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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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A DISSERTATION

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degree of

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BY

STEVEN JAY TURNER

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THE NEW EDUCATION IN THE NEW REPUBLIC MAGAZINE:

1914 - 1930

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THE NEW EDUCATION IN THE NEW REPUBLIC MAGAZINE: 1914-1930

CHAPTER I

THE PROMISE OF THE NEW REPUBLIC

The New Republic magazine was founded in 1914, in the exhilaration of a hoped for new world. The intellectual movers and shakers of the early twentieth century believed that mankind's perfectability lay, if not around the corner, at least as a distant attainable goal. It is almost impossible to overestimate the optimism that surrounded the emerging social sciences which, coupled with the benefits of applied technology, seemed to place within society's grasp the tools to reshape the United States into a democratic model for the world. Destiny had bequeathed America the instruments of freedom and order in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. An intellectual heritage from Europe, mingled easily into the fabric of a fading frontier America bent on reshaping itself into a democratic, industrial Canaan.

There were problems to be sure. The millions of immigrants who had deposited themselves on America's shores

beginning in the 1880s seemed to threaten the social homogeneity of the society. Strange people with strange, un-American ways posed the kind of national call to arms in which the new social scientists could flourish. Political corruption, especially in the urban "Boss" system, smacked of elitism and favoritism. Wealth was increasingly held by fewer individuals while "trusts" threatened to eradicate the American dream for the small businessman. But, these problems too, it was thought, could be dealt with through the unlimited imagination of Americans whose pragmatic nature had been given philosophic voice by Charles S. Peirce and William James late in the nineteenth century.

After 1892, reform was in the air. Social, political, educational and artistic reform reflected a growing sense of national sophistication and a belief in America's ability to transform itself into a "Promised Land." Muckrakers stormed the nation exposing corruption in government, the appalling conditions for workers in industry, the fossilized and entrenched practices of education, while painters and dancers, sculptors and actors took action to expose and reform the rigidity and formalism within their fields.

The New Republic magazine was founded as a result of one unexpected voice in this cacophony calling for reform. In 1909, Herbert Croly, wrote The Promise of American Life in which he presented his "reconstruction of America." Croly was an unlikely candidate for the mantel of

insightful political commentator. His background was more that of a dilettante than a savy critic. His father, David, was an Irish immigrant who became part of the New York intelligentsia as a newspaper editor, and his mother, Jane Cunningham, was a writer and the founder of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.[1] "Jenny June," as she was known was an unaffectionate mother more interested in a journalistic career than her son. She was editor of Demorest's Monthly and Godey's Ladies Book.

It was Herbert's father who exercised the greatest influence on him. David Croly was city editor and later managing editor of the New York World. He was co-owner and contributor to The Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, a real estate guide for New York City. In 1872, David Croly, founded Truth magazine to garner support for the utopian community at Oneida. Even more unusual was the appearance of the Modern Thinker. A magazine which lasted only two issues, it was characterized by the use of colored type on pastel pages. Croly believed that black and white printing damaged the eyes.[3]

When Herbert was born in 1869, his father had for several years been involved in his greatest passion - the thought of August Comte. Comtes philosophy called positivism attempted to reconcile faith and science by ridding religion of all superstition. This new "Religion of Humanity" held as its driving force the brotherhood of man.[4] The Crolys newborn son was, with appropriate

ceremony, christened into the "Religion of Humanity." His parents taking great pride that he was the first in the United States to be so ushered into the world.[5]

The impact of Croly's early immersion in positivism was evident in his later thought. In The Promise of American Life, he concluded by calling for the "brotherhood of man." Croly wrote, "It has been admitted throughout that the task of individual and social regeneration must remain incomplete and impoverished, until the conviction and feeling of human brotherhood enters into the possession of the human spirit."[6]

If Croly's early thought was shaped by his father's positivism, it was during his fifteen year college career that the other major philosophical influence of the age attracted him, namely pragmatism. Croly majored in philosophy at Harvard. It was the golden age of American philosophy and Croly was able to sit at the elbows of George Santyana, Josiah Royce and, the father of pragmatism, William James. Despite what seemed a natural affinity for Royce's brand of idealism, it was pragmatism that left its mark on Croly. Pragmatism as it was being fashioned by James was pervading American thought. It represented the ultimate tool for those who sought to reshape scientifically American society. Pragmatism became the world-view for Croly and his brand of reform. John Dewey, who would become a consistent contributor to the New Republic, reinforced the philosophical stance of the

magazine making it, in the early years, the most thoroughly pragmatic organ of the day.[7] John Chamberlain characterized Croly's thought saying, "At a time when John Dewey was still struggling with ... his ... pragmatic philosophy Herbert Croly was already a full-fledged instrumentalist."[8] Croly and Dewey were dyed in the same ink.

After his father's death, Croly sporadically pursued his studies at Harvard, worked on the Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide and also wrote for the Architectural Record. Fragile health and marriage into a wealthy family allowed Croly, in 1906, to cease work and begin writing a book.

The book, The Promise of American Life, was published in 1909. In its review, the Nation termed the book "notable" for its assessment of American political history, but demurred from Croly's conclusions which would lead to "state socialism."[9] But, unlike the Nation and reformers like William Jennings Bryan, Croly saw reform, not as turning back the clock to the golden days of America's past, but as an act requiring a "certain measure of discipline; not merely by the abundant satisfaction of individual desires, but by a large measure of individual subordination and self-denial."[10] Reform, Croly said, could not be considered "as equivalent merely to restoration of the American democracy to a former condition of purity and excellence."[11] Indeed, reform must lead to the fulfillment of the American ideal, and that ideal was to be found in the realization of nationhood rather than in a fragmenting individuality.[12]

For Croly, the two strands of American political thought could be traced to Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson, the ultimate democrat, placed his faith in the people and in the right of people to lead lives unfettered by government control. Hamilton, trusting the people less, saw the need for strong and purposeful government. Reformers, Croly said, "do not realize ... how thoroughly Jeffersonian individualism must be

abandoned," and replaced by a "transformed" Hamiltonianism which will operate in a "thoroughly democratic" way.[13]

Croly believed that the very evils many reformers sought to eradicate were the result of the excessive individualism on which they rested their appeals for change. "The huge corporation and the political machine," Croly said, "were both created to satisfy a real and permanent need .... the political system was based on the assumption that the individualism it encouraged could be persuaded ... to respect public interest; .... These assumptions were all erroneous."[14] Excessive individualism had created a government by 1909, which seemed to Croly unable to effectively deal with the changing complexion of American life. Croly noticed that a condition had arisen where the "People were to guide their leaders, not the leaders the people, and any intellectual or moral independence and initiative on the part of the leader in a democracy was to be condemned as undemocratic."[15]

The Jeffersonians in their zeal to avoid arbitrary control had crippled the ability of the nation to create for its individual citizens the truly equitable and democratic system they desired. What was needed was a strong and effective leadership beginning at the state level. A governor needed to function, legally, in the manner of the often illegal "bosses." Subject to recall for his decisions,the governor would provide the initiative

and imagination needed to operate a state.[16]

The nation should be governed by a leader not unlike Lincoln, an individual aware of his responsibility to the unity of the nation. Gone would be the selfish individualism of the Jeffersonian. In its place would be a "constructive individualism," a type of individualism where, "a man must in some way be made to serve the nation in the very act of contributing to his own individual fulfillment."[17]

An "aspiring individual" in Croly's America should possess "ideals ... perched a little higher than those of his neighbors ... he should be immediately ... loaded with rewards and opportunities. The public should take off its hat and ask him humbly to step into the limelight."[18] And how could Americans recognize a person of exceptional talent? Only by the better expression of his message, and the interesting manner in which it was presented. "They will rally to the good thing," Croly said, "because the good thing has been made to look good to them."[19]

Croly expressed a belief in leadership by a gifted elite arrived at democratically and continually adjusted by democratic processes. That adjustment could occur because not only would there be gifted leaders, but gifted critics too. Those individuals would continually inform and educate the people, becoming "standard bearers of the whole movement" toward "expression of individual purpose" in relation to the needs of America.[20]

Croly was deadly serious. Around him he saw social degeneration which threatened the middle class fabric of American life. He believed that a strong central government must institute a "national reconstructive policy." That policy would direct the course of economic affairs correcting abuses in both industry and labor. What was required, Croly thought, was a "constructive discrimination." The power of the United States government would be used to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate economic activity.[21] Croly outlined a litany of economic action that would bring about the equitable distribution of the national wealth. He called for abolition of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act because the government should be allowed to discriminate between good economic consolidation and the bad.[22] He called for nationalization of highly monopolistic industries either through outright ownership or by "official supervision."[23] Croly called for graduated taxes on corporate income,[24] and large inheritance taxes in order to prevent an aristocratic build up of unearned capital.[25]

Croly wanted to save America. His lucid political evaluation of American history and his economic program for a "national reconstructive policy" represented an attempt at balancing democracy and nationalism in such a way that the traditional equalitarianism of American life could lead to the fulfillment of America's national promise. The book concluded with a call for the brotherhood of man; an

Americanized "Religion of Humanity."

And yet, another factor seemed present, through less obvious, in Croly's call for a nationalized America, namely fear. Croly wrote, "The American ideal is no longer to be propogated merely by multiplying the children of the West and by granting ignorant aliens permission to vote. Like all sacred causes, it must be propogated by the Word and by the right arm of the Word, which is the Sword."[26] This lapse into a mystical defense of the country in the same breath as "ignorant aliens" revealed a theme within the progressive reform movement and touched upon the eventual educational remedies formulated by John Dewey.

In the same year Croly published The Promise of American Life, Israel Zangwill produced his play The Melting Pot. He described the conditions Croly observed every day in New York City:

> Here you stand, good folks, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to ... A fig for your fueds and your vendettas! Germans and Frenchman, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians-into the Crucible with you all! God is making the Americans.[27]

The wave of immigration that had begun in the 1880s was not made up of northern Europeans, but Europeans from the south and east. These people rather than spreading across the country gathered themselves into ethnic ghettos in America's growing industrial cities. These people of

different habits and attitudes posed a real threat to the "American way of Life." Ellwood Cubberely in Changing Conceptions of Education, also written in 1909, said that these new immigrants were "illiterate, docile, lacking in self reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law and order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civil life."[28]

Men like Croly and Cubberely believed that the promise of this "Promised Land" was at stake in 1909. Croly was presenting a way to nationalize, not only the American economy, but American culture as well. Given the methods of science and its social philosophy of pragmatism, it appeared obvious that the only way the middle class could genuinely create a homogeneous society in which the individual sacrificed his "Jeffersonian" will for a more socially harmonious "Hamiltonian" perspective was through education. This would require a "new education" based, not on the liberal tradition of learning, but on the experience of the individual as he adapted to the larger national experience. Education's "object is or should be to prepare him both in his will and in his intelligence," Croly wrote, "to make a thoroughly illuminating use of his experience in life ... as a man of business, a husband, a father, a citizen, a friend," these being the very qualities which seemed to be lacking in the new aliens.[29] What Croly believed was needed was a way to educate the

"ignorant alien" into "active participation in the collective task."[30] John Dewey would provide that approach, and the pages of the New Republic would reflect for many years these concerns about how that experiment in national education was going.

The Promise of American Life sold 7500 copies. The book became a seminal publication in the literature of the progressive movement. Croly earned the title of founder of American political science for his shrewd assessment of American political history. But, it also served him well in another way. It provoked a man of similar social consciousness to offer Croly the money to do whatever was necessary to fulfill the promise of American life.[31]

3

Willard and Dorothy Straight read The Promise of American Life in China where he was J.P. Morgan's Asian agent. Both responded to the Croly message of a strong American government active in the rectifying of economic abuses. They saw also, that Croly was empathetic to a more conspicuous and forceful American presence abroad. Straight and his wife were sincerely impressed. Croly had given voice to the kind of nationalistic impulses that Willard Straight believed in with his whole being. Blessed with wealth they determined on their return to New York to meet the man who had so fired their imaginations.[32]

After a series of meetings early in 1913 had confirmed their hoped for rapport with Croly, the discussions turned to practical means of fostering Croly's view of American political life. They toyed with the idea of a daily newspaper, but rejected it as too complex. Following a discussion of Norman Hapgood's misguided notions for Harper's Weekly, Dorothy asked, "Why don't you get out a weekly yourself, Herbert?" Croly replied, "It would take a lot of money." Yes, I understand," Dorothy said, "But let's go ahead."[33]

It seemed only natural that Croly would enter journalism. Indeed, he had already worked on the Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide and the Architectural Record. And now, thanks to two wealthy heirs of

Jeffersonian individualism, he was being handed on the proverbial silver platter the editorship of a weekly magazine which would endeavor to rectify the kind of economic excess that was making the magazine possible. The irony was duly noted by friends and critics alike.

The birth of the New Republic seemed charmed. With financial backing Croly began to gather a staff which could produce the required 25,000 words a week. Walter Weyl was the first editor Croly signed. An economist, Weyl had published, in 1912, The New Democracy. His book was compatible with Croly's thought, attempting to restructure the American economic system.[34]

Other staff followed. Francis Hackett was hired to handle literary affairs. Philip Littell was to write a full page column, "Books and Things." Charlotte Rudyard was given the task of lay-out and editing.[35] But, by far the most influential member of the new magazine's staff was Walter Lippmann.

Lippmann was the rising star of political criticism. A Harvard golden boy, he had been chosen by Lincoln Steffens to work on Everybody's Magazine. In 1912, Lippmann went to Schennectady, N.Y., to work in the administration of socialist mayor George R. Lunn. In 1913, Lippmann published A Preface to Politics. His deft analysis of human nature helped popularize the work of Sigmund Freud in the United States, and brought a needed

realism to the progressive goal of transforming American society.[36]

Even more powerful was Drift and Mastery the following year. Here he relied on the scientific method as the way one analyzed and determined the course of action in a society. A notion Herbert Croly could certainly accept.[37] Lippmann and the others began work the winter of 1913-1914. "We started ... on the assumption," Lippmann wrote, "that we were enlisted as loyal, though we hoped critical members of the Progressive movement."[38]

Offices were set up in New York City at 421 West 21st Street in a brownstone owned by Croly. A first order of business was to find a name for the magazine. Croly wanted to call the paper the Nation, but that name was already in use. The Republic seemed a logical second choice for a magazine bent on nationalizing America. After it had been decided and publicity had been circulated, it was discovered that a Republic existed out of Boston. Lippmann said, "We had to differentiate ourselves, and so with a positive dislike for the suggestion of utopianism, we called the paper The New Republic.[39]

In September, 1914, advertisements were taken announcing the New Republic magazine. Croly wrote that the journal would "stir the intellectual imagination of its readers, and create in them an attitude of mind productive of sound and determined action in the face of our national needs."[40]

Each issue of the magazine would contain five elements. Short editorials called leaders were unsigned. These were followed by full page editorial statements, also unsigned. Then, articles in the range of 1500 words by both staff and solicited writers. A correspondence section followed the articles with book reviews and arts criticism completing the issue. It was a tight magazine package modeled on the English journal the New Statesman.[41]

The New Republic magazine was built on the foundation of Croly's The Promise of American Life. Together with his like-minded staff, Croly set out to inform and educate the American people. Political and economic practice would not be the only areas for the magazine's scrutiny. Education was from the first issue an important concern. From 1914 to 1930, the American educational scene was reported on by dozens of correspondents. It is an impressive list - John Dewey, Randolph Bourne, Elizabeth Sergeant, Max McConn, Horace Kallen, William Bagley, Boyd Bode and many others.

This study is interested in the "new education" in the New Republic during its first fifteen years. These years of Croly's editorship present a rise and fall in educational enthusiasm for the path of nationalized education. The optimism of men like Croly, Dewey and Bourne in the building of a better America through experience-based and child-centered education underwent degrees of change until, by 1930, Dewey and other

educationists were calling for a reappraisal of the practices of the new education. The pages of the New Republic reflected a growing diversity and eccentricity of both educational method and purpose. This shift from the unitary nature envisioned for education by Croly and Dewey into a quarrelsome competition about educational belief is captured in the week by week reporting of the New Republic.

The beginning was very bright, however, and the optimism high that real change could be made in the American educational system, and that the result would be new men and new women for the new world that was dawning.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER II

WORSHIP OF IDOLS

When volume I, number I of the New Republic appeared, November 7, 1914, the first article on education clearly illustrated what the new magazine believed wrong with American pedagogy. The writer, Randolph Bourne, had been hired by Croly as a staff writer at the suggestion of Charles Beard.[1] The twenty-seven year old Bourne was a little man, five feet tall with a grotesquely misshapen head, the result of a "messy birth." That, coupled with a childhood spinal disease which left him a hunchback, made Bourne a physical freak whose only avenue for success lay in the intellect. He had written for the Atlantic Monthly; his essays collected into book form in 1913. Youth and Life established a reputation for Bourne as a keen observer of young Americans' ways and as an insightful critic of the American social scene.[2]

In that first article, Bourne described a visit to his old high school in Bloomfield, New Jersey. Sitting at the back of a classroom Bourne wrote, "I had before my eyes the interesting drama of the American school as it unfolds itself day after day in how many thousands of classrooms

throughout the land."[3] He granted the teacher a certain "conscientiousness" but found himself, along with the thirty students, experiencing "that queer sense of depression, still familiar after ten years, that sensation, in coming into the schoolroom, of suddenly passing into a helpless, impersonal world, where expression could be achieved and curiousity asserted only in the most formal and difficult way."[4]

Bourne went on to describe the division of the classroom between "good" children, who artificially connected themselves with their teacher, and "bad" children who had "more self-assertion and initiative than the rest." These bad children were for Bourne the truly "normal," those who would not buckle under to the artifice of formal education.[5] Not only were the students divided, but Bourne observed a chasm between the students and the teacher. He asked himself, "What institution ... in the grown-up world bore resemblance to this so carefully segregated classroom?" Bourne's conclusion was that only state legislatures operated in the same highly structured and artificial environment of the classroom.[6]

When the bell rang concluding the class, all the children suddenly became "normal," laughing and talking, becoming human for the first time in an hour. "Call this thing that goes on in the modern schoolroom schooling if you like," wrote Bourne, "only don't call it education."[7]

This initial essay on education in the New Republic

characterized the dilemma American intellectuals and educationists had experienced since the revolution. Given the uniqueness of the American experiment, what were the requirements for a uniquely American education? Each generation since the country's founding had wrestled with that problem, until by the Civil War, the hodge-podge of American educational enterprises cried out for logic and organization. William Torrey Harris, beginning in the late 1860s, brought about a needed sense of order and systemization to American schooling. In 1885, Harris wrote, "The school could not possibly undertake a more direct and efficient training of the child for social combination than it does undertake in its four cardinal phases of discipline-regularity, punctuality, silence, and industry."[8] These industrially crafted ideas were the very features of education that by 1892, when Joseph Rice's famous expose of American schooling appeared in the Nation, had become fossilized into the bedrock of educational practice. And, it was those same rigidities that Bourne observed in 1914 that caused him to promote a new form of education. An education which would foster in the child a more natural and, it was hoped, a more realistic relationship with society. If the promise of American life, replete with the implied social responsibilities of democratic citizenship, was to be inculcated in the young, the formalism of Harris, not to mention the stodginess of

higher education, must give way to the democratic naturalistic impulses of American society.

The threads of educational reform prior to 1914, were composed of elements promoting mechanical and industrial education modeled on the Della Vos method, the establishment of schools for the manual arts, the promotion of agricultural education in the midwest, and later, a growing emphasis on domestic skills for women, and nature studies for all.[9] Still, this education by special interest group was not the type of total reformation of the growing public school system that would accomodate the needs of democratic America. And, it was all of America too, that must be reformed, not just education or for education's sake. True radicals, like Eugene Debs, were never very interested in educational reform. Only the middle-class reformers like Croly, Dewey and Bourne saw education as a tool that could reshape American social and economic patterns. Education for them became, in the words of Frank Tracy Calton, "an engine for social betterment." Schools, so easily subject to parochial concerns of this group or that needed to become the shoulder to the wheel of America's evolving sense of nationhood.[10]

What Bourne saw in that schoolroom in 1914 was education that was not designed to promote the social betterment that he and the other reformers believed in. He was observing education designed for the individual mind, not the body politic. It was schooling which would never

alter America's broader social structure. Bourne was repudiating not just a methodology of teaching,but a body of knowledge that seemed to him inappropriate for modern America. In Drift and Mastery, Walter Lippmann wrote, "The sanctity of property, the patriarchial family, hereditary caste, the dogma of sin, obedience to authority, - the rock of ages, in brief, has been blasted for us ... the foundations of the older order survive only as habits or by default."[11] And, it was that "habit" which the middle class reformers wanted to break, and the new education was the method by which it could be done.

The chief architect of the new education, a former teacher of Bourne's at Columbia, was John Dewey. He believed that knowledge and action were not two separate entities, but a single activity of the individual mind as it confronted and solved daily problems. This process by which even a child solved his problems was the teaching task of the new education. Dewey believed that education now had to be based on the scientific method with its problem solving technique and, more broadly, upon the social philosophy of science, pragmatism. Pragmatism was for Dewey the only acceptable approach for a democratic, industrial society. Education then, by teaching the child how to deal effectively with day to day verities was, in effect, teaching the child how to better himself and the social order too. It was axiomatic for Dewey that schooling should not simply reproduce the existing society

in the young, but give them the tools and the opportunities to improve the collective culture.[12]

This change of educational attitude implied that the traditional focus of schooling on knowledge and the teacher should shift to a focus on the child. The interests of the child, thought naturally good, should become the driving force of all educational activity. "Few grown-up persons retain all of the flexible and sensitive ability of children to vibrate sympathetically with the attitudes and doings of those about them," wrote Dewey.[13] Dewey's belief in the sympathetic vibrations eminating from children represented a growing assumption about childhood and children's goodness, honesty and intelligence which had begun with Rousseau and had culminated in that busy year, 1909, with Ellen Key's, The Century of the Child.[14]

With the child at the center of the educational process and the child's interest as the means of fostering instrumental problem solving, the traditional liberal view of education with its formality and ordered knowledge was, as Bourne observed, not adequate. Like science, education was to be experimental; ever continuing experimentation which generation by generation would reform the society. Industrial society was society ever changing, ever growing. Education for the individual was growth too.[15] The individual and society were both to be involved in scientifically governed growth. For Dewey that was the only tenable approach for a democratic state to hold.

Failure to grow meant stagnation and death, be it in the biological world or the social world. The task of the new education then, was to promote the growth of the child's abilities which in turn, Dewey believed, would foster the growth and continued reformation of society.

And, society was the focus of the new education. Despite lip-service to the individual's needs, it was more an attempt by Dewey to do as Croly had suggested in The Promise of American Life, where "a man must in some way be made to serve the nation in the very act of contributing to his own individual fulfillment."[16] Or, even more pithy, as the reviewer of Democracy and Education in the Nation wrote, "In sum, one is driven to the belief that, in spite of Mr. Dewey's fine defense of individualism, his moral idea is really that of the 'good mixer.'"[17]

The belief that American society must be transformed in order to fulfill its promise was not simply a discussion of political structures and economic practices. Dewey and Croly wanted to create an American culture. A culture free from the taint of European, aristocratic influence. A democracy, Dewey believed, had to de-classify its culture if it was to be truly democratic. In an early article for the New Republic, "American Education and Culture," Dewey wrote that the "beginning of a culture ... is the perception that we have as yet no culture: that our culture is something to achieve, to create."[18] The burden of relying on "retrospective culture" for the nation's

identity was to relinquish America's promise, America's future. "The beginning of culture would be to cease plaintive eulogies of past cultures," Dewey wrote, "eulogies which carry only a few yards before they are drowned in the noise of the day."[19] Americans needed to justify their own unique brand of democratic culture and cease using the measuring stick of tradition which was diseased by its artistocratic origins.[20]

Dewey's culture had to be layed on a foundation of science and industry; America's own cultural heritage. Nothing from the past could guide nor prepare the nation in the formulation of that culture. "Since we can neither beg nor borrow a culture without betraying both it and ourselves, nothing remains save to produce one," by means of education.[21] "It is for education to bring the light of science and the power of work to the aid of every soul.... Culture would then be for the first time in human history an individual achievement and not a class possession."[22] Education was the means of "transfiguration ... to bring to the consciousness of the coming generation something of the potential significance of the life of to-day, to transmute it from outward fact into intelligent perception, is the first step in the creation of culture."[23]

However abstract and distant the goal of a scientific, industrial, democratic culture was for Dewey and Croly and Bourne, the reality was that education must change. It must change not just for philosophic reasons,

but because of the urgencies of a burgeoning immigrant population, because of the realities of needed vocational training for industry, and also because of the fast coming findings of psychology. School in America after the turn of the century was a social tool that was designed, not only to unify the society, but building on the work of Jane Addams and the Settlement House movement, to create needed change for the whole of America. The New Republic recounted a 1915 debate between a steel tycoon and a feisty Irishwoman on this very issue. The tycoon said:

> You people from the public schools have invaded every department of life. Every interest you have dragged into the schools, and no one can forbid you .... Now you have got to go back. You have to return to the original intention of the men who launched the system.

The Irishwoman replied:

> No, the public school will never return. They will go forward. They will go into your factories and change your factories. They will go into the hideous slums which you have created and they will clean them out. They will go into the politics which you have corrupted and they will make that pure. You must go back or you must change. The schools will go forward.[24]

2

The early years of the New Republic, before America's entry into World War I, were years of grand optimism that education could actually achieve the type of social reformation advocated by Croly and Dewey. The belief that a new education could bind together the heterogeneous segments of the American population, that it could rectify the problem of economic inequities and purge the political system of graft and favoritism, created the patina of a religious crusade.

If there was a single experiment in public education prior to the Great War that exemplified the unified attempt of progressive reformers to "transfigure" American schooling, it was the "Gary Plan." Not only was there a unanimity of thought and action about the Plan, but it represented progressive education at its best. This one experiment embodied the meat of progressive educational reform. It has proven to be the realistic standard against which all future progressive educational experimentation must be judged. Even the most cursory examination of the Gary Plan shows it to contain the essential elements of Croly's call for a nationalized America and Dewey's child-centered, scientifically based education for community. The Plan bore the imprint of the Settlement House movement and also the acknowledged need for vocational training curricula. And, equally important, the Gary Plan was

specifically designed for large scale use throughout the country at a savings to the taxpayers. The plan was written about glowingly by John and Evelyn Dewey in Schools for To-Morrow, but it was Randolph Bourne, in a series of articles in the New Republic in 1915, who brought national attention to the school system of Gary, Indiana.[25]

In 1906, the United States Steel Corporation bought a sandy, swampy section of Lake Michigan shoreline to build a new plant. The village of 300 grew, by 1914, to a population of 35,000 people. Bourne was dispatched to the new city of Gary by Croly early in 1915, to write a series of articles on the school system so admired by John Dewey.[26] Bourne found a "typically varied American city with ... attractive residences, handsome public buildings and churches, trolly-cars and taxicabs ... and [a] rather congested proletarian district inhabited by the cheapest immigrant labor from southeastern Europe."[27] In fact, forty-six per cent of Gary's population was alien.[28] But, observed Bourne, "the native American element decidedly predominates," in contrast to a nearby town, "which has practically a Polish government."[29]

Faced with a population which was doubling every year, and a tax structure based on assessments that, by law, were always two years behind, the city was incubating an educational horror-show. William Wirt, a student of Dewey's from his days at the University of Chicago, was hired in 1907 to design a complete school system.

Utilizing his experience with "work-study-and-play schools" he created a system of education characterized by Bourne as, "the first consistent and whole-hearted attempt to apply Dewey's educational philosophy."[30]

Following Dewey's lead, Wirt envisioned each school as a microcosm of the community. All life was to be dealt with within the walls of Gary's three schools. In the Emerson School, Bourne saw children going throughout the building in spontaneous movement. Gone was the lock-step of the military model for education. In its place were "interested individuals who ... are utilizing all the facilities of a lavishly equipped and stimulating community."[31] The students seemed to Bourne like privlidged members of a "democratic club", able to partake of all the school had to offer - its classes, laboratories, greenhouse and garden, its workshops and crafts classes, even a swimming pool. "The children," wrote Bourne, "do not seem to be there because parents send them there to get rid of them, but because what can be done there is so interesting that they cannot stay away."[31]

In fact, the school was used day and night. During the day, Gary's 5000 children attended its schools; at night 6000 adults moved within the classrooms and workshops perfecting their skills in English and history, or woodworking and crafts. The town joke was that every third person in Gary went to school.[33] School was even held on Saturday for those students wanting extra help, or who

simply wanted to play in the halls and rooms of Emerson, or Froebel or Jefferson schools.

Wirt's Gary Plan saw children as both the center of education, and as genuinely good and unaffected creatures. Bourne, after watching children work together in a woodcraft shop, asked, "could it be that mischievousness, supposed to be an integral part of child-nature,was simply a product of repression or idleness? Could it be that school discipline was largely an attempt to solve problems which artifical rules were directly manufacturing?" It was obvious to Bourne that Gary schools' democratic nature proved that a community of children could achieve harmony without relying on the "inventive wickedness by teacher's rules and percepts."[34]

Each school was self-contained with little segregation between younger and older children. The problem of children dropping out of school after the sixth or eighth grades was avoided by having each school contain twelve grades in an uninterrupted flow. Each child moved daily through a "community" of various ages, sizes and capabilities, just as in the real world.

The exceptional facilities of the Gary schools had a two-fold purpose. Initially, the facilities allowed each school building to become a community center for Gary's citizens, but it also was the means by which Wirt was able to educate all the children of Gary, while having only enough seats for one-fourth of the children at any

given time. "Mr. Wirt," Bourne wrote, "provides a coveted 'desk and seat' for about one-quarter of the children. While they are studying the traditional three R's ... the rest of the school is distributed in shop and playgrounds, gymnasium and studio, or at home."[35] This platoon system of handling large numbers of students became a hall-mark of the Gary Plan, and eventually found its way into schools throughout America.[36] Bourne observed, "The amount of money this saved in school buildings alone is so large that even a town like Gary, with relatively meager school revenues can afford, not only the varied equipment, but also luxuries like special school physicians and nurses, and special teachers for special subjects."[37]

Like the feisty Irishwoman mentioned above, the Gary schools involved themselves in every aspect of the community. A local branch of the public library was placed in each school. Chemistry classes worked with the city health and water agencies analyzing Gary's water and running tests on food and medicines sold in Gary's stores. The chemistry teacher told Bourne that he was in the midst of "youthful expertness - that there was scarcely a principle of science, theoretical or practical, that he could not develop from ... the daily life around the children."[38]

History classes followed Jane Addams' maxim of "education by current event." One class was designing various town plans for Gary's burgeoning population.

Another class was studying Athenian and Spartan systems of education in comparison with their own Gary Plan. "They study history backwards," one teacher told Bourne, "so that it explains what is happening today."[39]

Artisians from the community operated the various machines shops, the foundry and the printery, training students as apprentices who, in turn, would instruct the younger children in these pre-vocational activities. Girls learned to cook by actually preparing meals for the school population each day. Bourne believed that this deft mixture of the student with the daily work life of the community was the only type of training that could be called vocational. "The usual vocational school work takes the child too late, when his curiosity is likely to be dulled," wrote Bourne.[40]

Not only did the community come to the school, but the school went out into the community. Each teacher was assigned a one or two block area, or a tenement house which she visited regularly becoming acquainted with the parents of her students. She could then see how they lived so that the children "became still more colorful to the teacher as she came to know ... their background of family circumstances and nationality." Otherwise, it would be impossible for the teacher to adapt the subject matter to the children's needs.[41]

Bourne saw the schools in Gary filling not only an educational niche, but also providing the kind of truly

communal activity traditionally offered by churches and church schools and organizations like the YMCA. In a fascinating statement, Bourne wrote "it will be interesting to see how successfully some of these institutions which purport to form the child's morals and care for his soul's destiny prove their supplementary value, and how far they are not simply having joyfully extended to them a long rope by which they may hang themselves."[42]

The Gary Plan sought to train the child in the wider social life of the community by allowing him to do the things the city of Gary did. It stirred Bourne's imagination to think of these children, grown, applying their democratic, experimental approach to life to the everyday world. For him the Gary Plan offered America, for the first time, a school which valued children, allowing them a flexibility of behavior and curriculum on an unheard of scale. The Plan integrated the school with its community, until, hopefully, the lines between the two were completely blurred. It involved the school in the ongoing process of change toward the machine oriented society which was emerging. The system was democratic, progressive and a tool to be used in the constant reformation of society. And, finally, it was an economical way in which the society could teach the young the living body of scientific, industrial knowledge in its shifting and growing dimensions, and, in fact, lead and promote that growth. Alice Barrows Fernandez in an article for the New Republic

described that effort.

> When the school opens its classroom doors ... and lets the children out for play or work, when children get arithmetic not only in the classroom but in a practical carpenter shop, when they move about the halls in overalls bent on legitimate school work, when the whole school atmosphere is one busy, wholesome, activity, the school system has met an irresistable force more potent for change and freedom than any exhortation or argument. The daily flexible routine of the school becomes the dynamic power for the continued transformation of the school itself.[43]

In the charmed enthusiasm for educational reform before the war, the Gary Plan met the seminal requirements of Dewey's thought, of Bourne's sentimentalism and of Croly's need for nationalization of a disparate population. In a school system which was not just theory or daydream, Gary had replaced the old education with a democratic, experimental and economical system which had become the focal point for educational and social change in the lives of 35,000 people. It seemed to the advocates of the new education that at last a system had emerged that understood that:

> Children are not empty vessels, nor are they automatic machines which can be wound up and set running on a track by the teacher. They are pushing wills and desires and curiosities. They are living, growing things,and they need nothing so much as a place where they can grow. [The teacher] will have to think of the school as a place where children spend their time living not as artifically segregated minds but as human beings ... Americans need more than anything to learn how to live. This is the first business of education.[44]

3

The process of teaching Americans how to live was interrupted by the need to teach them how to die. Even as the first issue of the New Republic was being put together in the late fall of 1914, war was erupting in Europe. The debate over the degree of America's involvement in the continental conflict was strenuously carried on in the pages of the New Republic. And, when the battle was finally joined in 1917, it proved to be an issue which divided progressive ranks between those in favor of the war and those pacifists who believed America had succumbed to moral persuasion of the most immoral kind. "We thought that the [progressive] movement was established," wrote Lippmann. "We never dreamed that there would be a World War before our first issue was printed."[45]

The telling impact of the war,noted Lawrence Cremin, was a move away from social reform to a subjective, iconoclastic espousal of the individual. For education, this involved the accentuation of the child-centered approach to, on occasion, an anarchial extent. The generation of the twenties seemed far more interested in self understanding through the insights of psychology, and self expression through the new modern arts, than it was in creating a new social order which would culminate in Dewey's and Croly's democratic American culture.[46]

Eric Goldman in Rendezvous with Destiny wrote:

> As the new era opened ... Herbert Croly went home and refused to see anyone for three days. On the fourth day he summoned his editors to his office and told them that progressivism was finished. 'From now on we must work for the redemption of the individual.'[47]

For Randolph Bourne the war revealed the critical flaw in the philosophical base of progressivism. Bourne and his generation of intellectuals had cut their teeth on the pragmatism of John Dewey. Followers of Dewey, routinely referred to as 'disciples,' had sought to transform America by means of education. Many viewed the movement as a religious calling.

What distressed Bourne was that Dewey had yielded so easily to both the belief in the war's ultimate worth, and to the rhetoric of the "professional patriots, sensational editors," and the "sedition hunting vigilantes." Dewey had written a number of articles for the New Republic supporting Woodrow Wilson and the war. In one article, Dewey told the American people that, "a war waged to establish an international order and by that means to outlaw war is something hitherto unknown. In just the degree in which the American conception of the war gains force, and this war becomes a war for a new type of social organization, it will be a war of compelling moral import."[48] But, the war that was taking place was not being waged for such glorious purposes. Hate and vindictiveness were the order of the day. Bourne wrote, "Evidently the attitudes which war calls out are fiercer

and more incalculable that Professor Dewey is accustomed to take into his ... pragmatist mind." Dewey's philosophy "has never been confronted with the pathless and inexorable, ... [but] it goes ahead acting as if it had not got out of its depth."[49]

Bourne felt as if he had been "left in the lurch" by the philosophy of John Dewey. The belief that only by means of scientific and democratic values men could achieve the new world was one thing. But, the reality was butcherous inhumanity while Dewey continued to mouth democratic and noble platitudes. "I should prefer," wrote Bourne, "some philosophy of War as the grim and terrible cleanser to this optimism-haunted mood that continues unweariedly to suggest that all can yet be made to work for good in a mad and half destroyed world."[50]

The pragmatist intellectuals had failed in their duty as leaders. Bourne believed they had sold out "bag and baggage" from changing the world through the rational, scientific institution of education to the irrationality and brute-force of war. War would not build the new social order, but breed instead "poisonous mushrooms" which would sicken the society. Dewey and other pragmatists, like Lippmann, had defaulted on their clear vision of the world by yielding to the war. To Bourne that indicated a serious deficiency in the philosophy of these men.[51] Dewey's "papal blessing" on the war had revealed in him and his followers a readiness for the administration of the

war, but an inability to engage in a rational and "idealistic focussing of ends."[52] "They have absorbed the secret of scientific method as applied to political administration," wrote Bourne. "They are touched with creative intelligence toward the solution of political and industrial problems," but "they have never learned not to subordinate idea to technique."[53]

These pragmatists were individuals who had eschewed classical education in favor of training in political and economic technique. They were adept at recognizing problems, advancing solutions and organizing bureaucracies, but they seemed to Bourne, bereft of a philosophy of life. They appeared to have no underpinning of values to which to apply their skills. It was almost as if the war was designed for men of their ilk-efficient technicians, able to solve immediate problems, to achieve minor ends,while being, thought Bourne, completely oblivious to the larger ideals necessary for a truly democratic society.[54]

Bourne wrote of the "poetic vision" which was necessary to achieve major ends in a society. Without that vision pragmatism was doomed to simply adjust to the immediate situations within society. If the goal was only to "meet" situations, Bourne thought it likely that "you will get something less than you should be willing to take."[55] Also, one had to ask if pragmatism in education had the poetic vision to establish the kind of American culture longed for by Croly and Dewey? Or, was the new

education guilty of adjusting to the myriad problems of industrial America while not possessing a clear picture of democratic values? Dewey certainly understood that a foundation of values was necessary, but his lifelong cry of being misunderstood by his disciples was so plaintive that one wonders if there was not an ambiguity within his "goddamnable style" which helped foster misinterpretation of pragmatism toward a cult of the efficient and the immediate.[56]

Change and growth, the hallmarks of Dewey's thought and the new education, seemed inimical to values,which are conserving by nature. World War I exascerbated the tendency toward the immediate within education, leaving at the war's end, the educational movers and shakers so unsure of their collective values that it made a new order impossible to achieve. The intellectuals who had generated social ideas prior to the war turned, after 1919, toward individual regeneration through the glorification of the "pygmy world of private piety," or in the other direction, to Communism, and its policy of total social control.

Randolph Bourne, who would die in the world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918, had experienced the kind of loss of faith a religious undergoes on observing the white clay of his idol's feet. On a grander scale, that metaphor can be be applied to an entire generation of thinkers who found, not a new world order or a "Promised Land" emerging from World War I, but despair, confusion and a

preoccupation with self. With only a little exaggeration, it is fair to say that after the war the ideal of The Promise of American Life, to be achieved through the reformation of American education, was an idea whose time had come and gone. The truly progressive educational schemes, like the Gary Plan, lost their ways in political bickering. While the desire to emphasize the arts, along with the exhaltation of self expression rather than collective culture, compromised both Croly's and Dewey's vision of a democratic American culture.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER II

1. Sherman Paul, Randolph Bourne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 11.
2. Ibid., 6-14.
3. Randolph Bourne, "In a Schoolroom," NR, I (November 7, 1914): 23.
4. Ibid., 23.
5. Ibid., 23.
6. Ibid., 24.
7. Ibid., 24.
8. Quoted in S. Alexander Rippa, editor, Industrial Ideas in America, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1969), 296.
9. For a concise and invaluable discussion of educational reform after the Civil War see Lawrence Cremin's, The Transformation of the School (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), Part I.
10. Cremin, Transformation of the School, 58-59.
11. Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery (New York: Mitchell Kenerly, 1914), 16.
12. Richard Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 362-364.
13. John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillian, 1916), 43.
14. Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American Life, 364.
15. Dewey, Democracy and Education, 1-2, 10, 127.
16. Croly, PAL, 418.
17. Nation, CII(1916), 480-1.

18. John Dewey, "American Education and Culture," NR, VII (July 1, 1916): 215.

19. Ibid., 215.

20. Ibid., 215, 216.

21. Ibid., 216.

22. Ibid., 216.

23. Ibid., 216, 217.

24. William R. Chanery, "Adulterated Education," NR, IV (October 23, 1915): 304

25. Cremin, Transformation of the School, 157.

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27. Randolph Bourne, "Schools in Gary," NR, II(March 27, 1915): 198.

28. Randolph Bourne, The Gary Schools (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), 5.

29. Bourne, "Schools in Gary," 1918.

30. Ibid., 199.

31. Randolph Bourne, "Communities for Children," NR, II (April 3, 1915): 233.

32. Ibid., 233.

33. Bourne, "Schools in Gary," 198.

34. Bourne, "Communities for Children," 233-234.

35. Ibid, 233.

36. Cremin, Transformation of the School, 155-156.

37. Bourne, "Communities for Children," 234.

38. Ibid., 234.

39. Randolph Bourne, "Really Public Schools," NR, II (April 10, 1915): 25.

40. Ibid., 259-261.

41. Else Ueland, "The Teacher and the Gary Plan," NR, VII (July 1, 1916): 219-221.

42. Bourne, "Really Public Schools", 259.

43. Alice Barrows Fernandez, "The Meaning of the Wirt Plan," NR, VII(July 1, 1916): 223.

44. Randolph Bourne, "Education as Living," NR, VIII (August 5, 1916): 10-12.

45. Lippmann, "Notes for a Biography", 250.

46. Cremin, Transformation of the School, 179-183.

47. Eric Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952), 28.

48. John Dewey, "Morals and the Conduct of States," NR, VIV (March 23, 1918): 234.

49. Randolph Bourne, "Twilight of Idols," The Seven Arts, II (October, 1917): 688-702. Also, War and the Intellectuals; Essays by Randolph Bourne (New York: Harper Tourchbooks, 1964), 54.

50. Ibid., 55.

51. Ibid., 55-57.

52. Ibid., 59.

53. Ibid., 59-60.

54. Ibid., 60-61.

55. Ibid., 61-62.

56. William James when asked to characterize the writing style of John Dewey said, "It is damnable. You might even say Goddamnable!"

CHAPTER III

WHAT'S IN A PAGODA?

The call for the new education in the pages of the New Republic became more strident after the war. The pace of educational experimentation was accelerating, creating hundreds of small progressive schools by the beginning of World War II. These schools were nourished by the continued coverage of magazines like the New Republic. In this explosion of educational experimentation, the dangers of excess and misunderstanding of the true nature of the new education as envisioned by Dewey, Croly and Bourne became more likely. After the World War I, the general inclination for reform became institutionalized. In 1919, the Progressive Education Association was established under the leadership of Charles Eliot, and later John Dewey. This organization attempted to disseminate progressive ideas to parents and teachers throughout America. Also, Teachers College at Columbia became more and more influential in determining educational points of view for the progressive movement, injecting second generation interpretations of Dewey, and fostering more specifically

psychological approaches to education.

In 1922, Dewey penned a series of articles, for the New Republic which seemed designed to clarify the position of the new education, while decrying the failure of enthusiastic practitioners to adhere to the proper course. "Education as a Religion" was Dewey's attempt to balance the traditional American faith in education with the practical realization that too often education didn't do for the child what Americans believed education was supposed to do. Dewey whimsically posited that someday a man who realized that he had not learned to concentrate, or had lost his scientific curiosity, would be able to "bring suit against the community which subjected him to such injuries through its educational agencies."[1] Dewey believed that the ability of the school to produce what American educational pretentions claimed fell so far short that society should "have legal remedies against schools and teachers who send out into life citizens lacking the capacity and desires to be good citizens."[2]

The problem was that schools and teachers had too many rationalizations for failure. When a child left school ignorant, educationists could fall back on the saw of stupidity or laziness. When success was achieved by a student it was because the school had done its job, but when a student failed to learn the school simply shrugged its shoulders claiming intrinsic defects.[3] The danger in

that logic was that schooling, which was supposed to be an art based on science, was actually admitting that intelligence and the formation of character were accidental. Even more insidious to Dewey was the scapegoat of "free will." Here was the ultimate excuse of education for its dismal performance. "A shifting of our responsibilities to some unknown mysterious power whose force is greater than our own."[4]

The fact for Dewey was that even in 1922, after a quarter century of educational research, American schooling lacked the scientific knowledge to control the child's ability to learn. And yet, education was at that very moment dogmatizing its faith in the new educational methods and practices which were failing to achieve the desired results. "A faith becomes insincere and credulity injurious," Dewey wrote, "only when aspirations and credence are converted into dogmatic assertion."[5] Worship whether of the old education or new should not become dogmatic. Education could certainly be a faith, but one without superstition and based on science. "Without science this religion is bound to become formal, hypocritical and, in the end, a mass of dogmas called pedagogy and a mass of ritualistic exercises called school administration."[6]

Dewey was even more specific in his complaint in "Education as Engineering." Surveying the educational

scene Dewey wrote, "The school system represents not thinking but the domination of thought by the inertia of immemorial customs."[7] Education as generally conceived was the result of "hand me down" culture which contained no elements of the scientific method. Habit was the scourge of education. What procedures and concepts the new education was providing, Dewey thought, should be viewed as grist for the experimental mill, not as new laws of education. Experimentation should lead to criticism of education not to standardization.[8] What Dewey had observed though was the adoption of these "new conceptions" of education into a dogmatic system, even though there was "at present no art of educational engineering." Experimentation which would provide the "concrete materials" for a new education had to precede the establishment of a new system of education. "Let it not be supposed that there is really any advance in the science of education merely because there is technical improvement ... such 'science' only rationalizes old customery education while improving it in minor details."[9]

Dewey thought that the new art of education would be achieved only after a vast body of scientific knowledge had been accumulated. Education was suffering from a "premature science of education." Experimentation was becoming more of a disservice than an avenue to the new order of education. Indeed, practitioners were terming

"science" what was really the old habit of education in disguise. Just because the idea of "discipline" had been replaced by the concept of "inner motivation" did not mean progress had been made.[10]

What was needed were educational pioneers who through endless experimentation and through the use of their creative imagination would build the body of knowledge on which, someday, the new education would rest. Instead, Dewey observed educationists who wanted to be "scientifically up to date," applying the new techniques to the "old ways" leaving the new education attempting to be artful in advance of experience.[11]

In the final article of the series, "Education as Politics," Dewey struck a still current theme. He thought that technology had vastly increased the horizons of the individual's world. People were being asked to make judgements on matters far beyond their ordinary experience. Thus, an ongoing jockeying for the blessing of public opinion had created an age of "bunk and hokum." Dewey believed that individuals were being too easily swayed in their beliefs because they lacked the critical facility to discriminate.[12] That such a condition had arisen was the fault of education. Dewey wrote, "Our schooling does not educate, if by education be meant a trained habit of discriminating inquiry and discriminating belief, the ability to look beneath a floating surface to detect the

conditions that fix the contour of the surface, and the forces which create its waves and drifts."[13]

Even worse, the school fostered the acceptance of "bunk and hokum" by refusing to acknowledge social ills. If a child entered the adult world knowing only what he had learned in school about social affairs, he would be in a condition of "acquired and artificial innocence."[14] This could be avoided, of course, if schools became places where judgement was suspended, skepticism acknowledged, and evidence and observation were encouraged.[15] Then, Dewey believed, schools would become truly dangerous and more interesting places. "The outposts of a humane civilization."[16]

Like Dewey, Croly too was aware of the need for these educational outposts of a humane civilization, and over the years the New Republic provided coverage of the ongoing experimentation in schools which would build Dewey's body of scientific knowledge. Still, there was concern mixed with a bit of awe over the way in which the "new concepts" of education were filtering into the general curricula of American schools. A letter writer in 1924 captured the mystification which many Americans were experiencing:

> Sir: What odd threads are woven into the pattern of our amazing up-to-the-minute education? What a bizarre and polychrome fabric must be this Joseph's coat for Democracy! Let us hope that it may be serviceable if not beautiful-reasonably

> soft, firm and warm, without too many loose threads, frayed edges, harsh and unlovely patches.

After listing a catalogue of courses offered by a nearby school, the writer continued:

> The accident of the alphabet is responsible for some queer educational sandwiches ... Biology, for example, is found between automobiles and blueprints, psychology between plumbing and pulp making, sociology between show card writing and stenography, while history is flanked by heating and home ventiliation and home decoration. The eclectic minded ... will perhaps seek "multum in parvo" by enrolling for "Lumber and its uses."[17]

"What do children do in an 'experimental' school? Are they just wandering about at will 'being happy' as one critic complained, are they wasting precious time on the latest psychological fad, are they - last horror of all - being experimented on?"[18]

The children in the more famous experimental schools of the first quarter of the twentieth century were busy becoming juvenile artists, seeking to overcome the repression of an authoritarian society. These children and their teachers were looking for new and imaginative ways of experiencing and expressing reality. They were not searching for the means of social regeneration, but for the path of private fulfillment in a world corrupted by the precepts of decaying cultures. "Everything is perfect, coming from the hands of the creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man," Rousseau had written in The Emile.[19] But, the Rosseauian insights that Dewey had incorporated in his social reformism seemed the only element of interest to the pedagogues after World War I. The function of education as the cohesive element of a society bent on reforming itself continually was lost in the wake of individual fulfillment without regard to society. As Lawrence Cremin noted, the new educational experimenters "expounded one part of what progressive

education had formerly meant into its sole meaning." The new education became a fad and an outlet for the two preoccupations of the post-war era, psychology and expressionism.[20]

The rebellion against the standards of the old education was only one skirmish in the larger revolution against the knowledge on which man had rested his understanding of the world for two thousand years. America, having no breadth of tradition, was ripe for the adoption of a "new art," "new physchology," "new education," the newness originating from the release of people's repressed and oppressed feelings. New York City became the seed bed of new ideas. Greenwich Village with its growing population of artists, writers and aesthetes provided the intellectual stimulation for the decade of the twenties.

Prior to the Great War, the new intelligentsia could usually be found on Thursday nights in Mabel Dodge's apartment at 23 Fifth Avenue, overlooking Washington Square. There Mabel, lounging in white silk pajamas surrounded by white walls, treading white carpets, gathered the thoughtful and the thoughtless of a generation. Walter Lippmann, Big Bill Heywood, John Reed, Hutchins Hapgood, A. A. Brill and Carl Van Vechten, to name only a few, wrestled with the weighty import of psychoanalysis, labor unions, functionalism in architecture, self-expression in education

and the importance of free love.[21]

All areas of social life, it was thought, must be freed. In 1913, the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory Show introduced New Yorkers to modern art. Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase created a reaction of outrage which thrilled the "Villagers." The structure of art had been broken. Color and shape could now be given free reign. Art could be anything as long as it was a genuine expression of an individual's reality. Similar responses were generated by the "new music" and the "new dance." Charles Ives and Isadora Duncan were the Devil's offspring for the atonal, and the free expression within their work. Igor Stravinsky and Vaslav Nijinsky at the Paris premier of their ballet Le Sacre du Printemps experienced the "typical" reaction to the new art by the public. Carl Van Vechthen wrote that the performance was greeted by,

> cat-calls and hisses ... then ensued a battery of screams, countered by a foil of applause. We warred over art (some of us thought it was and some thought it wasn't) .... Some forty of the protestants were forced out of the theater but that did not quell the disturbances. The lights in the auditorium were turned fully on but the noise continued ... the disjoined ravings of a mob of angry men and women.[22]

Richard Strauss's opera Salome had its American premier at the Metropolitan in January, 1907. An outraged J. P. Morgan, after its first performance, bought out the entire production for the good of society.[23] Literature too, experienced a loosening up. Theodore Drieser, Gertrude

Stein, Sherwood Anderson and Frank Norris paved the way for Fitzgerald, Dos Passos and Hemingway. In poetry, e.e. cummings and Ezra Pound discarded traditional syntax and punctuation. As the War ended the Negro was discovered as an artist. The Harlem renaissance would generate black art, poetry and literature, and a succession of Negro musical revues on Broadway, the first in 1921, called Shuffle Along.[24] "The custodians of orthodoxy seemed to be in retreat," Alfred Kazin wrote, "and a profligate culture refreshed itself on the legend of a rakish youth and the amusements of a new literature."[25]

Equally dramatic was the discovery early in the twentieth century of sex. If art, music, literature and poetry could be freed from the restraints of culture and tradition, then why not sexual expression too? In 1909, while Herbert Croly was putting the finishing touches on The Promise of American Life, Sigmund Freud visited the United States. At Clark University Freud spoke to G. Stanley Hall, William James, Carl Jung, A. A. Brill, Franz Boaz and Lyman Wells among many, and sparked an affair with psychology in America that endures to this day.

Just as surely as American intellectuals had given themselves over to modern art, they found in psychology the vocabulary and the rationalization for all human behavior. "If there is anything you do not understand in human life, consult the works of Dr. Freud," Sherwood Anderson

announced.[26] With the approach of World War I, Greenwich Villagers began to sprinkle their conversation with words like "suppressed," "sublimation," "unconscious" and "id." Intellectual trendsetters, like Floyd Dell and Mabel Dodge, could now describe to themselves and, most importantly, to others their deepest sexual thoughts in a way free from the value judgements of traditional language. Science was on the side of freedom.

Freudianism found its way, almost immediately, into books on education. In 1919, William White's The Mental Hygiene of the Child and William Lay's The Child's Unconscious Mind were published. These were followed in 1922 by H. Crichton-Miller's The New Psychology and the Teacher, Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education by Osker Pfister, and Psychoanalysis in the Classroom by George Green.[27] The teacher's task now was to release the tremendous artistic potential within the individual child by means of motivation and appeals to the child's unconscious. This, it was believed, would sublimate the child's instinctual nature into a positive expression. How far all of this seems from the outpouring of social concern voiced by John Dewey and Herbert Croly. The new education had taken a turn, spawned, in Irving Babbitt's phrase, by the "ill-begotten children of Rousseau." Dewey's longed for body of scientific knowledge which would one day build a new science of education had been side-tracked by the

selfish concerns of the "splendid drunken twenties." Psychology and expressionism in education had found their way into the pages of the New Republic as early as 1915 in an article on Caroline Pratt's Play School in Greenwich Village.

The article, "The Play School: An Experiment," was written by Pratt's mentor, Helen Marot. Marot, a Quaker activist from Philadelphia, had gathered about her socialists, Single-Taxers and anarchists in her job as a librarian. Caroline Pratt was drawn into this group by her dissatisfaction with traditional schooling, and by Marot's encouragement that new ways could be developed to educate children. Pratt's insight for her school came one afternoon as she watched a child playing with trains and blocks. She observed that all of the essential truths of life could evolve from a child's spontaneous play. Armed with that belief, she traveled to New York City and set up a school at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Twelfth Streets in Greenwich Village. Her original intention had been to work with tenement children, but instead she found her students to be the offspring of artists, writers, and intellectual hangers-on who had flocked to the Village.[28] Pratt's school, based on the child's freedom of expression and on play, was well received by the Villagers. As Carl Van Vechten observed of the Village population, "somebody who has really done something is too much for the Villagers ...

Admiration mixed with awe describes them."[29]

In her article, Marot described the school as a "laboratory for children and teachers ... and for the community." The driving force of the institution was the child's "curiosity about things" which would lead to experiment and discovery.[30] Children were routinely set loose at work-benches with "full-sized tools." There they could create their own toys, and ultimately, create a "minature of the adult world." Since the school used "no repressive measures" the children were free to "interpret their environment." This interpretation was necessary because Pratt had found that older children, seven or eight years old, had already "made blind adjustments to their environments; that besides working out many relationships on false bases, they have established the mental habit of accepting much of their environment without trying to understand it."[31] Therefore, Pratt wanted students to come to her at four-years old "because it is realized that the most deeply graven impressions of life come from experiences of the very early years."[32]

Several times a week, the children would go "exploring" about New York City. No reason was necessary for these investigations, rather the "adventure" of the expedition was what was important. "What the children see on their expedition is not turned by the teacher on their return to the school into a lesson, nor is its uses

dictated by her. The school endowed by the patience of science,leaves all that to the children."[33] That rather startling statement was followed by an even more revealing admission:

> The teacher could not possibly give [the children] the sense of [the expedition's] value or purpose which they get in their own experimenting. Also; in breaking in on their sequence of thought she might weaken their own efforts at concentration; there is no reason why material relevant to a teacher's plan of a day's work should be relevant to the thought processes of each small child. A little later on we learn to manage irrelevant matter without its affecting so seriously our immediate interests.[34]

It is clear that for Pratt and Marot, the only valuable knowledge was that which came from the child's immediate and spontaneous experiences. Like Rousseau, they seemed to believe that out of the child's natural goodness and curiosity all needed understanding would arise, unless the child was tainted by the influences of adult repression.

For Pratt a child's play was the ultimate realization of art. Great art, she thought, arose from the freedom from repression that only children can experience in the fullest. Play and art were viewed as psychological impulses which must be released. Society had traditionally thwarted both of those impulses in children. Now, however, psychology had given Pratt the tools to undo the repression of the hand of man through play. "I have not the space to speak of the relation ... between the art and the play

impulse; of the increase of rhythm that comes out in the children's dancing as their play impulse is freed."[35]

Gone from these educationists were concerns about society and its reform. Now, schooling was for the individual, but not the individual mind, but for the individual's psyche, his emotions. "The belief is that the socialization of children is advanced if the instincts of this early period for individual effort is given the fullest opportunity for development."[36]

It is interesting to note that for Dewey, Croly and Bourne the old education had been viewed as an artifical evil, as undemocratic, as impractical or simply out of date. But, for Caroline Pratt and those who would follow her the old education was "repressive." This nod toward Freudianism illustrates a continued misunderstanding of Freud in America where repression has always been a synonym for bad or evil. A. A. Brill, the founder of American psychoanalysis, observed that in America the idea of repression was eagerly adopted, perhaps because of our revolutionary background, and that it was from the first misunderstood and misapplied.[37] Repression, if it has any moral value, is a good that prohibits human beings from acting like the lesser animals. Yet, in America, and especially in educational circles, the preoccupation with unfettering the child's impulses and instincts became the fashion for the later progressives. That, in effect,

compromised both the quest for social betterment and certainly the Western tradition of rationality which was now thought to be outmoded and of little use. Helen Marot concluded her article on Pratt's Play School by invoking the new god of American education:

> The findings of the Freud school of psychologists are poignant reminders that extensive education is not a substitute for intensive: that the socialization of the children ... depends on a scientific regard for the desires of the individual child .... These experiments in intensive education will assume an important place in the community as the effects of repression-the accompaniment of the present extensive education-during the most impressionable period of life are realized.[38]

3

Herbert Croly's dream of a reformed social and economic community was in no way enhanced by the educational experimentation of the 1920's. As Alfred Kazin observed, "nothing was so dead in 1920 as the crusading spirit of 1910."[39] Likewise, Dewey's goal of a transformed America had been compromised by a society that had turned away from the reformation of collective culture to individual psychological gratification where even "maladjustment became a sign of grace."[40]

Dewey had set the standard for what American education could be in a scientific, industrial democracy. He had posited the progressive teacher as the moral agent of an era which could lead to the fulfillment of America's promise. He had even created the milieu for that enterprise in the experimental school.[41] He displayed a romanticism and optimism about America's possibilities that promised a limitless future for mankind. Dewey sought to redefine the ways in which person to person relationships established and endured amidst the blossoming technology of the twentieth century.[42] He refused to acknowledge that there existed within man an evil which brings human beings always to tragedy. The kind of evil that resulted in the type of tragedy that had been the focus of man's spiritual and poetic expression for two thousand years. Dewey's

laboriously crafted books and his polemical journalism in the New Republic were always directed at man the good, man the solver of whatever problems lay between him and a more perfect society. His occasional dark night of the soul, for surely he had them, must have been dark indeed. The spectical of his educational theories being misunderstood, misapplied, mangled, but always in his name, must have tested his reservoir of strength and optimism as he neared seventy at the close of the 1920's.

When Harold Rugg, architect turned educationist, would write of the "child-centered" school in 1929, it was announcing an accomplished fact in experimental circles. The emphasis on the child's emotional and psychological development, the release of the boundless creative and artistic energy of childhood, the pseudo-Platonic belief that children could gain knowledge about the world through analysis of their personal experiences, all represented a kind of social dissatisfaction fermented by individuals who must have been ill at ease with themselves and their world.[43]

Alvin Johnson, a New Republic editor, wrote a profile of the Walden School, one of the progenitors of the decade's flaws. This 1923 article exemplified how uncritically the magazine approached the new twist within the new education. Johnson waxed, if not eloquent, certainly enthusiastically about the efforts of Margret

Naumberg's school. Naumberg, a socialist, a follower of Dewey and Marie Montessori, had gone to Europe before the war to study with Carl Jung. She began the decade of the twenties with a three-year stint on the couch of A. A. Brill. Her immersion in psychoanalysis led to the establishment of her school at 34 West 68th Street in New York City.

"As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined" was the maxim that had guided the old education. At the Walden school, the object would be to bend the twig not at all. "The children must have a chance to grow straight. This means that self-expression and self-direction must be the basis of the educational scheme."[44] Naumberg observed children being standardized, the insidious result of "socialization." Schooling's main effect had been the pruning away of undesirable traits, but this would not be the way at Walden.

While working with older children than Caroline Pratt, Naumberg envisioned her school someday taking children at six months in order for the child to have every opportunity to follow his "own natural interests." Johnson wrote proudly, "Naturally there is no room in Miss Naumberg's scheme of instruction for the textbook, the set task, the rigid standard."[45] Instead, the teacher acted as moderator of conflicting personalities. She "wove work and play together ... the Walden teacher often leads but never

drives .... The child must want to be led before the teacher's function can be exercised."[46]

The children of the school disciplined themselves and each other. Johnson thought it most like the adult world. There was no "goose step" to be found in the Walden School.[47] The purpose of the school was to find the way to fulfill each child's personality without "mutilation," "subordination," or "docility."[48] Johnson concluded by writing that "such experiments ... teach us how to bring up children adapted to social life without having been subjected to the mutilations and distortions that make social life barren and diseased."[49]

In February, 1924, the New Republic reported on yet another innovation. The Dalton Plan was conceived by Helen Parkhurst out of bits of theory garnered from the Montessori method and the work of Frederick Burk of the California State Normal School. In this article by Agnes De Lima, the social worker activist, she characterized Parkhurt's method as "providing adequate individual instruction" for large classes.[50] This innovation was generally one of method. It provided for the now familiar individualization of instruction by packets or worksheets, allowing each student to work at his own pace. "Except for certain group activities,the children work entirely as individuals, and each child is set free to cover the required ground at whatever hours and at whatever pace

seems best to him."[51]

Classrooms were called laboratories, each contained a teacher or "Specialist" and all the equipment needed for study in that particular area. But De Lima was concerned over the neutrality of the Plan in regard to curriculum. "The Dalton Plan is revolutionary as to method," she wrote, "not as to content or aim of instruction."[52] De Lima was worried that "Unless the curriculum is carefully adjusted to the child's needs the plan might become the emptiest ... of process." Reform of methodology was not enough. The neutrality of the Dalton Plan needed to be obviated in order to "associate itself with reform that goes beyond method."[53] For De Lima the Dalton Plan needed to align itself with the "best psychology" which she understood to mean reform of a political and social nature.[54]

These experimental schools which were attempting to become the "outposts of a humane civilization" were, as Lawrence Cremin noted, often arenas where "license began to pass for liberty, planlessness for spontaneity, recalcitrance for individuality, obfuscation for art and chaos for education."[55] In contrast to that dismal assessment the educational laboratory at Teachers College was interesting for its genuine pedegogical efforts. In 1924 the New Republic profiled the Lincoln School, giving its usual glowing appraisal for things different. Elizabeth Vincent observed that the common point among all

progressive schools was "They have abandoned the old education in the same practical, humanitarian spirit, and turned away from the system to the child."[56]

The Lincoln School correctly saw its purpose as determining what was a useful education. The faculty was trying to find out "what the child needs to know." Toward that end, Vincent detailed the four cardinal points of the Lincoln School philosophy. Foremost, was the idea that education had no value if it was not immediately important to the child. Education could not "merge into his permanent usable experience" unless it was intrinsically important.[57]

The second and third points were that education should not be broken into artifical compartments, and that learning should occur through all the senses, not only through the eyes and ears. Real life experience thus encountered and incorporated into the child would constitute learning. Fourth, "actual freedom and responsibility, actual group-life ... are the only sound training for making self-controlled, responsible public-spirited citizens of a democratic country."[58]

These were points of educational theory which John Dewey could certainly accept: the emphasis on the child's interests, learning by doing, education as a microcosm of the larger society, and training for social responsibility. Even more to Dewey's liking would have been the recognition

by the Lincoln School staff that they were experimenting. A genuine attempt was being made to compile data on how children learn. "The Lincoln School treads carefully, if fearlessly on strange ground," Vincent wrote.[59] Lincoln even attempted follow-up studies of former students.

Inter-disciplinary courses were established, Latin and Greek were replaced by French, and attempts were made to incorporate the manual arts, all while giving the child the sufficient training needed to pass the newly established College Boards. There were even a number of traditional characteristics retained in the methodology. Drill was acknowledged as a useful tool, if not over done. A rather startling admission, considering the era, was that Lincoln School "does not carry the interest doctrine so far that its pupils learn nothing they do not want to."[60]

Elizabeth Vincent's article detailed a noble attempt to do the kind of experimentation John Dewey had in mind. Here was a school which had not dogmatized its approach to education. Within the rather broad outline of Dewey's thought they were searching for the best ways, the optimum techniques, the most beneficial curriculum for America's children. But, even at Lincoln School in 1924 there was an example of the dreaded attempt to be "scientifically up to date." In one of the most fascinating and revealing statements encountered in preparation for this study, Elizabeth Vincent all too well described the position of

the newest member of the Lincoln School Staff:

> In one room of the Lincoln School, therefore, like a court astrologer in his tower, sits the school psychologist surrounded by her mystic data.[61]

Here in a clarion voice is the true perception of psychology, and by extension science, by the public of the 1920's It is psychology as seen by Greenwich Villagers looking for a panacea for their thwarted self-expression. Science, experienced as a religion, which might somehow alter that "human condition" traditional education had said was immutable. Education which had traditionally sought to enliven the intellect, and science which had emerged from myth to be grounded on observation, had, in one sentence, been aligned with the irrational and superstitious. The very qualities mankind had strived two thousand years to overcome.

The New Republic rarely entertained opposing opinions in its discussion of reform of primary and secondary education. However, two early articles show a divergence of opinion about the content of a new education. In 1916 Elizabeth Sergeant posed a question in the title of her article. She asked, "What's in a Pagoda?"[62] The answer was the Phebe Anna Thorne Open Air Model School for Girls. Established by Bryn Mawr College, the function of the school was to prepare young ladies for entry into that prestigtious institution. What was unique was that every effort had been made to utilize the new techniques of

education, but as applied to a classical curriculum. Sergeant observed, "it is not the classical subject matter that should be modified but the method by which that subject matter is acquired."[63]

The school's director,"a disciple of Dr.Dewey," had created the "warm" and "friendly" atmosphere of a progressive school, all for girls studying Latin and Greek, advanced mathematics and history. The students governed the school. Teachers floated about the classroom-sized pagoda buildings, rather than being ensconsed at their desks. There was a de-emphasis on textbooks and on writing. Yet, wrote Sergeant, "In this school intellectual curiosity plays like lightning around the room, runs like quicksilver through the veins of every scholar."[64]

This "college in embryo" was unique among the experimental schools covered by the New Republic. It was a de-politicized version of John Dewey. The Phebe Anna Thorne Open Air Model School for Girls was able to sidestep the criticism of anti-intellectualism, and of wasting children's time, charges which most of the other experimental schools fell victim.

The other item of divergence from the New Republic's party line toward the new education was a marvelously entertaining reaction to Abraham Flexner's book, A Modern School. The article was written by Edith Hamilton, a well known classicist and scholar. She wrote with charm and

erudition about her understanding of modern schooling. She observed that "This new school ... is to teach what is 'real' and dismiss what is 'formal.'" The schools of the Flexner type, she imagined, would be filled with "children, never dull and never lazy, gaining spontaneously ... an insight into the world they are living in."[65]

However, as "schoolmistress" Hamilton reflected on Mr. Flexner's book she "found a certain mistrust of the implications of this new education" stirring within her. Trying to understand this apprehension she recalled several articles of Randolph Bourne, a fellow-traveler of Flexner's, who also called for a reduction of the formal in education. After another persual of The Modern School Hamilton realized that Flexner's school would be a place "where dullness has been banished, where discipline is no more, and attention is as involuntary as at a moving-picture show. In brief then, the keynote of the new education is interest, not discipline; the aim is efficiency, not knowledge."[66] Hamilton then observed that Flexner and Bourne were probably more concerned about the education of boys. Boys who after an "interesting" school career will be appropriately disciplined by the world of work. But what of the girls? "When, therefore, a girl leaves the school of interesting activity what will life do for her comparable to what it will do for the boy in requiring concentration, accuracy, ... and the power to do hard work?"[67] To

solve that dilemma Hamilton begged, "let us keep the old education for the girls until the new school for the boys has proved that French demands as much clear thinking as Latin. Give up mathematics for the boys but let us keep it for the girls." And,of course, everyone knew that girls should possess discipline, so it might be wise, Hamilton thought, to keep that for the girls too.[68]

Hamilton's article, written in 1917, concluded with the admonition that "before the gates of excellence the high gods have placed sweat." A quantity Edith Hamilton thought particularly lacking in the modern school.[69] Whatever the new education might lack,it would never lack the attention of the New Republic. The lower education would always be of interest to the magazine, but the last half of the 1920's brought a shift of emphasis toward the reform of higher education.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER III

1. John Dewey, "Education as a Religion," NR, XXXII (September 13, 1922): 63.
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3. Ibid., 63.
4. Ibid., 63.
5. Ibid., 64.
6. Ibid., 66.
7. John Dewey, "Education as Engineering," NR, XXXII (September 20, 1922): 89.
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9. Ibid., 90.
10. Ibid., 90, 91
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12. John Dewey, "Education as Politics," NR, XXXII (October 4, 1922): 139.
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14. Ibid., 140.
15. Ibid., 141.
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17. J.I.Wyer, letter, NR, XXXVIII (February 27, 1924): 20.
18. Agnes De Lima, "Education in the Making," NR, XL (November 19, 1924): 303.
19. Alexander Rippa, Educational Ideas in America (New York: David McKay Co., 1969), 64.

20. Cremin, The Transformation of the Schools, 201, 203.

21. Bruce Kellner, Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 68,71,117.

22. Ibid., 73-74.

23. Donald Jay Groud, A Short History of Opera (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 453.

24. Kellner, Carl Van Vechten, 195-223.

25. Alfred Kazin, On Native Ground (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1942): 151.

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27. Cremin, The Transformation of the Schools, 208-209.

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29. Kellner, Carl Van Vechten, 70.

30. Helen Marot, "The Play School: An Experiment," NR, V (November 6, 1915): 15.

31. Ibid., 16.

32. Ibid., 16.

33. Ibid., 16.

34. Ibid., 16.

35. Ibid., 17.

36. Ibid., 17.

37. Nathan Hale Jr., History of Psychoanalysis in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971): 393-94.

38. Marot, "The Play School: An Experiment", 17

39. Kazin, On Native Ground, 152.

40. Ibid., 152.

41. Ibid., 113.

42. Ibid., 113-116.

43. Christopher Lasch writes of the low self-esteem exhibited by many of the reformers in The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963, chapter 5.

44. Alvin Johnson, "The Walden School," NR, XXXVII (February 13, 1924): 330.

45. Ibid., 134.

46. Ibid., 134.

47. Ibid., 135.

48. Ibid., 135.

49. Ibid., 135.

50. Agnes De Lima, "The Dalton Plan," NR, XXXVII (February 13, 1924): 308.

51. Ibid., 308.

52. Ibid., 309.

53. Ibid., 309.

54. Ibid., 309.

55. Cremin, The Transformation of the Schools, 207.

56. Elizabeth Vincent, "The Lincoln School," NR, XXXVII (February 20, 1924): 330.

57. Ibid., 331.

58. Ibid., 331.

59. Ibid., 332.

60. Ibid., 332.

61. Ibid., 332.

62. Elizebbeth Shepley Sergeant, "What's in a Pagoda?" NR, VI (April 1, 1916): 234.

63. Ibid., 234.

64. Ibid., 234.

65. Edith Hamilton, "Interesting Schools," NR, X (February 10, 1917): 45.

66. Ibid., 45.

67. Ibid., 45.

68. Ibid., 46.

69. Ibid., 46.

CHAPTER IV

COLLEGE AS IT MIGHT BE

While the tenor of discussion of primary and secondary education in the New Republic was usually radical and optimistic, the predicament of higher education brought out the "Jeremiahs" among the pedagogic pundits. Especially bleak after World War I was the future of the American liberal arts college. The fast-paced development of technical schools and professional schools made the existence of such a quaint institution as the liberal arts college problematic at best and outright un-American and an inefficient waste of time at worst. The thrust of the New Republic's coverage of higher education was the scramble by proponents of liberal education to justify and make relevant their kind of education for twentieth-century America. And, while the coverage was far-reaching, it was never able to rise above the pessimistic feeling that a losing battle was being waged. Words like "doom" and "despair," and "archaic" and "medieval" occur repeatedly in articles by writers wanting desperately for the reader to be convinced of the need for liberal colleges in the United States. That the "lady doth protest too much"

quality of the writing gave away the general feeling of a hopeless cause does not make the efforts of these scholarly and humanistic men any less touching. And, for those, including this writer, who believe that liberal learning is still the hallmark of education and the desired goal for a democratic society, the record of the fight for liberal education in the pages of the New Republic is a sad and frustrating chapter in the history of American education.

But, before examining those writings there is a crucial and surprising question that must be asked. Why was the New Republic lending support to the cause of liberal education? This, after all, was the magazine with the fervent pragmatic point of view. This magazine eschewed the formal within education, doubted the Aristotelian division of knowledge, and abhorred all things tainted by European aristocracy. This same New Republic was doing all it could to save the institution of the liberal arts college! Why?

Several answers suggest themselves. It may be as simple as the fact that Croly and Lippmann were Harvard men, and, of course, John Dewey was an academic through and through. The old college tie of liberal education, even for pragmatists, can collar a man for life. A more realistic answer to the question of the New Republic's support of liberal education can be found in the ongoing quest for an American culture which is the theme of American educational thought. The reform of liberal

education had crystalized around Charles Eliot's institution of the elective system at Harvard beginning in 1869. This much copied loosening of the grip of the classical curriculum was eagerly accepted and immediately abused by students and institutions alike. While this new system did free the student it effectively destroyed the basic premise of liberal education, the presentation of the unity of knowledge. Suddenly it seemed that college degrees became an accounting of a student's electives which might, or might not, give him the unity of knowledge as long as his credits tallyed the required number of units for graduation. This failure to retain the concept of the unity of all knowledge was further side-tracked by the emergence of the social and physical sciences, the creation of self-serving academic departments, and the explosion of extra-curricular activities, especially college athletics with its student camp followers, "the rah-rah boys." Certainly by the 1920's in the New Republic the liberal arts colleges felt themselves in disarray. As conservators of culture, they had lost their culture. And, men like Croly and Dewey, who wanted to create an American culture, felt the danger in the demise of the one institution which could one day provide the Americanized form of Western culture which must emerge if the democracy was to thrive.

Consequently, the New Republic was deeply involved in the reshaping of the liberal arts college. These schools were the places where the new American culture, in

all of its unity, could emerge. It is to the New Republic's credit that it did not capitulate to the professional schools and trade schools as the sole future of American higher education. By the 1920s, even the New Republic was not willing to let liberal arts colleges become the souless forms of social efficiency which was the legacy of the pragmatists. Van Wyck Brooks was unsparing in his observations written in 1918 capturing the growing disenchantment of intellectuals with pragmatism:

> (The pragmatists) say that our blood is too mixed and our aims too diverse for us to achieve a national faith in the European sense. But what are they able to suggest as a substitute? We have no American culture, no; but we have an "American spirit," .... We have none of the unity that gives life, no; but we have almost succumbed to the uniformity that destroys it. Are they pleased with this? ... have they not proved themselves bankrupt in solutions?[1]

and,

> Pragmatism has failed us, I say, because it has attempted to fill the place that only a national poetry can adequately fill.[2]

and,

> Their own vein of poetry, golden in William James, silver in John Dewey, ran too thin ... their whole training had gone to make them students of the existing fact. Unable as they were to alter the level of human vision, all they could do was to take men on the level where they actually found them .... What it actually did was to unfold ... a human nature that was either detached from the sources of life or contented with a very primitive range of needs and desires.[3]

The ideal of the liberal arts college was to grant man the vision and the poetic imagination that transcended

primitive experience. If an American culture was to emerge, it must take into account the dry efficiency of the Yankee trader and the soaring metaphysics of Europe and Christianity. These two extremes that Brooks described as "lowbrow" and "highbrow," the two sides of the American coin, the two extremes of American personality, were the elements that must be merged into the "middlebrow" which would then become a genuine American culture and the object of the American liberal arts college.

The modern American liberal arts college in 1925 was searching for the "American Totality" of Walt Whitman. Searching for a way to retain the wisdom of the ages without becoming anti-democratic, searching for a way to understand the modern world without becoming cynical and dry, searching for a means of incorporating new knowledge without losing its wholeness and unity, searching for the liberating value of knowing a body of knowledge without being dogmatic. To paraphrase Van Wyck Brooks, "America's coming of age" could be a be achieved only to the degree that the American liberal arts college was able to solve the dilemma of its purpose, making the ideal of the liberally educated person the goal for a democratic society.

The commentator was firm in his assessment of the college generation. "To have a good time is the great ambition of this group, and the 'good' may often be written with a question mark." He had surveyed one hundred college students to find out what they knew about the "outstanding figures in the history of the human race," and to discover their acquaintance with the "outstanding facts of present-day civilization."[4] He knew they were having a good time because they certainly were not studying. In this 1926 survey for the New Republic, only 5 per cent of the one-hundred college students could correctly identify Plato. Thirteen per cent knew Pestalozzi, however, most thought him an Italian painter of the fourteenth century. Solon was thought to be a "Hebrew dancer" by one good time scholar, while Cromwell was identified as an American prohibitionist by another. No student was able to name "several Russian writers" and only four could name five Italian painters. When asked, "What do you consider the most useful recent inventions?" answers included the automobile, radio, radium, insulin and the "Marcelle Waves."[5]

The invention of a method for curling women's hair proved no salvation in the desperate effort by liberal arts colleges to re-establish control over higher education. Nor was the cause forwarded by the first major article on

higher learning in the New Republic. In 1918, the mysterious Philonous wrote "The Need for a Modern University." He believed that universities had, for too long, been controlled by an outdated body of knowledge, by theological dogma, and a moral prudishness that barred the excellent scholarship of the likes of John Fiske and C. S. Peirce from the university classroom.[6]

What was needed were "intellectual pioneers" who would engage in research regardless of where it might lead, or whom it might offend, that was the professor's job. In fact, there should be no students and no classes in the modern university. An up-to-date university should have only laboratories where professors, aided by their young assistants could delve into the mysteries of the universe.[7] Obviously, if there were no classes there could be no lecture system. A greater evil had never been concocted because, "Lecturing unconsciously begets an easy omniscience and satisfaction with apparent or rhetorical truths .... No man no matter how critically minded, can stand up before a class and refrain from saying more than he knows."[8]

The best place for a professor to say more than he knew was in the newly established "survey course." Designed to meet the criticisms brought on by the elective system, the survey course was to give the student an overview of an area, the big picture of a field, or, even more grandiose, provide the student with an umbrella for

the unity of all knowledge. An editorial in a 1921 New Republic took the survey course to task, especially those in American Literature. The survey course, said the writer, was not education. "It contains no element of training in investigation, reasoning and drawing conclusions. The way in which the study of literature can be made a matter of training is to send the student to the sources, the original material, and hold him responsible for his conclusions."[9] The survey course could not provide real education, only an acquaintance with ideas. "It is so much easier and superficially more rewarding, instead of reading one play of Shakespeare to read about all the plays, including a conjectural life of the author, an appreciation of his dramatic art, and some views of the Elizabethan stage."[10]

As the 1920s dawned the crucial problems facing liberal education were the declining interest of the student population in liberal learning, and the problem of how to preserve and convey the liberal tradition in education.

A dilemma throughout the 1920's was the question of who should go to college. The liberal college had never been meant for all people, although there were those who thought it should be. With the pressure to be more "democratic" the liberal arts colleges now catered to all students only to find that many did not want the education offered by the liberal tradition. Professional schools and

trade schools began to drain off large numbers of liberal arts students, especially after the sophomore year. Colleges began to experiment with various admission policies. President Ernest M. Hopkins of Dartmouth College wanted "an aristocracy of brains made up of men intellectually alert and intellectually eager, to whom increasingly, the opportunities of higher education ought to be restricted, if democracy is to become a quality product rather than simply a quanitity one, and if excellence and effectiveness are to displace the mediocrity towards which democracy has such a tendency to skid."[11] Hopkins also decried those who attened college under false pretenses, looking for a good time or for social prestige.[12]

Stanford experimented with a special admission procedure for women based on "scholarship," "personality," "energy," "judgment," "reliability" and a half-dozen other characteristics thought desirable.[13] Some colleges began to recognize that intellectual activity was not all they had to offer. "For the majority," William Orton wrote, "an appreciation of the quality of life and thought is not to be reached by intellectual activity alone." He believed that the colleges should gather students by offering arts and crafts, music and drama which would build the "process of appreciation."[14]

In "College Minds in the Making," H. N. MacCracken wrote, "College freshmen differ widely ... some have been

blessed or cursed with experimental school freedom, others have been crammed with knowledge .... What is essential is the difference in motive leading them to college ... the educator can no more prescribe the same policy towards all."[15] All of the discussion of admission requirements, or the problems of meeting differing students' needs was a reflection of the continuing uncertainty within the liberal arts institutions as to its purpose. The first real analysis of the problems of the liberal colleges appeared in an "Educational Supplement" in the New Republic in October, 1922.

The theme of the issue was "The American College and Its Curriculum." The lead article was written by one of the New Republic's favorite commentators on things collegiate, Alexander Meiklejohn, the President of Amherst College. His article on "The Unity of the Curriculum" faced the "hesitation" among educationists to once again assert the unity of all knowledge.[16] As Meiklejohn understood it, the elective system had brought about the disconnection of knowledge separating it into a multitude of parts. The question then was, "How shall we make out a few disconnected fragments of a knowledge a unified understanding of knowldege as a whole, as a single thing."[17] There were two possible answers.

First, there was no unity of knowledge. It was a myth. It was nonsense. For those who held this view, a student simply gained command of the knowledge within a

specific and unconnected field of thought. This view, that knowledge had no unity, was the result of the emergence of the natural sciences. Science's whole purpose was to break things down into its constituents, rarely dwelling on the relationships among parts, but busily studying each individual part. Meiklejohn was quick to point out that Charles Eliot, President of Harvard, who had instigated the elective system, was a chemist by training. "The modes of thought of his powerful leadership were predominately the mechanical forms of chemical analysis."[18]

The second possible answer to the question of the unity of knowledge was that it was not myth or nonsense, but that it represented the greatest intellectual challenge of civilization. Just because one scheme of unified knowledge had broken down did not mean there was no unity within knowledge. Meiklejohn wrote, "Teaching, liberal teaching, is just the attempt to put our students at work upon that task. They have a world to find, to make. It is our task to set them to it."[19]

Meiklejohn was not enamoured of the survey course as a way to present unified knowledge. He saw its value as "slight." Rather than a survey course, he would "suggest the analytic course which finds a method of thought and gives the student practice in it." And, even more bluntly, "An introductory course should lead a student not so much by content as by problems." He favored an introductory "methods" course for all freshmen, and a concluding

"summation" course for all seniors. "A liberal course of study must be a study in philosophy .... Our seniors must be made to attempt the task of having a philosophy."[19]

The President of Amherst concluded on a sharp note. "We, the college teachers, have no philosophy ... we have been trained in the elective system ... we are devotees of 'subjects.'" Then, stingingly, "If teachers think in fragments, they cannot teach in wholes. If we mean to give a liberal education, then we must be ourselves a group of liberally educated men." Alexander Meiklejohn closed his article with, "We do not teach so much by what we say as by the way we think."[21]

In "The Problem of Higher Education," H. W. Chase recited the litany of woes of the liberal college. There was no such thing as a mental discipline even though that was the foundation of liberal education. Culture was not fixed even though liberal education had always thought it so. The elective curriculum had degenerated into an accounting system for granting degrees. "We must come to some clear conception of what knowledge is," pleaded Chase. He seemed as much in the dark as anyone.[22]

H. B. Alexander in "The College at the Cross Roads," was in even greater distress. "The grim fact about ... our colleges is that they reflect the energetic aimlessness of a society in which organization has outrun intelligence."[23] College had for Alexander sunk into "administration." "Certainly the most dismal spectacle offered by the modern

college is the astute official who looks upon each new idea with a shrewd, "'What is he after?' 'Whose back is this scratching?'"[24]

The sour grapes and disillusionment continued in this 1922 New Republic Educational Supplement with A. W. Vernon's complaint that if the colleges were going to survive then the colleges must rid themselves of three types of students. First, those who "are prostituting their college courses to a preparation for material or professional success."[25] A second scourge was the fraternity and sorority student drawn to college by the allure of following the football team around and indulging in bouts of alcoholism. And, finally, the third type of student who must be eliminated from the college ranks, those who came to be disciplined by the institution because their parents were unable to control them.[26]

At this point, the 1922 reader of the New Republic must have been sunk in despair over the future of American higher education. An attempt was made to counter that feeling with "Hope for the College." This piece of "pollyannaism" referred to the "good health" of the colleges, implied that the elective system was just fine,and that the level of instruction was "nothing to be ashamed of."[27] This writer's theme seemed to be that colleges were always in trouble, always at crisis points, with rebellious and inappropriate student bodies. Therefore, let no one be alarmed over what was really the

normal condition of higher education.

The litany of concern resumed in the next article with the accusation of "intellectual vagrancy," the observation that "a student who studies is queer!" and that today's students view education like a suit of clothes to be bought off the rack. Consqeuently, all was lost. The life of the mind had been sacrificed on the altar of the drunken twenties.[28]

A more legitimate analysis for creating a liberal curriculum was John Erskine's description of "General Honors at Columbia."[29] He began by noting the loss of "intellectual tradition" which had occurred with the adoption of the elective system. Consequently, the student had no body of common knowledge to study. Erskine recognized the advantages of electives, but realized that they were individual advantages fostered in isolation and mental privacy.[30]

To offset "this centrifugal tendency in the elective system" Columbia instituted a two-year comprehensive course of study that would be common to all. Begun in 1920, the General Honors Curriculum was based on the reading of the great books of Western thought, one book a week for two years. Weekly meetings were held to discuss the current selection. At the end of each year, an examination was given where the students were "encouraged to use all the books ... on some assigned topic."[31] The course was open to juniors and seniors.

For freshmen, Columbia set up a compulsory course in Contemporary Civilization administered by the departments of philosophy, history, economics and the allied social sciences. The course, Erskine said, would give the student "a wealth of ideas and suggestions." This, thought Erskine, would offset the narrowing of the mind so evident to him among the students and faculties of the 1920s.[32]

In 1925, Erskine was responsible for another fine article. In "The Liberal College", he attempted to define its function and importance to American society.[33] Erskine began by pointing out that many colleges called themselves "liberal." He had noticed that the greater the pressure on an institution to turn "professional" the more it trumpeted its liberality. Yet, some colleges had stood firm. "They teach nothing which would help a man or woman earn a living."

For Erskine, "To be liberal, education must not only be free from that kind of slavery which comes from too close attention to making one's living, but it must also prepare one to take an essential part in the humane efforts of life."[34] There were "liberal" colleges that Erskine had observed teaching the "classics" which graduated students ignorant of those classics, and worse, hating them. "The liberal college may have to be defined partly in terms of the subjects it teaches,but partly also in terms of its way of teaching them - perhaps most of all in terms of what it does not teach."[35]

The greatest threat to liberal education, to education in general, was the total preoccupation with "our own moment in time." Erskine wrote:

> We have made, therefore, a heroic effort in our college education to be contemporary. To live only in the moment, to imagine only one's own place, was once thought to be the fate of the stupid. We have made it the ideal of the educated. Contemporary literature, contemporary science, contemporary society ... How liberal it sounds to be up-to-date .... I personally have little doubt, that no college is liberal which trains its students to identify the excellent or the important exclusively with the contemporary.[36]

It was the task of liberal education to prejudice the student toward the wise. In the crowded curriculum of the 1920s, Erskine saw the preoccupation with temporary things. Those things should be left behind, he thought. Erskine presented liberal education at its most noble, and most heroic.

In its 1926, "College Supplement" the emphasis was once again on the woes of the liberal college. Titled "Remaking the American College," much space was devoted to advocating Columbia style survey and orientation courses,[37] to explaining the need for extensive extra-curricular activities for the less academically gifted,[38] and to how intercollegiate athletics was going to be the salvation of American higher education.[39] The articles were uniformly uninteresting and consistently failed to grapple with the genuine issues confronting American colleges. Two articles dealt with football, while another lauded fraternities and "rah-rah boys." This depressing performance was followed a

year later by the ultimate in discouragement, "The Doom of the Arts College."

The doom of the arts college was the "sad story of matricide."[40] The thesis was very simple. As various specialized colleges had developed, arising out of courses originally within the arts curriculum, the impact had been to "gut" the liberal arts program. Professional curriculums, whether of law or medicine or engineering, had "virtually decided that a liberal education in the original Arts College sense, cannot be made a prerequisite."[41] With the professional school chopping at the liberal arts college from the top, and the trade schools attaching from the sides, a new danger had arisen by 1927; attacking from below, the Junior College. "If the junior college program is carried out to its logical conclusion, our boys and girls will go to high school at home for two additional years and then to universities, if at all, as juniors."[42]

The article concluded with a call for all trade and professional schools to require a four-year liberal arts prerequisite for their programs. But, it seemed unlikely that either the writer, or his readers, believed that a real possibility in the midst of the "good-time" twenties.

3

Experiments in higher education during the 1920's were designed to satisfy every element within the society. Reed College restructured and up-dated the liberal arts curriculum, Antioch College showed higher education could work hand in hand with business providing workers for an industrial society, and the New School for Social Research was an attempt, headed by Herbert Croly, to give society the social "experts" to create the new world order. All three institutions were covered by the New Republic.

In June, 1918, Herbert Croly wrote an article calling for "A School of Social Research."[43] Modeled on the French Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, Croly envisioned an "independent school dedicated exclusively to the study of the subject matter of modern society."[44] The institution would grant no degrees, its students would be mature adults, its curriculum would include all of the social sciences. Croly believed that the research carried on at the New School would help "humanize" industry, the backbone of the new America.

The project included John Dewey, Charles Beard, freshly resigned from Columbia, and James Harvey Robinson. Dorothy Straight again provided money for a Croly project.[45] The school opened in 1919, with one-hundred students. Faculty included Thorstein Veblen, Horace Kallen and Emily James.[46] With so many strong personalities

involved in the project, the school soon came to disarray. Croly wanted an emphasis on a Labor Research Bureau, others wanted to reproduce academia, while a third group saw the school as an Adult Education Center. In 1923, the school was taken over by Alvin Johnson, a New Republic editor who reinvigorated the New School for Social Research within the adult education concept.[47]

A 1926 editorial statement on the school in the New Republic noted that twelve-hundred students were currently enrolled. The most popular course in 1926 was psychology, followed by literature, drama and art. The New Republic concluded by lauding the intelligence of the "lay public" for their wise course selections.[48]

What the New School was to do for the social sciences and the labor movement, Antioch College was going to do for industry. "The Antioch Plan is the coordination of technical and cultural education so that while the student is becoming fitted for work in a profession or other vocation, he or she at the same time will be preparing for effective citizenship."[49] This plan which made every student work his way through college, was devised by Arthur E. Morgan, an engineer. Morgan and a group of Ohio businessmen began the school because college students often "soak up ... miscellaneous culture," while in trade schools students got no culture at all. "Why not ... combine life and college?"[50]

Each student spent five weeks in the classroom and five weeks at work. Morgan envisioned educating small businessmen for engineering, machine shop management, and journalism, and education. At Antioch, students learned about life. The life of work and the life of study were one in the same for Morgan. "The best cultural values," he said, "are gained not when we escape from industry, but when we make it express our highest purpose.[51]

Industry was not the highest purpose of Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Established in 1910, Reed, under its President Richard Scholz, created an undergraduate curriculum that was viewed as a single course. "It is a course, not an aggregation of courses which add up in the mathematics of the registrar to a total of which the real value is hypothetical."[52] The first year the course stressed the "fundamentals of effective contemporary living," while the second year emphasized history and literature. The student the third and fourth year selected an area of concentration based on what his first two years had taught him.

Reed incorporated the meat of many liberal arts proposals. Its "course" was similar to Columbia's Honor Program. Also, Reed encouraged individual treatment of students, and instituted a colloquium the senior year similar to Alexander Meiklejohn's proposal. Reed also overcame one of the growing problems in colleges, that of departmental rivalry. Its single course concept fostered

interdisciplinary cooperation among the faculty creating "instruction by discussion and consent."[53]

In 1929, the New Republic sponsored an essay contest among college students on "College as it Might Be." Several enteries were printed. But, one, by Douglas Orr, seemed to catch both the hope and the frustration of the plight of the modern American college. Without realizing it, Mr. Orr, a recent graduate of Swarthmore, characterized fifteen years of thought about American higher education in the New Republic:

> For a time we had the free-elective system, the academic automat.

and,

> Formerly the college had an ideal of humane culture .... But we don't now; our educational ideal has been lost in the modern shuffle. And we have nothing to put in its place.

and,

> It is impossible now for the faculty to prescribe a curriculum ... but it seems that a philosophy of education cannot consist of the mere statement that the college shall offer courses. Is there some thing or things in the realm of the mind or of knowledge of which it can be said that all students ought to have or ought to acquire it? Are some of life's values so important ... that all of us ought to achieve them? If we can determine what those values are ... then we have a basis for a philosophy of liberal education.[54]

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER IV

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CHAPTER V

THERE'S MY EDUCATION

> From cradle to grave this problem of running order through chaos, direction through space, discipline through freedom, unity through multiplicity, has always been,and must always be, the task of education.
>
> Henry Adams

> When reason sleeps, the monster wakes.
>
> Goya

The article began, "This morning, quite by chance, I happened on my education. I was looking for something entirely different ... when I opened a drawer and there was my education." A neatly bundled sheaf of papers and notebooks lay in the drawer. "This is Mathilda's doing, I thought to myself, and smiled. Mathilda has a respect for education never having had any." The writer waxed nostalgic as he reverently thumbed the yellowing pages of his youth. "The value of an education," he said, "is that it gives you sound opinions ... maxims, one might call them, which ... are crutches for the weak minded. But it is an art to walk with crutches: only a trained mind can do it."[1] The long road from high expectations in society's ability to transform itself by creating a new education

had, by the end of the 1920s, become the cynicism of jaded esthetes who disparaged,not only themselves, but even those innocents, like Mathilda, who believed that education could make a person more intelligent, more humane, and even more American. Or, as in the case of John Dewey and Boyd Bode, educational reformers, who observed with dismay at the close of the decade the great intent of their ideas altered by the quest for expediency. The thoughtless application of their work had produced a mutated and stunted strain of educational reform. No one characterized the failings of the new education more devastatingly than Richard Hofstadter when he observed:

> Far from conceiving the mediocre, reluctant, or incapable student as an obstacle or special problem in a school system devoted to educating the interested, the capable, and the gifted, American educators entered upon a crusade to exalt the academically uninterested or ungifted child into a kind of culture-hero. They were not content to say that the realities of American social life had made it necessary to compromise with the ideal of education as the development of formal learning and intellectual capacity. Instead, they militantly proclaimed that such education was archaic and futile and that the nobelest end of a truly democratic system of education was to meet the child's immediate interests by offering him a series of immediate utilities.[2]

The writer in the New Republic continued his remarks on education by observing, "I believe I am indebted to my education .... Without it I should not know what to think on a variety of subjects about which I hold intelligent opinions." And, besides, "It is the only education I have got, and it takes up very little room in the drawer."[3]

Indeed, at the close of the 1920's, the question of what to think about the new education became a very real dilemma. Some were satisfied with their learning, others like Dewey and Bode voiced the kind of concern reflected in Hofstadter's criticism of the new education.

The New Republic, unabashed in its support of the new education, paused during the summer of 1930, for a look back. How had this new concept of education fared? How had the experiment progressed? Ironically, the fortunes of the new education closely mirrored the rise and decline of the New Republic itself.

The magazine had peaked early. The war years represented not only its moment of greatest influence and prestige, but its largest circulation to that time. In 1918, the New Republic had almost 28,000 readers. By 1920, subscriptions had fallen to 21,477. The drama and controversy generated by the war could not be equaled week by week during the good time twenties. Finally, in 1924, subscriptions sank to 13,970. The New Republic was deeply in debt.[4] The magazine filed for bankruptcy. It was reorganized with a board of directors which included John Dewey.

Herbert Croly also never equaled his early success as editor of the most influential liberal, political journal in the United States. After the war Croly turned away from politics and social reform to religion. He tied his hoped for "reborn Christianity" to the Asian mystic

Geroges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, and his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.[5] Gurdjieff and his usually female and rich followers, were the rage of the 1920s. A series of "managing editors" were brought into the organization as Croly became more and more detached from the daily operation of the New Republic. Tragically, in quick succession in 1918-1919, Willard Straight, Randolph Bourne, and Walter Weyl died. Between 1920-26, Walter Lippmann, Francis Hackett, Phillip Littell and Alvin Johnson all quit the magazine. Then in the fall of 1928, Croly suffered a massive stroke that left him partially paralyzed. He died in 1930, at the age of 60.[6]

In The Promise of American Life Croly had given a blueprint for a future America. That "promise" had meshed with the thought of John Dewey. Together they presented a view of a new world which inspired a generation to action. But the war, had destroyed the movement. For Croly and his magazine, for education and its theorists, it was different after the war. Psychologically, man confronted his id and was frightened. Artsically, man destroyed his forms and molds and ran amok. In literature, he lost his innocence, and grew old. Spiritually, he doubted his God, and was alone. So much hope, so much faith had existed before the war that a new, free and democratic society could emerge. The twisted, hunched figure of Randolph Bourne loomed like a ghost over the preceedings of the 1920s. He was the lost hope; the missed opportunities destroyed by the war. A

genius tardily recognized. The lonely voice in the wilderness. John Dos Passos touched on the charisma and symbolism of Bourne in his book 1919.

> Randolph Bourne
> came as an inhabitant of this earth ...
> At Columbia he studied with John Dewey ...
> wrote a book on the Gary schools ...
> and bought himself a black cape ...
> Bourne seized with feverish intensity on
> the ideas then going around at Columbia,
> he picked rosy glasses out of the
> turgid jumble of John Dewey's
> teaching through which he saw clear
> and sharp
> the shining capitol of reformed democracy
>
> --- --- ---
>
> If any man has a ghost
> Bourne has a ghost,
> A tiny twisted unscared ghost in a black cloak
> hopping along the grimy old brick and brownstone
> streets still left in downtown New York,
> crying out in a shrill soundless giggle:
> War is the health of the state.[7]

Education in the New Republic had become something of a ghost too, by 1930. Like Bourne, ideas had died, but there was a haunting still of missed chances and unfulfilled promises.

2

The task was, at the very least, a fissiparous proposition; assess the impact of the new education, its successes and failures, during the last decade. "The New Education Ten Years After," was a six part series which ran in the New Republic during June and July of 1930. The series proved an appropriate summation of what the magazine had attempted to accomplish educationally under the leadership of Herbert Croly and the omnipresence of John Dewey. The new education received, at best, poor reviews. Remembering that only fifteen years earlier, Randolph Bourne, had written about the old education as rigid, mechanical, a structure devoid of life and relevancy, now, the commentators decried a system which was no system, a program which allowed the tyranny of the child to reign. The arc of the pendulum was completed.

Boyd Bode, no enemy of educational reform, began the series with "Apprenticeship or Freedom." He noted that American education was subject to "fads and panaceas." While education had become scornful of the past it still remained painfully conventional and almost completely inarticulate about the future.[8]

Bode recognized two tendencies in the new education. One was the need to make education a preparation for life, and the other was the emphasis on the free development of the child. Both tendencies claimed to use the scientific

method, and both relied on psychology. Both of these attitudes rejected traditional education as mechanical and conforming, robbing the child of his free development and imposing a cultural straight jacket. Bode observed that there existed a conflict between these two attitudes. One, the "doctrine of specific objectives," held that education should cater to the specific needs of particular interest groups in preparing children for their future life as farmers, shopkeepers, salesman, or housewives. The competing "doctrine of freedom" maintained that education should meet only the need of childhood, cater only to children's needs to be children.[9] "There is reason to think," wrote Bode, "that this assault on 'scientific organization' has gone much too far." Bode observed that education had embarked on a road which eschewed traditional culture and spiritual values. Consequently, it was of extreme importance that education emphasize "liberated intelligence" which rose above the competing doctrines of reformed education.[10]

The problem with the new education was that "we do not know how to chart a new course." Education had deluded itself by believing that it had broken with the past while, in reality, it was "at bottom as conventional as buttons on the sleeves of a man's coat." Education cannot be seen simply as life preparation, or as freeing childhood of adult intrusions. True new education was education which was a "reorganization of personal experience and a

reinterpretation of beliefs in the direction of an individual philosopy of life."[11]

To think, however, of education in the light of the doctrine of specific objectives, where subject matter was determined by its vocational usefulness, struck Bode as indefensible. "A more poverty-stricken conception of education than this it would be difficult to imagine."[12] The doctrine of the child's freedom seemed inimical to any kind of adult organization of education. "Initiative on the part of the teacher is suppressed on the ground that purpose must not be 'imposed' on pupils from without, and one is left to wonder why a teacher is needed at all." And then Bode struck at the jugular of the new education. "The ideal of discipline through rigorous, systematic thinking and through allegiance to standards of taste and conduct is surrendered because the mob will have none of these things. Education is betrayed in its own household."[13]

For Bode, the flaws of the new education were summed up by the young pupil who inquired of his teacher, "Do we have to do what we want to do today?" And, also by the poet who wrote:

> Me this uncharted freedom tires;
> I feel the weight of chance desires.

Bode concluded his essay by darkly reminding his readers that many of the 19th century Romanticists, satiated on freedom, found "escape from the weight of chance desires by joining the Catholic church."[14]

The problem with the new education was that it had no program or sense of direction. The "material" for a new education existed. Science was fast delivering invaluable data into the hands of educationists, but until the new education chose to place its emphasis on "intelligence" little good could be expected from these ten years of educational reform.[15]

In the second installment of "The New Education Ten Years After," Joseph K. Hart wrote on "Judging Our Progressive Schools." Professor Hart began by reviewing the litany of sins against the old education, arguing effectively for the need for a new education which would deal with the problems of an industrial, urban society.[16]

However, the new education had presented as many problems as it had solved. Hart sampled opinions on the new education which he took to be representative of the general attitude. "We find the girls from progressive schools," one teacher said, "usually more interested in their work, more self-reliant, and occasionally more creative ... though often their creativeness seems a very ephemeral thing, superficially emotional and erratic .... Many ... are more difficult to manage ... freedom seems to have gone to their heads."[17] New education students were continually characterized as "problem persons, immature, unintegrated and maladjusted." Hart then quoted a letter from a concerned mother wondering about the best kind of school to send her son. She analyzed how her friend's

children had done in progressive schools:

> Jerry Caldwell expresses his personality so completely that he refuses to eat with the rest of the family ... George Downey showed much artistic talent before he went to the school; now he's a precocious dilletante ... Bruce Meriman is as sharp as a whip, and he can be nice when he wants to be, but he is so utterly undisciplined and self-willed that he's a general nuisance .... John Shermand is so over intellectualized and emotionally unbalanced that he's just not of this world.[18]

Hart concluded his article by observing that the new education had been successful in reacting against the tyranny of the old schooling, but now the time had come for the new education to produce positive results. Teachers must come out of hiding and be willing models for their students, chaos must be abandoned as an educational technique, and educationists must realize that their graduates must be able to integrate into society when schooling is completed. He closed with the rather frightening thought that the new education would take one hundred years to perfect.[19]

The New Republic, the staunchest supporter of the new education, presented the third installment of "The New Education Ten Years After," with an essay by Francis Mitchell Froelicher. He minced no words on the excesses of progressive education. The whole arena of education was beset by frauds and charlatans. The abuse of such words as "freedom" and "creativity" alone discredited much that the reform movement was trying to accomplish.[20] "Freedom" had rightly come to be associated with "noise, impertinence, unsavory conduct and slipshod work." While "creativity"

had spawned an outpouring of student poetry which was a "travesty on scholarship."[21] To this list Frolicher added other abused and misunderstood terms; "educational research, educational psychology, and the science of education." These were terms used by "credulous pseudo-scientists" who seemed never to have opened their dictionaries.[22]

He was adamant. "There is no science of education, nor will any science emerge miraculously through statistics compiled from questionnaires or standardized tests." Scientific advance would come from biology and medicine, and it was a waste of time for normal school graduates to engage in pseudo-scientific research to the neglect of their teaching or study of their individual fields.[23]

Froelicher advanced three criticisms against the term "progressive education." First, the term progressive had an exclusive conotation to it, snobbery was involved. Second, it had become associated with the superficial and the emotional. And, third, there was a group of educators who advertised themselves as "progressive" who were "hawking their own particular wares as panaceas." They were exploiting the children.[24]

Froelicher concluded his essay with the admonition that "the technique of teaching is important, but it should forever be made secondary to a thorough background of information."[25] Otherwise it would be impossible for parents to have faith in their schools. Otherwise

confusion would reign, which unfortunately was the case in 1930.[26]

In "The Crux of Progressive Education," Margaret Naumberg, of Walden School fame, presented a muddled, emotional, even nonsensical defense of her longed for "integrated society." While, it is somewhat difficult to fathom, Naumberg's article seemed to be obsessed with avoiding over socialization. "If life, more life, is to be the core of education, school organization and curriculum must also be shifted to a subordinate place .... We can scarcely expect to realize how deeply our group ways separate us from the crystallized individualism of Europe."[27]

In response to John Dewey's theory of individualism, Naumberg wrote, "Is this the best that the future holds for an ... integrated individualism? A dull and gloomy picture, this technological utopia, to those of us who still hope for a richer and socially balanced individualism."[28]

"The crux of education," Naumberg said, "lies ... in the balance of individual and group values." Americans must avoid their "herd instinct and develop an individualism which would be socially responsive." This approach, she seemed to believe, would melt all national boundaries, if applied world-wide. "Geography will be lost in this world of tomorrow."[29]

While Margaret Naumberg might be accused of living

in a fantasy world, Caroline Pratt, founder of the Play School, remained true to the tenets of experimental education. Her article, "Two Basic Principles of Education," espoused the same education she had advocated in 1915 in the New Republic: education is an "experiencing enterprise", and subject matter should emerge from the child's experience.[30]

Pratt methodically outlined her school's program, as discussed in Chapter III. She then acknowledged criticisms of her school. To the charge that she failed to prepare students for the next higher grade level, she responded:

> I believe we must face this failure and refuse to be influenced by it, or we shall gradually fail of our purpose and become formal schools .... We have something much more important to do than fit children for the next higher grade. We have proposed a revolution in education. Shall we face about at the first sign of criticism? Perhaps it would be better for us to go down than to make these compromises.[31]

And, on the off-chance that the reader doubted Pratt's seriousness of purpose and her dedication to radical experience-based education, she concluded by observing; "the more and the longer children are exposed to a [formal] subject matter program" the less capable they will be of understanding their own lives and their world.[32] She seemed to be saying that knowledge bred ignorance. Both, Pratt and Naumberg, epitomized the very problems that Bode, Hart and Froelicher associated with the new education.

But, the last word in this New Republic series, "The New Education Ten Years After" belonged to John Dewey. At 71 he was not only the father of the new education, but had, at every step of the way, unflinchingly commented on how best to create the new schools for the new world which he and Croly had envisioned. His thinking had from the first issue of the New Republic, by way of Randolph Bourne, given substance and form to the whole educational experiment which had gripped America since the turn of the century. His essay posed the dilemma he observed in the new education in its title, "How Much Freedom in the New Schools?"

John Dewey noted that the new education was a various and sprawling enterprise by 1930. The most obvious characterization of the progressive schools was that they were a reaction against traditional education, the evils of which were undeniable. But, this rather negative impetus within the new education had produced a one-sided reaction which must be rectified, an over-emphasis on the child.[33] Dewey believed that progressive educators in their zeal to throw out the formalism of traditional education had failed to replace the subject matter they had discarded.

> But rebellion against formal studies and lessons can be effectively completed only through the development of new subject matter, as well organized as was the old - indeed better organized in any vital sense of the word organization - but having an intimate and developing relation to the experience of those in school.[34]

A second concern of Dewey's was the retreat of the teacher. Again, he realized that the zeal to obviate adult imposition in education had, unfortunately, resulted in child imposition in the learning process. "What is wanted," Dewey wrote, "is to get away from every mode of personal dictation .... When the emphasis falls upon having experiences that are educationally worthwhile ... pupils and teachers alike participate."[35]

Concerned over the misuse of freedom in many progressive schools, Dewey returned to subject matter again. When genuine control and direction of experience existed within a school, he believed "rational freedom" would emerge. But, that would occur only to the degree that a new body of knowledge had been developed.[36] "Progressive education must have a much larger, more expansive and adaptable body of materials and activities, developed through constant study of the conditions and methods favorable to the development ... of understanding."[37]

Dewey closed with his recurring plea for more research, more data, and more experimentation. But, John Dewey was very much aware that America, and schooling in America, had undergone enormous change since the days of the Gary Plan, and Schools for To-Morrow. And his assessment, combined with those of his younger colleagues in the pages of the New Republic that summer of 1930, reflected uncertainty, dismay, disappointment, and even

disgust over the state of educational reform. The bright world which they had wanted to bring about seemed no closer that summer of Croly's death. Yet, these men and women had changed the world, only it had not changed as promised.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER V

1. Gobbo, "There's My Education," NR,XLV (February 10, 1926): 324.
2. Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American Life, 328.
3. Gobbo, "There's my Education," 325.
4. Levy, Life of Herbert Croly, 433.
5. Ibid., 460-61.
6. Ibid., 460-61.
7. John Dos Passoss, 1919 (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1932), 103-106.
8. B. H. Bode, "Apprenticeship of Freedom," NR, LXIII (June 4, 1930): 61.
9. Ibid., 61.
10. Ibid., 62.
11. Ibid., 62.
12. Ibid., 63.
13. Ibid., 63.
14. Ibid., 64.
15. Ibid., 64.
16. Joseph K. Hart, "Our Progressive Schools," NR, LXIII (June 11, 1930): 93.
17. Ibid., 94.
18. Ibid., 95.
19. Ibid., 95-96.
20. Francis Mitchell Froelicher, "A Program for Progressive Schools," NR, LXIII (June 18, 1930): 123.

21. Ibid., 123.

22. Ibid., 123.

23. Ibid., 123.

24. Ibid., 123.

25. Ibid., 124.

26. Ibid., 125.

27. Margaret Naumberg, "The Crux of Progressive Education," NR, LXIII (June 23, 1930): 145.

28. Ibid., 146.

29. Ibid., 146.

30. Caroline Pratt, "Two Basic Principles of Education," NR, LXIII (July 2, 1930): 172.

31. Ibid., 174.

32. Ibid., 175.

33. John Dewey, "How Much Freedom in the New Schools?," NR, LXIII (July 9, 1930): 204.

34. Ibid., 205.

35. Ibid., 205.

36. Ibid., 205.

37. Ibid., 206.

CONCLUSION

> If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.
>
> Lincoln

This study has relied heavily on the words of the New Republic. It is important that the magazine be allowed to speak for itself. What it had to say about education seems now neither subtle or profound. The New Republic was a chronicle for a relatively small and select group of people who had great ambition for American education. The heady optimism that pervaded the early years generates,even today, a nostalgia for lost idealism. There is excitement in Randolph Bourne's description of the Gary Plan, and one tends to believe that this system just might create the new order, the industrial utopia. Likewise, Dewey's early writing for the magazine reflected concerns about our culture, and how we could achieve it. Even today there is hope, wistful hope that it is true.

Every generation reads the documents of their fathers and thinks them naive. But, there is more than that in operation here. This writer, throughout his research, was reminded of a spring day in 1969, when he and

several thousand other young people gathered in Centinial Park in Nashville, Tennessee. Gathered on a great lawn before the Parthenon, the life-sized reproduction, perfect in every detail, of the most beautiful building ever constructed. From that citadel of Western culture we marched, hand in hand, to protest a war we believed to be unjust to our young minds and bodies. We marched to the state capitol, and gathered about a statue of Andrew Jackson, astride his rampant horse. There surrounding the "hero of the common man" we shouted obscenities at our leaders, our nation and our world. That journey from the temple of Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, to the rule of the mob, the lowest common denominator, is not dissimilar to the journey experienced by those wanting to reshape American education after the turn of the century.

John Dewey, of course, seemed always to have a plyon-like solidity to his personality. But, Croly and Bourne lost nerve and faith, respectively. Croly turned from shrewd political analyst to Indian mysticism, while Bourne zealously preached a gospel of salvation through education only to find his idol, Dewey, had joined camp with the enemy, compromising everything the young believer thought important. The others who made the journey from the tradition of knowledge to the freedom of emotion, like Margaret Naumberg and Caroline Pratt, seemed motivated by unspoken dissatisfactions about life in general.

The changes these people made in education which are reflected in the New Republic, were not the changes they had expected or desired. By 1930, Dewey, Bode, and many others were calling for a serious reassessment of the direction of the new education. One of the saddest circumstances in this study are the articles on the plight of the liberal college. These articles read like love letters written by men who know their suit is hopeless, but refuse to abandon their dreams.

Finally, the spectacle of evaluating the new education ten years later, Naumberg, crazed, Pratt, stubborn, while Bode, Froelicher, Hart and Dewey are saying, it's too much, you've gone to far. The point has been missed! They might almost have said the very thing Randolph Bourne said about the old education fifteen years earlier in volume 1, number 1 of the New Republic:

> Call this thing that goes on in the modern schoolroom schooling if you like, only don't call it education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The analysis of how a particular publication reported the educational scene offers endless possibilities for research. Studies similar to this one on magazines such as the Nation, Harper's Weekly, and the Atlantic Monthly could give further insight into the American journalistic attitude toward education. Continued consideration of the New Republic's educational point of

view in its later years and under other editors also is feasible.

The New Republic devoted a considerable amount of space to the local politics of New York City education, i.e. Boards of Education elections, mayoral positions on education, and local teacher versus administrator conflicts. These too, could be of specialized interest to the educational historian.

This writer was curious about the connection between Herbert Croly's thought and that of John Dewey. The philosophical and political meshing of their thought seems evident from their New Republic articles, however, a full scale study of their intellectual relationship is needed to discover the extent of the Croly-Dewey connection.

While not a direct outgrowth of this study, other areas for possible research include a thorough history of the New School for Social Research, an analysis of the intellectual relationship among John Dewey, William Wirt, Randolph Bourne, and their promotion fo the Gary Plan, and studies of the educational thought of Agnes DeLima and Margaret Naumberg.

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