Democracy and normative education
Invited comments to Nel Noddings plenary lecture
“Education and Democracy in the 21st century”1.

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1. On imposing forms of life

In the very beginning of her lecture prof. Noddings writes:
“One powerful lesson we have learned in the past few decades is that the form of
life we call democratic cannot simply be imposed on cultures unprepared for it” (p.
1).

The thesis put forth is filled with ambiguities. How should it be understood? Three
possible interpretations are presented below:
a) It is only the unpreparedness of a culture which makes the imposing of democracy
impossible, i.e. if a culture would be prepared then the imposing might be successful.
b) What makes the imposing impossible is that we talk about imposing democratic forms
or life, i.e. that imposing some other form of life on an (un)prepared culture might be
successful.
c) It is correct and defendable to try to affect other cultures towards “democracy” but
doing this by “simply imposing” is not a correct way of doing this.

If some of these interpretations reflect prof. Noddings point of departure, I think
we are in trouble. The reason to this is that the idea of imposing a form of life
democracy) on a culture:
a) assumes, at some level, that education is about imposing,
b) indicates a normative educational position that does not question itself, and,
c) subordinates education with respect to normative ideas about how the future should
look like,
d) assumes that interaction between cultures is an educational rather than a political issue.

In commenting this I would like to draw the attention to the following.
a) Education is not about imposing things but about supporting individuals to
develop such kind of self-reflective thinking and such reflexive relation to others, self and

1 Appreciating the invitation to comment on prof. Noddings lecture I must admit that my knowledge of her
academic work is limited. It may thus be that a reader familiar with other parts of her production
understands the lecture differently from me.
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the world, that allow us to understand what our individual relation is to the very culture in which we have grown up and live in and, further, to help learners to understand and develop their capability of transforming the very culture into which they belong to and have grown into as a result of educational and learning processes. A theory of the process of education thus must say something about how educational activity (pedagogical actions) affects the individual’s relation to herself, her world and to others so that these relations are not fixed but open for negotiation or change. In fact I think that prof. Noddings would agree in this.

b) However, a normative educational position, in the form defended in Noddings’ paper (including clear ideas about such future states, the realisation of which should be made possible by contemporary education) may oversee the pedagogical task of developing human transformatory readiness. I return to this later on.

c) If educational practice is subordinated with respective to educational ideals or norms (i.e. politics), then the relative degrees of freedom that educational institutions do have in western democracies are disregarded. This idea was developed and put forth already in educational theory in the beginning of the 19th by e.g. Friedrich Schleiermacher (see e.g. Benner, 2005; Uljens, 2002).

d) When discussing the “imposing of a culture on somebody” we must keep in mind the difference between what we may call primary and secondary socialization, i.e. the difference between 1) what it means for a newborn child to grow into a culture within the private sphere and 2) the task of institutionalized, collective and public education. The latter can be divided into two simultaneous processes: i) the creating of a space through and in which the learner may distanciate herself from the culture into which the child has grown into and ii) the “socialization” into other, additional, layers of that very culture or moving beyond it. But, in order a second order normative socialization, this “educational socialization” should be carried out in a non-affirmative sense, i.e. by questioning that very culture for which this secondary or educational socialization, socializes (Benner, 2005). The difference between the two processes (i & ii) are also reflected by that parents are not obliged to study educational theory precisely because they are not expected to publicly legitimize their upbringing to the same extent as school teachers must do. Parents are thus to a greater extent “allowed to impose” their culture on their children in an unreflected manner, which is not expected from schools as public institutions.

e) Finally, Noddings does not raise the issue of how, in principle, a non-democratic culture or society may develop, from within, into a democratic form of culture, from within. In Europe we have met this dilemma at least three times: in relation to the French revolution, in Germany after 1945 and in the Eastern Europe today, e.g. the Berlin wall.

2. On awareness of the relation between culture and educational theory

A perhaps less critical reading of Noddings’ point of departure, is the following. The sentence may be interpreted to pay certain attention to cultural limitations of educational
theory. To me the sentence appears to include the idea that educational theories have to be understood in relation to the very culture the theory is aimed for. The question whether a culturally seen universal theory of education is possible, in principle, may thus be implicitly included here.

In this matter I would like to draw the attention to that there is, in our western tradition, a longstanding understanding of that culturally universal theories and corresponding models of practice are not possible, as educational theory and practice are seen to be connected to various cultures both by constituting (upholding) and preparing for them. That educational theories cannot be understood irrespective of the culture in which they have been developed was realized already by Aristotle and has since been repeatedly pointed at. However, this fundamental insight has taken different forms. In the transition period towards “modernist” educational philosophy, as this is reflected in e.g. Schleiermacher’s lectures on education from 1826, the understanding of this principle did change. Education was no longer limited to a preparation for an existing society but as a preparation of the learner to view him- or herself as a developer of the society. The “powerful lesson”, i.e. that educational theory must be understood in relation to the culture it is aimed for, started long ago.

Because of this I claim that, in discussing education and democracy, historical and cultural awareness is necessary, in order to understand in relation to what kind of political and economical culture the idea of democracy and the education aimed for it, is developed in the first place.

3. On deliberative democracy and intersubjectivity

Prof. Noddings takes her point of departure in the concept of deliberative democracy, although it is not well defined in the paper. Before commenting Noddings suggestions it must therefore be explicated what we typically refer to by deliberative democracy. Then it becomes possible to answer what deliberative education might mean and how it can or should be related to a) educational practice and b) educational theory.

The model of deliberative democracy and deliberative communication may be seen as a family of theoretical positions represented by e.g. John Dewey, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Sheyla Benhabib. Jürgen Habermas theory on communicative action and his discourse ethics has been especially important. In essence the idea is here that in will formation emphasis is put on the enlightened and critical conversation or communication. By the help of an open, insightful and reflective attitude and by them help of the “best argument” it is thought that we can reach agreement or make social contracts, although consensus is by no means necessary to reach. For reaching an understanding honesty as well as an interested and respectful attitude towards the other is presupposed. Deliberative democracy further assumes a critical attitude towards authorities and that no one “looses” although one changes one’s opinion. What is important is also that one’s own tradition and what oneself view as valuable is made the object for critical testing.

This model of democracy both resembles and differs from the liberal tradition, which accepts individual (transcendental) freedom as a fundamental starting point (a
“Kantian” position). The similarity is that proponents of deliberative or procedural democracy often emphasize the role of language, rational reflection and legitimate procedures for communication. In addition, and very important, is that e.g. Habermas accepts the libertarian idea of that a concept of pre-communicative freedom must be supposed. Yet, he does not go as far as e.g. the liberalist philosopher John Rawls. Rawls argues more strongly that independent and free individuals are more or less clear over their own positions before they participate in the public discourse in terms of their individual will formation, but as we do not know the future, he argues, it is wise that we agree upon such rules that will not lead to a personal disaster if we ourselves turn out as the victims, so to speak.3

Although Habermas accepts a culturally independent freedom he holds, with the communitarians and republicans (Sandel, McIntyre, Arendt) that will formation is not solely carried out individually and then just expressed publicly, but that will formation is constituted by and through public discourse (res publica) or, as someone expressed it, that we learn the rules of the game by playing it. In addition Habermas seem to hold, with communitarians, that we as individuals, already from the beginning are included in cultures and represent certain traditions (cultural intersubjectivity). Rational, communicative reflection may then be used as a tool or as an instrument for transcending these cultural positions in which we are embedded and which we uphold. In order to be able to carry out such a transgression, a culturally independent free will must be accepted. In this sense Habermas seems to be “Kantian” in accepting the libertarian independent will but Hegelian as seeing freedom as something that is reached though social interaction.

If this is what is meant by deliberative democracy and communication I have two comments.

First, if one accepts deliberative democracy as a regulative idea for how democracy works or should work in the society, it would be important to develop an educational theory consistent with such a position. From Noddings paper we can see that this has not bee her main interest. But what is even more important is that in accepting any normative model of democracy as the point of departure one easily ends up in subordinating education to politics or democracy. Education is then reduced to finding out practical pedagogical methods for reaching an intended state of art. To accept some normative model of democracy as an ideal towards which educational processes should strive at means, if this model is a not yet real cultural/societal state of art, that an ideal state of art is tried to made real through education. Another alternative is that some normative model of democracy may reflect an existing societal practice. In that case this normative educational reasoning means that education should prepare children and youth for this, existing, practice. In this case existing societal practice, not future ideals, work as the normative ideal. Education is then reduced to socialization into something existing. In both cases the norms for pedagogical action are given from outside. What, then, guarantees that the normative model used for will formation, itself will be questioned? The task of pedagogical institutions must naturally also be to critically investigate various

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3 Rawls (2005) emphasizes himself, however, that his concept of personal freedom is not a metaphysical, psychological or philosophical, but a normative political concept (p. 45ff).
positions on democracy. Further, how do we avoid indoctrination if external norms are to regulate pedagogical activities? And how do we guarantee a relatively seen independent space for education within a democratic society?

It should also be observed that Jürgen Habermas in his writings on deliberative democracy originally did not intend to develop a theory of education. In Habermas’ discourse ethics one can find elements of a learning theory, but the Habermasian project was not a pedagogical one. Rather he argues for an ideal model for how the public political discourse and will formation could or should be carried out. If we accept a theory of democracy as our starting point in education, then educational reflection is running the risk of being reduced to how this or that view of democracy should be put into practice. Education is then dealt with in a reductionist manner and cannot ever develop theory of its own from such a starting point. Educational reasoning is reduced to finding out ways of organizing practice. My impression is that Noddings paper is very much about this.

An educational theory on deliberative democracy should explain what it means to learn or acquire these procedures of communication, i.e. how we enter that kind of (intersubjective world) of communication. Educational theory cannot start from that individuals are e.g. capable of speaking, tolerant, able to listen sensitively on the others arguments or the like. The starting point for an educational theory cannot be that individuals are bearers of different views or attitudes. The task of educational theory is rather a) to explain how we, in the first place, develop a view, b) how we become aware of that we have a specific view on the world and c) why and how educational activities are considered necessary for this to occur.

Further, a problem with accepting the Habermasian position as a point of departure in education is that the view of the ideal speech situation presupposes a symmetry between participants. However, educational discourse is by definition characterized by a parallel symmetry and non-symmetry. The question is thus to what extent an ideal speech situation indeed can be established or implemented in an institutionalized educational setting? Expressed differently, if students are able to carry out deliberative conversations then they obviously do not have to learn it and, on the other hand, if they are not able to carry out such conversations then they have to learn it. To explain what the learning of this means, is by definition something else than to explain what such conversations ideally are like, among individuals capable of carrying out these conversations. A theory of deliberative communication or democracy and a theory of education may overlap but their task is entirely different.

An additional problem with theorizing citizenship from the perspective of democratic theory is that such an approach tend to narrow the much wider understanding of citizenship that is relevant from a pedagogical perspective, e.g. cultural, social citizenship and economical citizenship in addition to political citizenship. Political or democratic citizenship is thus only one dimension of citizenship that an educational theorist must relate to.

This is not a critique of a deliberative or some other understanding of democracy. But I question the view that such ideas may be a starting point for developing educational theory. The deliberative features mentioned express normative educational aims, but do not explain, on a principal level,
i) of what kind the process of learning/Bildung is like through which e.g. tolerance is learned and will formation occurs and
ii) how pedagogical activity (if all), is explained to create or intervene such a learning (Bildung) process. Is, for example, pedagogical activity necessary for learning deliberative communication or not?

Also progressive education may be normative
In addition, prof. Noddings lecture oversees the fundamental pedagogical problem that regardless of if we follow a problem based or a disciplinary based model, both can very well be normative.

By normative pedagogy I refer both to such reproduction-oriented or transformation-oriented education that does not itself question the aims that one strives towards and where will formation is about formation of the learners’ will.

The alternative to such a normative education is a non-affirmative educational theory emphasizing a non-hierarchical view of the relation between education and politics/democracy (Benner 2005, Uljens 1998). This means that existing knowledge, values or ideals are dealt with reflectively. Non-affirmative education means then to focus, in the pedagogical situation, the questions to which existing norms or knowledge is seen as answers. Through this the learner is thought of to acquire an individual relation not only to given answers (positive knowledge) but also to understand the questions behind the answers (negative knowledge). Of equal importance is reaching an ability to formulate own and new questions to be answered. This kind of pedagogy can be made use of both in disciplinary based and in progressive thinking. However, there is not much in Nodding’s paper that let us understand that her version of progressive education would meet these requirements. Rather educational practice is subordinated with respect to progressivist ideals.

Intersubjectivity and inter-subjectivity
I cannot avoid the impression that the contemporary debate between the liberal and the deliberative options reflect a tension between, on the one hand, an “egological” (or subject-centered) position emphasizing (transcendental) freedom as the fundamental point of departure and, on the other hand, an intersubjective position arguing that some kind of common world must be the starting point. A similar debate may be found in educational theory (Uljens, 2002).

In principal, the problem with pure intersubjective positions (depending on how intersubjectivity is defined) is that to the extent intersubjectivity is assumed there is no need for education as we already are supposed to share the world. To the extent the world is shared it cannot be a pedagogical problem. The problem with egological positions is that education is an impossible project as the individual, through her own process of Bildung, establishes her relation to the world. If the individual is radically free to constitute her relation to the world, others and herself there is no room for pedagogical intervention.

For my own part I defend a position that accepts both intersubjectivity and “subjectivity” as simultaneous points of departure, but this requires us to differ between many forms of subjectivity and intersubjectivity and also to explain how these are related to each other. In explaining how intersubjectivity and subjectivity are related and
especially how new intersubjective states or spheres are pedagogically established, we can make use of Hegel’s concept of Anerkennung (Recognition), Herbart’s concept of Bildsamkeit, and further, Fichtes concept of education as Summoning to self-activity (Aufforderung zur Selbstaufentätigkeit).

4. Education, critical thinking and the openness of the future

Prof. Noddings claims that an education for democracy and the upholding of democracy through education, accepts that critical thinking is of fundamental importance. Critical thinking again, she says, includes the ability of making well informed choices. The only point in were we tend to disagree, it is claimed, is how we should educate critical thinking.

I agree - how should we understand this criticality and how is fostering critical thinking possible? The whole modernist tradition of Bildung, a tradition that also frames Noddings paper, is emphasizing
-autonomy,
-emancipation,
-critical thinking,
-self-determination,
-self-reflexivity,

as important educational aims. A well informed opinion is indeed what is expected to be developed among learners. My point is that these are concepts that have been and still are widely accepted because of their functional value in the shift from a premodern society to modernity (cf Foucault’s concept of governmentality). The clue is then: if the tradition of Bildung, including the idea of a well informed choice / emancipation, is of functional value, then how can this tradition of thought be truly critical? If critical thinking as rational reflection and position taking is exactly what the modern, democratic society needs then critical thinking would have no critical power. We are not punished for being critical, rather we are punished for being uncritical: Kant teaches us that remaining dependent is due to a lazy attitude, it is so convenient to be led by others. In coherence with this view, the autonomous, self-reflective, subject in the autonomous nation state has functioned as the grand narrative concerning how to understand education in relation to society and its development the last 200 years.

If critical thinking means to be critical, one might suggest that education for critical thinking, in relation to deliberative democracy and otherwise, must include a “preparation” of the learner to question the very point of departure we accept ourselves, whether this point of departure is that of deliberative democracy or some other position.

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4 See Uljens (1998, 2002). Axel Honneth has developed a view of the concept of recognition which emphasizes, in the Fichte-Hegelian tradition, that establishment of identity is dependent of the how and in what respects the growing individual is recognized. It might be fruitful to discuss this position in relation to Bildsamkeit and Aufforderung. There is, however, no room to develop this critique here.
Otherwise the learner would not be reminded of that one possible understanding of ourselves in the world is that the world may be changed by us, i.e. to see that moving beyond present or pedagogically intended state of affairs is possible. However, the point is here that this way out of the problem concerning critical education is not successful as this attitude is included in the very idea of modernity.

One could thus say that modern education emanated as a project for risk reduction as the other is not knowable and the future is open. Modernist educational philosophers did realize that the question that continuously had to be answered, again and again, was “what the older generation wanted with the younger” (Schleiermacher)? As a given answer to that question did no more exist it had to be the topic for an ongoing public discourse (res publica). As the individual was offered this freedom, a correlating, responsible subject had to be constructed (Foucault). Not surprisingly then, much effort was during the 19th century invested in how to foster the development of a moral character that would, in her actions, be led by the idea of good (e.g. Herbart). If the content or direction of morality was not given then it had to be developed. The learner was to be prepared to live with the question of the good life as one’s life long companion, i.e. as a question that could not be answered once for all. Moral education could no more be a question of leading the child to a given ethical values (Björk, 2000). Rather the child had to be led to the question of morality itself.

This challenge remains even if would accept e.g. Levinas’ view of ethics as the first philosophy. Only by accepting, with Levinas, that we are, by definition, moral subjects through our total responsibility for the Other, the pedagogical dilemma is not explained. How does a personal stance come to existence in the tension between this total responsibility towards the other and the Other as a generalized third? The process of coming to understand or see the world in these terms is a topic to be explained by a pedagogical theory. The problem is partially explained by Levinas. He seem to argue that Being before experiencing is originally atemporal (il y a) (Pönni, 1996). The reaching of an identity is then related to meeting the Other. An experience of time or temporality is then resulting from meeting another Otherness, that has a temporality of its own. Making use of the concept of Eros he explains the will to reach the other (désir) but which nevertheless remains unreachable. Corporeal intersubjectivity is thus, in a way, an important point of departure in Levinas philosophy. This level of intersubjectivity also precedes the subject’s experience of herself as identity. In contrast to the idealist western tradition Levinas replaces the egological epistemological project with an epistemological and decentered project. Yet, Levinas fits into the idealist tradition by emphasizing the Others radical otherness which cannot be subjugated to the Same (Ego). Although he definitely regards Husserl and Heidegger as philosophers who subordinated the Other “to the Same”, he might be understood as an idealist by preserving the view that the Other is unreachable, i.e. ultimately free. However, the Other’s otherness is not knowable, not epistemological, in nature. Levinas’ ‘desire’ is thus oriented towards something else than itself but is not intentional in a Husserlian sense, i.e. it can not contain the object it desires, in itself. Rather a pre-phenomenological level of “living of something” is identified. Pönni (1996, p. 19) interprets Levinas so that this “state of living of something” (vivre de…) or enjoying (jouissance) is then interrupted by desire for the Other, which is related to seeing the others face. In this meeting of the Other a summoning to let go of “what one lives of” appears, which would mean to leave one’s
solitariness. What makes Levinas’ position interesting from a pedagogical perspective is that he, as does the Bildung tradition in education, also views the relation between subjects as asymmetrical, but in the opposite direction and on a different level compared to classical educational theory. In Levinas’ position the ‘I’ is summoned to moral responsibility for the Other, the I is not the summoning one, as in the Bildung tradition. However, it is important to analyze what these two different asymmetrical relations mean in a pedagogical relationship. I have earlier suggested that the Other’s (the child’s) corporeal existence may be understood as a summons of the parent to responsibility, whereas parental summoning of the child (recognition) is constitutive of establishing an identity and cultural intersubjectivity. A development of the relation between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of recognition may take us further, especially if this is done in relation to the concept of Bildsamkeit (Uljens 2001, 97). It may be that the paradoxical asymmetrical relations (pedagogical asymmetry and ethical asymmetry) may be solved in this manner.

Also procedural or deliberative democracy, as other approaches, tries to come to terms with these tensions.

To conclude, the modernist understanding of the future as open required a construction of a certain type of subjective identity. Following Foucault we may say that governmentality of modernity may thus be seen as an art of producing freely choosing, rational and “autonomous” subjects. We cannot do without such subjects. Today we are aware of that the concept of Bildung was about the development of a certain form of governmentality (Foucault, 1982) that was functional for the modernist society. To repeat: If critical thinking as rational reflection and position taking (participation) is exactly what we need then where lies the power of critical thinking?

5. On disciplines – ordering or deliberative?

In developing her position on an education for deliberative democracy prof. Noddings makes a distinction between:

a) traditional educational programs that use the disciplines to organize the curriculum (language, mathematics, science, history, etc),
b) progressive educational programs that replace the disciplines with current problems.

Noddings votes for the latter alternative, the progressive one, because students may find traditional courses boring, uninteresting, difficult and irrelevant. Having no alternatives the students do poorly in the required classes and are not offered courses in which they would do well. In addition she claims that today’s world does not require so many well educated individuals that we usually think is the case. She then thinks that schools should be designed so that both traditional and progressive programs should be offered so that the students could choose.

Discipline centeredness

I do understand Noddings’ critique that a discipline centered curriculum may be seen as an instrument for disciplinizing thinking in an uncritical sense. This disciplinary
discourse concerning what cultural contents should be accepted as school subjects and as a university disciplines indeed constitute one of the mechanisms through which a certain kind of autonomy and self-reflectiveness has been manufactured in the modernist tradition of **Bildung.** In Levinas’ terminology such a discourse may be seen as an act of violence (Birch, 1992). By controlling the school content through disciplines, subjects or otherwise, means that a certain discourse is offered in relation to which the learner is allowed to develop her subjectivity.

In addition, as the well-known German educationalist Wolfgang Klafki has pointed at, school subjects cannot be viewed as simplified versions of academic disciplines. School subjects are rather social constructions meeting certain needs and interests. They do have a reference to academic disciplines but there are many subjects which do not have academic disciplines as referents. Rather school subjects should be both chosen and dealt with so that an “educating” dimension of the content is made visible for the learner in and through the pedagogical process. In dealing with these contents the idea is naturally that the students may come to develop her relation to herself, the world and others.

But this disciplinary order also offers the individual a common collective language which certainly is of fundamental value when it comes to forming an informed opinion, thus fundamental for deliberative or procedural democracy.

I exemplify parts of the point by the following example. One of the fundamental ideas of placing the education of teachers at the universities is to educate rational, critical and creative professionals. It is thought that academic studies can support the development of enlightened reflection and thus support practical action. An equally important dimension is to provide becoming professionals with a language enabling them to legitimate professional action by rational argumentation in relation to the enlightened public. Now, assuming that we witness an erosion of academic disciplines into a myriad of subdisciplines and –fields, the question must be raised if not the ongoing process is nonproductive with respect to the mentioned aims.

The discipline centeredness is thus two-edged: On the one hand it is understood as a process of disciplinization the thinking of the learners, which is not a random process in any culture but a governed process. On the other hand, this “disciplinization” also include the possibility for an individual to transform the disciplined thought itself. A pedagogy that is aware of both these dimensions is focused towards supporting the learner to realize which the contemporary “disciplined order” is. In doing so a mere socializing pedagogy is avoided: dealing pedagogically with the “dominating” understanding of the world then means:

- to simultaneously question this very order,
- to point at cultural, political and economical interests behind this order,
- to show what questions the given answers (disciplines) intend to answer,
- to clarify how the questions are constructed so that the disciplines come to be considered are relevant and logical answers,
- to understand through what mechanisms a certain cultural content is constructed as a school subject,
- to discuss in what respect pedagogical contents is relevant for students in a contemporary and future perspective, and
Prof. Noddings thus oversees some important dimensions of education as she very much seem to represent a child centered idea (even though she claims not), when it comes to making decisions on what grounds cultural contents should be transformed in teaching contents. According to her, potentially boring topics should be excluded, rather than handled by relevant pedagogical means so that cultural contents considered central is made meaningful for the pupils. In contrast, I find it pedagogically relevant to work with experiences of the world so that the educative value in the content is revealed through the learner’s engagement with it, i.e. to work out what the Bildungsgehalt of the Bildungsinhalt might be.

7. Some final comments

In a sense Noddings paper is a discussion of two normative proposals, and she votes for one of them suggesting that schools should not be structured in terms of traditional subjects but in terms of central problems to our culture. Noddings proposal is in no way new: we are familiar with this from Wolfgang Klafki’s idea about structuring the content of the comprehensive school following epoch typical problems (Klafki, 1997). Compared to his view Noddings proposal is not very well argued: what problems on what grounds?

A parallel school system
Prof. Noddings’ main suggestion is that single schools should include both traditionalist and progressivist programs. The suggestion is problematic in many respects. Here I wonder how this proposal is coherent with the idea of deliberative education? Is not the idea in this tradition to offer students from many different backgrounds a possibility to exchange their views in relation to each other? If deliberative democracy and an education coherent with this is “a form of life” in which the exchange of various ways of experiencing the world is constitutive, then how does prof. Noddings suggestion correlate with this view of democracy?

To learn to take a position
To conclude, when prof. Noddings argues that in education we should “create a setting in which students would learn to take a position” I can only agree. My impression is that our schools, especially schools in Finland, have not very much emphasized that students are expected to develop a position of their own. A rational intellect is often not the one that strongest expresses opinions publicly. Analytically oriented individuals often limit their constructive arguments to analyzing a situation, but such a subject is not necessarily a position taking subject. Knowledge does not necessarily and by itself result in will formation, although it offers a better starting point than will formation not based on knowledge, i.e. opinion not related to knowledge is equally unproductive. Thus, an increased level of education as such does not necessarily lead to a more vivid cultural debate. Indeed we today witness almost an opposite cultural state of art. The western population has never been better educated and is paradoxically passive in collective will formation (res publica). The tradition of Bildung, that still forms the general framework
for educational policy and theory, has indeed been functional in the sense that its “critical” orientation has not been successful in supporting the growth of position taking identities. It has rather produced servile subjects willing to invest their creative capacity in the name for private and public economic success.

References