

## NOTE OF THANKS

The preparation of 2001-2002 volume of *Educational Change* occurred during an unusual period in our history. As difficult and uncertain as our times may prove I hope the articles included in it may contribute to a more benign resolution to the conflicts that beset the human family.

Due to the heightened tension and uncertainty there are efforts in our social order to silence genuine expressions of differences. However, our short history indicates that differences have brought us a greater store of resources. Often, these have made it possible to increase both participation in and contribution to human well being. We would do well to continue and promote a tradition that promises to make the world a more hospitable place for us and for those that follow.

As in the past there are many individuals to thank, however the following must be singled out. Both Barbara Paugh and Su Hartley of the Publications Office at SUNY Oneonta have extended the resources of their offices and their skills to help bring out another volume of *Educational Change*. Wayne Byam, supervisor of the Print Shop at SUNY Oneonta, has often re-arranged schedules to help us share the frail results of our efforts with our colleagues. Dr. Douglas Shrader, chair of the Philosophy Department at SUNY Oneonta, has always been generous with both his editorial skills and his critical acumen. Dr. Jane Fowler Morse, outgoing president on N.Y.S.F.E.A., provided much editorial help and on very short notice provided us with a summary of Professor Maxine Greene's keynote address to the association (SUNY New Paltz, April 7, 2000). Marge Holling, secretary of the Philosophy Department at SUNY Oneonta has provided outstanding secretarial support and generous encouragement to complete this project.

Dr. Alan Donovan, President of SUNY Oneonta, through his quiet and unassuming demeanor has encouraged many initiatives including this one. His efforts have benefitted our entire community.

The Editor

**EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

**A Journal of Role Analysis and Institutional Change**

**Spring**

**2001-2002**

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*Anthony Roda*

## P R E F A C E

### **Anthony Roda**

The N.Y.S.F.E.A. held its 29th Annual Meeting, the last of the 20th century, at SUNY New Paltz (April 7-8, 2000) and its 30th, the first of the 21st century, at SUNY Cortland (April 6-8, 2001). The keynote speakers were Maxine Greene, Emeritus at Columbia Teachers College, and Richard Brosio, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, respectively. In this volume we include an overview of Professor Greene's address presented at SUNY New Paltz and the entire address by Professor Brosio which was presented at SUNY Cortland. The focus of our association has been and continues to be the foundations of educational processes and methods, both as they have been as they are and as they could be in the near and far future. One need not belabor that such concerns cannot be appreciated without broad imaginative insights in striking contrast to the "paltry empiricism" against which Emerson railed. Nonetheless, both of these perspectives have their place within the human struggle to understand and educate.

Since the above meetings, the events of September 11, 2001 have heightened the features of conflict and uncertainty to a level probably unexperienced since the Cuban crisis. There is the general economic malaise that the economy has been experiencing over the past two years, rampant corruption at the very pinnacle of some of the largest U.S. corporations, a tax structure that is bloated with all kinds of shelters (including off-shore tax havens), a business culture in which words such as "raiders," "takeovers," etc., etc., etc. have acquired positive connotations and lost all vestiges of disapproval and illegitimacy, and a disengagement from civic and political life exhibited by cynicism and low voter turnouts. The jingoistic and chauvanistic responses by some of our public representatives, attempts to silence public debate and

discourse, do little to alleviate the present cynicism. The style and manner is reminiscent of the false dichotomies of the Nixon era (of the love-it-or-leave-it type). The discourse is framed as though two alternatives capture the entire range of available alternatives. The strategy undermines the very nature of democratic public life by insinuating that disagreement with the policy of the representatives (one alternative) in question is tantamount to being unpatriotic.

These sweeping characterizations could be filled with an exceeding number of facts and details but such would be beyond the purpose at hand, i.e. to call attention to the part that education may have played and the part it could play now and in the future. Old concerns and old questions still haunt us and we still must wonder about what role, if any, education plays in the development of our political, religious, business and academic leaders. And yes! We must wonder to what degree education contributed to this sorry state of affairs/things.

The following pieces were written prior to the unfortunate events of September 11, 2001. Nonetheless, most of them have a compelling quality and a sense of urgency even greater than before that fateful day. The one exception is the review of Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club* which was prepared after September 11, 2001, but it too has the virtue of pointing the way to the foundations of our social order and education's role therein.

Because Professor Maxine Greene did not provide the N.Y.S.F.E.A. with a copy of her keynote address we had to rely on the notes of our Immediate Past President, Jane Morse, who was kind enough to provide us with an overview of the address to include in this volume of *Educational Change*. In her address Maxine Greene calls attention to the use of the human imagination and its powers to envision our social world in ways that pro-

mote choices and freedom while eliminating injustices. By so doing the imagination acts as a catalyst in a process she refers to as “creative democracy.” This process allows a continual re-invention of educational possibilities. These re-imaginings may lead to “outrage” at the unnecessary structural obstacles which impede and preclude many citizens from participating and contributing fully to the civic life of the community while improving their own personal lives. In this process, foundational scholars have a role to play through the vision of education with which they approach their work. She argues that no sham excuses should be accepted as justifying an unjust status quo in which the few enrich themselves and theirs while the many lack the basic necessities for a full and satisfying existence with human dignity.

The keynote at the Association’s 2001 annual meeting at SUNY Cortland was delivered by Professor Richard Brosio of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. In his address, “Attention Educational Professoriate, et al.” he gave us an overview of his longer publication *Philosophical Scaffolding for the Construction of Critical Democratic Education* (Peter Lang, 2000). The foundational issues addressed by Brosio revolved around the question: What are the appropriate educational responses in a human world in which epistemic certainty eludes us? As Dewey took great pain to remind us: The outcome of human action is riddled with uncertainty. Our keynoter contrasted this to the fixed certainties in the classical model of a market economy with its inflexible iron bound laws of supply and demand and its unalterable materiality. In his sketch of the classical Greek thinkers (Plato, Aristotle) Brosio represented them with the view that “it was possible to grasp patterns underlying seemingly random occurrences” and using this as a springboard, he quickly skipped to the Western developments of the 19th and 20th century. Here Brosio focused on figures such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and John Dewey as well as members of the Frankfurt School such as Herbert Marcuse. In addition Brosio integrated figures such as Jurgen Habermas, Existen-

tialists such as Albert Camus and Liberationists such as Paolo Freire in a kind of dialectical process which informs and encourages “participatory democracy, social justice, and respect for diversity.” For Brosio these are parts of an incomplete human project to rebuild the human world so that individual and collective needs and desires are put at the center. Part of this calls for a reorganization of the educational discourse which reorders priorities and avoids sham explanations for accepting or justifying the status quo (echoes of Maxine Greene) which oftentimes is a front or an excuse for exploitative and manipulative structures.

In the spirit of John Dewey Brosio reminds us that “forms of subjectivity, relativism, cynicism, solipsism, and nihilism” [p. 15] need not be the only alternatives or responses to cognitive uncertainty. However, there are no guarantees that these alternatives are avoidable but there are no reasons to embrace them either. For Brosio the heart of educational discourse should not be simply the acceptance of the status quo but its improvement. It is a goal that is both possible and consistent with cognitive uncertainty. And, to complement this kind of educational discourse Brosio’s *Philosophical Scaffolding* contains tasks designed to call attention and provoke reflection on the traditional cognitive classifications (e.g. mind-body dichotomy), sociological classifications, economic classifications, educational classifications, etc. At times these have been used as methods of control, while their social origins have been disguised or forgotten. Nonetheless these often invest and justify the continuation of forms of unjustifiable social stratifications as though such are inherent in the very nature and order of things.

Richard Brosio’s considerations of the relationships between categorical schemes and educational practices seen to have some parallels to the treatment of Dewey’s habits and Cassirer’s symbolic forms by Professor Thora Bayer in her “Dewey and Cassirer - A Postscript.” Her immediate concern is to tease out

the parallels between habits in Dewey and symbolic forms in Cassirer. Ultimately, however, these insights as Professor Bayer indicates should inform education in all its diverse occurrences.

As I indicated previously (“Preface,” Educational Change, Spring 2000, p. iv), I found and continue to find Dr. Bayer’s comments unusually interesting. However, I would be insincere if I did not add my own reservations regarding her comparison of Dewey’s “habits” to Cassirer’s “symbolic forms.” I should say at the outset that the status that Dewey accords to habits is quite different from the status that Cassirer accords to symbolic forms. I don’t think that either Dewey or Cassirer would use “habits” and “symbolic forms,” interchangeably. From the little that I know of Cassirer it seems to me that his use of symbolic forms suggests something about the structure or structures of human consciousness. In spite of his efforts to unstiffen the Kantian categorical framework he still ends up with a kind of formal argument (or should I say “explanation”?) for human consciousness which makes art, religion, science, etc. possible. However dynamic Cassirer attempts to make his philosophy it seems that he ends up with symbolic forms as the organizing principles of the human mind. Perhaps it is too much to suggest that Cassirer’s symbolic forms are analogous to the “invariant structures” of Husserl’s phenomenological project. If such an argument were made and sustained then the status accorded to Dewey’s habits is strikingly different from the status accorded to Cassirer’s symbolic forms. Dewey draws parallels to biological functions and mathematical functions, etc. but in the end his habits are acquired through the cooperative efforts of humans in their surroundings. As Professor Bayer so well states towards the end of her postscript it is in such contexts that the problems of self determination and freedom need to be worked out and this is an educational issue in both the narrowest and the broadest terms. In concluding this brief digression we should heed a warning that was paramount to Dewey’s thought, i.e. the avoidance of dualisms. However, the

philosophy of symbolic forms runs the risk of reifying these very forms and thus the very dualism that Dewey's treatment of habits attempted to destroy.

The next essay in our collection explores problems which have a close kinship to those articulated by Professor Bayer. In a highly speculative application of the Pygmalion myth, Professor Lars Mazzola treats us to a provocative account of the Miss America Pageant. In his "Myth, Critical Literacy, and Miss America" he interprets the pageant as an instance of the Pygmalion story. He sees the sponsors and creators of the pageant in a similar position and role as Pygmalion. The implication is that each recurrent Miss America is an instance of Galatea, Pygmalion's statue come to life, which becomes the artifact or model young American coeds aspire to resemble. Accordingly, contemporary multinationals, sponsors of these pageants, capitalize on the manipulated desire to market and sell services and products which benefit and enrich these organizations. Professor Mazzola's treatment of the Pygmalion myth might be intriguing and didactically useful, however, whether it can bear the load of explaining the phenomena of multinationals and their practices remains far from settled. Interpreting myths is problematic, to say the least, and riddled with pitfalls as Professor Mazzola indicated. At this time I should like to steer clear of such dangers. However, I welcome our readers' reflections and additional comments on Professor Mazzola's interpretation. It is interesting to note that a number of the conglomerates Professor Mazzola mentioned are being investigated for accounting and corporate irregularities, a pervasive phenomena of our economic landscape.

Closely related we have the essay, "Back to the Future: Coming to Terms with the Claims of History and Expediency in Recent Character Educational Initiatives," by Dr. David Granger also from SUNY Geneseo. In it he explored why "recent character education initiatives have proven so compelling to teachers

and the general public.” In trying to understand the appeal that these initiatives have for his graduate students Dr. Granger provided some historical context that shows the strengths and weaknesses of character education. For the most part he found that the appeal resulted from the experience of frustration by the loss of a common (universal) standard. Our contemporary order seems to lack organizing moral principles and aims which command a broad consensus. Faced with the daunting problems of diversity in all its manifestations and ramifications it is not surprising to opt for a solution in an idealized and romanticized past or a golden age which has vanished from the social landscape but which can be recovered, so the reasoning goes, through the traditional classical Aristotelian virtues of courage, temperance, honesty, etc. Sometimes these are complimented by or even replaced by those of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition such as patience, charity, fortitude, etc. The proponents of character education, recommend that these virtues and traits of character should be imparted, in an Aristotelian fashion, early in the moral development of the individual. Through this process of establishing “virtuous habits” one becomes “a person of good moral character” and displays courage, temperance, patience, modesty, etc. in everyday life. The character education proponents expect that this method is the panacea for the many social ills (drug abuse, disrespect, lack of discipline, violence and the many other social pathologies of modern societies) that pervade the contemporary social landscape.

Even though these initiatives may appeal to one for promoting cohesion and unity, they have some serious shortcomings. Primary among these shortcomings is the authoritarian and monolithic assumption inherent in the approach. The assumption often clashes with democratic and pluralistic values as well as the demographics of our social realities. A related aspect of these initiatives is the aim to promote efficiency. In itself it is a desirable aim, however, it too must be balanced with the aims of democracy. For Dr. Granger, these considerations show that there

are no easy answers and we are left to struggle with the questions: “Are recent character education initiative really receptive and responsive enough to these problems? And are they best interpreted as simple failures of character?” [p. 50]

In “Imagining Education for the Twenty-First Century: Views from Two Capitals,” Professor Kenneth Paulli from Siena College gives us his vision of educational possibilities in light of our existing realities. At the outset he emphasizes that education involves a number of players (tax payers, politicians, parents, students, teachers, administrators, etc.); and since any of these, potentially, can alter the results of the educational process and its consequences it is critical that we have an appreciation for the dynamics and the various configurations of the process insofar as we are able to imagine these. By teasing out the views of two of our public servants, Carl T. Hayden, Chancellor of New York State’s Board of Regents, and Hilary Rodham Clinton, New York State Junior Senator, Professor Paulli walks us through the main issues education faces in the near future. Through a reading of the General Requirements for the Registration of All Programs Leading to Classroom Teaching Certificates which was adapted by the New York Board of Regents in 1999 as well as a personal interview with Chancellor Hayden he articulates the chancellor’s vision.. For the views of Senator Clinton he examines all of the Senator’s education speeches as well as her more sustained reflections on education in *It Takes A Village*.

The four areas of critical concern for Chancellor Hayden which loom large on the horizon are (1) diverse student population, (2) literacy, (3) standards and (4) professional development. Professor Paulli confronts us with demographic projections from the 1996 U.S. Bureau of Census which predict that by 2020 more than 50% of the K-12 student will be non-white. In view of these demographic probabilities the great problem for both society and education is how to integrate the above concerns (1-4) and at the

same time guarantee the students of the 21st century a “real opportunity to participate fully in our American democracy and in our world’s economy.” [p. 58]

After presenting the Chancellor’s views, Professor Paulli turns his attention to the educational views of Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton. Her views flow from two fundamental inter-connected beliefs, namely (1) all children are capable of learning and consequently (2) all children should be given access to a quality education. For these aims to be actualized the larger social order is implicated. It is because of this that Senator Clinton urges a better integration of these goals into the larger community. Accordingly, Professor Paulli presents the areas which Senator Clinton considers essential in the educational process with which the above aims must be carefully coordinated. He discusses these areas under the following five general headings: (1) Education and Economic Opportunities, (2) Stepping up the Federal Government’s Role, (3) A Well-Trained, Accomplished Teaching Force, (4) Education’s Greater Social Role, and (5) It Takes a Village to Educate a Child. From these it is obvious that Senator Clinton sees education and the larger social order mutually inter-connected with both sharing one fate.

It is further obvious that both Chancellor Hayden and Senator Clinton imagine the future of education in “remarkably similar ways.” Among these imaginings the most obvious are (1) equal access to quality education, (2) early literacy education, (3) greater infusion of cutting-edge technology and (4) a well-trained and professionally developing teaching force. Both place the responsibility for the above on the entire social order, i.e. the “various educational stakeholders.” Further, both are of the view that the state and federal governments must be pro-active with policies that promote the above aims. Professor Paulli interprets the Senator’s and the Chancellor’s pro-active stance by the federal and the state governments as intervening in the public schools of

the 21st century in order to reform a system “inured to mediocrity, inured to chronic dysfunction.” Intervention from state and federal governments directed at reforming and improving a system from the “outside” is of some concern to Professor Paulli because, for him, it suggests that the educational system cannot reform itself. He then appeals to those on the “inside” of the educational system to reform it so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st century through their own imagination’s creativity as well as their own energy.

Professor Paulli seems to be setting up a polarizing relation between two principal stakeholders, i.e. the educational system and the government. But, if these two are genuine stakeholders then these have a stake and a role to play. The dynamics may evolve in a polarizing fashion as Professor Paulli seems to suggest. However, Professor Paulli’s “inside” and “outside” need not become mutually exclusive actors although that is a genuine possibility. Leaving open the more benign possibility of co-operative efforts, Professor Paulli’s suggestion would complement and amplify the views of the Chancellor’s and those of the Senator’s.

In addition to the above contributions this volume of Educational Change contains the winning essay (1st place), “Piaget, Constructivism, and Mathematics Education,” submitted by Jana Gardner, Manor School, Honeoye Falls-Lima School District, from the 3rd Essay Contest sponsored by the New York Foundation of Education Association.

Further, the feature “Notes and Comments” includes a note by Professor James Garrison, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on “Dewey, Spirituality, and Rationality: A Response to Professor Roda;” a second note by Professor T. W. Lindenberg, Emeritus, SUNY Oswego on “Paul Mort and Pax Americana: Further Thoughts on Glotzer’s ‘American Educational Research in the Dominions: Making the Case for Decentraliza-

tion in Inter-War South Africa’;” and a review of Louis Menand’s *The Metaphysical Club* by Professor Anthony Roda of SUNY Oneonta.

## IMAGINING WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN IN FOUNDATIONS

### A REPORT ON MAXINE GREENE'S REMARKS AT NYSFEA'S 29TH ANNUAL MEETING

**Jane Fowler Morse**

In her keynote address at our 29th Annual Meeting in New Paltz in 2000, Maxine Greene recounted some history of foundations before arriving at her own contribution: fostering the imagination through participation in the arts. Foundations, as an area of study for teachers, originated at Teachers College in the 1920s and 1930s, as recorded in the journal, *The Social Frontier*. Greene noted that in the early days, foundations was connected with Roosevelt's New Deal, the WPA, theater, and the labor movement. Greene compared the feeling of solidarity with the working class then to today's focus on altruism, pointing out that not many people now ask George Counts' question, "Dare the schools build a new social order?" Greene used F. Scott Fitzgerald's metaphor of the "foul dust" in the Eastern air in *The Great Gatsby* to describe the social pathology of the culture; querulousness, impotent drifting, facile optimism, rioters galore, and intimidation of dissenters were evidence of the spirit of the times. Foundations scholars attacked this "foul dust." In addition to Counts' famous challenge, Dewey attacked "economic royalists" and "economic individualism" in the United States, Harold Rugg wrote new social studies texts which were attacked by the American Legion, and Charles and Mary Beard wrote an economic interpretation of United States history, among other responses. Unfortunately, the voices of foundations scholars calling for reform did not prevail, although they were heard. Kilpatrick, whose classes drew thousands of teachers to Teachers College during the summer sessions, earned the nickname, "Columbia's million dollar professor," but was forced to retire by a reactionary dean.

Greene cited Dewey's work as inspiring her own, quoting Dewey's definition of education as "the art of giving shape to human powers and adapting them to social forces." Greene added Dewey's insistence in *Democracy and Education* that the individual is to be educated as a social being to his insight in *Art as Experience* that "the imagination is a way of seeing and feeling things so they compose an integral whole." The combination makes "old and familiar things new in experience," creating a sense of adventure out of the materials of everyday living. This leads Dewey to assert that "imagination is the only the gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction" for people (Dewey, 1958, p. 267, 272). Greene focused on the need for educators to cultivate the imagination. She criticized much of American philosophy for lacking imagination, refusing to engage in speculative ideas, and turning a deaf ear to movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the voices of excluded groups such as African Americans and gays. While praising the vitality of social foundations movement before World War II, Greene pointed out that foundations scholars, too, ignored these themes. There are no entries under 'urban,' "African-American," and "feminism" in Cremin's *The Transformation of the School*. The interdisciplinary approach of Kilpatrick, Rugg, Brameld, and others was dismissed in favor of a discipline-based philosophy of education, history of education, and sociology of education. Unfortunately, even *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* didn't attract much attention from foundations scholars, Greene lamented. This "should have set off alarm bells," she said, but alas it didn't. In the aftermath, events of the 60s - civil rights, feminism, the anti-war movement, Kent State, Cambodia, Nixon's plumbers - initially drew little response. It was years before critical theory attacked the old middle class assumptions again, in the work of Gintis and Bowles, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, Michael Apple, Joel Spring and others.

Greene praised Cornell West's call for moving philosophy away from being an intellectual exercise centered on language toward becoming a form of cultural criticism. Greene holds that "many lenses are required to make sense of what is happening." The big question

remaining, according to Greene, is how to do this. She suggested using theater, film, music, and novels as avenues into new ways of seeing and feeling. Greene lamented that Lincoln Center remains “elitist and fancy” despite her ongoing work to bring art to the people in that venue. She cited Whitman as someone who “made audible the voices of the people.” Greene also found an example of the kind of critical outrage that we need to develop in Morrison’s lead character in *The Bluest Eye*. Claudia’s anti consumerist hatred of white baby dolls and the Shirley Temple culture grows out of her deep desire for an opportunity to develop her own powers. Claudia is strong enough to make the space that she needs, but the culture tragically destroys Pecola, despite Claudia’s attempts to save her.

Greene’s claim: we should be instructed by the events of the 30s and the 60s so that the “funded meaning of that time” can contribute to our vision of what we should be doing. One reason that the police shot Amadou Diallo was that “they were incapable of seeing a black man with a wallet, not a gun.” They lacked the ability to “open up their perspective from a narrow, one-dimensional world,” and imagine “alternative realities.” Greene deplored the use of testing and tracking and the trend toward deprofessionalization in education, which shifts the focus from teachers encouraging children to use their imagination to teachers drilling children to give the right answer on the test. Greene warned that this approach leads to the kind of narrow vision that can have tragic results like those in the Diallo case. Paying attention to children’s stories is the corrective. What we need instead of “rationalists wearing square hats” is the possibility of “a slow fuse lit by the fire of the imagination” to transform our world.

In pursuit of these goals, Greene organized a conference on the Ambiguities of Freedom at the Center for Social Imagination, the Arts, and Education at Teachers College to address what Friere called “a culture of silence.” The conference brought together education activists, artists, and cultural critics to discuss jazz, hip hop, identity politics, the construction of race, racial profiling, use of tests and

single standards, tracking, and other violations of children such as “welfare to work” programs that tore thousands of children from their parents. In Greene’s view, freedom does not just consist of choice, but “there has to be a space wide enough for you to resist what stands in the way of choice.” In her analysis, there is now an absence of such a space. Little has been done to create it, while the educational research industry that arose after World War II has narrowed our thinking, leading to criticism of education based on test results, tax-payer revolts, and attacks on public schools instead of a new vision for education.

Greene developed Sartre’s idea that we need to invent a future vision to become better aware of the deficiencies of the present. She concluded by calling for “creative democracy” to re-imagine the possibilities of education, but she cautioned that “it has to be founded in outrage and we must be willing to invent.” I hope we can heed Greene’s critical insight in order to keep the study of foundations a force in teacher education that is vital, visionary, and effective in bringing about reform. We need to create a fair and just system that broadens children’s horizons while it improves the life chances for all children in the 21st century. If Greene is right, and I think she is, this must be preceded by an outrage at the present state of education based on our vision of what education could do if we had the courage to make it a reality. Greene’s own work could show us the way.

*State University of New York, Geneseo*

### END NOTES

Dewey, J. (1958). *Art as Experience*. New York: Capricorn Books.  
(Other quotes are taken from my notes on Greene’s talk.)

## “ATTENTION EDUCATIONAL PROFESSORIATE, ET AL.: PHILOSOPHY FOR DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION”

**Richard A. Brosio**

### **Introduction**

The following is representative of the Program Notes (hand-outs) provided New York State Foundations Of Education Association (NYSFEA) members, et al. who attended the conference at Cortland and who heard my keynote address. This comparatively brief paper has been drawn from a much longer work that was prepared for presentation at the American Educational Research Association meeting held in 2000. The purpose of this longer work was to familiarize colleagues in teacher education with some of the main arguments; points of view scholarly references; as well as historical, sociological, economic, political, and cultural contexts to be found within my book: *Philosophical Scaffolding for the Construction of Critical Democratic Education* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2000). This book (henceforth referred to as *PSCCDE*) manifests my views on what I consider to be some of the most important knowledge, arguments, and pedagogies for teaching philosophy of education - within the social foundations of education. The making of this book has occurred over my career as a teacher, which began in 1962. The debt owed to my mentor, Professor G. Max Wingo, is evident throughout *PSCCDE*. The longer paper that was prepared for AERA will be sent to the interested requester. My addresses are: rabrosio@yahoo.com and N64 W30949 Cindy Court, Hartland, WI 53029.

### **Section I: chapters 1 & 2**

Philosophy and philosophy of education are too important to be discourses for professionals alone. There are many reasons for this: the first one being epistemological, namely, the absence of certainty

and the futility of the quest for it. Second, the broad inclusion in discourse and related political action are morally binding if one assumes that intelligence is widespread throughout various populations. The necessary attempts to find middle ground between the historical quests for certainty (all failures thus far) and the dangerous retreat into radical relativism must be joined by everyone who seeks to construct criteria allowing us to decide among various better(s) and worse(s). The middle ground, which I support, makes possible personal and collective action even if *warranted assertibility* is the best claim for doing one thing instead of another. The unsuccessful quests for certainty and the resulting retreat to relativism and cynicism have both conspired to delude all too many people into thinking that progressive, democratic, inclusive educational and political projects aimed at securing more social justice are neither conceivable nor possible.

The classical Greeks can be credited with inventing Western philosophy because they had a need to - and confidence in - being able to construct explanatory models allowing comparative understanding and mastery of the mysterious and problematic. This project has helped make possible historical struggles to achieve various “dignities,” for example, religious, philosophical, political, socioeconomic, psychological, etc. The original elite claims to rationality, morality, educability, and political voice/power have been joined by many of those who were originally and too long excluded.

Despite their limitations, the Greek philosophers’ achievements provide a starting point for my “Blueprint, Philosophical Scaffolding, and Main Construction” in the first chapter of *PSCCDE*. They attempted to understand things holistically; insisted that concepts of the common good (as well as pluribus) could be developed; believed it was possible to grasp patterns underlying seemingly random occurrences; acknowledged tensions between volition and confining structures; etc. These accomplishments are central to my overall project aimed at education for **more**: participatory democracy, social justice, and respect for diversity.

The second chapter is called “The Unsuccessful Quest For Certainty: From Classical Greece to Postmodernist World (dis)Order.” I argue that, in spite of the necessary /understandable historical insistence on having effective and reliable knowledge about the world and ourselves, this insistence has served authoritarians all too well - especially when effective and reliable are confused with certainty. Furthermore, the meanings of effective, reliable and, certain must be democratically decided upon within the daylight of public spaces. This chapter also includes discussion of the dominant school-education tradition in the US; namely, educational essentialism that is backed by philosophical idealism (realism and neo-realism), and political conservatism. I champion those who have struggled against this triumvirate: democratic Marxist, progressive-pragmatist-liberal, Freirean, Liberationist, socialist feminist, African American, and some postmodernist thinkers-activists. These comrades have labored to construct “rational,” secular, publicly accountable systems of human knowledge and ethical criteria that are open-ended, fallible, and based upon radical democratization of the epistemic subject’s inclusion and participation.

## **Section II: chapters 3 & 4**

Democratic Marxist thought is part of Western philosophy that places **us** at the center of its analysis and concern. Chapter 3 is called “Various Reds: Historical Materialism, Critical Theory, and the Openness of History.” Marx’s historical materialism situates us in the concrete materiality of everyday life. Furthermore, he argues that there are dialectical relations between our ideas and our complex relations with material/economic, social, political conditions, and the “natural” environment. Historical materialism holds that we make our own histories: however, neither under conditions of our own choosing nor just as we like. History is open to human effort, although there are no guarantees.

Marx believed that many times we experience our world as alien and unjust because it has been constructed mainly by oppressors and

their agents - all too often assisted by our unenlightened selves. He saw the capitalist system as the most powerful secular force on earth. The historical task to be accomplished by those who had only their labor to offer the market was to learn that capitalism is neither good for them nor inevitable/unchangeable! Although Marx wrote little about schooling, he belongs to the company of “subversive” educators who seek to call things by their “correct” names.

Gramsci elaborated further on the worker-intellectual education required for collective liberation and the construction of a new democratic civil society, government, and moral economy. Both he and Marx realized that we could change that which we study and in the process change ourselves. These Reds knew that the working classes must ultimately free **ourselves**.

Gramsci grasped the little realized fact that all persons are educable. This makes him especially relevant to contemporary educational problems and possibilities. He was convinced that everyone has a culture and is potentially an “intellectual,” in the sense that we operate in contexts composed of ideas/representations of how things are, how they came to be, and how/why they could be changed. Antonio Gramsci’s belief that ordinary people have abilities leads logically to his insistence that good education’s main goal must be self-governance. For him, democracy means that every citizen can govern and that society must place us in the general conditions - via schooling and education in the broader sense - to achieve the knowledge, dispositions and tools to do just that! Gramsci was a transitional figure between Marx and the Frankfurt School, in part because he and they dealt with the workers’ failure to make a revolution, due in large part to the brute realities of fascism.

Central to Herbert Marcuse’s work is a depiction of what he called a one-dimensional person and society. This was caused by monopoly capitalism’s (backed by the class State) power to control production, distribution, and the formulation of desire itself via the “hidden persuaders” of advertising. Marcuse referred to the propa-

ganda of integration as a totality that characterizes a one-dimensional society - but one that is (or once was) formally democratic. This class society is both “democratic” and not free. Market “choices” become substitutes for authentic participatory democracy. Marcuse became an important civic educator by raising questions about how we could understand our conditions as well as the possibilities and difficulties involved in liberatory, collective action.

Marcuse and his colleagues wrestled with the difficulties caused by fear that “reason” was a frail reed upon which to depend. They attempted to fashion an improved version of reason within concrete historical situations, while at the same time arguing that it was necessary/possible to get beyond mere description. Contemporary teachers should continue to think about how we can move beyond the givens and “descriptive is” of schools and society. The Frankfurt theorists encouraged us to compare and criticize the “descriptive is” in the name of the humanly constructed “normative ought.”

The discourse favored by Critical Theorists, including Jurgen Habermas, is based on a historical community of discussants who use our intelligences to practice non-specialized versions of the scientific method. This is compatible with Dewey’s work. Habermas’s goal was a form of intersubjective agreements about reason, justice, and the common good(s). Educators can learn from his work, especially his presentation of non-coercive discourse within which we learn to consider others as contributors rather than opponents. Such discourse is necessary within schools and societies that are highly diverse in terms of class, race, ethnic, gender and other “identity” factors.

Chapter 4, “Saved By A Method: Science, Dewey, The Progressive Protest - And A Whiff of Reconstruction,” may be more familiar to educators than what precedes it. Therefore the text before you on this chapter will be comparatively brief. I stress the fact that Deweyan inquiry is based on pragmatist philosophy’s (albeit imperfect) attempt to anticipate consequences of personal and collective

actions. Although uncertainty cannot be overcome we can establish and rely on certain “facts” as well as “locate necessary and effective resources with which to decide intelligently.” The temporary attainment of “warranted assertibility” is a significant achievement. Dewey’s “complete act of thought” is useful to my radical, secular, democratic project because it helps us distinguish better from worse. It can assist us in figuring out differences between what is desired and what **should** be desired. Various Reds call it the “education of desire.” Dewey’s famous denunciation of the quest for certainty places him within the historical project characterized by broad, democratic, epistemological input as we seek to construct meanings within the thickness of everyday life. Deweyan education belongs in PSCCDE because it consists of relentless efforts to achieve comparative/transitory mastery over what is initially problematic. For Dewey and his best followers, democracy is all of one piece: the alternative is immoral authoritarianism. Professor Salvatore D’Urso has argued that Dewey’s educational philosophy and suggested practices could provide a non-deterministic Marxism with the educational ingredients it lacks.

### **Section III: chapters 5, 6, & 7**

Chapter 5 is called “Existential Contingency, We May Just Be On Our Own - And Camus’s Solidarity.” Existentialists go beyond Marx and Dewey with regard to places on the continuum consisting of certainty and the lack thereof. Existentialists argue that although both Marx and Dewey correctly place us within the material social order, they do not address the deepest human experiences - where fear and trembling begin. Both philosophers are accused of relying on certain foundational structures, historical laws, and the scientific method to replace the alleged certainties of the older intellectual/philosophical regimes. Existentialists face up bravely to the stark openness of history.

In spite of our being condemned to be free and the inability to achieve clear-cut distinctions between good and evil - or even better

or worse - I maintain that Camus helps us understand there are ideas and actions that are warranted in their assertibility. The connections between ideas and actions are dependent upon intellectually aware, brave, and solidaristic actors. Camus asserts that our ameliorative efforts can only “diminish arithmetically” the suffering of this world, **but** this constitutes betterment of great significance!

Camus writes of real people who act altruistically and in solidarity at many important times of our lives. We do so in the absence of transcendental or earthly guarantees. He understood well that we help one another against various plagues and celebrate our small, fragile victories. Albert Camus saw history as the stories of struggles against those who would humiliate us. He and other “existentialists” have not been afraid to employ fiction, aesthetics, the emotive, and expanded concepts of reason in order to move beyond and underneath the cardboard figures that characterize some so-called liberatory movements.

Existentialist educators seek to help students become more aware of themselves as choosers and shapers of their own (and some others’) lives. This awareness constitutes a supremely human zone wherein knowledge, understanding, and value creation move beyond teachers and texts - as well as far beyond high-stakes, standardized tests! Existentialist educators present the world and ourselves as “under construction.” There are significant differences and incompatibilities among Marxist, Deweyan, and existentialist thought and projects. However, I maintain that there are also syncretic and synergistic possibilities and realities among them

Chapter 6, “Liberationists: Freire And Various Spiritualists,” presents thinkers who, and ideas that, are supportive of what has already been presented in PSCCDE. Looking beyond chapter 6, we shall encounter socialist-feminists, African-American philosophers, ecological Greens, and some postmodernists who may be seen as supportive of the cast of characters presented in the earlier chapters.

Freire's radical contributions to PSCCDE are based on his conviction that everyone deserves to have "voice" and the necessary educational, political, and economic means to translate naming and critique into progressive structural and institutional changes. His insistence on the democratization of voice and political efficacy is scaffolded by his belief (like Gramsci's) that intelligence is widespread. Paulo Freire's educational project, like Dewey's, denounced the essentialist practice of trying to fill students' allegedly empty minds with "essential-official knowledge" by teachers. Similar to Marx and other radical democrats, Freire argued that people/learners must free **ourselves**. However, he realized the necessary roles of teacher-leaders. Like Habermas, Freire valued dialogue as necessary for understanding and collective action (praxis). Freire, Gramsci, and Marx did not deny that education is "political." In agreement with Camus, Freire saw people as firmly grounded within existentially rich lives and struggles. This view is very different from some postmodernist portrayals of free-floating, atomistic, sometimes aimless, and decidedly weak epistemic subjects who are said to swim in seas of ever-changing signifiers and meanings.

Freire's language of hope, utopian vision, and decisive action is characteristic also of the prophetic church of Latin America. The Liberation Church does not seek to escape into the realm of dreams; instead it demands knowledge and action within the world. Neither Freire nor his liberationist-spiritualist comrades think it is possible to see a clear light from amidst the thickets and darkness of everyday life. Liberation theologians and philosophers argue that the poor and oppressed are the principal historical agents of progressive historical change. This assertion broadens and changes Marx's earlier championing of the European and North American working classes. Freire, liberationists, and some spiritualists note the failure of Western philosophy and theology to extend demands for freedom and justice to the "immense world of the excluded" beyond the Northern Hemisphere.

Secularists are justified in their wariness about organized reli-

gions' alliances with various oppressive regimes. I am suspicious of historical and present tendencies by all too many religionists to be dependent on mysticism, obscurantism, and authoritarianism, all of which are based on putative certainties. However, secular, radical democrats must not be insensitive to what may lie beyond overly restrictive/reductive definitions of rationality and factualness. Various spiritualists and religionists are to be welcomed into progressive school and societal alliances. The price of admission is that all must refrain from pushing special and "inerrant" claims on the rest of us.

Chapter 7, "The Politics of Identity: The Struggle For Human Dignity Is Expanded," presents intellectual and political projects by and for women and African Americans as they sought to be included in - but change significantly - the best of Western philosophical, political, socioeconomic, cultural, and educational rights/benefits. I argue in concert with Nancy Fraser that whereas class politics demand resource redistribution, identity politics are aimed at gaining recognition. However, once this separation is considered seriously it is possible to view struggles for redistribution and recognition as related.

I maintain that it has been within the inevitable relationships to the political economy as workers and to the polity as citizens (or non-citizens) that gendered and raced actors have their greatest opportunities to recognize and combat effectively various forms of oppression. The necessary intellectual analysis allowing us to understand the advantages of being workers and citizens has been done mainly by those whose class position has allowed them the time and space to do it

Women, African Americans, et al. have all too often been misrepresented or not recognized in the Western philosophical canon. Western philosophers defined the possession of reason as the sine qua non of humanness and being able to make moral decisions. The exclusion of so many people from "gold metal" membership had to be fought on philosophical (religious), educational, economic, and

political grounds. The philosophy and politics of materialist-socialist feminists are grounded in political economy and the concreteness of everyday life. They have pointed out that in the regime of capital, labor in the household is **not** completely separate from labor in paid sites. In fact, labor is a seamless web within patriarchal and racist capitalism.

The African-American philosopher Lucius Outlaw was drawn to his field of study because of his inability to “make sense” out of Jim Crow Mississippi. He studied philosophy not only to understand the world but to help change it. Outlaw drew strength from the civil rights, “Black Power,” and anti-war movements. Because the canon excluded people from Black Africa, Outlaw, et al. attempted to alter and broaden what reason means in order to do justice to the many and varied ways knowing. The so-called “universals” would now have to be derived from the boisterous conversations among a vastly greater number of actors - including philosophers, philosophers of education, and other educators. The consequences for schooling and education seem obvious.

I argue throughout chapter 7 that Western philosophy and politics have been seriously flawed; however, historical struggles from below have and are being waged in order to remedy significantly some of these injustices. I am aware that the forces of reaction are implacable, fierce, and sometimes murderous. History is open - there are no guarantees. Kathleen Weiler’s work in *Women Teaching For Change: Gender, Class & Power* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988) provides the conclusion to chapter 7. Her suggested strategies are similar in many ways to what can be logically inferred from Critical Theory, Dewey, and Freire.

#### **Section IV: Chapter 8**

The eighth and final chapter is called “Back To Postmodernism: Problems and Possibilities - With a Touch Of Green.” The seemingly contradictory statement: “Back To Postmodernism” is used for two reasons. The first is that comments on postmodernist thought appear

throughout the first seven chapters. The second refers to tendencies by many postmodernist thinkers to disparage the historical attempt by Western philosophers, theorists, scientists, teachers, activists, et al. to understand social and physical phenomena profoundly and holistically. Postmodernists are justified in their refusal to quest for certainty; however, the abandonment of the historical and necessary attempts to discern what is better - if not best, warranted - if not true, contributes to our sliding down the slippery slope to dangerous forms of subjectivity, relativism, cynicism, solipsism, and nihilism!

Postmodernists criticize the Enlightenment and Marxist projects for being harmfully erroneous because of the latter adherents' belief that we can both understand our world and selves - as well as change them both for the better. I argue that this critique makes all too many postmodernist thinkers witting or unwitting allies of totalistic, undemocratic, global capitalism. The capitalists and their agents are busily reorganizing the world and its people as some postmodernists assume their diffident postures! Postmodernist thought has helped us understand better the complexities, nuances, and differences among us. Ultimately - along with Fredric Jameson - I am convinced that much of postmodernist thought is, in fact, representative of the "cultural outer husk" of contemporary capitalism.

The philosophical, educational, and political projects championed in PSCCDE lead logically to the need for greater ecological awareness. "Greens" have forced us to realize how fragile our planet's life systems are and that they, as well as human "capital," are being exploited for short-term profit. Christine Shea's educational project calls for the development of "ecological intelligence." (See - Christine M. Shea "Critical and Constructive Postmodernism: The Transformative Power of Holistic Education," in *Critical Social Issues in American Education: Transformation in a Postmodernist World*, 2nd ed. David Purpel and Svi Shapiro, eds, (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998), 337-354). "Green" education and politics, at their best, confront the capitalist attempt to commodify the entire world and all of its people. Perhaps various progressives

and democrats can rally around a banner depicting the “Big Blue Marble” - with a touch of green and even red?!

The afterword includes the following: I hope that some readers will benefit from critically appropriating ideas presented in PSCCDE. As you, the reader, imagine and theorize about the kinds of education that may be better than what exists, think about why they are not already common practice. Finally, you are invited to consider **what can be done** intramurally and societally to make what is desired more descriptive of our schools.

### Section V: Suggested Tasks

The “Suggested Tasks” serve as pedagogical and heuristic tools that are placed strategically throughout the text. They can be used as a form of study guides and/or possible assessment designs. These “Tasks” are intended to elicit responses from among a variety of readers - ones that they construct from their own careful interpretations of the philosophical discourses found in PSCCDE and elsewhere. The text is fortified by rich reference/end notes sections after each chapter. Although the “Tasks” are open-ended rather than “correct answer” oriented, the interpretive responses are expected to demonstrate some knowledge of what has been presented in the text and discussed in class. The wording and placement of the “Tasks” are meant to replicate the “conversational” interchanges that are possible among students and teachers as we work together through the course of study in the classroom and elsewhere. Obviously the persons who use PSCCDE can and will construct their own “Tasks.”

Examples of “Suggested Tasks.”

1. Explore the possibilities for different kinds of schooling in the US and elsewhere if “minority,” “underclass,” and/or “under-achieving” students were seen as part of an oppressed group. Can arguments be made to successfully reconfigure many student failures as part of socioeconomic, political, and school oppression - albeit, not intended by the overwhelming majority of educators? (From

chapter 6).

2. Construct a convincing argument that connects the mind-body dichotomy of Western philosophy to the school dichotomy that is called the head-hand divide. Do class, gender, racial, and ethnic biases play roles in deciding who is selected for the low status body and hand sides of the dichotomies? (From chapter 7)

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### SOME DATA SOURCES

The total number of endnotes in this 8 chapter work is 445. What follows is representative of those sources. William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study In Existential Philosophy* (1958); Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (1995); Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (1932); Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (1986); Richard A. Brosio, *A Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education* (1994); Richard A. Brosio, *The Relationship of Dewey's Pedagogy To His Concept of Community* (1972); John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (1929); John Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life* (1908); Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation* (1974); Ernst Fischer, *How To Read Marx* (1996); John Bellamy Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment* (1994); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970); Maxine Greene, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988); Pauline, Johnson, *Feminism As Radical Humanism* (1994); Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought: Augustine to Ockham* (1958); Katherine Mayhew and Anna Edwards, *The Dewey School* (1936); C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (1962); Van Cleve Morris, *Existentialism in Education* (1966); Susan Roberts and Darroll Bussler, eds., *Introducing Educational Reconstruction: The Philosophy and Practice of Transforming Society Through Education* (1997); Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945); Calvin Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality: A Response to the Postmodernist Challenge* (1992); Joel Spring, *Wheels in the Head: Educational Philosophies of Authority, Freedom, and Culture from Socrates to Freire* (1994); Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life* (1997);

Nancy Tuana, *Women and the History of Philosophy* (1992) ; G. Max Wingo, *Philosophies of Education: An Introduction* (1974); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism* (1995).

## DEWEY AND CASSIRER: A POSTSCRIPT

**Thora Ilin Bayer**

In the editor's preface to *Educational Change* (Spring 2000) Professor Anthony Roda raises several very interesting points concerning the connections and differences between Dewey's conception of habits and Cassirer's conception of symbolic forms that arise from my essay in that issue, "Conduct and Culture: Dewey and Cassirer." Professor Roda raises the question of the ontological status of Cassirer's symbolic forms: whether symbolic forms designate patterns that occur in all cultures. He asks to what extent Dewey's habits are parallel to Cassirer's symbolic forms in regard to the fact that habits change over time and habits can cease to fulfill their intended consequences. He points out that a better understanding of these issues is crucial for the understanding of the principles of general education.

A full treatment of these important issues would require a book-length study. They begin where the analysis of social psychology and human culture in my essay leaves off. What I can attempt in these remarks is to suggest the kind of metaphysics that underlies Dewey's theory of conduct as based in habit and Cassirer's theory of culture as based on the symbol. The central work of Dewey's metaphysics is *Experience and Nature*, first published in 1925 (2d ed. 1929). In this work Dewey says: "Human learning and habit-forming present thereby an integration of organic-environmental connections so vastly superior to those of animals without language that its experience appears to be super-organic."<sup>1</sup> This is very close to the view of the speech act that Cassirer describes in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms* (the manuscript of 1928). Cassirer says: "The speech act is never in this sense an act of mere assimilation; rather, it is, in however small a way, a creative act, an act of shaping and reshaping."<sup>2</sup>

For both Cassirer and Dewey language holds the key to understanding what human nature is. Cassirer sets the power of language in the wider context of the distinctively human power to transform what is felt and sensed into a world of symbols, language being a fundamental type of symbol along with mythic-aesthetic symbols and the mathematical use of numbers and formulas. Cassirer understands the human being as an organism as understood in the biology of Jacob von Uexküll that holds every organism to be composed of a reactor and an effector system. Between these two poles of organic existence Cassirer places a “symbol system” that occurs only in the human organism.<sup>3</sup> This symbol system allows the human organism to transpose its immediate reactions to its environment (*Umwelt*) into the various symbolic forms of culture, notably language, and from this position to formulate and create the effects it desires on its surroundings. Cassirer’s model is biological but also “intellectualistic.” Dewey’s emphasis on habit, and language as arising from habit that also becomes the basis for new habits, is biological-psychological. Both Cassirer and Dewey are transforming the Aristotelian definition of man as *animal rationale* into modern terms. The question for both Cassirer and Dewey is on what does the human animal’s power of *ratio* rest? Cassirer reformulates the definition into *animal symbolicum*. Dewey, we might say, does so in terms of animal “*habitudinum*.”

Although habits can exist in isolation and as such tend to shape behavior in terms of monotonous regularity, Dewey holds that habits also tend to form dynamic systems of behavior. He says: “Communication not only increases the number and variety of habits, but tends to link them subtly together, and eventually to subject habit-forming in a particular case to the habit of recognizing that new modes of association will exact a new use of it. Thus habit is formed in view of possible future changes and does not harden so readily.”<sup>4</sup> This conception of habits as interactive regards habits as flexible and changing according to the conditions that influence behavior. Habit in this sense can be self-modifying. Cassirer in parallel fashion holds that speech acts are not isolated events. He says: “We have here instead

an interaction of forces, of impulses of movement. Every use, no matter how transient and temporary, of a linguistic form is such an impulse, which does not leave the world of linguistic forms in the same condition in which it had found it, but which affects it as a whole, which it changes, however imperceptibly, and makes receptive for future new formations.”<sup>5</sup> Although Cassirer does not bring this out, speech acts are a kind of behavior that function in terms of habitual patterns. The meanings of such acts are bound up with and in turn direct patterns of human behavior.

Both Dewey and Cassirer have a process-based rather than a substance-based metaphysics of human nature and human being. The *being* of human being is defined by those forms of activity that are distinctive to the human organism. In *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) Dewey grounds logical thinking in habit. He says: “every inferential conclusion that is drawn involves a habit (either by way of expressing it or initiating it) in the *organic* sense of habit, since life is impossible without ways of action sufficiently general to be properly named habits. At the onset, the habit that operates in an inference is purely biological. It operates without our being aware of it.”<sup>6</sup> Logical inference, upon which inquiry depends, is based on our ability to connect what is otherwise diverse in experience through habit. Dewey says: “Any habit is a way or manner of action, not a particular act or deed. When it is formulated it becomes, as far as it is accepted, a rule, or more generally, a principle or ‘law’ of action.”<sup>7</sup> Dewey claims there are undeniably habits of inference that may be stated as rules or principles. This would mean, for example, that *modus ponens* is a rule of inference that originally arises from habit.

There is a parallel to Dewey’s conception of the basis of inference in the phenomenon of habit in Cassirer’s interpretation of the “concept of group.” The concept of group is originally a mathematical concept that can be defined “as the totality of unique operations  $\underline{a}$ ,  $\underline{b}$ ,  $\underline{c}$ , . . . so that from the combination of any two operations  $\underline{a}$  and  $\underline{b}$  there results an operation  $\underline{c}$  which also belongs to the totality.”<sup>8</sup> Put in general terms this means “a group is a set of operations having the

property that when two operations are carried out in succession the result is one that would be reached by a simple operation of the set.”<sup>9</sup> Cassirer sees in this a principle that runs through the formal structures of human knowledge from mathematics to the physical sciences and that also is the key to the psychology of perception. It is the principle of “perceptual constancy” that shows the inner form of the sameness of the objects we perceive in our surroundings.<sup>10</sup> The factor  $\underline{c}$  accounts for the consistency we experience in the world of objects made from the combination of  $\underline{a}$  and  $\underline{b}$ . This consistency, or to use a Deweyan term, “felt regularity” in experience allows for habit. Habit presupposes this consistency and makes it a principle of action. *Modus ponens* can only function if its terms remain constant. Habit in turn influences perception. They are aspects of a totality of process.

Cassirer’s main metaphysical distinction is between life (*Leben*) and spirit (*Geist*). Cassirer takes this distinction from the idealist tradition, most specifically from his reading of Hegel. A version of it is to be found in Dewey which is not surprising given Dewey’s familiarity with Hegelian philosophy. Cassirer says: “the opposition between ‘Leben’ and ‘Geist’ is the hub of this metaphysics.”<sup>11</sup> Life as a metaphysical principle is a continual flux without pause but it is not simply universal force. It has a duality within itself; its tendency to universality is offset by a tendency toward concrete particularity. Immanent in life is its self-transcendence as form. The opposition between life and spirit is functional, that is, when life generates itself as spirit, its movement becomes that of the self-developing forms of spirit. This conception of spirit as self-moving is Cassirer’s version of Hegelian dialectic. Life and spirit are two aspects of the general organic process that underlies the symbolic forms of human culture.

Dewey says: “As life is a character of events in a peculiar condition of organization, and ‘feeling’ is a quality of life-forms marked by complexly mobile and discriminating responses, so ‘mind’ is an added property assumed by a feeling creature, when it reaches that organized interaction with other living creatures which is language

communication.”<sup>12</sup> What Dewey designates as “mind” is what Cassirer means by “Geist” (“mind” being in fact another way to translate Geist into English). Of mind Dewey says: “But the whole history of science, art, and morals proves that the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind.”<sup>13</sup> Mind for Dewey is as Geist is for Cassirer, writ large in culture. Dewey builds his metaphysical account of mind on the biology and psychology of the organism. Cassirer’s metaphysics is driven most directly by his epistemology.

Cassirer gives a phenomenological grounding for his metaphysics in his essay on “Basis Phenomena” (c.1940). Cassirer describes these phenomena in various ways but in general they are I, act, and the work.<sup>14</sup> The “I” is the locus of life in the human self, the “monad.” “Act” is the phenomenon of will or action in relation to an other. It is the basis of ethical experience. The “work” (*das Werk*) is a lasting cultural product, something made by the I in its action that becomes a part of culture. Cassirer says, “every work is as such not that of an individual, but proceeds from cooperative correlative action. It bears witness to ‘social’ action.”<sup>15</sup> Culture is itself a work that is made up of works, the ultimate forms of which are symbolic forms such as myth, religion, language, art, history, law, technology, politics, science. For Cassirer the basis phenomena are not derived from anything. They are the fundamental elements of human existence. When the I interacts with the other to produce a work, human culture is the result in all of its basic forms.

Cassirer’s symbolic forms are universals of human culture. Wherever one finds a particular human culture these forms are present, although their particular modalities vary from one culture to another. Thus the art of one culture will vary from the art of another; their languages will differ; they will each have different histories, laws, systems of politics, etc. But every culture will have language, art, etc. This is true also of science. A given culture may not have science developed in a theoretical-mathematical form such as is familiar to us, but every culture will have forms of empirical-practical knowledge. New symbolic forms do not arise. All of them are always present

in any actual culture in an explicit, articulate manner or in a proto-manner. Any given culture may develop one form over others even to the detriment of the others. Thus there can be a strongly scientific and technological culture or a strongly aesthetically oriented culture or a culture that is predominately legalistic and historical. The dominance or balance of these symbolic forms can shift at different periods of a particular culture's life.

Dewey's conception of habit as connected to patterns of learning and language is a human universal. All human beings create patterns of conduct through habit, as do animals. But unlike animals, human habit formation is connected to culture. Dewey says: "Language in its widest sense - that is, including all means of communication such as, for example, monuments, rituals, and formalized arts - is the medium in which culture exists and through which it is transmitted."<sup>16</sup> Where Dewey uses the term "language," Cassirer uses the wider term "symbol," language being for Cassirer one form of symbol-use. Since the period in which Dewey and Cassirer were forming their views, it has become increasingly evident that there are examples of patterns of language-use, communication, tool-use, and societal behavior in the animal world that are not as different in kind from those of the human world as Dewey and Cassirer believed. But their general point still holds that only human beings create a total world of culture that involves the productions of works of art, histories, science, etc. The key to human culture and the patterns of human life for both Dewey and Cassirer is that human activity and human life are self-modifying. For Dewey this means that habits are themselves flexible and can also be modified by judgment. For Cassirer this means that the power to symbolize includes the power to develop systems of symbols that create their own worlds of meaning.

The human world for both Dewey and Cassirer is a world of freedom because it is a world of self-determination. There is a positive and negative side to both habit and symbolic form. The positive side is typified by the above-mentioned positive powers of each. The

negative side of habit is that we can become entrenched in rote ways of accomplishing things. Judgment must play a role in modifying these ways in relation to changing conditions. The negative side of symbolic forms is that one form of symbolism may come to dominate over the others. This can occur for Cassirer in times of social crisis such as when mythic images take over political processes to the detriment of reason and social analysis.

Cassirer's and Dewey's metaphysics of human experience differ in "tonality" but they share a common vision that is significant for human education. I expressed views on the implications of their positions for education in my previous essay. But several more remarks can be made that follow from Dewey's and Cassirer's metaphysics. What I am calling their common vision is that human culture is at base the manifestation of human freedom. Human culture for Dewey and Cassirer is not alienation, although individuals can become alienated from culture and understandably so when systems of injustice prevail. But culture in itself is not a process of alienation. Rightly understood it is a process of self-determination, a process wherein the human self can realize its own nature in all of its aspects. In times of social crisis and injustice it is this sense of self-determination that must be asserted and reaffirmed. The power of self-determination is at the basis of human being, that out of which all human cultures originally arise.

How can this sense of freedom as self-determination be taught? There does not appear to be a method or simple formula to accomplish such a sense of things. Teaching and education must be done in terms of an ideal, otherwise learning is simply rote learning of a subject matter. If the teacher has this ideal actively in mind, it will come out in various ways to the student. An ideal is a force in the mind that will always effect an orientation and make itself known. An ideal to be anything must first be understood in its own terms and these include how it is part of human reality. To understand what Dewey and Cassirer have said is crucial to grasping their common ideal of human freedom. Any teacher could use their work as a basis of indi-

vidual study to grasp more fully this ideal. But if one were to proceed more pragmatically, one could imagine programs, workshops, seminars, and discussions in which this ideal could be considered in the concrete, that is, in relation to particular courses and subject matters. There is no general formula. A powerful ideal can only take root in the particular situation and become part of the rapport and communication between student and teacher. In the end this ideal has to enter the distinctively human relationship that is at the basis of the educational process.<sup>17</sup>

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#### END NOTES

1. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), p.280.
2. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 4, *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, ed. John Michael Krois and Donald Phillip Verene, trans. John Michael Krois (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), p.16.  
See also my commentary on this work, Thora Ilin Bayer, *Cassirer's Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms: A Philosophical Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
3. Cassirer, *PSF*, 4, pp.43-45.
4. Dewey, *EN*, p.281.
5. Cassirer, *PSF*, 4, p.17.
6. John Dewey, *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, 1938), p.12.
7. *Ibid.*, p.13.
8. Ernst Cassirer, "Reflections on the Concept of Group and the Theory of Perception (1945)," in *Symbol, Myth and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945*, ed. Donald Phillip Verene (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), p.274. These "reflections" derive from Cassirer's essay: "The Concept of Group and the Theory of Perception," trans. Aron Gurwitsch, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 5 (1944): 1-35; originally pub. in French: "Le concept de groupe et la théorie de la perception," *Journal de Psychologie*

(July-Dec., 1938): 368-414.

9. Ibid., pp.274-75.
10. Ibid., pp.286-87.
11. Cassirer, *PSF*, 4, p.8. See Bayer, ch.1.
12. Dewey, *EN*, p.258.
13. Ibid., p.219.
14. See Bayer, pt.2.
15. Cassirer, *PSF*, 4, p.159.
16. Dewey, *Logic*, p.20.
17. I thank my students at Xavier University of Louisiana for discussions and conversations we have had concerning some of this ideal of education. My thinking has benefited much from the points of view they have contributed.

## MYTH, CRITICAL LITERACY, AND MISS AMERICA

Lars Mazzola

Of all the skills that we teach in foundations courses, critical literacy, I believe, is the most important, because it has the most potential to lead to liberation in all its forms—intellectual, emotional, economic, social, political, and spiritual. In an effort to make the task of understanding literacy easier for my students, I use a variety of images—three, to be exact—that help convey its meaning. First, I use the textbook phrases that we all know so well: conventional literacy develops the ability to read a signature, functional literacy develops the ability to read a message, cultural literacy develops the ability to read a text, and critical literacy develops the ability to read the world (Tozer, 1998). (Sounds easy, eh?) Second, in an effort to make their knowledge more active, I ask students to imagine that they are teachers and that their task is to ask a series of questions that summarize the major issues of critical literacy. This, too, is far from easy, for it reenacts the demanding work of Socrates, who asked his listeners, past and present, not only to answer his probing questions **but to ask them as well**—the mark, I believe, of a truly literate person. Third, after my students spend considerable time and effort attempting to articulate critical literacy as a series of questions, I advance my third pedagogical image. This one is also a question.... I ask my students to uncover the myth—if you will, the embedded images—that lie hidden in their assignment. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me give you the task I assign them, and then you will be able to understand the puzzlement of their raised eyebrows, which I attempt to disarm with my all-knowing smile....

Since our class has already studied the PBS video entitled “The War on Boys,” I balance our study of gender issues by examining our culture’s War on Girls. I use a short excerpt of the *Miss America Pageant* to open the skirmish. Using the words of the Pageant contestants as well as the rubrics of the Pageant itself, I ask my students

to develop a series of questions that illustrate the concepts of critical literacy. After about five minutes, I ask students to share one of their questions with the class. What I am hoping to get—and usually do, in some form or another—are questions like these:

1. Who holds the power in this Pageant?
2. What studies (authors) confirm this picture?
3. Are there any victims in this Pageant? If so, who?
4. What is the message that the Pageant sends to society?
5. To what extent is this Pageant accountable to the people?
6. Why do Americans tolerate this Pageant?
7. Why are scholarships given to the contestant's university?
8. How could the victims of this Pageant liberate themselves?
9. Give a mythic analysis of this Pageant.

We spend a good deal of class time discussing our answers to these questions. Since the last question of the list—giving a mythic analysis of the Pageant—is the deepest and most difficult question for my students, I guide them through it gently, as if we were treading a labyrinth. I do so because mythical analysis is difficult for a number of reasons. First, mythical analysis is usually not taught in courses other than literary criticism, and therefore most education students are not familiar with it, even though former generations were exposed to it—in church, at home, and at school (Sutton, 1963). Second, and to add to the problem, the very concept of myth presents difficulties. As the critic Michael Bell points out, “The word myth inhabits a twilight zone between literature, philosophy, and anthropology. It means both **a supremely significant foundational story** and a falsehood. We therefore use it relationally; one person's belief is another person's myth (1997, p.1). We all know many people who

strive to live rationally, without myth, which is often considered to be an irrational throwback to the Pleistocene.... Yet, despite our contemporary rejection of myth, many of our deepest thinkers, playwrights, artists, and musicians consider myth to be our treasure, the essence of our wisdom. Robert Bly's book, *Iron John*, and the recent film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, amply illustrate this point, that life is woven from myth, often from the hidden dragons of the past, from which we cannot escape, but which, when rightly accessed, hold the secret to our—and others'—happiness. Those who believe that mythic analysis is useful know that it is difficult to learn and teach for yet another reason. Psychologists such as Bruno Bettelheim claim that the myths that we live—and that our culture projects—are largely unconscious. Therefore few of us know what myths lie behind our lives: only in retrospect, if we are lucky, do we see some sort of pattern. Thus it takes great deal of skill, insight, and maturity to see the mythic outlines of our lives, as well as in the mythic outline of our culture. For all its difficulty, it is helpful to identify these myths, these foundational narratives that are so important. We often pay a price for discovering the foundational myth, for living unconsciously conforms to the directive of our culture, which trains us to think and act automatically, as if time, not insight, were important. But mythic analysis is an important adjunct to critical literacy, because it helps uncover the unconscious scripts that drive us to live mindlessly. Thus, mythical analysis is useful because it can foster insight and illumination, both of which prepare the ground for the more difficult work of liberation.

So I begin the journey of mythical analysis downward and inward by asking my students what images from classical mythology deal specifically with images. A stony silence usually follows—an appropriate response, as it turns out, for the myth that I am trying to tease from them is the myth of *Pygmalion*: the Cretan sculptor who falls in love with Aphrodite and, since he cannot possess her, carves an image of her as a substitute.

At this point, a few students smile, nod “Aha,” and conclusively

mention Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle of the Broadway show, “My Fair Lady,” derived from G. B. Shaw’s play, *Pygmalion*—a Victorian adaptation of the original myth. But the Broadway musical and G. B. Shaw’s play are a far cry from the original Greek myth, which springs from a radically different perspective from Victorian middle class consciousness.

The Greek myth takes us back to what might be called primal theater. *Pygmalion*, because he cannot possess *Aphrodite*, makes an ivory image of her and ... as the story goes ... takes her image to bed with him. This proves unsatisfactory, as most images do, so he pleads with the goddess to take pity on him. *Aphrodite* grants his prayer and brings the image to life, naming it *Galatea*. The story concludes in a curious fashion. *Pygmalion* marries *Galatea*, who dutifully bears him a son (*Paphus*) and a daughter (*Metharme*). *Paphus*, *Pygmalion*’s successor, begins a dynasty that founds the Cyprian city of *Paphos*, where a famous temple to *Aphrodite* is built (Graves, 1955, p. 211).

Students usually see that what connects *Pygmalion* and Miss America is the image of ideal beauty that *Pygmalion* **attempts to fall in love with**: *Galatea*. I begin a psychological exploration of the myth by asking if it is common to fall in love with an image that we have fashioned from our deepest desires. Shy and reluctant nods of assent usually come my way from different corners of the room.... I point out that psychological studies indicate that image-making lies at the heart of romantic attachment—one of our species’ most common psychic preoccupations, and one that enjoys heightened intensity during adolescence and early youth. The prevalence of images in the works of Euripides, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Moliere, and Joyce, for example, along with the testimony of films, poetry, fiction, pornography, dreams, fantasies, imaginative exercises, bedroom talk, and the like, all bear this line of inquiry out.

Another psychological dimension to this myth, I point out to my students, occurs in the classroom, when teachers, against their better judgement, attempt to seduce their students into a very danger-

ous activity. The activity to which I am referring is, of course, thinking—which often proves to be both painful and subversive. But thinking can turn even more dangerous if and when teachers attempt to seduce their students in another manner—into having them accept their (the teacher’s) view of reality. After all, what is more dangerous than a ready-made answer? Seduction can also occur outside the classroom as well, when teachers (and students) attempt to fall in love with each other, like silly dumbbells—recently captured in the film, *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, a “real funomonon,” as Joyce might put it.

Shocking as these psychological readings might be for many of my attentive undergraduates, I continue to interrogate them further about the myth. I ask them to raise another angle, another perspective, besides the handy sexual one. There is usually another long silence after I ask this.... But eventually some brave student brings up the idea that dreams are powerful images, too, images that have important psychological functions. They can be considered as emotional releases or safety valves that help us to preserve our sanity, that prevent us from going mad. I concur and develop this notion further. It is true that some images have a softening effect on us, buffering the impact of reality. As a case in point, referring to the Miss America Pageant, what teenager—or adult, for that matter?—does not wish for a complexion or figure like Miss America’s? In a more universal way, appealing to adults and teenagers alike, I point out that we all cling, as Eugene O’Neil expressed it in his play, *The Ice Man Cometh*, to deeply cherished images or “pipe dreams” which serve as security blankets, protecting us from a world that is often a little too chilly for comfort. Since I am teaching education students, I expand upon the question and ask them if schooling might not be considered a kind of security blanket or pipe-dream as well, if the curriculum that they are obliged to follow might not also wrap them in a world that is based on a some kind of dream, denial, or self-deception.... The more astute of my students recall our earlier readings and discussions of top-down management, where the dreams of trustees or the Board of Regents, for example, materialize in the classroom, as recent “ivory” versions of the curriculum....

There are some nods of assent to this line of inquiry. But I am after more. Since many of my students are politically naive, I have no other choice but to take chisel in hand and hammer out the following line of thought.

Pygmalion—I say—is Madison Avenue. Pygmalion is the media, projecting images of nubile women that make their corporate owners filthy rich. And—I also say—Miss America is Galatea, the image that is brought to life by Aphrodite, the pervasive, powerful, bewitching Sex Goddess whom most humans adore and serve. Pygmalion (Madison Avenue—or, behind it, Coca Cola, Ford, Philip Morris, et al.) succeeds because of Aphrodite, who attains her vitality through nothing less than “make believe”—a Pageant. (Awesome, nod my undergraduates....) I point out that another way to see **Miss America becoming real** is to compare her to Cinderella. Cinderella, a poor waif at the beginning of the story, becomes real at the Ball, the Pageant of all Pageants. At the Ball she meets her prince, who effortlessly falls in love with her. Now why does the Prince fall in love with her? The answer is the same as Pygmalion’s—because she fits his image, as exactly as her foot does the glass slipper. Love comes through matching an image. After the Ball, we are led to believe, Cinderella and her Prince live happily ever after. This is the payoff of the Pageant—the image of Bliss, the reward of effortless relationship, without risk, sweat, deformity, uniqueness, sickness, or smelly feet....

The uncanny presence of Aphrodite, who lives not only on Olympus but in every nook and cranny of our planet, brings the Miss America Pageant alive, and her primal force also gives a curve and twist to every line of the **show**, be it walking, singing, dancing, talking, and even **answering questions**.... All of these activities happen without the slightest trace that the contestants have been victimized by a jealous goddess who **loves to do this kind of thing** to young girls, who are just too pretty for their own good.... Her relish for this kind of revenge is classic. It is Aphrodite, we remember, who forces Psyche to submit to a number of tasks that overwhelm her. It is only

the disobedience of her maverick son, Cupid, as well as the hidden grace of Nature, in the guise of ants, eagles, and stone towers, that keeps her from catastrophe and suicide, the unfortunate end of much inappropriate image-making.

Classical literature is full of the Love Goddess' fury. Homer, in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, recounts the curse that follows Helen, considered the most beautiful and enchanting woman of the classical world. Helen brings ruin not only to all of Troy but to most of Greece as well—its arrogant chieftains, their resentful wives and lost children, and the countless commoners who sailed, fought, and died for her sake. Sophocles, in his *Antigone*, has the chorus say of Aphrodite, “Whoever feels your irresistible grip is driven mad, their mind wrenched apart, swerving into ruin” (Fagles, 1984, p. 101). Against such a goddess, no mortal can stand. Much later in time, during the European Renaissance, Cervantes, in his first published work, the pastoral romance, *Galatea*, portrays the same kind of bitter controversy that attends Aphrodite, the Love Goddess. Two shepherds, Elicio and Erastro—one noble, one rustic, prototypes of Cervantes' later characters, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza—both seek the hand of the same woman, the princess Galatea, “whose beauty,” Cervantes tells us, “is such that it is better to imagine it, since words are inadequate to do it justice.” Beautiful as she is, Galatea has a very difficult life, trying to deflect the constant and unwelcome advances of many suitors. The romance closes in Galatea's unresolved conflict with her father, Aurelio, who wants her to marry someone she resists. As Elicio and Erastro prepare to come to her rescue, the First Part of Cervantes' early work closes, with the promised Second Part never to follow. But the theme of the early work—the plight of idealized beauty that cannot be rescued by rustic nobility—does not disappear from Cervantes' literary imagination. Instead, it appears in larger form, in his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, which takes up the unfinished project of *Galatea* and transforms it into an even wider theme—noble obsession in conflict with reasonable mediocrity; virtuous fantasy at odds with unvarnished materialism. This theme is embodied in the experience of every major and minor character of the novel,

the most singular example being Don Quixote's inflation of Aldonza Lorenza—a woman he never has even seen—into an illusory princess, whom he calls Dulcinea del Toboso (Pt 1, Bk 1). The stories of Marcella (Pt 2, Bk 2, 5-6), Dorothea (Pt 2, Bk 4, 1-3), and Camilla (Pt 1, Bk 4, 6-8), as well as the story of the madman locked up in the prison of Seville (Pt 2, Bk 3, 1) also illustrate this theme, which is derived from the ancient Greek source of the myth of Pygmalion, who attempts to embrace what cannot be held.

Since time is about to run out, I am forced to cut short this tantalizing digression into classical literature and refocus our attention on the original Greek myth of Pygmalion. For the myth has other dimensions to it that are important for critical literacy, dimensions that Shaw's play as well as its Broadway version, "My Fair Lady," both ignore, even though Freudian psychoanalysis had begun to permeate British and American culture by the time of their creation and production. The vast underbody of the myth resists detection, like an iceberg, so I throw out the following questions to try to bring up its submerged content.

I ask my students not only what it means to fall in love with a goddess but also what happens when people take an image of a goddess to bed with them. The silence that follows indicates that if more light is to be shed on this topic, the task is going to fall on my shoulders. I cautiously begin by confiding that I have viewed a number of college catalogues, but I have never come across a course entitled "Fetishes, Goddesses, and Bed...." Therefore, since college courses are the depositories of world knowledge, I humbly confess that there is nothing more to say. We will just have to end it here.... I admit that I am at a loss as to how to proceed.... I also admit that, even if I knew, I would be reluctant to explore this topic in the classroom, especially with undergraduates, since my thoughts might force them to confront something that most of them, up to this point in their lives, have probably studiously avoided—namely, a confrontation with their own Shadow, what Freud called the "polymorphous perverse," hidden within each of us—the fly in every ointment. But I poke around a bit

and ask my students to examine what lies close at hand, so to speak—personal fantasies, dreams, dorm talk, fraternity and sorority parties, the internet, and other similar venues. Accessing this information, I suggest, could help reveal what it means to fall in love with a goddess and take her image to bed with you. What it means, I believe, is different for all of us, but it probably combines such activities as longing, fantasy, dreams, masturbation, remorse, isolation, guilt, and loneliness. Despite our permissive culture of instant gratification, genuine relationship occurs, as Jung said, only when the head and tail are joined, only when the conscious and subconscious minds work together for similar goals, only when right thought and action cooperate with desire and fantasy—unlike Pygmalion, who severed them, by forcing reason into fantasy.

I conclude with a final question which, following my theological bent, is actually a three-in-one sally (whammy, if you prefer). First, I ask, how can an image take on its own life? Second, how can an image have offspring? Third, how can its offspring be guided into maturity? This is the climax of my little lecture on critical literacy. I put it in simple terms, for by now my undergraduates are looking a bit stony-eyed, as if I have broken a taboo (another way of defining critical literacy). First, how does an image take on its own life? Pygmalion provides the answer. He has a child, Metharme, by his daughter, Galatea. That spells incest. Not bad for starters. But that is only one third of it. Second, how does the image have offspring? Pygmalion's son and successor, Paphus, begins a dynasty that founds the Cyprian city of Paphos, where a famous temple to Aphrodite is built. That means that the son, following his love-obsessed, sex-crazed father, subdues the matriarchy and institutes the temples of the patriarchy. That spells prostitution, which occurs only after the image of woman has been distorted and heightened by voyeurism. And that, I add, is where advertising and abuse come in, transforming the simple loveliness of a girl or woman into pornography. Now we have two thirds of it. I press on to my final point, for I am committed to give clear answers and workable solutions to the problems I raise. I address my third question: How can the children—the images that come

alive—be guided into maturity? Simple, I say, giving a triple answer to my triple question: 1) by learning to view exploitative images critically, 2) by watching channels like C-Span or PBS, and—get this—3) by turning off the television, something that can now be considered a counter-cultural activity!

So what is the conclusion of this analysis? Happier and brighter students? Alas, after all is said and done, there is a visible sense of deflation and disappointment in the class. The reasons are not hard to find. Students have been forced to submit to the deconstruction of one of our most cherished, popular myths. No one is happy with that. It is not uncommon, if I wait long enough, that one of the prettier coeds in the class shyly raises her hand and confesses that she was once the Beauty Queen of her Senior Ball and that, until now, she never thought that “there was anything wrong with that...” All too often, copy-cat style, there are follow-up responses to this confession: “Me, too!” But the undergraduates who were not Beauty Queens sometimes have something more to add. They tend to deride all the contestants of the Miss America Pageant, as well as all beauty pageants, as “stupid.” Recent studies bear this out. Our youth, the most spoiled generation in history, is targeted by multimedia conglomerates, *The Merchants of Cool*. Last year, these conglomerates (Viacom, News Corp, Vivendi Universal, AOL Time Warner, Walt Disney, and Bertelsmann) earned over 150 billion dollars from teenagers, who were maneuvered (actually, tricked) into buying their own fantasies. Recent studies confirm that most teens live in a fantasy world where adults are not present, where the latest rebellion becomes **a product**, where the standards of speech and behavior are progressively coarsened, and where the best way to fit in, as one astute teenager put it, “is to just dumb yourself down enough to accept it” (*Merchants*, 2001). For every Queen, there are millions of non-queens, and they feel it—and resent—it deeply, even while seeing the stupidity of the ongoing show. The only consolation for the losers is actually a very valuable one: they have an early start at “crap-detecting,” a phrase that Hemingway used to describe the essential quality of a good writer, reporter, or cultural critic (Weingartner, 1969).

But the experience of deflation does not end here, for it continues into the next class, in ways that fellow teachers might especially appreciate. I notice, even after all of our deep analytical work, that the college pageant continues right before our very eyes. Pretty undergrads strut their stuff. Their carefully selected clothing, their model-like, statuesque figures, their makeup, their air—all broadcast that they have assimilated the message of Pygmalion down to the smallest detail. This myth does not die easily in our culture. It is projected to all corners of the globe, every minute of the day and night. Pygmalion is Madison Avenue, and his contemporary children are the midriff and the mook. The midriff is “a slim, teenage girl, highly sexualized, a world-weary sophisticate,” and the mook is “a boorish teenage boy, a perpetual adolescent, crude, infantile, misogynistic, and very, very angry” (Merchants, 2001). Pygmalion is the unredeemed, unprosecuted patriarchy, whose incestuous images fake (not-so) innocent teens into doing what they fantasize. The fault lies with Pygmalion, not Galatea, his creation, his dupe.

For me, the bell has rung, leaving an indelible signature: Galatea—the ad, the fetish, the stylized teen—imprisons its creator, Pygmalion (who knows no better), and then it imprisons itself (into the ongoing fantasy of consumerism). Galatea imprisons herself by the erotic power that brought her to life. What can free her? Only the power embedded in another ancient myth, the myth of inner beauty, which captures the magic of the soul. But that will require another chapter, another exploration, where the myth of Pygmalion is transformed into its opposite—the myth of Psyche (Christ-Buddha).

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## **BACK TO THE FUTURE: COMING TO TERMS WITH THE CLAIMS OF HISTORY AND EXPEDIENCY IN RECENT CHARACTER EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

**David A. Granger**

### **Introduction**

In a passage that nicely summarizes the prevailing outlook of character education in the United States today, a noted figure in this movement writes:

Given the enormous moral problems facing [our] country, their deep social roots, and the ever-increasing responsibilities that schools already shoulder, the prospect of taking on moral education can seem overwhelming. The good news...is that values education can be done within the school day, is happening now in school systems all across the country, and is making a positive difference in the moral attitudes and behavior of students, with the result that it's easier for teachers to teach and students to learn.

The author then goes on to affirm that

Two universal moral values form the core of a public, teachable morality: respect and responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

How could anyone who hears repeatedly in the media of ghastly episodes of school violence, a lack of student respect and discipline in the classroom, drug and alcohol abuse amongst teenagers, and the general nihilism and excesses of the ominously-labeled "Generation X" responsibly dispute the basic claims being articulated here? He or she would have to be somewhat morally depraved or care little about the behavioral prerequisites for effective student learning. At least that is what a number of my graduate students were encouraged to think as they conducted their researches on character education this

past fall.

In the course of this brief paper, I will eventually suggest that one might indeed dispute the preceding claims. And I would like to think that this does not signify a lack of morally integrity on my part. It is not my express purpose, however, to try to augment or magnify the various criticisms that have previously been laid at the door of character education (a pedagogy whose current revival, you will recall, originated in the early 1990s<sup>2</sup>). These well-rehearsed criticisms can stand or fall of their own merit. My immediate aim here, as I see it, is actually a somewhat more mundane one, though I would like to think that it is no less important in the long run. I want to explore a little why it is that recent character education initiatives have proven so compelling to teachers and the general public alike (conservative as well as liberal), and why the assorted criticisms so often fall on deaf ears, or even incur confusion, frustration, and anger.

My paper begins with a brief account of the beginnings of character education, one that marks, in particular, the continuity between its past and present forms, and then enumerates the kinds of character traits being advocated in the current literature. This is followed by an overview of the commonly identified strengths and weaknesses of character education as we discussed them in my graduate course on the philosophical and psychological foundations of education. Next, I look at the basic nature and tenor of the responses to character education offered in several students' term papers. Finally, I attempt to make sense of and, along the way, problematize the attractions of character education in a manner that acknowledges its enticing claims to history and expediency, but also suggests a way to help students see beyond them.

### **Character Education Past and Present**

It is well known that Aristotle is usually considered the central figure in the early development of character education.<sup>3</sup> And he remains its most frequently invoked authority even today. Aristotle recognized, more than many of his time, that human beings can never

achieve complete infallibility in matters of morality. The forces of circumstance, he argued, can be powerful enough to snap (or at least severely fray) even our strongest moral fibers. Consequently, in his writings on ethics Aristotle appealed not to the realm of the ideal as a basis for his model of human virtue, but rather to empirical reality — to the people and behaviors that seemed most consistently to characterize Athenian society at its best. His criteria for making this determination were founded largely upon the authority of tradition; which meant, in effect, upon the interests, values, and beliefs of those in whose interest it was to maintain the general status quo of that rigidly classed society. Thus in a distinctly circular fashion, virtue was essentially defined by the people and behaviors that were said on the authority of these same people to display virtue.

In accordance with this emphasis on authority and tradition, Aristotle likewise held to what Plato termed the well-ordered society. And he maintained that in such a society an overall consensus must exist as to what activities and functions different individuals need to perform to maintain this vital order. Regardless of one's destined station in life (politician, artisan, slave, wife, etc.), human virtue or moral character, following Aristotle, consisted in performing one's activities and functions with excellence and for the good of the whole, through which alone individual happiness was possible. He did strongly suggest, though, that these virtues tend to differ from station to station. (Magnificence, for instance, is certainly only available to the very wealthy.) As detailed in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the principal moral virtues included courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation. The principal intellectual virtues, on the other hand, were practical and theoretical wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle claimed that the intellectual virtues were for the most part beyond the capacities of the young; they necessitated an ability to reason that could only come with maturity and considerable life experience. He did, however, believe that the moral virtues both could

and should be habituated early on in life. To become a person of virtue, Aristotle famously said, one must develop the habit of acting virtuously and be encouraged to do so, often through imitating adults. This was to be the job of the first stage of one's education, and it was to take place in the home and (as we moderns put it) the local community. After these virtuous habits had been firmly established, and only then, young adults could safely reason about and analyze various moral issues - they could engage in the discourse of philosophy. At the most fundamental level, though, a person of good moral character was someone who regularly displayed courage, temperance, patience, modesty, and so forth in his or her workaday life.

I would argue that many significant aspects of this Aristotelian line of thinking can be found in character education today. Consider, if you will, the following.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary proponents of character education often train their moral compasses on the good of the community as a whole - initially, on the classroom and school communities - and they maintain that this good must occasionally supersede individual freedoms. (Freedom of expression comes most immediately to mind.) Civic responsibility or virtue thus tends to be a prominent theme in their thinking. Contemporary forms of character education also stress the interweaving of intellectual and moral excellence through strenuous, disciplined activity and as indispensable to genuine human happiness. Though the irrational element of our nature must be attended to first, as a precondition for more cognitive pursuits, both our rational and irrational sides, it is said, must eventually be made to work in harmony with one another. It is not enough simply to know what virtue consists in; it must also be practiced so as to become habitual and tinged with the appropriate emotions. Along this same line, like Aristotle, modern character education is frequently grounded in some conception of essential human nature, be it either secular or sacred in orientation. And it is claimed that this essential nature takes readily observable forms in everyday life, regardless of the contingencies of time and place. Additionally, appeals to the authority of history or tradition occur with great regularity. For instance, and again reminiscent of

Aristotle, it is inferred that we already know from past history what virtue or good character consists in, and that it must be fostered in some sort of explicit fashion or one is not really conducting moral education. This frequently means identifying a number of virtuous role models — people, such as teachers, who have shown that they can function successfully and responsibly in a well-ordered society. More recently, literature and biography have been used in this same capacity.<sup>6</sup> And lastly, the different virtues are typically promoted as timeless universals. They are thought to apply for all people and in all possible situations, while several have been dubbed foundational in nature. As they appear on various published lists, these virtues, taken together, total well over one hundred. Here are some of the more popular entries: respect, responsibility, civility, patriotism, self-control or discipline, diligence, generosity, fairness, courage, and integrity.

### **Commonly Identified Strengths and Weaknesses of Character Education**

As an introduction to the theory behind character education, and as one of our main course texts for the semester, my graduate foundations students and I read and discussed Nel Noddings' book *Philosophy of Education*. In her concise overview of the past and present forms of character education, Noddings recounts several commonly identified strengths and weaknesses of this approach to moral education.<sup>7</sup> I will first speak of the strengths.

According to Noddings, one of the most positively received aspects of character education is its insistence that the moral life must grow out of our everyday interactions with others. That is to say, it maintains that virtue is essentially empty if it does not involve a horizon of significance, an abiding sense of the good, that reaches beyond the individual self. A meaningful individuality implies sociality, as John Dewey liked to put it. Similarly, character educators recognize that the consistency and integrity of virtue necessarily depends upon the conditioning that the demands of the natural and so-

cial environment make on the self. Hence character education typically avoids the pitfalls of hyper-cerebral, ivory tower moralities, the kind too often proposed by modern academic philosophers.

Second, character education seems to be on firm ground in emphasizing the priority of practice. Virtue is as virtue does, runs the popular expression. It is one thing simply to memorize a series of moral rules or possess the ability to solve artificial moral dilemmas, to know what virtue consists in in some abstracted sense. But history reveals that actually living and applying this knowledge or skill effectually in the everyday, and with a sensitivity to concrete particulars, is altogether another matter. With character education, though, learning to be moral entails developing an active disposition to certain types of behaviors through firsthand experience. Virtue becomes an integral part of the self.

Lastly, Noddings mentions the great practical appeal of character education. She notes that it directs its energies at the possibilities and empirical reality of whatever the society has at hand, and not one that requires super-human abilities, thus also acknowledging the limits and liabilities of the human condition. This commonsensical quality of character education extends to its general developmental sensitivity as well. For it seeks the inculcation of basic virtues, the attainment of certain social norms, as a prerequisite to more complex moral reasoning, questioning, and critical analyses.

Likewise, there are three commonly identified weaknesses of character education worth mentioning. First, the concern has often been raised that the virtues identified within a given society, particularly in relation to its presumptions concerning the good life, might be inculcated in the young without sufficient critical examination by educators and the adult public. Moreover, we all know how difficult it can be to alter our habits of thought and behavior after they have been deeply ingrained and regularly reinforced. Noddings suggests, for example, that a seemingly exemplary figure like Thomas Jefferson felt constrained in denouncing slavery because it appeared to him so

indispensable to the well-ordered society of his day. Similarly, some have argued that virtues such as generosity easily assume self-righteous, paternalistic forms that can act to suppress or blunt more substantive efforts to bring about social and economic equality.

Second, Noddings points out that the empirical evidence regarding the ability of character education to satisfy its strong claims is not as compelling as one might like. For instance, several studies have shown that children may be likely to exercise the prescribed virtues when authority figures are present, but are not so well behaved when these authorities are elsewhere. We are told that character education can “conquer materialism, demonstrate respect for life and property, and stem the tide of violence in our land,” but deep-seated transformations of character as a result of formal education seem rare to nonexistent.<sup>8</sup> Some people (Dewey among them), have thus questioned the merits of singling out certain activities as the special province of moral education. Overall, then, it is not clear that character education can effectively address the influences on student behavior that exist beyond the school walls or whether schools, as the designated guardians of virtue, can substantively modify the moral character of society.

Finally, character education has been criticized for its persistent appeals to tradition and authority. For these would seem to presume the existence of a just, well-ordered society, one in which there is widespread agreement on the roles and functions of each of its members. Yet is this really the case in the United States today? Moreover, is there consensus or near consensus on the virtues to be transmitted to the young? If not, what happens to the treasured virtues of subcultures when these virtues differ from those of the dominant group in society? Several commentators have argued that character education has so far been unable to provide satisfactory answers to these questions.

### **Students' Responses to Character Education**

Shortly after we concluded our lively and, I would like to think, evenhanded discussion of character education, almost half of my eigh-

teen students (all of them with children of their own) informed me that they had decided to write their term papers on this subject. Furthermore, they chose to do so because, at least at the time, either they or people that they knew had character education programs underway in their own schools. This being the case, I gave them minimal guidance in their research and anticipated receiving some probing and provocative papers. Our exchanges in class plainly indicated that the students were now prepared to assess the strengths and weaknesses of character education with a fair but critical eye.

As I began reading through the papers several weeks later, it soon became clear that the students had had a difficult time exercising this fair but critical eye in their researches. In fact, it was all but nonexistent. The papers were, from a scholarly perspective, disconcertingly unbalanced. Though the opportunities to do so were plentiful, the students failed to raise any theoretical questions or concerns about character education generally or about the specific programs that they had investigated. And only one practice-oriented question was ever broached. Instead, the claims of history and expediency, so prevalent in character education literature, now governed their thinking.

What I mean here is that the students referred repeatedly, and with a sense of nostalgia, to the days before our (supposed) recent and steep moral and cultural decline, the days when everyone agreed upon and lived by the same basic values. All but one of the papers began with a recitation of recent statistics on the frequency of lying, stealing, cheating, and violence among young people. Much of this was blamed either on the demise of the traditional two-parent “American family” or the low moral standards in our schools. Surprisingly, the popular media was imputed somewhat less frequently. On the other hand, the students openly praised the universal nature and practicality of virtues such as punctuality, loyalty, self-reliance, and the dignity and necessity of honest labor - what might be termed an “industrial morality” for the 21st century. It did not bother them that references to critical thinking were relatively few and far between.

And they accepted without question the standard notion that charity is the best way to advance the welfare of the less fortunate.

The students were also powerfully attracted to the claim that, as quoted earlier, “values education can be done within the school day...[and] with the result that it’s easier for teachers to teach and students to learn.” Wherever possible, most of them strove to find in their research that this was indeed the case, even if the evidence they finally offered was rather scant. However, the students did question the effectiveness of “virtue of the week” and worksheet-driven approaches to character education. These were thought to be too artificial. Yet this minor practical concern was effectively eclipsed by their stories of frustration with undisciplined students and the irksome fact that “you can’t lay a hand on them anymore.” As adults and classroom teachers, then, character education appeared after their research a moral and pedagogical imperative. Hence it just seemed wrong to suggest that it could be in any critical way misguided.<sup>9</sup>

### **Problematising the Attractions of Character Education**

It is quite obvious, I think, that my students are not alone in being attracted to the notion that a return to “traditional” values will bring with it a safer and more cohesive society. On the surface at least, and couched in these terms, who would not be? The fashionable discourse of moral and cultural decline suggests that the very foundations of American life and schooling are eroding, and it urges that a recovery of the past is both possible and necessary. It calls us back to the future. We seem certain that we were more moral as youths than are young people today. If we can go back to basics with reading, writing, and arithmetic, why can’t our future be more like our past where morality is concerned?

I would also maintain that the idea of making one’s life and work easier is not attractive to classroom teachers alone. The “cult of efficiency” now reaches into all aspects of our lives and has doubtless received a powerful shot in the arm from the many new information technologies. With the level of productivity expected from each

of us today, and especially in light of the demands for accountability facing teachers, why not take the path of least resistance? What teacher working in such conditions would turn down a chance to make teaching and learning “easier”? Besides, how could making things easier in itself be a bad thing?

I do not pretend to have answers to all of these questions. Ultimately, they touch upon very complex issues concerning the parameters of possibility set by the socio-cultural milieu in which we live. But I will say that my experience this past fall has enhanced my awareness of the need to problematize some of the claims of these questions, to help my students get a glimpse beyond them. This might go something like the following.

In a country that purportedly aspires to a genuine, democratic pluralism, the more difficult path to (moral) education could well be the more virtuous one in the long run. A pluralistic approach to virtue would seem to necessitate a sustained conversation (involving individuals as well as groups) on the most appropriate means and ends for living well in a democratically sovereign society. This will no doubt leave us feeling a bit disoriented now and again, yet without being completely helpless. It is not easy to accept the “other” as an “other” while at the same time recognizing our common humanity. Nor is it easy to keep the question as to what constitutes virtue or the good an open one, developing and maintaining a sustained dialogue on the subject that is sensitive to things like incommensurability and indeterminacy. But as philosopher Robert Nash writes, such a democratic disposition entails that we continually find new ways to negotiate our way through and learn from “the inevitable clash of values that is the heart and soul of democratic living.” And this requires from all of us a degree of “caution and humility” that sits poorly with the claims of expediency advanced by character education.<sup>10</sup>

People generally had stronger moral sensibilities in the past. Perhaps. But at what cost? How many perspectives on the good and the just were effectively marginalized in the past? What, for example,

was it like to be a Native American student in the days when the Lord's Prayer was recited at the start of every school day? Moreover, how many important social movements have depended upon certain people or groups not being responsible to the authority of conventional norms and their keepers? And what of the World Trade Organization protests of today? In claiming the authority of tradition and moral sensibilities of the past, one could argue, we implicitly promote a morality of compliance to the status quo. We say, in effect, "we have no doubt made some errors in the past. However we have learned from them, finally achieved true enlightenment, substantive equity and justice, and are now ready to secure our gains and begin reasserting timeless virtues." Can this really be the case, though, in a country that leads the industrialized world in the percentage of children and elderly living in poverty, percentage of the population without health insurance, homelessness, unequal distribution of wealth, defense spending, foreign debt, deaths by execution, and so on?<sup>11</sup> Are recent character education initiatives really receptive and responsive enough to these problems? And are they best interpreted as simple failures of character? I will leave it to you to decide.

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#### NOTES

1. Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), pp.22 and 67.
2. See, for example, William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), *Marva Collins' Marva Collins' Way*, (New York: Putnam, 1990), William Kilpatrick's *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), Edward Wynne and Kevin Ryan's *Reclaiming Our Schools: A Handbook on Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline*, and the previously cited volume by Thomas Lickona.
3. Elements of this synopsis of Aristotle's ethics were drawn from Nel Noddings' *Philosophy of Education*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

4. Aristotle, *Ethics*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson, (London: Penguin Books, 1955).
5. See Note 2 for the popular literature on character education from which this general profile was drawn. I must also confess that the risk of over-generalizing or creating a one-sided profile always attends this sort of activity. While allowing for the necessary brevity of this paper, I have tried to avoid doing either.
6. Wayne C. Booth's *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) is frequently referenced in this regard.
7. See Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, pp.12-14 and 149-151.
8. See J.S. Leming's "In Search of Effective Character Education," *Educational Leadership* 51 (1993): 63-71. The preceding quotation is from the SUNY Cortland Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs website, which is located at <http://www.cortland.edu/www/c4n5rs/>.
9. Robert J. Nash recently spoke of seeing this same phenomenon with his students in his book *Answering the Virtuecrats: A Moral Conversation on Character Education*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997).
10. See Nash, *Answering the Virtuecrats*, p.11 and p.51.
11. See Andrew L. Shapiro, *We're Number One*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

## IMAGINING EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: VIEWS FROM TWO CAPITOLS

**Kenneth P. Paulli**

In her latest work, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*, educational historian Diane Ravitch writes:

Each generation supposes that its complaints are unprecedented. Critics of the schools in the 1980s looked back to the 1950s as a halcyon era; critics of the 1950s looked back on their own Depression-era schooling as a high-water mark. But those who seek the “good old days” will be disappointed, for in fact there never was a golden age. It is impossible to find a period in the twentieth century in which education reformers, parents, and the citizenry were satisfied with the schools (Ravitch, p. 13).

Will an early 22nd century educational historian say the same of 21st century American education? Are our efforts to imagine education for this new century thinly veiled complaints? Are they doomed not to be taken seriously? I believe they are not. As scholars and practioners involved in the business of preparing men and women for the teaching profession, I suggest that we must now weigh in and continue to weigh in on the question, “How do you imagine education for the 21st century?” Moreover, this cannot be done in a vacuum, even if that vacuum is defined as the larger academy. Our weighing in is credible to the extent that we have conversed and continue to converse with multiple educational stakeholders: members of the academy, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, members of the business community, politicians, tax payers, etc.

The focus of this essay, however, is more limited. It reports on an actual and a literary encounter I had with two members of two different and equally important leadership communities relative to

education: Carl T. Hayden, Chancellor of New York State's Board of Regents and Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York's Junior Senator. As you might guess, Chancellor Hayden and Senator Clinton imagine 21st century American/New York education in similar and different ways. Based upon a careful reading of Part 52.21, *General Requirements for the Registration of All Programs Leading to Classroom Teaching Certificates* (hereafter, Part 52.21), adopted by the New York's Board of Regents in 1999, a personal interview with Chancellor Hayden, and a careful reading of all of Senator Clinton's education campaign speeches as well as her text, *It Takes a Village*, this essay will identify the points of convergence between these two important people in terms of New York imagining education for its students in this new century. Also, this essay will identify and discuss some of the implications of these points for teacher preparation programs in New York State. Perhaps such a study will assist us, NYSFEA, in our efforts to imagine and facilitate education for this new century.

### **Chancellor Carl T. Hayden**

Carl T. Hayden was elected to the Board of Regents for the Sixth Judicial District in 1990. The Sixth Judicial District is comprised of the counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Otsego, Schuylar, Tioga, and Tompkins. Regent Hayden was elected Chancellor by his colleagues on March 16, 1995, reelected to that office on March 9, 1998, and reelected for a third, three year term on March 20, 2001.

When I met with Chancellor Hayden on Tuesday, March 20, 2001, I asked him how he imagines education for New York State over the course of this new century. The Chancellor was quick to point out that the world will change in ways that are unknown for those of us attempting to imagine so far into the future. However, he believes that imagining or visioning for briefer periods of time, for example, five to ten years is essential. It is with such a time frame, said the Chancellor, that the Regents passed Part 52 of the new Regu-

lations which, when stood back from, reveals at least four ways by which the Regents imagine public education, at least for the next decade:

- 1) Diverse Student Population;
- 2) Literacy;
- 3) Standards;
- 4) Professional Development.

### **Increased Student Diversity.**

It is estimated that by the year 2050, more than 50 percent of the total U.S. population will be composed of minorities, and by the year 2020, more than 50 percent of the K-12 student population (public and private) will be non-white while the teaching force will remain largely white (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Such statistics in no way alarm Chancellor Hayden. Rather, they are what drive the “Field Experiences, Student Teaching and Practica” section to the new Regulations.

In this section the Regents state that the preparation for all teacher candidates in New York State “shall include at least 100 clock hours of field experiences related to coursework prior to student teaching or practica. The program shall include at least two college-supervised student-teaching experiences of at least 20 school days each; or at least two college-supervised practica with individual students or groups of students of at least 20 school days each” (Part 52.21, p. 15). Furthermore, the Regents specify the kinds of experiences they consider appropriate for 21st century teacher candidates in stating that New York State teacher preparation programs shall “provide candidates with experiences in a variety of communities and across the range of student developmental levels of the certificate, experiences practicing skills for interacting with parents or caregivers, experiences in high-need schools, and experiences with

each of the following student populations: socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students who are English language learners and students with disabilities” (Part 52.21, p. 15).

Chancellor Hayden, and many others, knows, not simply imagines, that the classroom of tomorrow will be significantly more diverse, not only in terms of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic background, but also in terms of ability. The classroom of the 21st century will be more integrated among academically talented students, “general” education students, and students with special needs. Therefore, teacher candidates must be prepared to work in heterogeneous learning environments. In their preparation, New York’s 21st century teachers should have early and frequent experiences of working with diverse student populations. On all accounts, this section of the new Regulations makes sense.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, in their text, *What Teachers Should Know And Be Able To Do*, seems to agree when they write that accomplished teachers are committed to students and their learning. Accomplished teachers are those who understand that their mission must include an understanding of the totality of each and every student, his/her race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs (if any), culture, academic and family backgrounds, etc. (NBPTS, p. 13-16).

The Chancellor recognizes that this kind of transformation will not be easy. In his words, New Yorkers had become quite comfortable with an education system in which there were multiple *parking garages*. There was one for the gifted and talented students, one for the general education students, one for the students with disabilities.” Now, said Hayden, “In New York State there will only be ONE parking garage, a garage in which ALL students will park.”

### **Literacy Skills.**

Second, if education is the fault line between those who will

succeed in the 21st century and those who will not, then literacy is the core of the fault line. Chancellor Hayden cited several studies that state that early literacy skills are the key to future educational success. This research finds a home in Part 52.21's section entitled "Pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills." Here the Regents direct 21st century teacher preparation programs in New York State to provide study that will permit candidates to obtain pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills in a number of areas not the least of which is literacy. Specifically, the Regents state that teacher preparation programs must provide study in the area of

language acquisition and literacy development by native English speakers and students who are English language learners-and skill in developing the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of all students, including at least six semester hours of such study for teachers of early childhood education, childhood education, middle childhood education, and adolescence education; teachers of students with disabilities; students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, students who are blind or visually impaired, and students with speech and language disabilities; teachers of English to speakers of other languages; and library media specialists (Part 52.21, p. 12).

The Chancellor and his colleagues believe that all teachers share in the responsibility of teaching New York's students to be literate, not just English, Language Arts or Reading teachers. This belief is also found in New York's English Language Arts Standards, specifically in the English Language Arts Core Curriculum. Here the Regents "recognize that teachers in all content areas share the responsibility for the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking competencies" (English Language Arts Standards, p. 2).

### **Higher Standards.**

Third, the Chancellor contends that because the world of the 21st century will be vastly different from the world as we know it

today, and because that new and different world will demand more from its citizens that it has ever done before, it would be “morally indefensible” and “economically self-destructive” for New York State, for these United States, not to expect more from its students. Hence, the Regents insistence on higher standards for students, teachers, and teacher preparation programs. This insistence is dealt with in detail in the document which, in many ways, drives Part 52.21 of the new Regulations governing teacher preparation programs, *Teaching to Teaching to Higher Standards: New York’s Commitment*. Chancellor Hayden contends that new teachers, thus teacher preparation programs, must be thoroughly knowledgeable of these learning standards. According to him, this is the best way for graduates of New York schools to meet the increasing demands of the world of this new century.

### **Professional Development.**

Fourth, the Chancellor imagines education in the 21st century as embracing professional development in ways it has never done before. This piece to his imagining is reflected in the section of *Teaching to Higher Standards: New York’s Commitment* dealing with Gap 3, “Not enough teachers maintain the knowledge and skills needed to teach to high standards throughout their careers.” Here the Regents state that all teachers receiving a professional certificate on or after September 1, 2000 will be required to successfully complete at least 175 hours of professional development every five years, directly related to student learning needs as identified in the School Report Card, state initiatives and implementation of New York State standards and assessments to maintain their certificate in good standing” (*Teaching to Higher Standards*, p. 30). The timeline for this requirement has changed from September 1, 2000 to September 1, 2003 and from every five years to every three years. Regardless, the thinking here, according to the Chancellor, is self-evident. Because the world will change dramatically and rapidly, so must education, so must teachers, so must teacher preparation programs. If the students of

the 21st century are going to succeed in the larger world of the 21st century, they will succeed only to the extent that their teachers possess breadth and depth of the latest knowledge in their field, and continue to develop the skills necessary for their students to meet higher and higher standards.

Increasing Student Diversity. Literacy. Higher Standards. Professional Development. In terms of responding to the question, "How do you imagine education in the State of New York in the 21st century?", Chancellor Hayden's responses can hardly come as a surprise. They are reasonable responses. They are responses that many education stakeholders might offer. However, in meeting with the Chancellor, what intrigued me was the Chancellor's comment regarding what one is TO DO with such imaginings. For him, and for the fifteen other Regents, imaginings ultimately must find root in common, daily practice otherwise they remain simply the musings of the *intelligentia* or politically ambitious. Hayden believes that if left to its own devices, the education system, would remain "inured to mediocrity, or worse, chronic dysfunction." The Chancellor believes that the Regents must act as New York State's Constitution mandates that they do, that is, by creating a vision from which policies or regulations will follow, regulations and policies which will direct the common, daily practice of education in New York State. According to the Chancellor, the Regents must "stay the course" if New York's 21st century students are to be given any real opportunity to participate fully in our American democracy and in our world's economy.

### **Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton<sup>1</sup>**

As one who now represents New York's interest in Washington, it is important to include Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's views on education for the 21st century. As Senator Clinton often says, "Though I am new to New York, the issues that New York faces are not new to me." Clinton, a native of Chicago, former First Lady of Arkansas and former First Lady of the United States, has been involved in educational issues for more than thirty years. Her involve-

ment in educational issues began in the early 1970s when she was fresh out of Yale's Law School and working for the Children's Defense Fund.

As a long-time advocate for children and their right to a quality education, Clinton believes that children are our greatest resource and thus all children must receive quality education. From a social standpoint, today's children will become active members of society in the 21st Century. Economically speaking, the children of today must have a quality education because the economic future of America depends on their ability to compete in the global marketplace. Senator Clinton emphasized these points in her speech at Central Islip High School.: "We have to face up to the fact that there isn't anything more important, not only to our children's future but to all our futures than providing a world-class education"(Clinton, *Central Islip High School*).

The Senator also subscribes to the notion that all children are capable of learning. All children should be given access to a quality education, one that will enable them to graduate as students who have received a world-class education. Senator Clinton re-affirmed her commitment to this idea in her UFT Paraprofessional speech when she said, "All children can learn -no exceptions, no excuses"(Clinton, *UFT Paraprofessionals*).

Senator Clinton's educational imaginings are based on these two fundamental beliefs. Emerging from these bedrock beliefs are five ways by which she imagines education for America and for New York State for this new century

- 1) Education and Economic Opportunities;
- 2) Stepping-Up the Federal Government's Role;
- 3) A Well-trained, Accomplished Teaching Force;
- 4) Education's Greater Social Role;

### 5) It Takes a Village to Educate a Child.

#### **Education and Economic Opportunities.**

The fact that education is linked to economic opportunities is not something new. However, it is important to understand that as the American economy becomes more and more globalized, the importance of quality education increases. A quality education, in the Senator's mind, is the "fault line" between those who succeed and those who will not. She stressed the effects of such a rapidly changing economy when she spoke to the New York City Council of School Superintendents saying, "And so we know that just within the space of really about thirty years that the economy has changed so dramatically, that so many of the jobs that used to be available are no longer there" (Clinton, *New York Council of School Superintendents*).

Furthermore, globalization of the economy has resulted in the increased role of technology. Only those who have access to quality education, one permeated by the latest technology, will succeed. The Senator recognizes this and believes that the future of quality education partially depends on the availability of technology in the classroom. "We cannot permit there to be this so-called digital divide where some children because of what their homes can provide or what their schools can provide are so much farther advanced in their use and understanding in computers"(Clinton, *Watkins Glen High School*). Thus, for Senator Clinton, a quality education is suffused with cutting-edge technology.

#### **Stepping-Up the Federal Government's Role**

Second, in terms of 21st century education, Clinton imagines that the Federal government will have an increased role in education. There are several implications of this idea. The first is that the Federal government should be more involved in providing resources to public schools. Senator Clinton stresses the need for more federal assistance to schools repeatedly throughout her many speeches. "Many

of the communities in New York cannot afford to tax themselves any longer, or any higher...I believe the federal government should do more in terms of grants and loans to school districts, so that the work that needs to be done can get done”(Clinton, *Watkins Glen High School*).

The second implication of the federal government’s role in the future of education is that the government will create a vision and that the states will strive to meet this new vision of education. That is to say, the federal government recognizes the fact that local communities know what works best in their own school, but that the government should assist them in raising standards for students so they may be prepared to enter the 21st century. Senator Clinton has always believed in the Federal government acting as a visionary. In fact, she states it in her book, *It Takes A Village*, when she discusses the education program of Goals 2000. “The Genius of Goals 2000 is that it marries the ideas for what children should learn, local control over how children learn, and accountability for whether children learn”(Clinton, *It Takes a Village*, p. 260). Evidently, the role of the Federal government in Senator Clinton’s imagination does more than just provide resources; it helps set higher standards and ensures accountability, while allowing autonomy of local control.

### **A Well-Trained, Accomplished Teaching Force**

The need for well-trained accomplished teachers is a third way by which Senator Clinton imagines education for the future. For the 21st century, more teachers will be needed to fill the inevitable teacher shortage that will effect the nation. To provide an answer to this dilemma, Senator Clinton envisions the establishment of a National Teachers Corps. This program provides a resolution to the teacher shortage while at the same time ensuring that teachers are well-trained. Senator Clinton really drove this point home in a speech at Syracuse University when she spoke about this program. “With a National Teacher Corps, I would provide scholarships to sixty thousand young people annually....we would also like to provide bonuses and train-

ing for fifteen thousand mid-career professionals....this program would promote alternate pathways to certification so that people from fields like engineering or computer technology would feel that they could enter the teaching profession” (Clinton, *Syracuse University*).

Along with advocating for well-trained teachers, the Senator’s vision for the future also calls for a pragmatic way for people to find information about teaching. She envisions the establishment of another program, called the National Clearing House. This program, as stated by the Senator, would allow people to “go online to learn about teaching jobs and the skills they’ll need to succeed in that job. Prospective teachers could get on-line information about certification requirements, teacher education programs, alternative certification routes, and schools could put on-line all of the jobs that are available”(Clinton, *Syracuse University*). Senator Clinton believes that the future of education will be effected by the severe teaching shortage. However, she acknowledges that some people will be affected more than others will. “We know who will be most disadvantaged. It will be the children who are already in poor schools under difficult circumstances”(Clinton, *UFT Paraprofessionals*). Her plan for the future seeks well trained teachers as well as those from other professional experiences that can step in and make sure students are properly educated for the future.

### **Education’s Greater Social Role**

Clinton imagines 21st century education in yet a fourth way in that she sees the need for public education to take on a greater social role. For the Senator, this means that the education system will attempt to sponsor programs that will assist student learning outside of the classroom. In a speech at Syracuse University, she explains how schools in the future should offer “pre-school and after school and summer school and mentoring programs”(Clinton, *Syracuse University*). This promotes learning outside the classroom and is conducive to academic achievement. For example, if a child is living within a single parent household, it is important to understand that the parent

has to work in order to support the family. Therefore, it is necessary to offer programs that will ensure that children will be academically productive instead of just sitting in the house. Senator Clinton recognizes the fact that education does not occur only within the classroom and is a strong advocate of providing childcare. "We also have to make sure that we do have access to quality childcare and we're just not doing a good enough job of that"(Clinton, *New York Council of School Superintendents*). With adequate childcare programs, single parent and dual-earner families would be better able to provide for their children while at the same time allowing them to work. This concept extends further than childcare and can include programs mentioned before like after-school tutoring.

In the future it is important for education to take on more of a social role because social interaction is a large part of the educational process. Senator Clinton agrees, and believes that the most important years of school are the pre-school years. This idea was conveyed to the audience in her UFT Paraprofessional speech when she said "we also need to support programs like Head Start and pre-school so that children are given the kind of help in those very early years that will equip them to be successful in school"(Clinton, *UFT Paraprofessionals*). This idea is important because from a social perspective, the education system should provide opportunities to make sure that children arrive at school ready to learn. In this sense, these programs would encourage social interaction that are educationally related. Specifically programs like mentoring and tutoring provide children with extra help where they need it and also allow for students to come to school prepared to learn. Even more so, Senator Clinton believes that education in the future through these programs, will affect children socially because it will "keep them off the streets, keep them out of trouble" (Clinton, *New York Council of School Superintendents*).

### **It Takes a Village to Educate a Child**

The fifth component of Senator Clinton's plan is that it will be

necessary in the future for all facets of society to contribute to the educational process. For Senator Clinton, it is important that the education system alone does not have sole responsibility for children's education. Her point on shared responsibility is expressed in her speech to the New York Council of School Superintendents: "Schools need to be partnered by businesses, colleges and libraries and others throughout every community within the state" (Clinton, *New York Council of School Superintendents*). This partnership can only aid in the education and development of children.

Each institution can make its own contribution to the education of children. Senator Clinton again emphasized this idea when she describes how important society as a whole is in raising a child. "Each of us plays a part in every child's life: It takes a village to raise a child" (Clinton, *It Takes A Village*, p. 12). Senator Clinton gave even more credence to this idea stating that "When I think about education I don't just think about schools" (Clinton, *New York Council of School Superintendents*).

Out of all of the institutions that aid in a child's education, the family of the child is perhaps most influential. Senator Clinton recognizes this and believes that in order to prepare for the future, Parents have to take a more active role in the children's education. "I believe that parents are a child's first teacher and that the home is a child's first school. I think that we have to do more than we currently do to help parents understand their responsibilities" (Clinton, *Syracuse University*). This is why Senator Clinton encourages parents to read to their children and become active members in the school system.

### **Points of Convergence and Some Implications for Teacher Educators**

Chancellor Hayden and Senator Clinton imagine 21st century American and New York education in remarkably similar ways. They both believe that equal access to public education must translate into

equal access to a quality education. Furthermore, quality must be understood as including but not limited to early literacy education, greater infusion of cutting-edge technology, and a well-trained and professionally developing teaching force. Both the Chancellor and the Senator imagine the responsibility for educating children as a shared responsibility among various educational stakeholders. Finally, Clinton and Hayden agree that the federal and state governments must be more proactive relative to their roles as visionaries and/or policy makers.

The Senator and Chancellor's imaginings are neither profound nor revolutionary. In the words of Senator Clinton: "There is nothing magic to them or so complex we can't figure it out. We know what needs to be done. But we need to make this a national commitment" (Clinton, *Central Islip High School*). "National Commitment" seems to be a code word for greater government involvement and/or intervention in public education of the 21st century. Perhaps this is what is of greatest significance for us, members of the academy, men and women who are involved with education issues from the "inside." Chancellor Hayden and Senator Clinton seem to suggest that the educational system, which includes all those who work from the "inside," is incapable of bringing about the kind of reforms necessary for our 21st century graduates to participate or compete in a world that is becoming ever more a global village. As previously mentioned, Chancellor Hayden (and to a certain degree, Senator Clinton) believes that the "educational system is incapable of reforming itself because it is inured to mediocrity, inured to chronic dysfunction."

Is this so? Have those of us on the "inside" become so accepting of educational mediocrity that we lack the critical distance to imagine education differently? Have we become too comfortable with enabling a dysfunctional system that we cannot move ourselves to change? Have we reduced ourselves to being incessant complainers such that no one listens to us anymore? Do we lack the imagina-

tion, creativity and drive to take what we imagine here and help it find a home in common, daily educational practice? I do not believe so IF we insist that no one view, no two views (even if they are from the important capitols of Washington, DC and Albany, New York) are sufficient in terms of imagining and reforming education for this new century. Truly, it takes a village; it takes all educational stakeholders' involvement in and commitment to imagining and establishing just and challenging learning communities for all students, no exceptions, no excuses.

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1. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Sean Kennedy, a sophomore at Siena College and student of mine, for his tireless and excellent efforts in assisting me with the research and writing relative to Senator Clinton's imagining of 21st century education.

## NYSFEA ESSAY CONTEST

Since the inception of the N.Y.S.F.E.A.'s annual essay contest in 1998, five such contests have been held and the announcements for the sixth have been sent out. The Association is grateful to all past sponsors and to those individuals who generously gave their time and energy to guarantee the success of each of these events; and most of all the participants who deserve a special thanks for without them there would be no contest. The following is a list of the institutions which have provided financial support for the awards presented at the Association's annual meetings:

- 1998 SUNY Oneonta
- 1999 SUNY Binghamton
- 2000 SUNY Geneseo
- 2001 SUNY Cortland
- 2002 Hofstra University
- 2003 Siena College (forthcoming)

In addition, the Association is pleased to announce the winners for the third and fourth essay contest. The third essay contest was sponsored by SUNY Geneseo and the annual meeting of the Association was held at SUNY New Paltz (April 7-8, 2000). The winners of the essay contest gave their presentations on April 8, 2000. The first Prize was awarded to Jana Gardner from Manor School, Honeoye Falls-Lima for the essay "Piaget, Constructivism, and Mathematics Education." The Second Prize was awarded to Jane Miller from York Central School for the essay "Literacy and Communication: Understanding and Applying the Theories of Vygotsky." Finally, the Third Prize was awarded to Kristi Fragnoli, a graduate student at SUNY-Binghamton for the essay, "Why Do They Do The Things They Do? A Study of Theory, Practice and Change within the Classroom."

The fourth essay contest was sponsored by SUNY Cortland

where the annual meeting of the Association was held on April 6-7, 2001. The winners Lindsey Barton, Lee Marley and Kathrine Valdran were all students at SUNY Geneseo and addressed the topic "Theory and Practice - Expanding Environment in both the College and the Elementary Classroom," at the meeting on April 7, 2001. It was the view of the readers that although the essays were clearly worthy of merit none were deserving of a first prize and, consequently, no essay from the 4th competition will appear in *Educational Change*. However, financial awards were distributed according to the readers recommendations. Last, but not least, a special thanks to the co-ordinators and readers of the essays. The 3rd contest was coordinated by Jane Fowler Morse and readers were Sue Books, Eduardo Duarte and Anthony Roda while the fourth was co-ordinated by Sue Books with Eduardo Duarte, Anthony Roda and Kim Scott as readers.

The following is Jana Gardner's First Prize Essay from the third contest.

## **PIAGET, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION**

Jana Gardner

Contemporary teachers suffer from a perpetual problem that undermines their day to day operations in preparing youngsters for a productive role in society. In practical terms, educators are presented with the realities of covering a curriculum with outdated material, burgeoning classes with a multitude of behavior issues, unsupportive parents, and an administration that seems to spend more time putting out fires than providing leadership. In other words, teachers have to deliver the goods in an effective manner in a sometimes impossible

and often less than optimal environment. In contrast to this scenario, educators are also mindful of what they would *like* to see happening: a scholastic nirvana in which they can implement effectively the educational theories and philosophies that seem phenomenal on paper and in the workshop setting. It is a frustrating endeavor to try to bring this desired objective to fruition. Constructivism is a viable solution to this dilemma, especially for the mathematics educator. This approach offers intrinsically motivating activities soundly based in developmental psychology, empowering the learner with a self-created body of knowledge. In this paper, I will touch on the merits of Piaget's view, outline the basics of his theory, describe how constructivism evolved from this, and conclude with some considerations on implementing constructivism in the classroom.

Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth century Italian philosopher, says that, "Humans can only understand what they themselves have constructed." (Microsoft Bookshelf CDROM, 1995). This is a central point, for, as educators, we must decide the wherefores and the why of how our students will arrive at knowledge. Do we feel that we, as teachers, are the gatekeepers of learning, and that knowledge is some separate, absolute truth? Or, like Kant and Dewey, does an experience have to be perceived and "done actively" in order to hold any relevance for the individual? Our philosophical beliefs drive the programs that we implement in our classrooms and are the keel that keeps us pointed toward our destination in the roughest of seas. With the pressures brought to bear on today's classroom teachers, it is incumbent upon us to "set sail" in a seaworthy craft, namely, Piaget's theory of stages allied with a constructivist view of learning.

Just as epistemology has advanced over time, from Plato's search for "the forms," through Bacon's tossing out of the idols in favor of objectivity, and onto current views that take into account the knower's perspective, likewise the science of psychology has progressed to a new understanding of the human mind, and especially that of the child. In the classroom, pedagogical, authoritarian styles of learning were being countered with modern methods. On a parallel path and

time frame with these two advances, the perception of mathematics changed from being incidentally acquired while in pursuit of a separate discipline, i.e., in the study of science, to a worthwhile pursuit of its own, largely due to increased industrialization and technological advances. (Gadanidis, 1994).

Drill and practice were thought to be the best ways for students to learn mathematics. (Unfortunately, this doctrine is still well entrenched.) The premise that “meaning gets in the way of efficient computation and that students cannot deduce mathematical rules from examples and other rules...” and that “bonds between stimuli and responses are strengthened through exercise,” was maintained by E. L. Thorndike, considered the founder of psychology of mathematics education. (Gadanidis, 1994). Progressive thinkers and educators, among them John Dewey, Jerome Bruner, and Jean Piaget challenged this teacher-centered, adult-oriented behavioristic view. Piaget was the first major contemporary to develop a clear idea of what would come to be called constructivism, which applied knowledge of children’s cognitive development to pedagogy in the classroom. For over 60 years, Jean Piaget conducted a program of research that has greatly affected our understanding of child development. Piaget called his theory “genetic epistemology” because he was interested in how knowledge developed in human organisms. With a background in both biology and philosophy, concepts from both disciplines influenced his work. His research had one unique goal: how does knowledge grow? “His answer is that the growth of knowledge is a progressive construction of logically embedded structures superseding one another by a process of inclusion of lower less powerful means into higher and more powerful ones up to adulthood. Therefore, children’s logic and modes of thinking are initially entirely different from those of adults.” (Boatman, 1998). More simply put, Piaget’s constructivism is based on his view of the psychological development of “cognitive structures” of children. Cognitive structures are patterns of physical or mental action that underlie specific acts of intelligence and correspond to stages of child development. (McKeachie, 1994). Piaget’s stages of development contain within

them elements which are conducive to change. Each stage defines one set moment in child development and then progresses to another level or stage. The resulting well-structured model presents a situation to be overcome or an action to be performed so an individual can move to another progressive, higher stage. (Boatman, 1998).

Essentially, Piaget's theory shows intellectual development as occurring in four distinct periods or stages. Development is continuous, but the intellectual operations in the different periods are distinctly different. Children progress through the four stages in the same order, but at different rates. The stages do not abruptly end but trail off and merge with the next.

**Sensorimotor** (age 0-2). Intelligence takes the form of motor actions. In this period, a child learns about his or her relationship to various objects, including learning a variety of fundamental movements and perceptual activities. Knowledge involves the ability to manipulate objects such as holding a bottle. In the latter part of this period, the child starts to think about events that are not immediately present.

**Preoperational** (age 2-7). Piaget had divided this state into the preoperational and the intuitive phase. In this preoperational stage, children use language and try to make sense of the world. They need to test thoughts with reality and do not appear to be able to learn from generalizations. Knowledge becomes intuitive later in this phase; the child moves away from drawing conclusions based solely on experiences with concrete objects. However, these conclusions are based on rather vague impressions and perceptual judgements. It becomes possible to carry on a conversation with a child. They develop the ability to classify objects on the basis of different criteria, and also learn to count and use the concept of numbers.

**Concrete operational** (age 7-12). In this stage, a child can do mental operations, but only with real (concrete) objects events or situations. Logical reasons are understood. For example, a concrete operational person can understand the need to go to bed early when it

is necessary to rise early the next morning. Piaget thought that the concrete operational stage ended at age eleven or twelve. There is now considerable evidence that these ages are the end limits to this stage and that many adults remain in the stage throughout their lives.

**Formal operational** (age 12+). A formal operational thinker can do abstract thinking and starts to enjoy abstract thought. He or she can formulate hypotheses without actually manipulating concrete objects, and when more adept can test the hypotheses mentally. The formal operational thinker can generalize from one kind of real object to another and onto an abstract notion. Other abilities include the capacity to think ahead and plan, along with the capability of metacognition. (McKeachie, 1994).

Constructivist learning theory asserts that students acquire new knowledge through the process of *adaption*. Adaption is a change in cognitive structures or schemas, which are simply ways in which individuals have generalized or worked out things. Adaption has two components. Assimilation involves the interpretation or incorporation of events in terms of existing cognitive structures, whereas accommodation refers to the changing or modification of existing schemes to make sense of the environment. (Boatman, 1998). Cognitive development consists of a constant effort to try to adapt to the environment through these two processes. The experience of a contradiction, similar to Dewey's "felt difficulty," is known as cognitive disequilibrium. It is the overcoming of such a contradiction that results in new constructions. New, as well as existing, knowledge is transformed as students construct more inclusive schemas of understanding. (Gadanidis, 1994). A classic example, rendered even more significant because of the notable ability of the players involved, was discussed by Piaget in a 1968 lecture to illustrate this process. He explained how Einstein's theory of relativity caused a certain amount of "cognitive disequilibrium" in the physics community.. It required a rethinking – assimilation and accommodation – of long accepted notions among some very powerful thinkers.

While the cognitive development stages identified by Piaget are associated with characteristic age spans, they can vary for every individual. In addition to the four stages, Piaget also describes three types of knowledge that form somewhat of a hierarchy, with the base being physical knowledge, followed by logical-mathematical thinking, and finally social-arbitrary ability. The tendency is for the progression to proceed from simple and self-oriented to more sophisticated and objective.

At this point, I think it is important to make a distinction and establish the correlation between genetic epistemology and constructivism. The former is a theory... a rationalization for why the two year old solves a problem one way, the seven year old another, and the thirteen year old in a completely different fashion. For a variety of reason, constructivism is hard to categorize as a method, a theory, or an epistemology. So, what is the link between constructivism and genetic epistemology? What is it about Piaget that constructivists love? Although few writers have expressed a definitive connection between the theory and the practice, I believe that this convergence lies in the concrete operations stage. Wheatley's statement that "knowledge originates in the learner's activity performed on an object" substantiates my reasoning. Concrete operations is the realm where the learner can *prove* a concept to himself. He continues, "Knowledge is not passive, cannot be given or sent, but must be actively built up by the individual." (Wheatley, 1991).

Constructivism is contrasted to any approach that has students acquiring knowledge in a passive process, i.e., knowledge is passed unchanged from teacher to student. Constructivists would say that even in a lecture situation, the student would still ultimately construct his or her own understanding. (Classroom Compass, 1995).

The significance this philosophy holds for educational practice is that the educator must realize that Piaget's theory is geared toward children, not adults, and centered on the actions of the child, not the teacher. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers must, first, under-

stand the steps of development of a child's mind and, second, be willing to relinquish center stage and take on the role of facilitator or coach. This second task can actually be more difficult to carry out than one would think, for it requires a certain security on the part of the teacher, who must possess enough confidence in his or her function in the learning process that he or she is willing to step back.

What is the teacher's role? In short, to provide "fertile soil" for the students. That is, to bring about the classroom conditions where initiative and independence are encouraged and students gain their own intellectual identity. Open-ended questions are asked requiring more than a simple factual response, while encouraging connection and summarization (with ample time for reflection). Communication is encouraged in a variety of ways – dialogue, charts, maps – to exchange, refine, and reinforce ideas; activities are done with real world stuff – raw data, primary sources, manipulatives, and interactive materials. One would expect students to demonstrate skills like generating ideas, posing problems, hypothesizing, testing ideas, generating multiple solution strategies, and evaluating the consequences of mathematical calculations. (Classroom compass). The students are searching for viable solutions to the problem they are facing... not necessarily an ultimate answer, but one that works for them within the given constraints and at their particular cognitive stage.

The magnitude of information that students potentially have to deal with – in general, and specifically within the field of mathematics – is enormous. It is ludicrous for the educator to assume a "dis-pense of wisdom" stance, viewing the task of mathematics education as a "codified body of knowledge to be taught." (Wheatley, 1991). The task of learning mathematics is too immense to use a rote method, where the teacher explains the process using the left-hand pages in the text and the students practice problems on the right hand side. In this case,  $9 + 5$  and  $5 + 9$  would have to be learned as individual skills. For the constructivist, understanding the underlying patterns and inferring from one relationship to another is what mathematics is about. The emphasis should be on understanding integrated principles

and unifying structures. Otherwise, students are just reciting mathematical facts.

Additionally, the question is not only whether the students construct understanding of mathematical concepts but also how good their constructions are. Thus, a “constructivist teacher’s emphasis is on creating learning environments that help students create good schemas of mathematical understanding.” (Gadanidis, 1994). It is a challenge for the instructor to be fully cognizant of the essential concepts and skills and to then be able to present them in a problematic way. A thorough knowledge of the discipline as well as the students’ cognitive developmental stage are critical. “Problem centered learning requires considerable restructuring of course materials as well as different metaphors and images for teaching and learning. Conventional textbooks designed to be used in an explain-and-practice mode are a poor source for tasks.” (Wheatley, 1991). Needless to say, it will take a dedicated individual to overcome these obstacles.

To illustrate a constructivist approach to mathematics, I chose one of the first activities with which I begin the school year of my fifth grade math students. According to Piaget, fifth graders would be well into the concrete stage and approaching the beginning of the abstract thinking stage. A well designed lesson is going to incorporate this, ensuring that, in addition to a hands-on aspect, they will have to stretch their understanding to apply the concept symbolically or abstractly. This unit has students exploring the factors and multiples of the “landmark” numbers of 100, 1,000, and 10,000. They will build the numbers in a variety of ways, and use their knowledge of relationships among these numbers to develop computational strategies. Emphasis is on reasoning about number characteristics using terms such as multiple, factor, even, odd, prime, and square. Student pairs begin by picking a number between 10 and 30. They are instructed to count out that number of small tiles and create as many “rectangles” as possible (for example, the choice of 18 yields 1 by 18, 2 by 9, and 3 by 6), using graph paper to record their examples. Through questioning and sharing, the students develop the idea of

factors and its reciprocal concept of *multiples*. It is discovered that *even* numbers can be constructed in rectangles two tiles wide and that only *square* numbers can be formed into a rectangle of equal dimensions. Number puzzles are then used to reinforce and practice. Students work on puzzles in small cooperative groups, with the support of working definitions, charts, tiles, and other ideas we have developed to this point.

A typical puzzle might look like this:

- My number is a square number.
- My number is even.
- My number is less than 100.
- My number is prime.

Students develop and compare different strategies for solving these puzzles. The instructor will periodically draw the group together to share solution strategies and record findings on chart paper, asking questions such as, “How did you go about finding the answer? How did you decide that your answer was correct? Why did you think this puzzle was impossible?” Students’ responses might be drawn, explained verbally to a partner, written in a journal, or constructed from manipulatives. Homework or an assessment might consist of giving the student the first three clues of a puzzle and asking them to write a clue that gives the puzzle just one answer. The unit progresses from here, with factor pairs of 1000 beginning the next level of exploration, highlighted by representative ways of multiplication. At one point, the multiplication algorithm is *not* allowed, forcing the student to construct – either on their own or with some support – and utilize alternative ways of figuring out just what  $26 \times 47$  means.

Educators have long accepted that most students at the elementary school level function at the concrete operational stage and so use

concrete representations of the concepts being studied, whereas they have assumed that high school students work at the formal operational stage and, therefore, are able to utilize symbolic and abstract representations. However, research shows that 50 percent of students sixteen and older function at the concrete operational level. (Gadanidis, 1994). This would indicate that the use of concrete representations would be advantageous in enabling the middle school and high school student to internalize and truly understand the mathematics principles at hand. Dr. Steve West, a mathematics professor at SUNY Geneseo, routinely uses manipulatives for his college freshman as they struggle to get a grip on the topic on which they are working. As a matter of fact, students who are taking the mathematics courses required for an education degree are required to purchase a kit of manipulatives including geo-blocks, Cuisenaire rods, and geometrical pattern blocks. These students come away from their preparation with a truer grasp of the concept. (Personal communication, April 29, 1999). I only wish that my calculus professors had given me models and objects to manipulate and discuss with my peers instead of some arcane formula for finding the balance point of a solid object.

In this same line of thought, the educator must realize that not only is the progression to formal operations not a guarantee, but that progression from one stage to the next might resemble more of a waltz, with one step forward and two steps back. Furthermore, formal operations might be achieved in one subject area and not in another. At this juncture, a process known as scaffolding would be the appropriate measure for the teacher to take: "Scaffolding allows students to perform tasks that would normally be slightly beyond their ability without that assistance and guidance from the teacher. Appropriate teacher support can allow students to function at the cutting edge of their individual development." (Classroom Compass, 1995). For example, a simple 3-column chart with the headings *sometimes*, *never* and *always* can help a student sort polygons by their attributes, providing a foundation and framework from which to build their knowledge.

Contrary to common assumptions, there is a social learning element to constructivist mathematics education. To use Wheatley's term, the learner must test the "viability" of his solution. After the first few steps, mathematics can no longer be learned by means of interaction with a 'concrete' environment, but requires the 'confrontation' of the student's cognitive model with that of another student or teacher... again, ensuring that the child has not constructed false knowledge, but has built a good schema. (Gadanidis, 1994). "The very act of formulating an expression of their views promotes reflection which then leads to revision. It is not unusual for people to modify their position once it has been communicated to others in a small group setting." (Wheatley, 1991).

In closing, I would ask that those of us who are engaged in shaping the future through the students in our classrooms reflect upon or revisit the foundations of how we teach. I came to the realization that I had been philosophically operating on a hodgepodge, using practices that intuitively felt like the right thing to do (perhaps because much of the time I act like a typical kid – kinesthetics and curious), but leaving me unable in a professional sense to articulate upon exactly what this intuition was based. As a result of this review of Piaget's epistemology and the underlying characteristics of constructivism, I now understand why this active approach appealed to me so, and why it merits strong consideration by all educators. It can be nicely summarized by looking at the synonyms of the word scheme from which schema is derived: categorizing, planning, engineering, building, and... *doing*.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

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### DEWEY, SPIRITUALITY, AND RATIONALITY: A RESPONSE TO PROFESSOR RODA<sup>1</sup>

**James Garrison**

Professor Roda worries about the propriety of a statement in a recent issue of *Educational Change* in which I suggested that for Dewey “spirituality is more important than rationality” (see Garrison, 2000, p. 2). Roda believes that “Dewey would have viewed the distinction between rationality and spirituality as primarily formal” (see Rota, 2000, p. ii). I believe the distinction is primarily one of part to whole when the operations of rationality are spiritual; otherwise, they are two different kinds.

As evidence of the kind of “formal” distinction Professor Roda believes Dewey has in mind between spirituality and rationality, he cites the following from *Art as Experience*: “It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the other” (Dewey, 1934/1987, p. 61). What Dewey describes here is a formal distinction in experience. In my opinion, Dewey the staunch antidualist could draw distinctions with an acuity the best of analytical philosophers might well admire. Anyway, the passage quoted is a fine instance of the kind of “formal” distinction Professor Roda has in mind; it is not, I feel, the proper way to map the distinction between spirituality and rationality. Rationality can express spirituality, though when it does so it is only a partial expression.

Before moving forward, I want to voice a lingering concern. By drawing a “formal” distinction between spirituality and rational-

ity, Roda seems to want to confine spirituality to some one or another domain of human experience while clearly Dewey wanted to leave open the possibility it may pervade the entirety of human experience. I even wonder if Professor Roda means to assign rationality to one of the formal divides above (e.g., the practical or intellectual) and spirituality to another (e.g., the emotional); I think that would be a mistake. I do doubt, though, this is actually his intent.

In the remainder of my response, I first expand about the passage cited by Professor Roda above as well as review the three characteristics I associated with spirituality in my original paper. (Allow me to add that the three characteristics overlap; even so, they may not exhaust all that Dewey meant by spirituality).

In the passage cited above, Dewey is explicating what is involved in having “an experience” (p. 61). The passage continues thus:

The emotional phase binds parts together into a single whole; ‘intellectual’ simply names the fact that the experience has meaning; ‘practical’ indicates the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it. The most elaborate philosophic or scientific inquiry and the most ambitious industrial or political enterprise has, when its different ingredients constitute an integral experience, esthetic quality (p. 61).

The emotional, intellectual, and practical are phases, aspects, or subfunctions of a single experience; when fully integrated into a consummatory experience, the experience becomes “distinctively esthetic” (p. 61).

First, note that there is nothing distinctively “rational” about any of the three aspects constituting “an experience.” Emotions simply bind the experience together as an immediate experience while the practical implies that the experience involves an organism-environment interaction. The “intellectual” phase just refers to the mediated, meaningful character of experience. According to Dewey (1933/1986): “[T]hings gain meaning when they are used as means to bring

about consequences (or as means to prevent the occurrence of undesired consequences), or as standing for consequences for which we have to discover means” (p. 233). Any aspect of experience may acquire rational aspects once they become meaningful. For Dewey (1938/1986), “Rationality as an abstract conception is precisely the generalized idea of the means-consequence relation as such” (p. 17). Indeed, in aesthetic experience for Dewey (1934/1987), “Means and end coalesce . . . . [A]ll the cases in which means and ends are external to one another are non-esthetic” (p. 202). Rationality simply emerges as an extension of the working out of meaning. I am not referring to pure “rationality,” which Dewey explicitly rejects, or the “reasons and structures that drive the present industrial economic order” as Rota suggests, nor would Dewey (p. ii). I hasten to add that however “rational” the current economic order proves, Dewey, Rota, and I agree that the ends would not approve themselves upon further reflection with regard to their consequences. That, however, is another matter.<sup>2</sup>

While formally distinguished from each other, the practical, intellectual (including the rational), and emotional interpenetrate at all times. For example, in his *Logic*, Dewey (1938/1986) observes, “What I have said in *Art as Experience*, in chapter VII, on “The Natural History of Form” can be carried over, *mutatis mutandis*, to logical forms” (p. 372). In *aesthetic experience* for Dewey (1934/1987) the practical, intellectual (including the rational), and emotional become integrally related in the dynamic organization characteristic of all form (see pp. 62). As “an experience,” the three aspects of experience among which Dewey draws a “formal” distinction are parts, phases, or subfunctions of a larger whole. In any particular experience, one or another aspect is usually foremost, but the others never fully disappear. In an aesthetic experience, all three blend into a consummatory aesthetic experience. In a consummatory spiritual experience, all three blend in much the same way. A lesser spiritual experience may have all three, but not well integrated; it may also have any two, or only one. Rational experience, for instance, may have spiritual properties either alone or as part of a larger spiritual experi-

ence. Martin Luther King used civil disobedience as a means to his end is an example of method in the service of moral freedom and spiritual growth. I suspect many freedom marchers had spiritual experiences during these protests, though sadly, some were martyrs to the cause. The relation between spirituality and rationality is that of whole (spirituality) to part (rationality), provided rationality (or any other part) is actually spiritual. Sometimes, as Professor Roda points out, "rationality" is the opposite of spirituality. Pure, detached "rationality," or the "rationality" of practicalistic the current economic order or technocratic administration are not, upon reflection, truly rational in Dewey's definition of inquiry (see, Dewey, 1938/1986, p. 108). So, I conclude, spirituality is more important than rationality if for no other reason than the latter is, at best, only part of the former.

So, what are some of the characteristics of spirituality? In my original paper, I suggested that spirituality is a struggle for poetic unity involving three things: (1) the human eros to live a life of expanding meaning and value, (2) the human desire to find intimacy, unity and harmony with the rest of existence, and (3) the desire that human creative action matter in the course of events. Dewey writes that when "the factors that determine anything an experience are lifted high above the threshold of perception and are made manifest for their own sake" we have aesthetic experience. Personally, I believe that when spirituality integrates the aesthetic (and artistic), moral, and cognitive (meaning and rationality) spheres it lifts them above even aesthetic experience. So, I conclude that for Dewey spirituality is more important than rationality not only because it contains it as a part, but because spirituality is more important even than the aesthetic experience itself. Now I am not so confident about this last claim regarding Dewey, but I am quite sure that is my own reading. As Dewey observes, regarding any existence, including presumably a text, "The same existential events are capable of an infinite number of meanings" (p. 241). We may read Dewey's texts in an infinite number of interesting, valuable, and valid ways. That does not mean all ways, including mine, are any of these things. There are also an infinite number of wrong readings as well as meaningful, though

flawed readings. While Professor Roda questions my reading, he also personally solicited my response to sustain the dialogue. That is more than courtesy; it is the spirit of the living logos as it moves through Roda, Garrison, and, you, the reader who must decide, or, better still, write your own reading.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Professor Roda for his kind invitation to continue the conversation. We are in profound agreement about the importance of ongoing dialogue in human affairs.

<sup>2</sup> Another thing wrong with the present industrial economic order is that it uses Hume's not Dewey's sense of instrumental reasoning in which means are completely detachable from ends and in which rationality always serves the emotions (see Garrison, 1999). I am confident professor Roda and I agree on this as well.

**PAUL MORT AND PAX AMERICANA: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON GLOTZER'S "AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE DOMINIONS: MAKING THE CASE FOR DECENTRALIZATION IN INTER-WAR SOUTH AFRICA"**

**T. W. Lindenberg**

In a recent issue of NYSFEA's *Educational Change*,<sup>1</sup> Richard Glotzer offered an interesting perspective on Paul Mort, a professor of education at Columbia Teachers College in the 1920's, whose career extended well into the 1950's. While Mort was one of the beacons in school administration and finance, he also expanded his horizons toward the Union of South Africa, a country within the British Commonwealth. This was done with the intention of reforming (how many times have we heard this throughout the 20th century?) South Africa's school system. It seemed an odd voyage on which to embark, but Mort did just that.

Who was Paul Mort and who was his mentor, Isaac Kandel? Richard Glotzer does provide some detail on Mort. A Midwest school teacher at the age of 16, Mort obtained a BS degree at 21 and was later principal and school superintendent. For bright, inspired young men the academic heights were unlimited in the early 20th century. Columbia Teachers College in the 1930's and continuing well into the 1950's was arguably the greatest academic center for the study of education. The often told tale acquired currency as the department of social foundations of education and the department of school administration ascended to greater power and prestige. Mort easily found a home at Teachers College.

In his fine article Glotzer addressed some critical questions regarding the career of Mort and the curious interest he had in the educational system of the Union of South Africa. From among the other questions that need attention, I will focus on two: Why, of all the

places, focus on the educational issues in South Africa? And secondly, was this work consistent with the rest of Mort's scholarship and studies in school finance? One should also ask: why were so many of the Teachers College faculty interested in the educational systems of the British Crown colonies, when America by 1933 was in the middle of a depression with the average wage 60 percent less than in 1929 and unemployment reaching a frightening 25 percent levels? Part of the answer lay in the aforesaid claim that TC was not only going international in its scope and stature, but, as Professor Glotzer notes, students such as E. G. Malherbe from South Africa were attending and obtaining graduate degrees from TC in unprecedented numbers. Malherbe, in particular Glotzer commented, had been an office mate of Paul Mort and by the 1930's both were among the leading educational researchers in their respective countries.

A number of interesting circumstances aligned themselves at this time as well. The increasingly powerful Carnegie Corporation under Frederick Keppel had the monies to dispense on projects that supported the Corporation's "social policies" and those that seemed to serve America's interest. For young academics still in mid-career this opportunity could not be passed up. This interest represented the optimism, so manifest then, that the school models of educational administration and financial structure could perhaps be applied to South Africa's educational conditions. By the mid-1930's Mort was one of TC's leading educational researchers and an academic expert on state school fiscal matters. Blunt and yet so charismatic, as many associated with him claimed, Mort commanded almost unchallenged power in the East when it came to state fiscal expertise, and combined with an unsurpassed understanding of the politics of writing educational legislation, his influence was vast. As Glotzer makes so clear, Mort had set new directions with fiscal options aimed toward "equalization" formulas designed to bring greater balance of money spent per pupil regardless of any districts' wealth or taxable potential<sup>2</sup>.

Given this emphasis it is interesting to observe that Mort and

his generation while remaining oblivious to the moral implications for legal segregation in America and apartheid in South Africa, saw a universality among the world's nations particularly those of the Western world and those that had a long history with the Western nations that colonized them. For Mort and his colleagues it meant that the administrative forms and the fiscal support structure that seemed so successful in the United States could serve countries as New Zealand or South Africa equally well. This represented a *Pax Americana* that began at the turn of the century and continued well into the 1980's. Whether it was led by politicians, corporate heads, endowment benefactors or leading educators, America was seen as a model for education and its meritocratic social structure could be emulated and copied. America's elite schools of education such as TC seemed confident that the American common school was an ideal model to keep upgrading, refining and strengthening. It was inconceivable for leading educators to envision any other educational alternative. Many of these educators were among the major voices of progressive education and this movement, although hardly one without contested issues over direction and purpose, had at least the belief that progressive schooling was directly descendant from the 19th century common school. In addition to this institutional model they had a misplaced optimism about the power of the common school; and it appears, from hindsight, that this faith in some universal model of public supported education that would fit all circumstances was simply naive. We know today, of course, so much more about the subtle interactive components of a culture and its schools, the curriculum variations that must take account of cultural differences within the history of any given nation.

So, in many ways this perceived departure of Mort's from his major career paths was not such a radical step after all. It was in fact an easy transition from his work on state fiscal policy in America to that of other nations in the world, particularly those eager (and abetted by American investments) to adopt a model of schooling that was seen as extremely successful in the eyes of the world and further reinforced by the words of America's educational elite situated in

many of her fine universities. On the practical side, research monies from willing foundations were available at this time. Isaac Kandel had a major international study enterprise going for him at TC; and, since he represented that growing number of educators who became disenchanted with the direction the Progressive Movement had taken by the 1930's, a closer look at him highlights some significant issues. Did he become more interested in the comparative study of education of other countries as he saw more and more of America's schools falling under the spell of the child centered pedagogy? He had long been an educational theorist and for the greater part of his career interested in comparative education. Might it not be tempting to explore the rise of state school organizations in a climate where the fierce debates over curriculum directions were for all purposes absent? Were foreign posts seen as virgin territory that would allow American ingenuity to create something of an ideal system of education unblemished by the ideological struggles (such as strong child-centered schools vs. affirmative social role schools) that characterized the American school of curriculum debates?

Not the least of the ideological struggles was that between those who sided with a strong child centered position for schooling and those who were beginning to push for an affirmative social role for the schools.

Although most of the TC faculty were solidly within the progressive camp of educators, there was hardly unanimity among these professors. Kandel in particular and most likely Mort began to side with the more conservative side of progressive education. As America in the 1930's became mired deeper in the depression and the perceived threats to the social order became more alarming, a certain group of the TC faculty, later known as the "TC crowd" urged American schools to directly address the economic urgency and challenged educators to build a new social order in the famous words of one of this group, George Counts. The men who spoke from this extreme wing of the progressive education movement included Counts, John Childs, Harold Rugg, and to some degree William Kilpatrick. In many

ways this group of social reconstructionists was becoming the leading voice among progressive educators in spite of their small numbers and indeed it could be argued they represented the most articulate challenge to the school of thought variously known as child centered education. As Herbert Kleibard has drawn out in his studies, this child centered position provided the original network of ideas that gave substance to the early progressive education movement and enlisted none other than John Dewey in their support for their counter curriculum proposal against the entrenched classical studies curriculum. So the Progressive Education Association's bias toward this child centered pedagogy could well be understood, but in this new social climate of the 1930's, this position was seen as grossly ignoring the larger social concerns of depression ridden America.

At stake was the monumental task of preserving what educators cherished in the individualism of the child, while trying to prepare youngsters for their social responsibilities in a complex, industrialized modern society. These depression years brought the ideological tensions to the forefront seldom seen with progressive educators. The question now was just how seriously should educators take Dewey's words expressed years earlier in his seminal publication, *The School and Society*? The issue, indeed, now had a sense of urgency. American society could not afford the excessive individualism that seemed to set the tone for much of the early history of the Progressive Education Association, and neither could a large number of American schools, at least, as expressed by the social reconstructionists.<sup>iii</sup> For Edward Krug this struggle over ideas and indeed school practices, meant that American education began to give greater attention to social goals as he said it "renewed approval of the ideals of social efficiency and control."<sup>4</sup>

Esteemed thinkers from Plato to Tousseau set forth their views of the good and just society, and further attempted to show the relationship of individuals to the collective society. No less a thinker as Dewey joined this debate in his many writings. In his *Individualism, Old and New*, written in 1929, he tried again to address this problem

because of renewed attention it received in educational debates from a variety of social scientists and educators.

As usual, Dewey was most subtle and at times his rich ideas were obscured in a wordy vagueness, and as a result some dismissed Dewey altogether. He attempted to redefine the sanctity of individual freedom within a modern industrial age, and did not shrink from this difficult task, ever fearless and idealistic (i.e., not in a philosophical sense, but in remaining ever optimistic about future possibilities for Americans). He had considerable sympathy for the older conservative view of individual freedom seen as potentiality unlimited in its capacity for development. Freedom is not complete in itself, Dewey went on, "waiting to be bestowed on the world," instead it will develop only through interactions with actual social conditions.

For Dewey these "actual conditions" included the corporate world. Ideals and individual freedoms will only be realized as they are forged in remaking the social conditions that advance the potentials of individuals and mankind. As was often with Dewey, he was of course saying the industrial order of the past two centuries is emotionally and morally bankrupt, but it is the world we now have. He did not present the grim details of this social breakdown as Karl Marx did, but he did lay claim to new directions Americans could take. These directions are not found in retreating to the older notion of individuals finding resources within themselves; it is found in "many and multiple associations." These are the only means "by which the true potential of individuality can be realized."<sup>5</sup>

Dewey put this conviction nicely in an apt Emersonian metaphor:

"To gain an integrated individuality each of us needs to cultivate his own garden. But there is no fence about this garden: it is no sharply marked-off enclosure. Our garden is the world, in the angle at which it touches our own manner of being. By accepting the corporate and industrial world in which we live, and by thus fulfilling the precondition for interaction with it, we, who are also parts of the moving present, create

ourselves as we create an unknown future.”<sup>6</sup>

This was a Dewey terribly concerned about the social and individual disintegration in American culture. But the individualism of the past was not a solution to this disaster and he was equally alarmed by fascist and communist reactions. A renewed social intelligence was needed and the nation’s schools could become part of the renewal. All was not lost in the midst of the corporate and industrial growth in American society.

In the center of this debate, alarm understandably arose over the ascending fascist and communist states in Europe and their perceived threats to what many cherished in the American form of democracy. As we now are aware these fears may not have been grounded in fact, but the perceptions nevertheless added another emotional layer to the debate over child centered pedagogy and schooling for social responsibility. At a time when any stand for a stronger social role for the school was branded socialism, or even worse communism, then any defense was bound to throw the social supporters not only on the defense, but often forced them to side once again with the child centered progressives. Dewey, for all his acuity, was often in this position. This was not an easy time to advocate publically a favored ideological position.

Reconstructionists and other sympathizers pursuing a greater social purpose for the school, in their enthusiasm, had to avoid pushing a social efficiency position to fascist extremes. There was an element of indoctrination in their zealotry that put them uncomfortably close to some of the extreme social efficiency claims for the social role of the school. Kandel in 1935, in fact, spoke against reconstructionism stating that trying to build a new social order was granting “the right to conduct propaganda in the schools.”<sup>7</sup>

## II

Issac Kandel and in some measure Paul Mort, as TC colleagues, inevitably were thrown into this controversy. Kandel, of the two as

his various publications have shown, was far more the theoretical thinker and thereby became equally well known for his “essentialist” stand which in a curious way aligned him, at least indirectly, with the social reconstructionists in his stinging criticism of the child centered pedagogy. But in his rebuke of the classroom catering to the individual, he attributed it to much of the pragmatic philosophy underneath this pedagogy, something Counts and Childs could not accept. This showed just how subtle and complex the debate over the social role of the school had become in these difficult times in America. The alignments on various sides of the issues were not easily distinguished, or to put it another way, these intellectual positions could not be easily compartmentalized into forms that could help scholars make sense of the debates. Drawing the lines too sharply between let’s say the social conservatives and the so-called progressives reconstructionists distorts the views in question. Both Kandel and Dewey in their many writings reveal the tensions and, indeed, the frustrations within these intellectual distinctions.

As I said, by the 1930’s Kandel was a leading spokesperson for the essentialist school curriculum. The dangers besetting America’s schools, at least those Kandel observed, were the pedagogies that focused too readily on the here and now, “felt needs,” “social issues,” “real world problems.” For Kandel these represented a thoughtless leap to methods that were inspired by a pragmatic “cult of uncertainty” as he called it. This was not a direct attack on Dewey, although the very title of Kandel’s Kappa Delta Pi lecture published in the early 1940’s, *The Cult of Uncertainty*, would lead the reader to believe otherwise. However, Kandel was quite sympathetic to the message delivered in one of Dewey’s last statements on education, the influential *Experience and Education* published in 1938. In that book, students of Dewey will recall, he severely criticized the excessive “bookish” cultural curriculum favored by traditionalists such as R. M. Hutchins, but he was even more hostile toward the child centered progressives who were becoming exceedingly romantic in their views of the learning child, while overlooking the need for the intellectual levels of experience. It appeared these progressives ignored

the reasoning intellect and the need for its cultivation.

Kandel chose to address the two most publicized progressive movements in education, the aforementioned child centered pedagogy and social reconstructionism. Both were at bottom, Kandel concluded, the products of pragmatism. The one, the child centered position chose to ignore the cultural heritage of America; the other, reconstructionism, although heavily critiquing the prevailing American cultural and industrial scene, did not examine this heritage well. In chastising American culture reconstructionism overlooked its strengths. For Kandel and his followers (as we have said, Mort gave most of his attention to fiscal policy and never directly got involved in their curriculum debates) American schools had to reassert a commitment and respect for the traditions of western humanism to foster the civic virtues they valued within a democratic society. As America's schools searched for a theory of education Kandel could only see the hand of pragmatism emphasizing the immediate needs of learners in a society in which the prevailing climate of uncertainty looked far too much toward the practical advantages of any course of study. Aggravated further by a false notion of the aristocracy of the classical studies (the classical heritage was all but swept away in school studies), Kandel was understandably horrified. Yet Kandel clearly missed the subtleties of Dewey's pragmatism; he could only see a philosophy morally adrift never standing firm on any set of human values.

Kandel and other essentialists looked to the cultural heritage of the past, at least that part of western culture educators could agree upon, and perhaps that may have been easier to identify in 1930 than today. Nevertheless, it was this liberal education, the bedrock of educational conservatives that seemed the answer for American educational dilemmas. They evoked the age-old argument that it is a liberal education that provides the tools, techniques, and the intellectual discipline for understanding and controlling man's affairs. The idea was (and remains) as old as Aristotle's writings and this position always had an audience throughout 20th century discussions over

the course of study to which schools should subscribe.<sup>8</sup> The number of educators who tilted in this direction was remarkably small, although they represented a powerful and modestly influential voice.

It was within this landscape Kandel and Mort labored. Both increasingly looked to other countries not only for potential research but perhaps with faith and hope that some form of the American common school could become the leading means of education in these far away lands. This in itself is ironic because New York City, the home base for TC, in the 1930's was a mess; as has been shown by documented studies and detailed analyses, by many who have looked at the power structure and the public administrations of this remarkable city.

Added to years of administrative neglect, graft, and corruption the deepening depression aggravated and multiplied the ills in the city's civic life. This was evident in the deterioration of the city's parks, public spaces and the city's schools; and it was true in reform administrations as well as in the administrations of the smoothly oiled Tammany Hall machine.<sup>9</sup> There was immediate cause for concern right in the home base of many of these leading progressive voices.

Did any of this urban deterioration and suffering of the city's inhabitants strike the TC progressive professoriate as outrageous? If so, little was said other than in broad claims about the effects of the depression on the social conditions in America as a whole. Again the question: when their own New York City desperately needed fiscal and thoughtful attention, why turn to the problems of South Africa? The irony in this choice says something about the lack of a deep moral commitment to the immediate school conditions that were evident among progressive educators.

### III

As a coda to this discussion, I would be remiss if some comment were not made concerning the Union of South Africa some 70 years after the period examined in this essay. South Africa and the

United States shared some common characteristics. They were both the subjects of England through substantial portions of their history and hence the free whites were very much a product of the English culture. Second, they are multi-racial societies with a slave holding past. Legal segregation existed largely in America and the practice of apartheid was written into South Africa's legal institutions. Thus, it is readily understood why white scholars in the 1930's did not respond with any moral concern over South Africa's policies of apartheid since very similar legal restrictions were in place on blacks in America. The two nations were quite similar in other less important ways: population makeup and the sheer numbers of people, powerful white ruling classes and, of course, scholarly exchange programs such as those at TC.

By the 1990's South Africa arrived at a negotiated break up of the apartheid regime, but as with the United States in the 1960's this in itself did not guarantee full citizenship rights in terms of fairness of treatment and justice to black people. In the wake of a story of a violent central government that often responded brutally to even the most peaceful protests of segregation, the country has not found the means to take advantage of the opportunity of this newfound legal freedom. Hence, South Africa in recent years remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world that is not formally at war. The transition to a more inclusive post-apartheid society has not been easy and added to this burden is an impending AIDS crisis of epidemic proportions. Fear of crime, paranoia grips everyone, white, black, Asian, the rich and the poor alike. These conditions inform the nation's politics and as observers have noted it has contributed to the ambivalent response to the AIDS threat. Various AIDS dissidents particularly in the United States have not heeded the scientific facts regarding the HIV virus link to AIDS, instead look to a variety of environmental and social factors as the precipitating cause of AIDS. This view has captured the attention of President Thaba Mbeki and within the confusion of the nation's politics, South Africa is not responding to this impending health disaster. However, this is only one aspect of this highly unstable nation. South Africa never experienced real war

conditions (such as the Civil War in America) in its anti-apartheid movement, however, a post war atmosphere prevails, a nation with no visionary leaders willing to confront frightening health and social problems.<sup>10</sup>

So we come back to those years when Kandel and Mort looked to the school system in white South Africa for purposes that still remain unclear except to say they too easily cast their faith in the schools (an American form at that) as an institution of social change without understanding the fuller cultural context within which these schools would operate. It is with some sadness to see this land so wrenched with social dislocations some 70 years following the earnest efforts by Kandel and Mort to bring to it the kind of humanity their brand of American progressive education envisioned possible.

I leave the reader with a thought raised earlier. Did Kandel, grown weary of the curriculum debates in America, look to other lands where perhaps a brand “essentialism” could find a comfortable beginning at least within the context of let’s say South African culture? I am sure he could see that his essentialist brand would never attain great popularity amidst the many progressive voices vying for attention in American schools debates. We will never know for sure, but it strikes me that there was a dual side to these progressive idealists and perhaps a naivete’ in avoiding moral choices or perhaps in not seeing the moral issues at stake in the case of South Africa or for that matter in America.

To be fair, in assessing choices made in those difficult depression years, it is always important to avoid imposing contemporary thinking on times past. Still, there are judgements to be made or at least serious questions raised about the choices made by leaders in the past for they often set pathways that later generations followed - sometimes to dubious ends.

Paul Mort and Isaac Kandel were but two men in the emerging study of education and schooling (nationally and internationally) who represented the best of their generation, the educational elites be-

tween the two World Wars. Their contributions to the educational literature of ideas and fiscal policy stand on their own merits. Their venture into the South African culture, however, strikes me as a good example of *Pax Americana*, a doctrine that so often saturated 20th century foreign policy and, yes, education in a manner that hardly lifted the specter of humanity to the level their public statements proclaimed.

This period in American history between the two World Wars remains ever fascinating. The society and its thinkers labored to extend many of the benefits of the progressive period and reinterpreted some of these benefits while America began to dominate the world in so many ways with its unprecedented power and wealth. But as this brief excursion into the South African episode revealed, many intellectuals were having difficulties finding comfort in adapting the humane principles of progressivism to an America that was becoming increasingly powerful, bureaucratic, and beset with a number of conflicting ideologies. Defining America's role in the policies of other nations remains as perplexing today as it was in this earlier Progressive period.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Richard Glotzer, "American Educational Research in the Dominions: Making the Case for Decentralization in Interwar South Africa," *Educational Change* (Spring 1997), pp. 52-65.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 56-57.
3. It should be noted that even in its heyday the influence of the PEA particularly on American secondary schools was marginal. See David L. Angus and Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999, in their recent study of secondary education in America.
4. Edward Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972, vol. 2, p. 221.
5. Dewey was equivocal in his thoughts on American capitalism. Theo-

retically, as I have tried to make clear, Dewey was not yet calling for the demolition of the capitalist economic structure. David Kennedy, writing on the intellectual discontent with the liberalism of Roosevelt's New Deal, cites Dewey that a compromise with a decaying system is impossible. That seems to draw Dewey into a far left radical camp where the philosophical Dewey would not be entirely comfortable. No doubt there was sufficient ambiguity between the social Dewey with certain political convictions and Dewey the pragmatic philosopher. See David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

6. John Dewey, *Individualism, Old and New*. New York, 1929, Capricorn edition, 1962, p. 171.
7. See Kandel, "Academic Freedom and Noblesse Oblige," *Teachers College Record* (December, 1935), quoted in Krug, *Shaping*, Vol. 2, p. 238.
8. As intellectual confluences shift, it is interesting to note that within the last decade or so the value of a strong liberal education for all students is once again gaining much support. The lack of a general level of knowledge among our youth, increasing dissatisfaction with various brands of vocational education, and a sense of the undemocratic quality of the multilevel curricular structures for different populations of students have once more brought the arguments for a strong liberal education to the front in the various curriculum debates. Might it not be that prior to the 1990's this support primarily came from the arts and sciences faculties in America's elite colleges and universities.
9. See a number of studies on the state of New York City in this period, but among the finest Robert Caro's *The Power Broker*, New York: Random House, 1975, remains a superb work.
10. For one of the best reports on the current health crisis facing South Africa see Helen Epstein, "The Mystery of AIDS in Africa," in *The New York Review of Books*, July 20, 2000, pps. 50- 55.

**THE METAPHYSICAL CLUB BY LOUIS MENAND  
FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX: NEW YORK,  
2001, xii, 546 pp.**

**Reviewed by Anthony Roda**

Towards the end of Spring 2001 Jean Strouse's review of *The Metaphysical Club* appeared in *The New York Times* (June 10, 2001). My daughter, aware that I occasionally teach a course in American Philosophy, was delighted to bring the review to my attention. I was intrigued by it and struck by Strouse's focus on the personal dimension, for both the intellectual fate of individuals as for the fate of their ideas. I made xerox copies of the review and during that summer distributed them to students in an "Introduction to Philosophy" class I was teaching at the time. I thought that it would be an interesting way to introduce students to the traditional Platonic trinity of "The True," "The Good" and "The Beautiful." These concepts and categories still provide instructors and students an avenue by which to approach the issues of knowledge, values and action.

Although the review did not leave an indelible mark it did leave an impression strong enough to excite me when my son surprised me with a Christmas gift of *The Metaphysical Club*. I did not read it at one sitting, however; I spent a good part of the winter break working through it and found it to be the sort of book I had been searching for ever since the Fall of 1967 when I first taught a class in American Philosophy. Consequently, I decided to adopt it for the American Philosophy class I was scheduled to teach during the Spring of 2002. Fortunately for Louis Menand and *The Metaphysical Club*, but unfortunately for our class, hardback copies of the book were already out of stock and the paperback edition did not become available until late in April of 2002.

So we had to make do with the two copies I owned. Of the ten students that finished the class, one student, who plans to attend law school in the Fall of 2002, purchased his own copy and others showed varying degrees of interest in it. We divided the class into four groups of students (3 groups of 3 students and one group made up of the one student who had purchased his own book) in order to cover the four central figures of Menand's investigation, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., William James, Charles S. Peirce, and the inheritor of their tradition, John Dewey. Each group prepared comments on one of the above and presented them to the class.

The Metaphysical Club made the Spring 2002 semester far more exciting than it would have been otherwise. On the whole, it is a graceful account of the lives of the above mentioned thinkers at the center of pragmatism; and by tracing the development of this movement, unique to the U.S., Menand has addressed a long-standing need in the country's intellectual history. In recognition of his contribution he earned a well-deserved Pulitzer prize. Further, through his remarkable appreciation for their personal peculiarities and struggles Menand shows how these factors may have conspired to change their lives as well as their intellectual development; thus, we get a sense of how they influenced one another and the intellectual climate of their times. The graphic picture of Chauncey Wright, Charles Peirce's teacher and anyone else's who cared to be instructed by him, whose need for conversation was so great that he almost ceased to function without it is a case in point. This peculiar need played itself out in a number of social discussion groups of which The Metaphysical Club was, the one that may have provided part of the ground from which American Philosophy developed its own distinctive character. When all is said and done, we have a crisp picture of the U. S. intellectual landscape (from the beginning of the Civil War to the end of WWI) along with the development of its university culture, including both leading and lesser actors.

Menand suggests that groups such as The Metaphysical Club served Wright therapeutically as a way of warding off alcoholic and depressive episodes, while also providing a forum from which to articulate his views of the universe, human knowledge and human efficacy. Whatever, Wright's (regarded by Darwin as having articulated Darwin's views better than Darwin himself had) personal shortcomings may have been, Menand finds clear evidence for the high regard in which he was held by Holmes, Peirce and James. Each thinker extrapolated from Wright what was compatible with his own larger perspective with emotional and other personal experiences as factors.

In Holmes' case and probably for most northerners caught up in the fratricidal experience of the Civil War (1861-1865) the events associated with the war were traumatic and crucial for the development of a new attitude of mind. As this new outlook evolved it undermined the sensitivities fostered by the New England Brahmins (a term coined by Oliver W. Holmes Jr.'s father, Dr. Holmes, glib of tongue with a self-centered provincialism he identified with the natural objective and universal order of the universe). Brahmins such as Dr. Holmes commissioned a kind of genteel reason in the resolution of human conflicts. Unfortunately, it did not rise to task and was unable to prevent the horror of the war with its devastating effects on both the social and intellectual pre-Civil War order.

Thus, what the Civil War brought home to the junior Holmes and those who experienced it firsthand was that the assumptions of his father's generation with their implied intellectual order failed to prevent the war. Holmes Jr., the legal thinker, captured the new orientation in his first law review article. [ In it we get something akin to R. G. Collingwood's phenomena of absolute presuppositions as they are transformed into relative ones.] He characterized the process of legal reasoning in language in which concrete lived experiences are primary (at least anthropologically) and abstract principles are secondary. "It is the merit of the com-

mon law that it decides the case first and determines the principles afterwards.” [p. 217] It is an approach consistent with an open universe, one in which our knowledge of the universe is not fixed and predetermined in advance. It is an attitude which is shared by James as well as Dewey and in a rather complicated way by Peirce. Holmes’ language advocates a method by which principles are realized in conjunction with human cooperation.

Dewey viewed Hume’s suggestion to map human nature as an attempt to unravel the structure of the humanities and the social sciences and to an extent the natural sciences. But this is only half of the story for Dewey and he hastens to add that Hume neglects the effects of associated living. However, the metaphor of a map is apropos and suggestive of the contribution humans make to the evolution of our knowledge of the world around us, as long as it is understood as a product in which human nature and social customs and institutions are cooperative factors. Perhaps, the history of map-making exhibits a process similar to the history of organic life. Given the influence of Darwinism on Wright, Peirce, James and Dewey, they would have reflected on the relationship between the organizing principles (maps) humans use and the history of organic life (map of organic life such as the theory of evolution). Furthermore, they would have wondered about the implications of humans writing the history of organic life from an evolutionary perspective while they (humans) are subject to the same processes (evolutionary). What kind of relation would there exist between the evolving human cognitive processes and the evolving organisms (the subjects of inquiry)? These kinds of reflections might push one towards a kind of Humean skepticism as happened in the case of Chauncey Wright whose use of scientific reasoning led him to a through-going nihilism regarding a theory of conduct and a theory of nature.

After the Civil War, Wright’s views would have had many sympathizers to the extent that his views pointed out the limitations of human reason and his “thought represented a mature de-

bunking of the philosophical and scientific certitudes that had failed to prevent – in some cases had even incited – four years of mutual destruction.”[p. 214] However, thinkers such as James, Holmes, Peirce and later Dewey read Wright’s nihilistic conclusions as a new beginning for their own inquiries. “Their challenge, as they perceived it, was to devise a theory of conduct that made sense in a universe of uncertainty, a universe like the one Wright described.”[p. 214] What Louis Menand gives us in *The Metaphysical Club* is the story of how these thinkers and their colleagues responded to the failure of reason in warding off catastrophes such as the Civil War. Thus, he shines a light on the path these thinkers followed in their re-examination of the limits of reason, not only with respect to cognitive certainty and the status of “truth” but also, and especially, with respect to reason’s ability to effect human happiness.

The traditional metaphysical search for principles of order both adequate and consistent seems to have eluded these thinkers and their world-view receded into one of uncertainty and change. These thinkers viewed these features (uncertainty and change) as ultimate traits of human experience, but some modification would have to be added with respect to Pierce. And yet one had to act one way or another, or refrain from acting altogether, for actions seemed to demand a unified direction. However, concerning the efficacy of human actions the best that could be expected from human reason (ideas) amounted to hunches and bets (Holmes, James). In Dewey these ideas (hunches and bets) are treated as instruments or tools that have a use only insofar as they overcome obstacles in the fulfillment of human goods and desires. Thus, these thinkers end up with a humbler view of human reason, only one of the many factors in the historical process. Ideas viewed as events or occurrences subject to the same historical and evolutionary processes as biological organisms suggest that they may be compared to the “fixed species” of Darwin’s “theory of natural selection,” and may exhibit similar patterns of change. But this is

an unusually controversial and difficult issue, to say the least, without even broaching the issue Wright might have raised: is it even possible to decipher the order change might follow with respect to either biological organisms or human ideas?

For these giants of American thought, these kinds of concerns undermined the transcendental character of metaphysics and exhibited the hubris that often attached to its claims. Such considerations could serve as a prolegomena to classical American philosophy and shed light on why Holmes, James, Peirce and Dewey developed the views that they did while they shield away from ideologies. In his "Preface" Menand stated that "The belief that ideas should never become ideologies... was the essence of what they taught," [p. xii] and the attitude they had towards ideas was that they are: (i) "tools" which are (ii) "social" and (iii) "dependent on human carriers and the environment" while their survival was tied to (iv) "adaptability." [pp. xi-xii] It is this attitude that Menand unravels from the events and the backdrop in which and against which the above figures came by their views.

The result is a work in the best tradition of intellectual and cultural history, and as such it is also the story of the development of philosophy in the United States as it became integrated into the fabric of U.S. society. In this multi-dimensional panorama we also get the story of a people's declaration of intellectual independence. It seems as though these thinkers harkened to Ralph W. Emerson's call in the *American Scholar* and freed themselves from the past but lost all fixed points of references by which to set their compass. How they responded to this intellectual state of affairs is the story Menand wove for us in *The Metaphysical Club*. It should become a cornerstone for all areas of American studies, especially for those focused on the dynamics of history and philosophy.

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