce others; and Rorty explains that democracy is the public morality that attempts to be neutral among conflicting private moralities. That is, democratic people only interfere with each other’s private moralities when those moralities become undemocratic by threatening other private moralities.

In Dewey’s socialist democracy, individuals derive meaning and purpose from association, and so construe their political freedom positively: as opportunities to pursue the benefits of associated life:

Dewey [elaborated] his vision of liberal democracy … in terms of basic human desires for consummatory experience, growth, self-realization, and community, and in terms of the need for collaborative effort to achieve greater frequency and security for these desired ends in a changing contingent world whose future can in some measure be influenced and improved by human action and experimental intelligence [22].

I take Dewey’s advocacy of “the positive sense of freedom as empowerment to lead a better life” [23] to be a prediction that, given the chance, people will find the best use of democratic freedoms to be cultural habits of mutually beneficial social interaction; but then for Dewey, social empowerment was a means to individual freedom of conscience:

Earlier liberalism regarded the separate and competing economic action of individuals as the means to social well-being as the end. We must reverse the perspective and see that socialized economy is the means of free individual development as the end [24].

Shusterman himself finds individual development to be the goal of both Dewey’s and Rorty’s democracy:

Dewey and Rorty agree that self-realization is the highest value for liberal democracy and that such self-fulfillment is distinctively individual and aesthetic. Realizing oneself is not a matter of fulfilling any fixed general essence of human or citizen, conforming to a predetermined moral or social formula legislated by nature or society. It is rather a particularized creative project of individual growth, a Nietzschean project of becoming what you are, by using one’s particular conditions, talents, inclinations,
and opportunities to mold oneself into a richer, more attractive person who will enjoy more satisfying and rewarding experiences with greater frequency and stability [25].

However, this kind of self-realisation requires, besides the empowerment of social collaboration, the freedom to associate and disassociate with others, as we see fit, in the pursuits we deem most worthy. The positive freedoms of association, co-operation and collective growth presuppose the negative freedoms of not being told how, when and for what purposes to associate. A democracy of non-intervention, like Rorty’s, is therefore both logically and practically prior to a Deweyan democracy of collective flourishing. Indeed, Rorty’s only point in differentiating an arena of public morality from the arena of competing private moralities is that if the latter are not privatised, they become oppressive. The only constraint Rorty sees democracy putting onto private moralities is that they acquire their converts by persuasion rather than by force [26]—which is presumably his re-wording of Dewey’s idea that liberalism means using experimental intelligence rather than force to determine collective action [27]. Without the habits of restraint that follow from Rorty’s division of public and private morality our collective pursuits can become undemocratic, whereas, without the habits of meaningful collaboration envisioned by Dewey, our democratic society can become sterile and cruelly competitive.

The behavioural interpretation of democracy I shall begin here will reflect this distinction between democratic principles of non-intervention and beneficial association. I will describe a separate set of behaviours for each principle. I believe a behavioural interpretation of these principles is more useful than a strictly conceptual interpretation, for demonstrating that association presupposes non-intervention. At times I will describe procedures rather than behaviours; but then a procedure is only a rule for behaviour that has been adopted by some community. The fact that these procedures are written down, so that sometimes in discussing them we make reference to texts rather than to actual human conduct, does not make them any less appropriate to behavioural studies, as long as the procedures are rules for how to act and not how to think or what to believe. Of course, a community that aspires to democracy should monitor continually the democratic quality of both its formal procedures and the actual habits of human interaction that form within it.

To begin with, the ideal of non-intervention is realised by the establishment of relatively value-neutral procedures for facilitating the pursuit of private moralities. The distinction Rorty wants to maintain between the public and private moralities is another way of describing a procedural, as opposed to a substantive democracy—a distinction I believe to be as necessary as it is indeterminate. A procedural democracy is one in which there is general agreement on procedures for free speech, universal franchise, the separation of church and state, rules of evidence, and so on—procedures that are neutral to the content of private moralities, e.g. religious or political platforms. In substantive democracies there is no such neutrality: citizens may use governmental power to sponsor or aid the pursuits of private moralities that gain a majority of collective support. This distinction is naïve, of course, because there is no such thing as a value-neutral procedure; but I also believe this distinction
is one we cannot do without, because democracy depends on the identification of procedures that are at least relatively value-neutral, in that the only values to which they are opposed are those against democracy itself: for example, Fascism. Assuring each citizen as much freedom of conscience as is compatible with the same freedom for all, is the value behind this distinction. This is one reason I like Rorty’s characterisation of democracy as one kind of “public morality”, for it is a morality—a normative stance, a choice of values—but it addresses a different sphere of moral choices than is addressed by each individual’s “private morality”, or vision of perfection [28]. Democracy aims to make the kind of public moral choices that will least interfere with our private moral choices:

The spiritual inner man, his motives and his deepest impulses are not only no business of public authorities; they ought not to concern his fellow citizens, especially his ideological opponents, or even people who do not share his system of associations, background, and loyalties (Judith Shklar) [29].

Some of the procedures that facilitate democratic nonintervention are, as I have mentioned, free speech, universal enfranchisement and so on. It has been the business of American courts and legislatures for centuries to spell out the behavioural policies and practices that realise these procedural ideals. One example is the decision that no level of government that issues parade permits in the course of regulating traffic may discriminate against any applicant for such a permit on the basis of the content or message of the parade.

More interesting, perhaps, than the rules of democratic institutions are the patterns and habits of interpersonal behaviour among their members. The ideal of non-intervention in such behaviour is to avoid using force—including legislation, violence, fraud and fallacious reasoning—to win adherence to one’s private moral views and practices. The alternative is persuasion. A person who, when offended at the way her neighbour worships, is inclined to speak to her neighbour about it rather than to her legislator, has developed a democratic disposition. A related disposition is to oppose undemocratic uses of force: to notice coercion and object to it.

Take just one other example of how this dichotomy functions. It is one thing for a Mormon woman to ask herself, as a Mormon, what are her proper roles in her marriage, her family, her religious community, and her society. It is quite another thing for the same woman, as a citizen of a democratic society, to ask herself which of these roles her society should disallow or discourage. As a Mormon, the woman may decide that her spiritual fulfillment lies in a domestic life rather than in a career outside the home; she may even believe, further, that what is true for her, in this regard of spiritual fulfillment, is true for all women, all of whom share a feminine spiritual nature; but as a member of a democratic society she may only attempt to persuade other women to follow this view. She is not entitled to coerce them herself, or to have public force used in that attempt, in the event people of her persuasion attain majority status.

The distinction between persuasion and force is indeterminate. It is obvious that hate crimes and rioting are undemocratic means of pursuing private moral
visions, and that writing books, appearing on talk shows and participating in other forms of public dialogue are not overly intrusive. However, the democracy of many behaviours is contestable, especially many kinds of social activism, such as picketing, boycott, sit-ins and hunger strikes. Is it persuasion or force to follow a woman out of an abortion clinic and persist in verbal confrontation with her whenever she enters public space? The same American courts that have protected offensive speech against attacks by people in whom it has only caused psychic pain have also upheld legislation against verbal harassment. Different communities may evolve this distinction in different ways and be equally democratic, so long as they have evolved either procedures or collective habits (or both) of pursuing the distinction, through inquiry and social reconstruction, in order to maximise freedom of conscience. Democratic communities are communities that, among other things, constantly worry that their individual and collective behaviours may cause someone’s conscience to be forced.

It is easy to formulate a behavioural interpretation of Dewey’s concept of social co-operation, since that concept was modeled on the habits of scientific communities. Dewey and Rorty have both taken the purpose of social life to be individual self-realisation, of which there is no authoritative [30], teleological standard [31]. They have both asserted that self-realisation is an open-ended, Darwinian process of growth and adaptation to the changing possibilities we encounter in our environment. Dewey saw that this kind of growth requires above all two things: variety in the environment and adaptability—openness to change—in the individual. Dewey saw that both of these were easier to achieve among co-operative communities than by individuals, and like Peirce before him, he found that communities of scientists had evolved useful habits of interaction that cultivated both variety and adaptability.

Variety means that potentials for change in the natural and social environment are not artificially or dogmatically limited. In scientific communities this ideal is realised by the standards of free and open inquiry that isolate scientific research from the sanctions of church and state. These correspond, in democratic communities, to the procedures and practices of non-intervention I have discussed, which facilitate an ideological and cultural pluralism. Adaptability is the ability to grow by discerning the meanings, selecting from the opportunities, weighing the risks and usefully employing the materials our natural and social environment has to offer. In science, adaptability involves such inquiry skills as discerning aberrant phenomena, investigation, imagining new hypotheses, careful reasoning, honest experimenting and self-correction. Each of these skills is collective as well as individual. That is, many communities of scientists have developed habits of collective discernment, reasoning, etc. and have found their collective inquiries to be more efficacious and more beneficial to each member than the isolated inquiries of any individual. This is because, normally, no individual can see as many possibilities or notice as many fallacies as a group of people looking for the same things. People with similar goals and standards can correct each other’s mistakes and model their strengths for each other, so that not only can members of the community grow by learning from each other, but also the members can grow as a community, by learning how best to interact—to divide their efforts, to compensate for each other’s weaknesses and
build on each other’s strengths—so that a strong community can actually practise virtues that none of its members can practise themselves.

Dewey urged that our societies become more democratic by attempting to structure just this kind of social co-operation—particularly in schools—in which free citizens join in like-minded communities to draw more growth from one another than any of them could achieve on her own. Whether we are restructuring a school system, writing a tax law, raising a family, hunting a virus or interpreting poetry, our results will be better and our personal virtues (talents, capacities for growth) will be more developed if we make these attempts as communities. When Dewey called for closer public association as the means to every individual’s self-realisation he was not advocating a collective private morality, in which the members of a society socialise one another towards a common standard of self-realisation. Nor was he merely espousing the socialist doctrine that fairness requires the social assurance of equality of opportunity (which, of course, he was). He was enacting the pragmatist view of personal development, in which the conditions of personal growth are best cultivated not by people but by societies.

It does not follow that there is any public obligation to support, further, or otherwise care for private pursuits one does not share. Democracy does not require us to make every cause our own. After all this talk about the benefits of close social co-operation, I want once more, and briefly, to raise Rorty’s distinction between pursuing a collective private vision and pursuing a public vision. A public (political) vision is pursued by citizens acting as the engineers of society, and the result will be executed by the government, by force. If they are democratic, this vision will be limited by the principle of non-intervention: citizens will not be tempted to lend their public authority to this or that private cause. A collective private vision is pursued by people who are not acting as citizens, at least while they pursue it, but as Mormons or skinheads or jazz enthusiasts or Disney stock-holders or Jane Austen buffs or Queer Nation radicals or Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Some of these communities are alarmingly powerful but again, if they are democratic they will not be tempted to use their power in coercive ways. This does not mean that private concerns should not be discussed in public space. On the contrary, public discussion of private views is as important to the function of democratic society (in terms of mutual understanding and accommodation) as it is to personal fulfillment (the construction and clarification of personal meaning). It only means that what private groups do in public space should never amount to forcing someone’s conscience. Democracy provides the un-coerced arena in which people with divergent private passions attempt to persuade one another about what is important—about what they should care about.

4. Is Care a Democratic Virtue?

I hope that bringing many ideals of care and of democracy into the currency of behaviour has already made some of their areas of similarity obvious. Now, on the basis of this behavioural analysis, I may assert my thesis: the relationship between caring and democracy is identity among certain of their respective behaviours. I do
not claim that caring action is a prerequisite for, or conducive to democratic interaction, or vice versa, but that certain behaviours and behavioural habits that partially constitute a person’s or a community’s caring also partially constitute that person’s or community’s democracy. I say “partially” because there are behaviours and habits that belong to care and not to democracy, and vice versa.

The behaviours named by the caring virtues of acquaintance, mindfulness and moral imagining also belong to the virtue of democratic co-operation—specifically, the virtue of adaptability, or mutual growth through social inquiry. These behaviours include noticing, imagining and communicating with others, inquiring into and articulating the needs and interests of others, imagining the peculiar desires of others as belonging to ourselves and broadening our exposure to human experience. I think it is obvious that this kind of examination and experimentation is as relevant to thorough social inquiry as to thorough interpersonal care, and that any community in which these practices become habitual is as likely to experience practical, co-operative social improvement as the emergence of strong and varied foci of solidarity.

Solidarity itself, of the types I have described, is not properly a democratic goal. That is, the intense interpersonal caring that is manifest in people taking up one another’s burdens and causes is certainly conducive to all the ideals of democracy I have named and, in fact, is facilitated by the democratic procedures I have described; but such solidarity of conscience and private purposes is not itself a democratic ideal, and to try to make it into one would violate the democratic ideal of non-interference. By democratic procedures and habits, citizens exert pressure on each other to conform their political views and habits to democratic standards, but do not pressure them to homogenise their private views in deference to any particular value system, or for the sake of solidarity itself. On the contrary, democratic practices positively disallow citizens from coercing each other that way. Altruism, sacrifice, compassion and love, in so far as their behaviours are distinguishable from the democratic behaviours of non-interference and of social co-operation, belong to the realm of private morality, and are not properly the objects of political concern. Democracy leaves us free to pursue them or not; democratic authority must stand indifferent. Politicians who offer their constituents moral leadership and mean more than the civic morality of democratic interaction, or who use their positions to attempt to unite their constituents under any collective credo, no matter how innocuous, either do not understand or openly flout the democratic ideal of social non-interference.

Tolerance, on the other hand, is a quintessential democratic virtue: its practice constitutes the ideal of social non-interference [32]. As such, tolerance is related to the democratic goal of cultivating pluralism for the sake of co-operative growth. Moreover, tolerant behaviours are an important part of the process of social inquiry for growth. It emerges, as Dewey saw, that the same tolerant dispositions and procedures that are necessary for our political freedom are equally necessary for thorough inquiry. Tolerance facilitates the marketplace of ideas, in which we sometimes profit from the successes of others involved in pursuits we at first consider misguided or distasteful, and in which others sometimes profit from
mistakes we make in pursuits we begin with bravado and find unworkable. Also, the disposition to resort to persuasion rather than force in cases of conflict very often tempers our own convictions, for it necessarily engages us in dialogue from which few of us ever withdraw with all our beliefs and reasons intact, and from which genuine public concerns may be formed. In short, a community of citizens with different moral ambitions, who aim for inclusiveness and who accommodate each other in their divergent pursuits (as far as those pursuits are politically compatible), is the ideally fertile ground for personal and collective growth.

The virtue of self-care is similarly relevant to both the cultivation of variety and the process of collective growth through inquiry. As Ayn Rand has asserted, without sufficient self-regard our unique insights and desires may not be articulated, and thus have no chance to be explored, tested, extended or nurtured by our community. It is the community as well as the individual that suffers from this loss of voice. Without variety, inquiry is stifled. This was the page of evolutionary science that Dewey took from Darwin: since variety cannot be planned, the more homogeneous a society, no matter how rigorous its process of inquiry, the less potential it has for improvement. Similarly, the process of collaborative inquiry depends on each member of the community criticising and re-creating ideas and practices from her unique perspective. The cognitive virtue of impartiality proscribes self-effacement as much as self-absorption. Consider the prominence of self-regard in Matthew Lipman’s conception of caring thinking:

When we are thinking caringly, we attend to what we take to be important, to what we care about, to what demands, requires or needs us to think about it. Higher-order thinking, in other words, is not value-free … Caring thinking is not content merely to classify; it must rank and grade, assign priorities, distinguish between what is urgent and what is not. Lurking behind one’s valuations is always one’s sense of proportion, that idiosyncratic perspective in terms of which some things appear to one to be close by and huge while other things seem to be ever so far off and of minuscule dimensions [33].

Without sufficient self-regard a person may be unwilling to participate in the give and take of thorough inquiry. Indeed, the behaviours of self-care I mentioned—articulating one’s desires and negotiating them fairly with others—are equally important behaviours of inquiry.

5. Conclusion: moral education

The behavioural dispositions, or virtues, we value enough to educate are those without which, we have judged, it would be neglectful to allow our children to make their way through life. There is no such thing as education that is value-neutral (even norms as universal as reading and hygiene bespeak particular values), and so all education is a form of enculturation. As behavioural analysis makes clear, enculturation is more than the acquisition of knowledge but less than indoctrination, for the very nature of ideals such as reason, care and democracy is that they must be wilfully
chosen and practised. Of the six virtues of care I have identified, all but one are also virtues of democracy—either the public democracy of social non-interference or the private democracy of social co-operation for mutual growth—and are therefore appropriate aims of public education. If our children are to willfully choose and practise these ideals we have chosen to educate, they must be included in the process of inquiry by which these ideals are identified and constructed. The exercise of behavioural analysis might be one fruitful aspect of such inquiry. As programmes such as Philosophy in the Schools attest, children are eminently capable of discussing such queries as: “What kinds of things does a fair person do?” “How does a real friend act?” “How can I show that my community is tolerant?” “Is what’s good for me the same as what’s good for you?” “I know this is a safe place when such-and-such happens.” The operationalising of concepts such as fairness and friendship at once help children to concretise them as actions they may carry out, and to appreciate their complexity and inherent vagueness.

However, behavioural analysis, such as I have begun in this article, suggests that democracy and care are less subjects to be learned than habits to be acquired. Moral education must therefore provide students with opportunities, not only to inquire into them, but also to practise them. Ideally, inquiry and practice should run together: moral inquiry should alert students and teachers to the moral dimensions of their experience, including their shared experience. Students and teachers should seek opportunities to experiment with moral conduct, should reflect on their conduct and practice the moral strategies they find most meaningful, with a view to becoming proficient in them and to developing them into habits. The combination of inquiry and action would mean that students and teachers construct (and reconstruct) democratic virtues, simultaneously as concepts and as dispositions.

The overlap of caring and democratic virtues means that communities that practise the kinds of care I have described will necessarily be democratic to some extent, and vice versa, but the overlap is not complete. There are important distinctions to be made. I am concerned that advocates of various ethics of care have promoted virtues such as sympathy, altruism, sacrifice and love, as aims of didactic moral education, claiming that they are necessary for democratic society. I have shown to what extent I believe this is true: democracy imposes on its adherents the public obligation to treat one another with the consideration, respect, and sometimes the tolerance, that will allow all private pursuits (i.e. individual and collective pursuits that do not threaten democratic pluralism) to thrive. Apart from that, however, democratic authority must not be used to promote caring virtues espoused by private communities.

Of course, within democratic societies there will be private communities that aspire to private caring virtues, just as there will be communities that aspire to private ideals of art, eros and hate. Many of these communities will not also aspire to be democratic in themselves, and this is not necessarily a problem for the democratic societies in which these groups function. All kinds of non-democratic private communities form around private credos: the Anglican Church, the Boy Scouts, the Council for Secular Humanism. Democracy does not require these organisations to be democratic in themselves by practising the democratic be-
behaviours I have identified. The Boy Scouts, if they can show that they are truly a private organisation and do not rely too much on government support, may refuse admittance to homosexuals and atheists. Democracy merely requires that the practices of such private communities fit within the democratic practices of the larger society. In most cases all this means is that private communities remain strictly voluntary: that civic institutions lend them no official sanction or preference, and that disaffected members be free to leave them—in short, that no one’s participation is forced. In the classroom, this means that while it is appropriate for school authorities to acknowledge and in some ways accommodate private moral agendas constructed by students conducting moral inquiry in the school, the school, as a civic institution, must treat this as an instance of private solidarity. The school must be seen neither to prefer nor to discountenance such agendas, and must regulate that all students are free to associate or disassociate with such agendas.

I am alarmed at how forthrightly people will abandon democratic principles when it comes to public moral education. School programmes for religious instruction, character education, good citizenship and intercultural empathy very often cross the line that separates public from private enculturation. This is due in part to the fact that in many respects young children are not considered full citizens capable of making considered moral judgements, but didactic moral education can only atrophy their capacity to make such judgements. Only the practice of moral inquiry, including reflective conduct, can increase that capacity. This kind of education requires that we do not present virtues as closed or final; that we talk to our children about the contingent origins of these virtues, the limits of their applications and the history of their adaptations; that we share our curiosity about how they might need to be adapted in the future. It also requires that as adults we not permit ourselves to perpetuate our values by appeal to our own authority, whether or not it is backed by aggression. The inclusion of children in the process of value inquiry obliges us as adults to be up-front about our reasons for preferring certain virtues, and obliges us to give fair-minded consideration to counter-values presented by children.

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**


[2] Take two examples: (1) “Although it is possible that rationality may not lead to certainty, most of us, I think, would admit that human beings have evolved conceptions of cognitive virtues that have been of help in creating civilizations ... We would not be better off without impartiality, consistency and reasonableness, even though we may all live them imperfectly ... We can educate children to identify and agree upon a procedural conception of what it is to reason well.” “What is a ‘Community of Inquiry’?” in: Wendv Oxman et al., (Eds) *Critical Thinking and Learning* (Upper Montclair, New Jersey, Institute for Critical Thinking, 1992), pp. 300–301. (2) “A dialogue that tries to conform to logic, [the community of inquiry] moves forward indirectly like
a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself. Consequently, when this process is internalized or introjected by the participants, they come to think in moves that resemble its procedures. They come to think as the process thinks.” Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education (New York, University of Cambridge Press, 1992), pp. 15–16.

[3] Gilligan’s construction of the ethic of care has become the foundation for a number of care-based morality measures, such as the Ethics of Care Interview (see Eva Elisabeth Aspaas Skoe et al. “The ethic of care: issues in moral development”, in: Personality Development in Adolescence: a cross national and life span perspective (Tromso, Norway, University of Norway Press, 1998)). For alternative constructions of the ethic of care, see Nell Noddings, Caring: a feminine approach to ethics and moral education (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984); and Martin Hoffman, Empathy and its Development (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987).


[5] Gilligan’s finding of gender preferences for divergent moral paradigms is merely a finding of correlation, and does not include a theory of causation. Moreover, this finding remains controversial, as new studies alternately confirm it (see, e.g. Christian S. Crandall et al. “Newsworthy moral dilemmas: justice, caring, and gender”, in: Sex Roles (University of Kansas Department of Psychology), Vol. 40 (3–4), 1999, pp. 187–209) and refute it (see, e.g. Cindy J.P. Woods: “Gender differences in moral development and acquisition: a review of Kohlberg’s and Gilligan’s models of justice and care”, in: Social Behavior and Personality (California State University), Vol. 24 (4) 1996, pp. 375–384). Whether or not the moral paradigms constructed by Gilligan are indeed preferred by different genders in any culture, however, is irrelevant to my thesis of the relationship of care to democracy.

[6] Indeed, Gilligan’s work has prompted a re-evaluation of Kohlberg, in which many theorists have found elements of a caring ethic in Kohlberg’s paradigm, and/or have offered reconstructions of that paradigm that incorporate such elements. See, e.g. Bill Puka et al. The Great Justice Debate: Kohlberg criticism, Vol. 4 of the series Moral Development: a compendium (Troy, New York, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1994).

[7] Many philosophers of care extend this mindfulness to the network of relationships one has to all of nature, but Gilligan does not go this far.

[8] “The most basic questions about human living—how to live and what to do—are fundamentally questions about human relations, because people’s lives are deeply connected, psychologically, economically, and politically. [One should] Refram[e] these questions to make these relational realities explicit—how to live in relationship with others, what to do in the face of conflict …” Gilligan, In a Different Voice: psychological theory and women’s development (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982, 1993), p. xiv.

[9] In fact, Judith N. Shklar notes that notions of justice are largely shaped by willingness to care: “The difference between misfortune and injustice frequently involves our willingness and our capacity to act or not to act on behalf of the victims, to blame or absolve, to help, mitigate, and compensate, or to just turn away.” The Faces of Injustice (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), p. 2. “The line of separation between injustice and misfortune is a political choice, not a simple rule that can be taken as a given.” Ibid., p. 5.


[11] Terms such as “noticing” and “imagining” are not proper behavioural terms because they do not refer to observable phenomena, but they name clusters of observable activities that are most profitably interpreted as having intentional purposes and effects. For example, a behaviourist would not hesitate to read a certain series of repeated glances followed by a change of facial expression as an act of noticing.

[12] Gilligan, 1982, 1993, p. 11. Again, Shklar notes that this kind of sensitivity to particularity is one of the means by which notions of justice are shaped: “The normal model of justice … limits itself to matching [the] situation [of victims] against the rules, which is inadequate as a way of recognizing victims. Victimhood has an irreducibly subjective component that the normal model of justice cannot easily absorb … Who is to say what rules, if any, do or do not permit a group to feel victimized?” Shklar, 1990, p. 37.

John Dewey: “All friendship and intimate affection are ... the result of information about another person ... as it becomes an integral part of sympathy through the imagination. It is when the desires and aims, the interests and modes of response of another become an expansion of our own being that we understand him.” Art as Experience (New York, Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), p. 336.

[16] Ibid., p. 69. Shklar has written that “A benevolent, medicinal, kindly meant cruelty is ... a Christian duty, especially when used to return the wayward to the true faith.” Ordinary Vices (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 240.
[17] In this regard, democratic societies must not accept the argument often advanced by fundamentalist religious leaders, that since even private sinful behaviour will incur the wrath of God on the entire nation, citizens are justified in enforcing prohibitions of such behaviour.
[19] Ibid., p. xix.


[21] Ibid., p. 394.
[22] Ibid., p. 393.


Dewey, p. 78.

“[W]ithout the protection of something like the institutions of bourgeois liberal society, people will be less able to work out their private salutations, create their private self-images, reweave their webs of belief and desire in the light of whatever new people and books they happen to encounter.” Rorty: Contingency, pp. 84–85.


Dewey and Rorty follow Peirce in seeing human teleology as “developmental”, described by Sharp as “a pursuit of purposes in which genuinely novel purposes can and do emerge ...” (Peirce, p. 53.)

Dewey saw social co-operation as more central to self-realisation than Rorty sees it, but Rorty, for his part, does not picture individual growth occurring in a vacuum. His picture of the postmodern liberal seeking self-realisation is that of a person modifying her beliefs and practices in line with the people she meets and the books she reads—clearly a social project although the co-operation may be on a looser, less organised and less public basis.

It may seem that I have begged the question of whether the caring virtue of tolerance and the democratic virtue of non-interference are identical, since I have made them so by definition, in invoking the Dewey/Rorty distinction between persuasion and force to define them both. In each case I reached that definition by a different path. The commitment to avoid force in working for solidarity is, on one hand, a form of compassion—a means of avoiding cruelty—and on the other hand, a political contract of reciprocal protection. I am arguing that a person who cares deeply for me, and another who is merely willing to afford me minimal democratic civility, will respond with some of the same behaviours when I confront them with a belief or practice they find abhorrent but not threatening. In deed, the word “civility” carries both of these connotations—affective and political.