

EDUCATION AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

A STUDY OF THE PEDAGOGY OF JOHN DEWEY

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LSA - Liberalism and Social Action.

CC - The Child and the Curriculum

SS - The School and Society

DE - Democracy and Education

EE - Experience and Education

ED - The Ethics of Democracy

IDP - The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy (in McDermott 1981)

## PREFACE

John Dewey's work was prolific and polemical and the secondary literature on him is extensive. I have tried in this thesis to use his own writings as much as possible - philosophical and pedagogical texts, articles in journals and book reviews. The only autobiographical source is "From Absolutism to Experimentalism" (1930), a brief account of his early intellectual development. He <sup>also</sup> collaborated with his daughter, Jane, when she wrote a biographical essay on him for Schilpp's book, 'The Philosophy of John Dewey' (1939).

In 1959, a hundred years after his birth, there was a surge in books and articles published throughout the world, celebrating or reappraising his life and work. There seems to be no general consensus about the meaning of everything he said and there is still a flow of reinterpretations being published. His work has been translated into many languages.

I have used a number of books which contain selected articles and extracts from Dewey's work which are seminal to his thinking - *John Dewey on Education*, (1964), edited and with an introduction by Reginald Archibault, published by the University of Chicago Press; *Intelligence in the Modern World - John Dewey's Philosophy*, (1939), edited and with an introduction by Joseph Ratner; *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, (1973 and 1981), edited and with an introduction and commentary by John J. McDermott, published by the University of Chicago Press. ~~Since~~ <sup>she</sup> 1964, Jo Ann Boydston at the University of Southern Illinois has been editing Dewey's complete collected works. They are divided into three parts, *The Early Works*, (1882-1898), *The Middle Works*, (1899-1924), and *The Later Works*, (1925-1953). ~~When finished there will be thirty-seven volumes~~ <sup>she</sup> ~~in all.~~ <sup>began edit up</sup>

## ABSTRACT

John Dewey, the American philosopher and educator, lived from 1859-1952. During his lifetime he became known as one of the leading exponents of American pragmatism and as the 'father' of progressive education. He was a controversial figure in his own time and remains so to-day. This thesis sets out to analyse the reasons why he was blamed for the alleged failure of the state school systems of both countries - in the US in the 1950s and in the UK in the early 1990s.

It appears that the controversy derives not so much from the nature of his pedagogy per se as from its political implications. His pedagogy, if taken to its logical conclusion, would lead to the radical reconstruction of society since it is based on the concept of liberty as effective power to do specific things. This concept is at the core of Dewey's democratic ideal.

The thesis looks at the influences on his early intellectual development and at the ways in which his educational theory was put into practice at the Laboratory School at the turn of the century. It then analyses the ways in which this theory has been adopted and adapted by both progressive and vocational educators.

The thesis draws largely on John Dewey's philosophical and educational writings and on some of the available secondary sources. The research is qualitative and the methodology is literary and philosophical. While the study is essentially historical, an attempt will be made to make a connection between Dewey's educational ideas and educational controversies in Britain to-day.

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The most widely known biography is by George Dykhuisen, *The Life and Mind of John Dewey* (1973). Arthur Wirth has written extensively about Dewey, (1966, 1983 and 1988), with particular reference to vocational and secondary education. In 1991, Robert Westbrook of the University of Rochester, N.Y. <sup>published?</sup> wrote *John Dewey and American Democracy*, a widely acclaimed intellectual biography published by Cornell University. Dewey's early intellectual development is described in detail by Neil Coughlan in his book, *Young John Dewey*, (1975), published by the University of Chicago Press. Richard Bernstein has written an <sup>✓</sup>excellent intellectual biography of Dewey, *"John Dewey"* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967) and has included enlightened chapters about him in his more recent books. These are all mentioned in the bibliography. Articles on Dewey appear regularly in journals such as *"The Journal of Philosophy of Education"*. The Dewey Society based at the University of Illinois works in cooperation with the journal, *"Educational Theory,"* in which there are at least one or two articles each quarter on some aspect of Dewey's work.

In all Dewey's writings he refers only to the male of the species. It is so constant that I decided to ignore it and be politically incorrect. In fact, Dewey fought hard for the suffragettes, believing that women's political enfranchisement was necessary to the democratic movement. He is said to have marched in a suffrage parade unknowingly carrying a banner thrust into his hands which read "Men can vote! Why can't I?"

I have referred throughout to the United States of America as simply America.

In the text, I have referred to some of his writings by the following initials rather than leave the reader to infer the title from the date alone.

AE - From Absolutism to Experimentalism

PM - The Problems of Men

PP - The Public and its Problems

EP ?

## Chapter One

### Introduction.

*"The problem of the relation between individual freedom and collective well-being is to-day urgent and acute, perhaps more so than at any time in the past. The problem of achieving both of these values without the sacrifice of either one is likely to become the dominant problem of civilization for many years to come. The schools have their part to play in working out the solution, and their own chief task is to create a form of community life and organisation in which both of these values are conserved."* (Dewey quoted in Mayhew and Edwards 1936)

During his life and since his death in 1952, there has been continuous dispute about John Dewey's status as a philosopher and educator. When the University of Paris conferred an honorary degree on him in 1930, he was described as the most profound and complete expression of American genius. (Dworkin 1959 p.17) Yet the Oxford philosopher, A.J.Ayer, (1982), saw his contribution to philosophy as negligible. The American philosopher, Richard Rorty, (1979), believes that he is one of the three most important philosophers of the twentieth century while F.A.Hayek (1944 p.19n) dismissed him as "the leading philosopher of American left-wingism." Dewey's pedagogy has inspired teachers across the world and his books have been translated into many languages yet in both Britain and America, his ideas, closely identified with progressive teaching methods, have come under attack. In both countries, progressive education in general and John Dewey in particular have been blamed for the decline of educational standards in schools.

It is probable that Dewey lost the respect of certain philosophers because he was convinced that the purpose of philosophy was to address the problems of society rather than to search for eternal truths. He ignored the fashionable trend towards analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, maintaining that philosophy in America would be lost unless it could "somehow bring to consciousness America's own needs." (Dewey 1917) Addressing those needs, according to Dewey, entailed the transformation of American society. He saw the political status quo in America, not as a representative democracy with government by, for and of the people, but as a society divided by class and privilege, with wealth and power in the hands of the few. One of the consequences of industrialisation in the nineteenth century was the rise of corporate capitalism and the contrast between the rich and the poor was extreme.

\* The Road for a Recovery  
of φ 1917 Middle Worker  
Vol 10.  
p 96

At the end of the century, progressivism arose as a social movement, partly out of the fear that social cohesion was at risk and partly out of a humanitarian desire to address the social inequalities caused both by industrialisation and by constant and increasing immigration. In its demands for 'authentic democracy', a 'new freedom,' or a 'new liberalism,' progressivism signified many different tendencies - political, social and educational, some markedly diverse in their underlying convictions. Whether the quest of these new 'progressives' was for scientific efficiency, humanitarian or educational reform, the overall desire of these people was not to disturb the status quo, a desire reflected in their key concern for more effective and efficient means of social control. Clarence Kariyer (1972) states that it was, without question, a middle-class and conservative movement. Certainly, powerful and influential groups, including businessmen, manufacturers and agriculturalists, were anxious to encourage and sustain America's economic progress. Dewey's involvement in this movement was inspired by his commitment to social change. Thus, in the 1890s, he identified closely with the humanitarian social reformers such as Jane Addams, but despite his initial enthusiasm, he remained on the edge of the movement. Robert Westbrook (1991) places him in the radical wing of progressivism, arguably the most thoroughly democratic of them all. Other historians have argued that he was not even a radical and certainly not a revolutionary. If



revolution means violence, this is true. "I know of no greater fallacy than the claim of those who hold to the dogma of the necessity of brute force that this use will be the method of calling genuine democracy into existence....It requires an unusually credulous faith in the Hegelian dialectic of opposites to think that all of a sudden the use of force by a class will be transmuted into a democratic classless society." (Dewey 1935 LSA in Ratner 1939 p.449 and Kennedy 1950 p.108) The use of violence was contrary to his commitment to the use of 'freed intelligence' as the method of directing change. (ibid)

Dewey's lodestar, "the vision of life for the sake of which the war is being waged," (Berlin 1969) was a participatory democracy, one in which individual freedom and the collective good might both be achieved. It was a moral ideal, a *modus vivendi*, and as such was to be distinguished from the notion of political democracy as a mere form of government. Underpinning this democratic ideal was a liberalism based on a conception of positive freedom which led, he believed, to a just and equitable society. Dewey's commitment to this ideal ran like a thread through all his work, affecting the stand he took on every issue. The means of achieving this end were as fundamental to his thinking as the end itself. It was through the process of critical inquiry, the method at the heart of pragmatic philosophy, that he believed his democratic ideal might be achieved.

Liberalism was the essential bedrock for Dewey's vision of democracy. It enabled the individual to be self-directing, free from oppressive constraints. While Dewey considered liberalism to be the political theory that defined the 'good society,' he became convinced that in order to bring such a society about there had to be a connection between liberal values and a particular economic order, one which was not capitalism. When attached to a *laissez faire* economic system, liberalism brought about an imbalance of power and opportunity between workers and employers which denied Dewey's vision of democracy and led to unbridled individualism and neglect of the common good.

Dewey believed that the conception of freedom was (always) relative to whatever forces happened to be oppressive at any given time or place. In 'Liberalism and Social Action' (1935 LSA) he argued that liberalism meant freedom from chattel slavery, serfdom or dynastic despotic rule. In that it was, in these instances, freedom from constraints, it was what Berlin (1969) calls negative freedom. During the nineteenth century, liberalism had come to mean freedom for entrepreneurial industrialists from the government restraints that had hampered their economic progress. When this 'classical' liberalism was united with a laissez faire economy, the situation arose in which there was a maximum of individual liberties and a minimum of government restraint in the conduct of business. This became so individualistic that the formerly oppressed became the oppressors, and the new oppressed were the working classes - the victims of the industrial revolution. In the face of such "emphatic individualism" it became necessary for the government to intervene to counteract the ill effects that this revolution was having on the working classes; as liberalism was adapted to protect these underprivileged groups, its spirit and meaning changed. "It came surely, if gradually, to be dissociated from the laissez faire creed and to be associated with the use of governmental action for aid to those at economic disadvantage and for alleviation of their conditions." (Dewey LSA 1935) By the end of the century, however, philosophers and political activists felt that this was inadequate in dealing with the enormous changes taking place - hence the demand for a new liberalism.

Dewey was disturbed by the social divisions and inequalities caused by this individualism. Society was divided into labouring classes and leisure classes, and the former, the majority of human beings, lacked economic freedom and was therefore relegated to servile status. (Dewey 1916 DE p.136) By the end of his life, he became convinced that the only way to a truly democratic society was through a liberal democracy in which liberalism was allied to an economic order akin to socialism, if not socialism itself. "No doubt in my own mind that laissez faire liberalism is played out, largely because of the fruits of its own policies. Any system that cannot provide elementary security for millions has no claim to the title of being organised in behalf of liberty and the

development of individuals." (Dewey 1946 PM) To Dewey, socialism was a method of collectively controlling economic forces - it was "an ethical ideal - a political and economic means to the development of the individual through practice." (Damico 1978 p.76)

Dewey was greatly influenced by English political and economic thought. When he was a postgraduate student at the Johns Hopkins University, 1882-1884, he was inspired to the point of 'temporary conversion,' by the work of the idealist Oxford philosopher, Thomas Hill Green. "Upon both sides, the side of philosophic conviction and the side of political and social life, Green is in closest contact with the deepest interests of his times." (Dewey 1889 ) The school of Green, as it became known, was part of the idealist movement in England which reacted against the market morality of classical liberal theory advocated by the Benthamite utilitarians. They considered a liberal democratic society to be a numerical aggregate of autonomous individuals, endowed with guarantees of personal liberty against the claims of society as a whole. Freedom was identified with maximisation of choice. Influenced by Green, Dewey came to believe that this sort of democracy was based on an error of the eighteenth century, when liberalism was identified with the idea of natural rights and theories of social contract. (Menand 1992- ~~in NY Review~~) By contrast, Green saw the liberal democratic society as an ethical and social organism. He passionately believed in the importance of the individual as a member of society and in the responsibility of that society to maximise the powers or capacities of that individual. It was basic to his concept of liberalism that the individual was inseparable from society. In 1888, when still much under Green's influence, Dewey wrote: "The non-social individual is an abstraction arrived at by imagining what man would be if all his human qualities were taken away. Society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as an aggregate of isolated units is a fiction. If this be the case, and if democracy be a form of society, it not only does have, but must have, a common will; for it is this unity of will which makes it an organism." (Dewey 1888 ED)

see  
Bib.

Through Green, Dewey became convinced that self-realization and social service were linked and together formed an aspect of 'positive freedom.' Each individual, in seeking self-realization, could use their special talents to contribute to the well-being of their community. Dewey identified democracy with equal opportunity for all members of society to make the best of themselves as social beings. He saw it as the purpose of society to provide the means by which people can "achieve the fullest and freest realization of (their) powers." (Dewey 1908) Genuine individuality was to be achieved through the collective good rather than in opposition to it. It was by intelligent participation in what Dewey called "associated living" that the individual could achieve "self-realization". His goal, therefore, was a democracy in which social reform was made possible through the collective will.

Dewey's philosophical theory was ineluctably linked to education. He hoped to enable children to bring about change in society by educating them to be citizens in a participatory democracy. "The conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind." (Dewey 1916 DE) The process of education which he envisaged was grounded in the dramatic discoveries made in experimental science and psychology in the second half of the nineteenth century. Dewey's intellectual perspective was transformed by evolutionary theory. He believed that Charles Darwin's 'Origin of Species,' published in 1859, the year he was born, "introduced a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics and religion." (Dewey 1909 IDP) Captivated by the new scientific method, Dewey formulated an epistemology which was based on inquiry and took into account the contingency of experience. Scientific method was the only means of acquiring knowledge, the only means by which an individual might grow. In coming to terms with permanent uncertainty and the fallibility of knowledge, he abandoned the traditional philosopher's quest for epistemological certainties, giving up his commitment to fixed and final ideas. Together with the ideas of Charles Peirce and William James this philosophical process became known as pragmatism, with Peirce, James and Dewey being the three noted exponents.

Bernstein (1991 p. 328) suggests that they were ahead of their time, anticipating the challenges of postmodernism. As a group, they took on the implications that science had for epistemology by refusing to accept that any belief or thesis was not open to further criticism or interpretation. For them it meant the end of philosophical certainty. While Peirce appealed to the regulative ideal of a critical community of inquirers, Dewey saw inquiry as the spring for action. He believed that the construction of such a method of effective inquiry, when applied to morals and education as to science would answer America's "greatest practical want." (Dewey 1930 AE) Growth or self-realization was the aim of education and it came about through constant inquiry.

In this thesis I want to show that Dewey's desire to bring about social reform in America was driven by his particular interpretation of freedom, liberalism and democracy. Along with other progressive social reformers at the end of the nineteenth century, Dewey saw education as a major factor in <sup>changing</sup> transforming society. But whereas the social reformers saw education as a means of social control, Dewey saw it as a liberating force. His notion of a participatory democracy presupposed that once an individual's intelligence was freed through education, he could then play a constructive part in a democratic society. In the next chapter, I look at the influences which formed this political outlook, in particular his discovery of the work of T.H.Green and his idealist philosophy.

In the third chapter, I put his idealism into the fast-changing, social context of industrial America. Dewey's experience of life in Chicago at the turn of the century convinced him of the need for social reform, which, as a purpose in life, was also part of Green's idealist legacy. Green had believed it was the task of the philosopher to remedy the ills of society, a role which Dewey took on in America. He considered that classical liberals failed to see that their concept of liberalism inhibited social reform. In encouraging individualism and advocating laissez faire policies, liberalism ceased to be concerned with the collective good. <sup>he was</sup> Dewey was also inspired by the people he met in the 1890s who were already caught up in the progressive movement and he was able to witness in Chicago the difficulties inherent in a multicultural society. He came to believe that

education was the means of bringing about the sort of social transformation that was needed for a participatory democracy.

In chapter four, I describe how Dewey put his educational ideas into practice in the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. The pedagogy which he formulated with his teachers was designed to recreate a miniature democratic community within the school, modelled on pre-industrial society. He also wanted to test the theories of William James and the functional psychologists - that knowledge and thought could grow out of active experience. He hoped to build up a philosophy of education based on inquiry and the reconstruction of experience. In the place of the authoritarian and formal practice of traditional education, Dewey constructed an educational theory based on the latest discoveries in the growth and development of the child. Education was the "supreme human interest in which other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head." (Dewey 1930 AE)

When the school closed after seven years, Dewey continued the fight for his democratic ideal in a conflict with the vocational education lobby. In his determination to forge a democracy that was not based on divisions of class and unequal educational opportunity, he found himself pitted against powerful forces in America, the social efficiency educators, manufacturers and businessmen, all committed to a very different concept of democracy, one informed by the demands of corporate capitalism. They wanted to train children for specific skills in industry whereas Dewey wanted to give them a liberal and a vocational education which would enable them to participate in the control of the workplace. To empower people through education was Dewey's solution to the 'crisis in culture,' a term he used for the gap between the ideal community of individuals and the reality of the private and self-serving control of industry. Chapter five describes this conflict.

In chapter six I look at the way in which Dewey's hopes to bring about social change through education were slowly dashed as the pioneering steps he had taken in progressive education at the

Laboratory School were undermined by educators who were neither as intellectually rigorous as Dewey nor as committed to social reform. They were influenced instead by the ideas of the European progressive education movement which was preoccupied with free expression and the development of the spirit and the individual, per se. Dewey's position in education was therefore distinctive and isolated in that traditional, progressive and vocational educators all fell short of his ideal. It is ironic that although Dewey was severely critical of these progressive educators, he was nevertheless blamed for the effects of their worst excesses. As he grew older, Dewey's opposition to traditional education focused increasingly on the political implications of the authoritarianism inherent in traditional education as opposed to the freedom in his own democratic pedagogy. Dewey wanted an education system and a democratic society which were both committed to freedom and inquiry, not hidebound by dogma and authority. Just as the children in the Laboratory School were educated to act through the exercise of reflective intelligence, so the citizens of a democracy should, through such education, be empowered as active members of the public, to conduct their own lives and have control over what happened to them.

In chapter seven I put Dewey's work into a wider context, looking at his reputation in both America and Britain. In America, he was accused by the political 'left' of wishing to uphold the status quo and by the political 'right' of trying to overthrow it. His pedagogical ideas, in their association with the progressive movement, became a symbol of social change - identified by some with subversion and anarchy. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Dewey became more damning in his criticism of materialism, corporate capitalism and individualism, and increasingly emphatic in his demands for a democracy which was more 'socialist' in character. As a consequence, his unpopularity increased. If the 'Dewey factor' had disappeared with his death, it might be possible to dismiss him as a disillusioned philosopher of education. But it has not. Despite the demise in America of 'progressive education' as a movement, progressive ideas have lived on. In the 1990s in Britain, Dewey has received singular attention from some of Britains' educational policy makers. I suggest that this has as much to do with his democratic agenda as with his pedagogy, though they do, of

course, reflect one another. While in America and Britain, his democratic ideals have been identified with a quasi-egalitarianism, I suggest that the real reason for his unpopularity is that his educational theory was grounded in a democracy which was not authoritarian and which permitted open, critical inquiry. There is a clash of liberal values. Those on which Dewey's philosophy of education was based are at odds with those espoused by conservative governments in Britain over the last fifteen years, the values of the market, competition and individualism- in short, the values of laissez faire liberalism. There is therefore, I believe, a link to be made between the political status quo that Dewey was commenting on in the mid-1930s and the liberal democracy that exists in Britain in the 1990s. Dewey saw the tension between the individual and the collective good as one of the major dangers facing society. I would argue that this tension is as great, if not greater today. Dewey's educational theory was a step towards social reform which he hoped would begin to ameliorate social and economic conditions for all people rather than the privileged few and thus bring about a more just and equitable society.

In the final chapter I suggest that for Dewey there were three main prerequisites for the establishment of a democratic society. These were the reconstruction of the community, the freeing of intelligence and the redefining of liberalism. Underpinning these changes was his concept of freedom as 'effective power'. This power would enable the individual to become a participating member of society. In 1935, he called for a new, radical liberalism, one in which material security for everyone would ensure the full realization of human potential. It was necessary to have freedom from the oppression of authoritarianism, the effects of which were particularly damaging in education. Dewey believed that education should free people's intelligence, through open inquiry and the continual reconstruction of experience. This would enable them to take an active part in a participatory democracy and effectively direct the affairs of society.

Dewey's radical liberalism never came to pass but this is not to deny the present need for it and it is the underlying purpose of this thesis to focus attention on this need. At the Standing Conference of



European Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe in the spring of 1994, Catherine Lalumiere, the European Council's secretary general, talked of "the worrying tide of xenophobia, violence and intolerance in Europe. She said she was concerned at the level of political disenchantment, particularly among young people. She said schools must do all they can to motivate children to become democratic citizens." She said she believed that it was the teachers who had a crucial role to play in Europe's now multicultural societies. "Teachers carry an enormous responsibility for the instruction of the young...the exercise of democratic responsibility needs to be taught." (TES April 1 1994)

It was Dewey's conviction that the exercise of democratic responsibility could and should be taught. In 1934, he wrote: "The other need (for a philosophy of education) especially urgent at the present time is connected with the unprecedented wave of nationalistic sentiment, of racial and national prejudice, of readiness to resort to the ordeal of arms to settle questions, that animates the world at the present time. The schools of the world must have failed grievously or the rise of this evil spirit on so vast a scale would not have been possible. The best excuse, probably, that can be made is that schools and educators were caught unawares. Who could have dreamed that the demon of fear, suspicion, prejudice and hatred, would take possession of men's minds in the way it has done? But that excuse is no longer available. We now know the enemy; it is out in the open. Unless the schools of the world can engage in a common effort to rebuild the spirit of common understanding, of mutual sympathy and goodwill among all peoples and races, to exorcise the demon of prejudice, isolation and hatred, the schools themselves are likely to be submerged by the general return to barbarism, which is the sure outcome of present tendencies if they go on unchecked by the forces which education alone can evoke and fortify." (Dewey 1934) Sixty years later, the need for Dewey's democratic ideal in education is <sup>still</sup> urgent.

## Chapter Two

### The Legacy of Idealism

*"An eminent philosopher once remarked that, in order truly to understand the central doctrines of an original thinker, it is necessary, in the first place, to grasp the particular vision of the universe which lies at the heart of his thought, rather than attend to the logic of his arguments."*

Isaiah Berlin: *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*. (1990)

*He was born in 1859*

Dewey's intellectual development reflects the age he was born into. Darwin's *Origin of Species* had been published in 1859 and shaken a deeply religious America to the core. Dewey felt keenly the conflict between the claims of science and religion and became convinced, as Darwin suggested, that the world was in constant flux. As a consequence, knowledge had to be contingent and changing. Yet while his philosophy was to be concerned with coming to terms with a world of uncertainty, Dewey at the same time developed a commitment to democracy which was constant, total and unchanging. "It was not simply one topic among others that he explored. It stood at the centre of his being and his intellectual endeavours." (Bernstein 1986) His vision of democracy came to inform all aspects of his thinking in ethics, logic, education, politics and social reform. Where did this 'particular vision' come from? It may be that Dewey would not have appreciated an attempt on anyone's part to find out. Towards the end of his life, he wrote: "It is important to remember that one does not wish one's earlier beliefs to dog one's footsteps throughout life. The assiduousness of the detective can be wearisome, inferences can be erroneous, time wasted. To what extent can someone make pronouncements about another's thought and philosophy with any accuracy? Sometimes it is difficult to do this even about oneself and be accurate." (Dewey quoted in McDermott 1981)

Dewey first experienced democracy as a way of living in Burlington, Vermont, where he was born in 1859. It was a small enough community for people to know one another and for everyone to be of consequence. Even to-day Vermont has a rural calm to it, as if it has escaped from the high-tech., frenzied world of the Eastern Coast. The countryside reasserts itself. There are spectacular ranges of wild, tree-covered hills and mountains, wide lakes, fields with cows and sheep, small homesteads, farms and cottages; people seem to move more slowly; it is a human-scale environment. Burlington still is what it was then, a centre for trade, agriculture and light industry, with much of the industry dependent on wood brought down from the Canadian forests. In pre-industrial times, the sense of community born from the isolation was strong. Families were working units; jobs and responsibilities were shared amongst parents and children; the family was a microcosm of the community and there was a spirit of cooperation and mutual support in both. Dewey's schoolfriends helped with the jobs at home and Dewey and his brothers worked on their grandparents' farm in the vacations. His daughter, Jane, wrote: "That his boyhood surroundings played a large part in forming John Dewey's educational theories is clear. As a boy and young man he saw almost all his associates assuming a share in household activities and responsibilities. Young people were brought into intimate contact with a whole round of simple industrial and agricultural occupations." (Jane Dewey quoted in Schilpp 1939) The community spirit engendered through working together was to become essential to Dewey's democratic vision and he later tried to recreate it in the Laboratory School in Chicago. The old Vermont town-meeting was at the heart of his conception of democracy. It was at such a gathering that democracy began, where people talked with one another, face to face. Dewey believed throughout his life that democracy began with conversation. (Dewey quoted in Corliss Lamont 1959) "The winged words of conversation have a vital import lacking in the fixed and frozen words of written speech. Logic in its fulfillment recurs to the primitive sense of the word: dialogue. Ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought.....We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is dormant and its

communications are broken, inarticulate and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium." (Dewey 1927 PP p. 219)

As soon as Dewey got to the University of Vermont in 1875, he was open to the influence of English intellectual life. The University subscribed to English periodicals in which the new ideas in the natural sciences and evolutionary theory were constantly discussed. The 'Fortnightly', the 'Contemporary Review' and 'Nineteenth Century' provided subjects for symposia and Tyndall, Huxley and Darwin were powerful influences. "These periodicals which reflected the new ferment were the chief intellectual stimulus of Dewey at this time and affected him more deeply than his regular courses in philosophy." (Jane Dewey in Schilpp 1939 p.11) It was through the 'Fortnightly' that Dewey came to study Harriet Martineau's condensation of Comte's 'Positive Philosophy'. Comte interested him primarily because he suggested that there should be a social function for science and this perception became a permanent influence on Dewey's thought, the emphasis being on scientific method rather than science itself. "(Comte's) idea of the disorganised character of Western modern culture, due to the disintegrative 'individualism' and his idea of a synthesis of science that should be a regulative method of an organised social life, impressed me deeply." (Dewey 1930 AE in McDermott 1981 p.8.) Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Aids to Reflection,' edited by Dr. James Marsh was one of the first books to influence Dewey. At one time President of the University of Vermont, Marsh had been probably the first American scholar to have an intimate first-hand acquaintance with the writings of Immanuel Kant. (Dewey 1941 PM p.358.) 'Aids to Reflection' was an attempt by Coleridge to rationalise Christian theological doctrine which "created a flutter in the ecclesiastical dovecots" where Scottish intuitionism dominated. As an old man, Dewey remembered the book as his spiritual emancipation at University because it enabled him to be both liberal and pious. (Corliss Lamont.159 p.15.)

Dewey found a metaphor for his concept of democracy and community in his third year at the University of Vermont. He had to study a textbook by Thomas Huxley, 'Elements of Physiology,'

and his intellectual curiosity was excited by Huxley's idea of the biological organism. It awoke in him for the first time "a distinctive interest in philosophy". (Dewey 1930 AE in McDermott 1981). The organism, made up of interdependent parts, seemed to him to be like his vision of the community - a society made up of individuals working together cooperatively for the good of the whole. From this book he derived "a sense of interdependence and interrelated unity that gave form to intellectual stirrings that had previously been inchoate, and created a kind of type or model of a view of things to which material in any field ought to conform. Subconsciously, at least, I was led to desire a world and a life that would have the same properties as had the human organism in the picture of it derived from study of Huxley's treatment." (ibid)

It was probably because of this desire for unity that, when Dewey went to the Johns Hopkins University to do a PhD in 1882, he decided to enrol on the courses taught by the idealist philosopher, George Sylvester Morris. It was a very European syllabus - History of Philosophy in Great Britain, Hegel's Philosophy of History, Spinoza's Ethics and History of German Philosophy with special reference to the movement from Kant to Hegel. ~~(It was a heady mixture)~~ German philosophy, and Hegel, in particular, were coming into vogue in America as well as England at this time. Hegel clubs were being set up all over America and ambitious, free-minded young men travelled to Germany to study. Dewey wrote later that German idealism at the time was "the vital and constructive one in philosophy... it supplied a demand for unification that was doubtless an intense emotional craving, and yet was a hunger that only intellectualised subject matter could satisfy. The sense of divisions and separations that were, I suppose, borne in on me as a consequence of New England culture, divisions by way of isolation of self from the world, of soul from body, of nature from God, brought a painful oppression - or, rather, they were an inward laceration. My earlier philosophic study had been an intellectual gymnastic. Hegel's synthesis of subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and the human, was, however, no mere intellectual formula; it operated as an immense release, a liberation." (ibid) This holistic impulse recurs throughout Dewey's work; he was drawn to the notion of the one made up of the many - the

organism made up of interdependent parts, the democratic community made up of individuals. It led him to combat all dualisms, to reconcile opposing forces, soften dichotomies or redefine terms in such a way as to prevent conflict.

It was through Morris that Dewey was introduced to the work of Thomas Hill Green, the leader of a group of idealist Oxford philosophers in the latter part of the nineteenth century, whose thought had been influenced by Kant and Hegel. "Unlike their compatriots, they had some knowledge of Hegel and a good deal more of Kant." (Collingwood 1939 p.15.) Green's philosophy made a tremendous impact on Dewey, influencing him in every way. It is curious that the philosophy of Green should have had such a profound influence not just on Dewey but on other young philosophers at Oxford. Melvin Richter suggests that many of those who were inspired by Green shared both his evangelical background and the dilemma he faced over the conflict between faith and reason. "It is, to-day, difficult to convey the intensity of the crisis of conscience that overcame intellectuals and others with the decline of religious faith in its traditional forms, coinciding with the emergence of new, sharp, social divisions, and specifically the deteriorating and often horrific condition of the urban poor." (Simon 1994)

Certainly this was the case with Dewey and more so with Morris. Dewey had had a deeply religious upbringing. His mother was a zealously pious non-conformist who had made sure that Dewey was "right with Jesus" when he was a boy. He had taken refuge as soon as he could in the more liberal evangelical faith of his friends and fellow-students at the University of Vermont. Although he was caught up in the controversy between evolutionary theory and religious belief, Dewey believed that religion should somehow fit in with reason and that reason should not be hidebound by faith. Dewey's sanguine attitude may have been because of a "mystic experience" he had had soon after graduating when he was schoolteaching in Oil City. He had experienced a "blissful feeling" that there was nothing to worry about and that having religion was about not worrying. There is no evidence that he ever did. (Eastman in Dykhuisen 1973 p.22.) Morris, on

the other hand, had intended going into the church when he had been afflicted with a crisis of faith lasting twelve years. He had been rescued from this spiritual anguish by Green who had demonstrated to Morris's satisfaction that it was possible to reconcile God and science. "It was the main work of Green's speculative philosophy to show that there is a spiritual principle at the root of ordinary experience and science, as well as at the basis of ethics and religion there was a spiritual principle at the root of ordinary experience and science, as well as at the basis of ethics and religion. (Dewey 1889 p.17.) It was therefore a grateful and passionately felt enthusiasm for Green's philosophy that Morris passed on to Dewey.

Neither Morris nor Dewey ever met Green who died at the age of forty-six in 1882, the year Dewey began at Johns Hopkins. At the time of his death, Green was still working out his philosophy, providing "a new Weltanschauung....which, for a time, carried all before it, and certainly influenced social and political action." (Simon 1994.) At a time when an atomistic utilitarianism was entrenched in English politics, Green converted German Philosophic Idealism into "something close to a practical programme for the left wing of the Liberal Party." (Richter 1963 p.13.) Green's political theory was in essence an attack on the individualism inherent in Benthamite utilitarianism. It was <sup>rather</sup> essentially an ethical theory, with little attempt made to understand the demands of a market economy. The school of Green, as it was called, wanted to bring about a liberal-democratic society which would maximise the development of people's human powers, that is, their potential for using and developing their uniquely human capacities. This was what Green called "freedom in the positive sense: in other words, the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good." (Green 1881 quoted in Richter 1963 p.283.) The distinction which Green draws between negative and positive freedom <sup>was later</sup> is developed further by Isaiah Berlin (1969) in 'Two Concepts of Liberty.' Green's theory was based on a view of man's essence not as a consumer of utilities but as a doer, a creator, an enjoyer of <sup>the</sup> his human attributes - <sup>namely</sup> these were the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgement and action, for aesthetic creation and contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for

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religious experience. (Macpherson 1973 p.4) In this, they were opposing the view of man's essence as seen by the Utilitarians whose notion of a liberal society was based on affording people a maximisation of satisfactions. People, seen as consumers of utilities, should have the widest freedom of choice possible to this end. It was "only when a man is seen essentially as a bundle of appetites demanding satisfaction that the good society is the one which maximises satisfaction." (ibid) Green, on the other hand, believed in "freedom in the positive sense: in other words, the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to the common good." (Green 1880 quoted in Richter 1973 p.283) It was an exciting time, even when witnessed from America. Dewey wrote of it later: "The 'eighties and 'nineties were a time of new ferment in English thought; the reaction against atomic individualism and sensationalistic empiricism were in full swing.... This movement was at the time the vital and constructive one in philosophy." (Dewey 1930 AE p.6)

The essence of Green's idealism was based on a reality that was mental or spiritual - an eternal consciousness or Self. Because man was capable of reason he could be linked to this consciousness. But he was also essentially a social creature and was inseparable from the state, the political community or the social group such as his family in which he lives. Man was linked to the eternal consciousness, not as an individual, but as a participant in his shared social and political life, that is, as a citizen of the state. His education, which enabled him to become a citizen, was one of the most important of the state's concerns. It was through education that the individual was able to take part in the eternal reality and the proper function of the state was to mediate between the human and the divine. (Gordon and White 1979 p.3)

Green believed that there were two selves, the self as it was realized up to the present time and the ideal Self that the realizing self was aspiring to be. The human self was an outline or vacuum which filled up as the individual 'realized' himself, the ultimate aim being "eternally complete consciousness" or being at one with the ideal Self which was God, reality or eternal consciousness. To achieve this state of the ideal Self, therefore, became the motive for human action. Green saw



the realization of the self, that is, the development of the individual's potential, as the goal of living. Civic action was the means of self-realisation. Green wanted his students to think of idealism as a philosophy of active citizenship with civic action as "the highest attainable morality". (Simon 1994) Dewey took from Green "the understanding that this metaphysics and faith enjoined a life of public service....(he) urged his pupils to think of absolute idealism as, above all, a philosophy of citizenship." (Westbrook 1991 p.36) Once Dewey became aware that the problems of American society were as acute as any in England, he wanted to develop his conscience, like Green, to the point "in which it became a public and political force as well as a private and 'moral' monitor."(ibid) Self-realization, therefore, became the moral ideal and it was the cohesive factor in the liberal-democratic society. Such a society did all it could to encourage the maximum development of the capacities, powers or potential of every individual, but as it was a sine qua non of the realizing process that the person should be engaged in civic action as a social being in society, the progress of the individual became ineluctably tied up with the benefit of the collective good.

Green was the perfect example of the philosopher-reformer. He saw social reform as the means by which the rich could assuage their guilt for the plight of the poor. By the end of the nineteenth century in England the appalling social and economic effects of industrialisation on people were very apparent. ~~The social reformer~~, Beatrice Webb described <sup>the</sup> a new consciousness of sin which grew up at his time. "A <sup>It was</sup> collective or class consciousness; a growing uneasiness...that the industrial organisation, which had yielded rent, interest and profit on a stupendous scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for the majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain." (Webb 1926) Green tapped into this consciousness of sin and as a result of his inspirational teaching, many of his students left Balliol to devote themselves to "reform in politics, social work and the civil service". They were to spend their lives in improving the school system, establishing settlement houses, reorganising charity and the Poor Law, and working in adult education. (Richter 1964) "The school of Green sent out into public life a stream of ex-pupils who

carried with them the conviction that philosophy, and in particular the philosophy they had learnt at Oxford, was an important thing and that their vocation was to put it into practice....Through this effect on the minds of its pupils, the philosophy of Green's school might be found, from about 1880 to about about 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every part of the national life." (Collingwood 1939 p.17)

The philosophy of Green's school "could also be found penetrating every part of Dewey's writing and teaching until the early 1890s and fertilising his ventures in social reform." (Westbrook 1991 p.37) The idealist and ethical foundation for Dewey's concept of democracy was drawn almost entirely from Green's as was his interpretation of freedom as power; his theory of growth in education derives largely from Green's theory of self-realization as the moral ideal; Dewey, like Green, came to see education as the first and foremost responsibility of philosophy and Green set Dewey the example of the philosopher as social reformer. Green believed that it was the philosopher's role to sort out the problems of society. "The school of Green had taught that philosophy was not a preserve for professional philosophers, but everyone's business." (Collingwood 1939 p.50) Dewey became equally convinced that philosophy should be concerned with the problems of the real world. In an article on Green, written in 1889, five years after leaving Johns Hopkins, Dewey wrote: "Both theoretically and personally, the deepest interests of his times were the deepest interests of Professor Green. The most abstruse and critical of his writings are, after all, only attempts to solve the problems of his times - the problems which meet us in current magazine discussions, in social and political theory, in poetry, in religion, and in the interpretation of the higher results of science....He saw in what is called philosophy only a systematic search for and justification of the conviction by which men should live. He was (to quote Caird) 'a democrat of the democrats.....his sympathies were always with the many rather than with the few.'" (Dewey 1889)

After leaving Johns Hopkins in 1884, Dewey, with Morris's help, got a post as a lecturer in psychology and philosophy at the University of Michigan where Morris was a Professor. In 1885 he began working on his first book, 'Psychology'. It was published in 1887 to mixed acclaim. Despite his preoccupation with Hegel and Green at Johns Hopkins, Dewey had also attended courses in physiological psychology with G. Stanley Hall, a rising star in psychology and education. The laboratories and the seminar at that time were the most glamorous institutions of the new university life and experiment and research were the accepted sources of the new knowledge. (Coghlan 1975) Dewey was not immune to the excitement, telling his daughter, Jane, years later, that it had been bliss to be alive and in such surroundings. (Jane Dewey in Schilpp 1939) Dewey's allegiance to idealism, however, was far too strong to permit a switch of loyalties and the only solution appeared to be to make religion scientific. Dewey's 'Psychology', therefore, was an attempt to bring together in a single system the new empirical physiological psychology he had learned with Hall and the doctrines of philosophical idealism. It was an uneasy mixture. Hall commented: "The facts are never allowed to speak out plainly for themselves, or left to silence, but are always 'read into' the system which is far more important than they are. That the absolute idealism of Hegel could be so cleverly adapted to be 'read into' such a range of facts, new and old, is indeed a surprise as great as when geology and zoology are ingeniously subjected to the rubrics of the six days of creation." (Dykhuisen 1973) Dewey seemed to be sitting on the fence. He wanted to show that knowledge of God was implied or involved in every act of knowledge whatever, but, as William James pointed out, this was not possible. "It's no use trying to mediate between the bare miraculous self and the concrete particulars of individual mental lives." (James 1886 quoted in Dykhuisen 1973 p. 55) There were others, however, who praised Dewey's 'Psychology', particularly those, like Morris, who were sympathetic to the idealist cause; it was even adopted as a text by several prestigious colleges - Smith, Brown, Wellesley and Dewey's alma mater, the University of Vermont. Its interest lies more in the way it reflects Dewey's reluctance to abandon idealism for 'science' and his instinct to unite opposing forces. At any rate, it aroused

controversy and imagination amongst his students. A poem appeared in the Michigan Argonaut in 1888, entitled 'Psychology' :

O what is the matter with yon, lank girl,  
A pale and wild and haggard she,  
Oh, don't you know, the old man said,  
She's taking Dewey's Psychology.

Once she was fair to look upon,  
Fair as a morning in June was she,  
And now the wreck you see to-day  
Is caused by Dewey's Psychology.

A year has passed, again I strayed  
By the Medic's hall; what did I see  
But some whitened bones of a girl who died

Taking Dewey's Psychology. (in Dykhuisen 1973 p.57)

Dewey turned his attention back to idealism and democracy. While he never seriously took on the religious aspect of Green's idealism, his political and ethical writings between 1885 and the early 1890s owe much to Green's idealist social thought which <sup>was to form</sup> formed the basis for Dewey's democratic theory. (Westbrook ~~1973~~ 1991 )

In America, the enemy was liberal realism, an American version of utilitarianism. Although at this time, America was ostensibly a purpose-built democracy, it was a society which encouraged the increasing agglomeration of wealth in the hands of the few. Armed with Green's convictions, Dewey took up the idealist battle. In 1888, he wrote the 'Ethics of Democracy', in which he attacked the views of Sir Henry Maine, an eminent British jurist. Maine based his definition of

democracy on the theory of atomistic individualism which saw men as non-social, individual units that required a social contract to hold them together. He argued for government which was a set of political institutions geared towards ensuring social order and stability. He had hard words for democracy which he saw as an unstable and destructive form of government largely because he believed it was impossible to generate a general will out of these non-social masses. Dewey fought with idealist verve against what he saw as this obsolete, individualistic liberalism of the eighteenth century. Democracy <sup>had to</sup> must be a moral ideal. Society, he argued, was more than just an aggregate of individuals, it was a social organism with its members bound together by a common purpose, common ideals and a common will. "Society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as an aggregate of isolated units is the fiction. If this be the case and if democracy be a form of society, it not only does have, but must have, a common will; for it is this unity of will which makes it an organism." (Dewey 1888 quoted in Westbrook 1991) A society held together by a common will, in which every citizen participated in the affairs of the community, made it the most stable form of government. Instability and strife occurred only when people were excluded from society. The individualism in such a democracy was a moral one and not a numerical one. "It is an individualism of freedom, of responsibility, of initiative to and for the ethical ideal." (ibid) In a democracy it was possible for the individual to find his proper place and to participate fully in the life of that society. Maine <sup>had</sup> failed to distinguish between democracy as a way of life and political democracy as a system of government and he <sup>had</sup> failed to acknowledge the vital need for the former.

Here was the idealist liberal-democratic theory of T.H.Green. Green's concept of democracy had depended on the opportunity of self-realization for everyone in society and Dewey made it an integral part of this first formulation of democracy. The individual and society could be perfected through the harmonious development of the powers and capacities in that society. Freedom, positive freedom, was the opportunity to make the best of oneself as a social being but the goodness had to be oriented towards the general good. (ibid) This was, in the first instance, Green's ~~definition of 'freedom in the positive sense' as 'the liberation of the powers of all men-for~~

contributions to the common good.' (Green 1986) The quality of individuals depends on the social forms of education and cultural transmission of values, and the quality of a society depends on the extent to which it fosters the development of free creative individuals. "Society was a kind of moral organism and the notion of individual freedom within this organic society was the positive freedom to make the best of oneself as a social being." (Westbrook 1991 p.38) This was the essence of the idealist concept of democracy. This concern for the good of all individuals in society remained basic to everything Dewey was to write and was the inspiration behind his concern with social reform.

But despite his preoccupation with idealism, Dewey was turning more and more towards science. It was William James' book, 'The Principles of Psychology', published in 1890, which gave Dewey's thinking a new direction. He began to consider the possibility of experience without the Absolute. He had found a naturalistic basis for his idealism which gave an entirely new orientation to his thought. (Kennedy 1951) James found words to express new ideas, like the 'stream of consciousness' and he developed a biological concept of the psyche. "Many philosophers have had much to say about the idea of organism; but they have taken it structurally and hence statically. It was reserved for James to think of life in terms of action..... anyway, it worked its way more and more into all my ideas and acted as a ferment to transform old beliefs." (Dewey 1930 AE) James with his colleague, James Angell, asked what the function of consciousness was and decided that mental experience was used to adjust to the environment. They decided that thought, and therefore, knowledge, must come about through action. Thought was a natural function that had evolved in order for humans to survive. "The pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment are thus the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon." (James 1890 Principles of Psychology) <sup>This radical</sup> The notion of thought emerging through action, of present action taking into account future consequences, was the cause of Dewey's 'ferment' and it was to become a basic principle of his educational theory.

Despite the 'ferment', Dewey continued to write articles on Green, but in an increasingly critical vein. In 1893, in *Philosophical Review*, 11 November, he wrote an article entitled 'Self-realization as the Moral Ideal' in which he modified Green's theory of self-realization. Although Dewey had taken on at one point or other almost everything from the school of Green, he had always balked at the eternal consciousness. He developed Green's notion of 'a fixed and pre-supposed self' and updated it in the light of his growing interest in biology and functional psychology. Instead of Green's two selves, Dewey suggested instead that there be only one self, an active, working or practical self, as opposed to a fixed or pre-supposed self, "carrying within the rhythm of its own process both 'realized' and 'ideal' self. (Dewey 1893) Whereas Green believed that the purpose of life was to fill up the self with realization, with Dewey's boundless and active self, the realizing was endless - hence his notion of growth leading to further growth. "To find the self in the highest and fullest activity possible at the time and to perform the act in the consciousness of its complete identification with self is morality and is realization." (ibid) Dewey disliked the dualism implicit in the idea of both a realizing and an ideal self. "The fixed ideal is as distinctly the bane of ethical science to-day (i.e. 1893) as the fixed universe of mediaevalism was the bane of the natural science of the Renaissance." (ibid) He accepted "as a practical fact that we do, at a given time, have unrealized powers, or capacities and that the realization of these powers constitutes, at the time, our moral goal.... To realize capacity does not mean, therefore, to act so as to fill up some presupposed ideal self.... The child realizes his artistic capacity whenever he acts with the completeness of his existing powers.... To realize capacity means to act concretely, not abstractly.... to realize capacity means to make the special act which has to be performed and activity of the entire present self - so far is it from being one step towards the attainment of a remote ideal self." (ibid)

Dewey therefore adapted Green; he shifted from a religious to a biological perspective, kept the basic idealist concept of self-realization, but called it growth. He "lopped away the religious rationale, leaving only growth for its own sake." (Gordon and White 1979 p. 198) It was to

become the unifying principle of his educational theory. Growth has been considered inadequate as an aim of education by some of his critics. But Dewey saw it as a natural, inevitable process occurring in all living things; it was the dominant vocation of all human beings; it was indicative of development, change and progress and it had no end beyond itself. There was no consummation of this self-realization, no final absorption into eternity, no reaching towards a fixed ideal. Indeed Dewey was to abandon all fixed ideas. Without the Absolute to become one with, Dewey maintained that growth simply led to further growth. In education it constituted both the aim and the process of education but it had to take place within a democratic form of social life. (Dewey 1893) This was essential. Individuals cannot be understood on their own, they are part of society. "Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself." (Dewey 1899 SS) In *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1919) Dewey stated that there was one sentence that was central with him all his life - "Growth itself is the only moral end." (quoted in Corliss Lamont 1959 p.53)

Dewey, however, was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the remoteness of absolute idealism from the concrete realities of experience. He wrote to James Angell in 1893: "Metaphysics has had its day, and if the truths which Hegel saw cannot be stated as direct, practical truths, they are not true." (Dewey 1893 quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.61) Absolute idealism had satisfied his intellectual and emotional craving for an organic and purposeful world and provided him with the foundation for a democratic social and political theory that reconciled individual and community. (Westbrook 1991) But Dewey was no longer in his ivory tower and the reality of life was inescapable.

It was "the shattering effect upon him of reading Green" that had turned Dewey into an idealist. (Gordon and White 1979) In an article written in 1886 Dewey referred to "the late Professor Green" of whom he could not speak "without expressing his deep, almost reverential gratitude." (Dewey 1886). But by the turn of the century Dewey had moved away from idealism, referring to



this period of his life as a "temporary conversion". Its effects, however, were permanent and substantial, as he himself acknowledged. "I drifted away from Hegelianism.....Nevertheless I should never think of ignoring, much less denying...that acquaintance with Hegel has left a permanent deposit on my thinking." (Dewey 1930 AE in McDermott 1981) In 1945, he said, "I jumped through Hegel, I should say, not just out of him. I took some of the hoop....with me, and also carried away considerable of the paper the hoop was filled with." (quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.14).

It would be unfair to Dewey's pragmatic spirit to dwell on his idealist years or make too much of them. Yet what was on the paper taken from the Hegelian hoop? First, Dewey always sought after unity. He "inveighed against the tyranny of dichotomous thinking on educational matters, dissolving away duality after duality: individual good versus collective good, liberal education versus vocational education, development according to nature versus social efficiency. This holistic cast of thought was something he shared with the British idealists and derived from his early attachment to their philosophy." (Gordon and White 1979 p.53) Second, the idea that philosophy should concern itself with the problems of society remained with him to the end of his life, along with the notion of the philosopher as educator and social reformer; third, the principle of growth which grew out of self-realization became the foundation of his educational theory. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, he retained the idealist concept of democracy. Dewey's vision of democracy never moved much from this position. His concept of democracy, like Green's, was ethical rather than political, a moral ideal and *modus vivendi*. He never saw it simply as a form of government with its institutions and procedures. "It was more than a form of government; it (was) primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." (Dewey 1916 DE) Political democracy was, in a way, simply a means of putting into place democracy as the moral ideal. This was "a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry and religion.

And even as far as political arrangements are concerned, governmental institutions are but a mechanism for securing to an ideal, channels of effective operation." (Dewey 1927 PP)

In 1919, he wrote: "Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-round growth of every member of society.....The best guarantee of collective efficiency and power is liberation and use of the diversity of individual capacities in initiative, planning, foresight, vigor and endurance. Personality must be educated, and personality cannot be educated by confining its operations to technical and specialized things, or to the less important relationships of life. Full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs. This fact fixes the significance of democracy." (Dewey RP 1919 p.20)

*This idea of an educated public was essentially a vital part of Dewey's vision of democracy. he is not*

Essentially Dewey wanted a representative or participatory democracy in which every member had a part to play. Thomas Jefferson had also had a moral concept of democracy. He had wanted the American people to be formed to "habits of reflection and correct action which would render them examples of virtue and of happiness within themselves." (Jefferson quoted in Padover 1939) He had attached great importance to small, self-governing communities, advocating the division of counties into wards in a way that enabled everyone to share in the government of affairs not merely on election day but every day.(Dewey 1940) In 1820 Jefferson wrote: "There is no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to *inform* their discretion. (Jefferson quoted in Padover 1939). Dewey had called him America's 'first great democrat' but America was far from being such a democracy. It was because there was such disparity between Dewey's vision of a 'true' democracy and the reality that *he* began to work towards social reform, *towards the realization of*

*an educated public.*

## Chapter Three

### The Road to Reform

Although Dewey was convinced that philosophy could and should help solve the problems of society, he had little access to the problems afflicting America in the provincial atmosphere of the University of Michigan campus. The character of his social philosophy was thoroughly British and there was little in his work up to that point to distinguish him from an Oxford don or an Edinburgh professor. (Westbrook 1991) During the nine years he spent at Michigan, he felt cut off from the social and ideological ferment of society. "It was an isolation he was itching to overcome." (ibid) However it was also during these years at Michigan that Dewey's interest in social reform developed, brought about largely through the people he met.

First there was Alice Chipman, one of his students. Dewey became friends with her and in 1886 they married. Alice was a forceful young woman with a strong social conscience. She had been brought up by her grandparents who had inadvertently fostered in her intellectual independence and self-reliance. Her grandfather had been "a temperamental dissenter from established conventions and a champion of the vanishing rights of Indians." (Jane Dewey in Schilpp 1939) Her daughter, Jane, writes glowingly of her brilliant mind, indomitable energy and courage. Dewey acknowledged that Alice put guts and stuffing into his work and she certainly urged him towards social reform. "Awakened by her grandparents to a critical attitude towards social conditions and injustices, she was undoubtedly largely responsible for the early widening of Dewey's philosophic interests from the commentative and classical to the field of contemporary life. Above all, things which had previously been matters of theory acquired through his contact with her a vital and direct human significance." (ibid) Alice also changed Dewey's attitude towards religion. She, herself, "had a deeply religious nature but had never accepted any Church dogma. Her husband acquired from her

the belief that a religious attitude was indigenous in natural experience, and that theology and ecclesiastic institutions had benumbed it rather than promoted it." (ibid)

Alice's awareness of social injustice arose from her close acquaintance with the plight of the Indians but more generally the injustice arose from the contradictions contained within the concept of a democratic America - on the one hand, the rhetoric which presented a Jeffersonian, hand-crafted democracy, a world of happiness and equality, and on the other hand the reality which was more like rule by oligarchy and far from the moral ideal of Dewey's dream. Fabulous amounts of wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of the few (Nasaw 1979); the 'established Americans', descendants of the seventeenth and eighteenth century immigrants who had successfully exploited the opportunities of the new world, were understandably anxious to hold on to the fruits of their endeavour. They tended to be white, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon, but also incorporated into the reality of American democracy was the acceptance of an enslaved black population, a decimated Indian one, and a disenfranchised half of the population, the women.

Throughout the nineteenth century, massive waves of immigrants had poured into America, seeking the work that was promised in the new industries. As the country filled up with 'foreigners', the divisions between rich and poor became more apparent and more worrying. "By 1900, America was a land of strangers. Almost half the population was foreign-born or children of foreign-born." (Violas 1973) Many of the earlier immigrants had come from Northern Europe, from Great Britain, Germany and Scandinavia. <sup>Rome</sup> Often they had travelled westwards, establishing farms and villages in the fertile land of middle America but by the early decades of the nineteenth century this <sup>was changing</sup> pattern had changed. Between 1846 and 1853, following the Great Famine in Ireland, over one and a quarter million Irish people settled in America. As Roman Catholics, they introduced an irreconcilable religious element into a country which was predominantly protestant. They were often not rich enough to buy land and many survived only by doing the most underpaid and menial jobs - digging canals, railroads and gas mains. Later in the century, around the 1880s, the

immigrants began to come from Southern and Eastern Europe. These were not always at ease in their newly adopted country, <sup>and</sup> instead of showing the pioneering spirit and heading West, they tended to cluster together in the cities, living a self-contained life as similar as possible to the one they had left behind. By overtly seeking to maintain their old way of life and keeping themselves isolated from their new neighbours, they failed to integrate into the American way of life. Their strangeness gave rise to concern and alarm amongst the established Americans who saw them as a threat both to the stability and social cohesion of the country and to their recently acquired wealth. By the turn of the century, feeling was running high. Professor Ellwood Cubberley, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford, wrote: "Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock and to corrupt our civic life." (Cubberley 1909) His desire was to awaken in these new American citizens an awareness of Anglo-Saxon righteousness and the only way to do it was through education. "What kind of American consciousness can grow in the atmosphere of sauerkraut and Limburger cheese? What can you expect of the Americanism of the man whose breath always reeks of garlic?" (Bierstadt 1922 quoted in Nasaw 1979)

Immigration, combined with industrialisation and the consequent urbanisation, all proceeding at a hectic pace, caused a severe and barely controllable degree of social disruption. There was also a breakdown in the basic structure of the lives of those in rural communities. The speed of change had been too fast for them to adjust to easily. Poverty increased as farms failed to yield a livelihood; families migrated more and more from the country to the cities to seek a living in industry and together with the immigrants from abroad this brought about a worrying concentration of people in the cities. "In 1820, for every person working in manufacturing and distribution there were six people engaged in agriculture; by 1860, this figure had fallen to three. By the Civil War, the family no longer constituted the dominant unit of production." (Bowles and Gintis in Young and Whitty 1977)

While Jefferson had believed that industrialisation presented a threat to the moral character of democracy, Dewey considered that a greater threat lay in the dislocation and unsettlement of local communities that it brought about. (Bernstein 1986) The community was the vital starting point for democracy, the two were interdependent. Any threat to the community was a threat to democracy. "Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community." (Dewey quoted in Corliss Lamont 1959) Not only were communities being broken up, but historic human associations were shattered. "Their deeper plaint was what Morton Grodzins has aptly called the 'gemeinschaft grouse'- the cry that industrialism had dissolved the fabric of community leaving alienation in its wake and that this ultimately had caused the deterioration of life in the slum." (Grodzins quoted in Cremin 1961)

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Protestant ethic had been dominant in America, unsurprisingly as so many of the early immigrants had come from Northern Europe. It had exerted an influence over the people not only as a way of enabling the industrious to get rich but also as a means of social control. "Industry multiplied by Frugality gives the product Wealth, which equals Virtue." (Benjamin Franklin quoted in Karier 1973) Education tended to be the responsibility of the family and the community and was as much to do with moral training as with the acquisition of knowledge. Few children were educated past the elementary stage. The common school was an elementary school, though taking pupils of all ages.

During the first part of the nineteenth century there was a fundamental shift in values once poverty was seen no longer as a virtue but a vice, a shift which was also taking place in England. (Karier 1973) Those who succeeded in life were considered to be of good character; those who remained poor therefore had a bad character. This faulty logic dictated that children who were born into poverty were often removed from their natural parents and sent to orphanages or placed in households where they could earn their keep and be morally trained. American village life, which

had also exerted a powerful stabilising influence on society, began to break up; as the rural communities dwindled, the structures which had enforced the community values of cooperation, responsibility and discipline died with them. This left a void which worried the well-established Americans. As industrialisation spread, so did the fear that the cities, increasingly teeming with people, would be far less amenable to such order and structure.

The school was seen by the white majority as an alternative means of establishing social control or at least giving a common core of values to an increasingly pluralist society. (Violas 1973)

By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were therefore two major problems for educators; one was how to educate children and the other was how to control them. Horace Mann led a campaign to make elementary education in the common school compulsory and universal; the half-hidden agenda was to prevent political and social revolution breaking out. (Nasaw 1979) While Mann was impressed by the diversity of the American people he also feared that the unity of a democratic America was threatened by the conflicts of value that were emerging and increasing all the time. He foresaw the destructive effects that religious, political and class differences might have and through the common school he hoped to establish a common value system within which all the diversity might flourish. "His quest was for a new public philosophy, a sense of community to be shared by Americans of every background and persuasion. And his instrument in this effort would be the common school." (Cremin 1964) However, although the common school was intended to unite children with its common value system, there was no democratic agreement about what this value system should comprise. It was accepted that the religious values that were to be inculcated in the common schools were Protestant, the social values were white Anglo-Saxon and the economic values were Puritan - all of which posed problems for those many people who were black, Indian, Irish, Catholic, Jewish or Southern European. In the South, there was still punishment by fine and imprisonment for even attempting to educate negroes. (Nasaw 1979) Nor was it coincidence that members of the Ku Klux Klan were later to declare themselves as "in the front rank of the defenders of the public schools." (Tyack 1968 quoted in Karier 1973)

Not only was the campaign not an act of disinterested altruism - it was also a determined attempt on the part of those who had succeeded in the New World to hold on to the fruits of their success. This is corroborated by Horace Mann when he made the case for the common school to a business community. "Finally, in regard to those who possess the largest shares in the stock of the worldly goods, could there, in your opinion, be any police so vigilant and effective, for the protection of all the rights of person, property and character, as such a sound and comprehensive education as our system of common schools could be made to impart; and would not the payment of a sufficient tax to make such education and training universal, be the cheapest means of self-protection and insurance?" (Mann 1848 quoted in Karier 1973).

The process of making elementary schooling universal was gradual. Massachusetts was the first U.S. State to pass a compulsory-attendance law for children between the ages of six and fourteen in 1852; Mississippi was the last in 1918. The law did not force those who, due to economic necessity, could not afford to send their children to school. There were others, particularly the Irish Catholics, who refused to send their children to schools where the Protestant religion was so uncompromisingly dominant. Lawrence Cremin writes of the new era which began in the history of American education as the law took effect. "The crippled, the blind, the deaf, the slow-witted, and the needy arrived in growing numbers.....The dreams of democratic idealists may have resided in compulsory-attendance laws, but so did the makings of the blackboard jungle." (Cremin 1961)

By 1890, although the common school was for the most part taking care of the younger children there was the ever-increasing fear that the older ones were getting out of control. Only 7 % of 14-17 year olds were attending school, public or private. (Fisher in Nasaw 1979 p.117) The sociologist Edward Ross published a series of articles between 1896 and 1898 in which he discussed explicitly the idea of social control through education. He stressed the fact that social cohesion and stability had been maintained through the moral values taught by family, church and



community. As these three slowly lost their grip, Ross suggested three others to take their place, mass media, propaganda and education. "The ebb of religion is only half a fact. The other half is the high tide of education. While the priest is leaving the civil service, the schoolmaster is coming in. As the state shakes itself loose from the church, it reaches out for the school." (Ross 1906 in Karier, Violas, Spring 1973 p31)

These views, expressing an underlying fear of the breakdown of law and order, led to the idea of the school taking on 'in loco parentis' responsibilities with children doing more and more activities in school rather than out of it. There they could be controlled and kept out of mischief. As far back as 1872, the School Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts had asked for summer schools to be established so that "no boy or girl shall be left with unoccupied time. Idleness is an opportunity for evil-doing....These schools will cost money. Reform schools also cost money." (Nasaw 1979) The common school became integrated into American life but it solved none of the contradictions of American society. The tension between the rhetoric of democracy and the reality of a class-divided society only deepened. As the tension increased, so did anxiety over the inadequacy of the public school system.

During the early years at the University, between 1884 and 1889, Dewey began to be interested in both primary and secondary education. Part of his administrative responsibility at the University was to visit the high schools which, along with the university, were an integral part of the State's education system. He had to assess whether their academic standards were high enough to warrant entry to the university without a special exam. This first hand knowledge of high schools led to curiosity about the elementary schools. Once he had visited them, he became convinced that the poor standards of learning that he saw in the secondary schools were the outcome of the mechanical teaching methods used in the elementary schools. They were not in touch with the latest theories on child learning and they inhibited the learning process. "Existing educational methods, especially in the elementary schools, were not in harmony with the psychological principles of

normal development." (Jane Dewey in Schilpp 1939 p. 27) There was far too much reliance on rote-learning and recitation. Children were neither encouraged nor motivated to learn. Classes were still far too large and books were scarce. By the 1880s, the exodus from the country to the cities and the relentless increase in immigration meant that in the cities there were often more than sixty children in a class. "Recitations averaged ten minutes per subject per class and untrained teachers continued to concentrate on the same old drill in the same old readers." (Cremin 1967)

It all resonated with Dewey's own experience of elementary school in Burlington which had been a mixture of boredom and frustration, "its tiresomeness only mitigated by the occasional teacher who encouraged conversation on outside topics." (Jane Dewey in Schilpp 1939). Dewey too had spent most of his <sup>early</sup> schooldays in recitation and rote-learning. He had learned far more outside school, helping on his grandparents' farm in the vacation or tramping in the Adirondacks with his brothers. "They outfitted Lake Champlain rowboats with a tent, blankets and cooking utensils and explored the lake from end to end." (ibid) He had also recognised how much could be learnt in a rural community simply by being a part of a cooperative working society. "The realization that the most important parts of his own education until he entered college were obtained outside the school-room played a large role in his educational work, in which such importance is attached, both in theory and in practice, to occupational activities as the most effective approaches to genuine learning and personal discipline." (ibid) There was a chasm in traditional schools between learning and its application and he believed that it was the "amassing of facts and principle" without ever seeing their application that led to stultification and boredom. Without the consciousness of application, learning had no motive for the child. It was from this point on that Dewey started looking for a theory of education which would combine and reconcile the demands of education, philosophy and psychology. (Dykhuisen 1973 p.51)

Dewey's harsh feelings towards traditional education and the public school system were corroborated in 1892, when a dramatic research project was taken on by Joseph Mayer Rice, a

young pediatrician. On behalf of the Forum, a 'stuffy moribund New York monthly' which had recently sprung into life under a new editor, Walter Hines Page, Rice took on the task of appraising the entire American public school system. (Cremin 1961) He visited thirty-six cities across America, talked to teachers and parents, attended board meetings and sat in on lessons. From twelve thousand interviews, he wrote nine articles for the Forum and then published his book. "With alarming frequency the story was the same, political hacks hiring untrained teachers who blindly led their innocent charges in singsong drill, rote repetition and meaningless verbiage..... In city after city public apathy, political interference, corruption and incompetence were conspiring to ruin the schools. (ibid) Rice noticed an "absolute lack of sympathy for the child....The unkindly spirit of the teacher is strikingly apparent; the pupils being completely subjugated to her will, are silent and motionless; the spiritual atmosphere of the classroom is damp and chilly." (Rice 1893 in Cremin 1961) His findings confirmed all that Dewey had experienced as a pupil and corroborated all he had seen when visiting secondary schools in the State of Michigan, in 1887 and 1888.

Fortunately for Dewey, one of the few outstandingly good schools that Rice visited was Cook County Normal School in Chicago, "one of the most progressive as well as one of the most suggestive schools" where children received an all-round education in "nature study, art and social activities as well as the three R's all taught by an inspired, enthusiastic staff." (Cremin 1961) Colonel Francis Parker who had been the principal of the school since 1883 the school became a close friend and colleague of Dewey's. His ideas on education influenced Dewey considerably. Like Dewey, he criticised the rigid discipline enforced in the traditional schools and pioneered more informal teaching methods - "the first home-grown hero of the progressive movement". (Cremin 1961) Parker's enthusiasm for education had taken him to Europe in the late 1860s where he had attended lectures in Berlin and observed the upsurge throughout Europe in new pedagogical theory. Like Dewey, he very much wanted to see growth and improvement in human beings. "I think that is the whole secret of my enthusiasm and my study, if there be any secret to it - my intense desire to see mind and soul grow." (Parker quoted in Cremin 1961) He believed that the work of the school

should focus on the child, offering a warm community atmosphere in which there was a constant and united effort "for the upbuilding of democracy." (Connell 1980) Although Dewey has often been called the father of progressive education, he maintained that it was Francis Parker, "more than any other one person" who should have that title. (ibid) When Dewey moved to Chicago in 1894 he sent his own children to Cook County Normal School and supported Parker when there was public protest over his radical changes to classroom practice. A newspaper account describes one such meeting at which Dewey was speaking. " Dr. Dewey is one of the quietest and most modest appearing men imaginable.....To see him on the platform in his gray sack coat, drooping moustache, hair parted in the middle and his 'excuse me for intruding' air, as opposed to Colonel Parker, with his massive, bald head, his impressive and aggressive personality and his 'you had better not get in my way' air, one would never dream that the quiet man with his level eyebrows and pleasant gentle voice was the lion and the great Colonel Parker was the lamb. Such, however, is the case. Col. Parker sits at one side of the platform, listening, often with closed eyes, as is his wont, to the agreeable voice of Dr. Dewey, as he quietly utters those radical ideas which simply remove the bottom from all existing forms of educational effort...He quietly loosens the hoops and the bottom insensibly vanishes. Dr. Dewey is worshipped by his hearers. There is a charm about his personality which is simply irresistible. He is as simple in his language as in his manner and the ease with which even the great unwashed can comprehend the principles he lays down is proof of his grandeur." (Report in Chicago newspaper - 1894 quoted in Wirth 1966)

Towards the end of the 1880s Dewey got caught up in politics through his connection with Franklin Ford, a one time editor of a Wall Street commercial journal. Ford had been looking for an intellectual to edit a national sociological newspaper he was hoping to start. Westbrook calls Ford an eccentric and ascribes Dewey's susceptibility to such a man to his desire to escape from cloistered academic life. "He was excited by the practical bearing Ford's scheme gave to a central theme in his democratic theory." (Westbrook 1991) Dewey later described him as 'a scoundrel' (quoted in Corliss Lamont 1959) but nevertheless he fell for Ford's idea. This was to do with

making the individual conscious of his 'function' in an interdependent community. The newspaper was to be called 'Thought News' and its aim was to do just what Dewey desired - to socialise intelligence in the new industrial order. Social justice could be achieved, Ford maintained, if the distribution of knowledge about social ills were radically reorganised. The idea appealed to Dewey because it seemed to offer one route to a participatory democracy. Dewey was infected with Ford's zeal. He wrote to William James: "I believe that a tremendous movement is impending when the intellectual forces which have been gathering since the Renaissance and Reformation, shall demand complete free movement, and, by getting their physical leverage in the telegraph and printing press, shall, through free inquiry in a centralized way, demand the authority of all other so-called authorities." (Barton Perry 1935 quoted in Westbrook 1991)

In 1892, Dewey wrote in the Detroit Tribune: "When it can be seen, for example, that Walt Whitman's poetry, the great development of short stories at present, the centralising tendency in the railroads and the introduction of business methods into charity organisations are all parts of one organic social movement, then the philosophic ideas about organism begin to look like something definite. There are lots of people around the country who are scientifically interested in the study of social questions. Here at the University we are more or less shut off in our study of psychology and ethics from the facts themselves." (quoted in Bernstein 1966). In the end, despite the long discussions that went on between Dewey and Ford, the paper never came out. There was enough adverse publicity to make Dewey realize that professors should not get involved in radical journalism and he pulled out of the venture. Ford and his brother accused him of getting cold feet. (Ford 1894 quoted in Westbrook 1991) Although this episode of Dewey's life was rather out of character, the failed newspaper venture had the effect of focusing Dewey's attention on social injustices. " If Alice Dewey and T.H.Green were largely responsible for the ethical and political turn Dewey's philosophy took in the late 1880s, it was Ford, more than anyone else, who in the early 1890s directed this turn toward radical democracy." (Westbrook 1992)

By the time Dewey moved to the University of Chicago in 1894 as Head of the Department of Philosophy, he was a nascent philosopher reformer in the spirit of T.H.Green, but without the idealist underpinning. He hoped to use both philosophy and education as a means of ameliorating the condition of the people. "From the nineties on, Dewey became America's intellectual spokesman for practical social reform, for the elimination of specific injustices, and for the positive reconstruction of a democratic community that would become more humane and in which all would share the benefits." (Bernstein 1977)

Chicago was a far cry from Vermont and a sharp contrast to the Michigan campus. For the first time Dewey was confronted with the reality of an industrialised city with an enormously high immigration rate. As he became ever more aware of how critical America's needs were, his desire to bring about social change intensified. Chicago at that time was a microcosm of the economic and social changes that were taking place. Between 1880 and 1900 its population rose from 500,000 to 1.7 million. In 1890, three-quarters of the population were foreign-born people and their children. Every sort of big city problem afflicted it. "All the pathologies and possibilities of urban life were on full display in Chicago in the 1890s and rapacious entrepreneurs and corrupt politicians struggled with visionary reformers for control of the city's destiny." (quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.83)

The impact on Dewey was shocking. He wrote to Alice in 1894: "Chicago is the place to make you appreciate at every turn the absolute opportunity which chaos affords - it is sheer Matter with no standards at all.....Every conceivable thing solicits you; the town seems filled with problems holding out their hands and asking somebody to please solve them or else dump them in the lake. I had no conception that things could be so much more phenomenal and objective than they are in a country village, and simply stick themselves at you, instead of leaving you to think about them. The first effect is pretty paralysing, the after effect is stimulating - at least, subjectively so, and maybe that is all chaos is in the world for, and not to be really dealt with. But after all you can't get

rid feeling here that there is a 'method' and if only you could get hold of it things could be so tremendously straightened out." (quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.84)

The University of Chicago was new, founded only in 1890. The Department of Philosophy included psychology and pedagogy, and as the Head of Department, Dewey was able to gather around him some of the best brains in America - George Herbert Mead, James R. Angell and James Tufts. However, one of the deepest influences on Dewey's view of the world at that time was Jane Addams. When Dewey had been at the University of Michigan, he had been invited by Jane Addams to give lectures and lead discussions at Hull House, a settlement house. Once in Chicago, Dewey and his family became very close friends with her. She was an ardent social reformer, with a fierce social spirit, making it her life's work to alleviate the hardship and suffering of the immigrants who were pouring into Chicago. She had founded Hull House in the fall of 1889 and it was probably the best-known of the American settlement houses. Several of these settlement houses were set up in those cities where there were large immigrant communities. Their purpose was to provide a centre to help the newcomers feel more at ease and more welcome in their adopted country. The idea of settlements had originated in England in the 1880s, inspired by members of the school of Green. In 1884, Charles Kingsley, John Ruskin and the Rev. Samuel Barnett had founded Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, London, as a memorial to Arnold Toynbee, the economic historian and friend and colleague of Green. Their desire was to live as neighbours of the working poor, sharing their life, thinking out their problems, learning from them the lessons of patience, fellowship, self-sacrifice, and offering in response the help of their own education and friendship. (Cremin 1961) It was as a result of visiting the Toynbee Hall Settlement and her enthusiasm for the work being done there that Jane Addams was inspired to set up Hull House. It was situated in the toughest, roughest, poorest part of westside Chicago. There was a free coffee-house, a public kitchen, a nursery, a kindergarten, an art club, a Shakespeare club, a music-school, a dramatic association, the list was infinite; she revived the older crafts of spinning, carding and cabinet-making and tried to enthuse the young American-born children with respect for the old European

past of their parents. There were lectures, discussions, classes and clubs and she encouraged the immigrants to send their children to the public schools, "the great equalizers of American life and the balance wheel of social progress." (Brickman and Lehrer 1959). She saw art as the great panacea for the workers, an opiate for the masses which might circumvent social disharmony. "After all, what is the function of art but to preserve in permanent and beautiful form, those emotions and solaces which cheer life and make it kinder, more heroic and easier to comprehend; which lift the mind of the worker, from the harshness and loneliness of his task, and, by connecting him with what has gone before, free him from a sense of isolation and hardship." (Addams 1902 quoted in Karier 1973)

*It would be humanitarian social reformers*

Through his friendship with Jane Addams, Dewey got to know a group of intellectuals with radical views. They were part of <sup>the new Progressive</sup> a new middle-class liberal movement, which began as a response to their anxiety about what they saw as the imminent breakdown of society. They rejected the classical liberal's concern for individual autonomy and negative liberty and embraced the idea of community as a positive force for good. They were uncompromising in their attack on the creators of great wealth and were keenly aware of the need to help the immigrants and rural migrants adjust to the new industrial, urban life and to create new communities within the cities. Without this help there was real fear that the gradual demise of rural communities and the rapid rise in urban populations would result in crisis. (Violas 1973) Jane Addams and the staff at Hull House tried to provide this help, particularly for the young people in poor families, both immigrant and "American", so many of whom were jobless and moneyless and ready to turn to crime. Her concern was to give some sort of caring supervision, but it was also a means of getting the immigrants to share some common cultural experience. She and her friends were militant social workers who led marches, spoke at political rallies and supported all those committed to social reform, agitating for factory legislation and improved city services. It was their efforts in practical reform that made Dewey feel Chicago was the "greatest place in the world". He was welcomed into the reform community, became a trustee of Hull House and took up the cause



of the new liberalism.

But what exactly was the cause? Behind the good will there was also a political agenda and it is sometimes difficult to ascertain who was influencing whom in the friendship between Dewey and Addams. They seemed at times to speak and write with one mind. Horace Kallen stated that he was in "close contact with the group around Jane Addams" and that Addams herself "had a very telling effect on Dewey." (quoted in Corliss Lamont 1959 p 73) But whilst Addams was doing all she could to help the poor and needy, she was also an elitist, expressing faith in the rational knowledge of the best minds. (Violas 1973) The new liberal set in which she was a leading figure wanted a society where the individual would be part of the greater whole but this whole had to be harmonious and therefore under strict control. Addams' aim was to create a means of social control more appropriate to the problems of the overpopulated city. She wanted an organic society which was also a social unity but with the individual as subordinate to the larger group. Education was one way to promote this unity, an interest which Addams and Dewey had in common. Green had avoided this hierarchical relationship between the individual and society by making the two symbiotically united. His system had no subordinates. Alone, the individual was insignificant. Addams' conception of a democratic society overrode commitment to any other group, family, social class, ethnic origin, religious belief or geographical position. It was 'cosmic patriotism' she was looking for, but that did not occur naturally. The waves of immigrants constituted a major threat to this cosmic unity and as such they had to be involved in as much cooperative activity as possible. It was essential that the individual be provided with "a store of common memories and shared experiences that would act as cement for the new organic society."(ibid) Dewey was to make his contribution through education. The school was the means of helping the newcomers adjust to others around them. <sup>more</sup> But adjustment to society fell far short of Dewey's designs for education.

It is easy to be seduced by the theory of the 'revisionists', Karier, Violas et al. They offer a

convincing theory of the social control element in progressivism which perhaps underestimates the disinterested humanitarian aspect of it. Harold Silver suggests they have been overwhelmed with possible examples of social control without analysing fully what the implications are. Addams certainly encouraged Dewey to recreate the spirit of the pre-industrial rural community in the school. Many of the children who went to the Laboratory School had parents of a liberal persuasion who were also Hull House members and supported Dewey in his work in education. Christopher Lasch suggests, somewhat cynically, that Dewey and Addams were not trying to democratise industry so much as to make it run more efficiently - that they and other reformers wanted to substitute education for other cruder methods of social control. (Lasch 1969) It is certainly true that progressive social reformers, particularly settlement workers, saw the social character of the school as the most effective means for educating individuals who would be able to correct the abuses and injustices of the larger society in which they were growing up. Not only that, it provided the children with a degree of shared experience that they would not otherwise have had.

But there were fundamental differences between Addams and Dewey. Dewey was not an elitist. Addams saw social problems, like ethnic minorities, as an irritation to be disposed of; "conflict... was unnecessary and thoroughly dysfunctional." (Westbrook 1991) Addams wanted to do all she could to alleviate the plight of the poor and deprived, but there was no doubt in her mind that she knew what was best. Dewey, on the other hand, saw conflict as an inevitable part of life, posing problems which had to be solved. It was Dewey's pragmatism, his constant preparedness to go on inquiring and changing that distinguished his thinking from Jane Addams'. Conflicts between individuals, groups and classes were just some "of the many social questions whose answer depends upon the possession and use of a general logic of experience as a method of inquiry and interpretation." (Dewey 1903 SLT) Addams, therefore, was not in accord with Dewey's conception of a participatory democracy. He wrote to Alice: "(Addams) converted me internally, but not really, I fear. At least I can't see what all this conflict and passing of history means if it is perfectly

meaningless; my pride of intellect, I suppose it is, revolts at thinking it's all merely negative, and has no functional value." (Dewey 1894) When Addams (1902 in Karier 1973) asserted, "we must demand that the individual be willing to lose the sense of personal achievement, and shall be content to realize his activity only with the activity of the many," she intended adjustment to the social order. Those who were different from the norm had to be moulded until they fitted in. This was hardly self-realization. Addams was happy for the factory worker to participate in one small part of the manufacturing process, to get fulfilment from participation in the collective effort. Dewey was to fight for intellectual understanding of the industrial process of all workers. He wanted them to be educated in a way that enabled them to control their lives and bring about social change.

This difference between Dewey and Addams is of particular importance when assessing Dewey's role as educator and philosopher. Was he, as some critics believe, a humanitarian social reformer like Addams, bent on preserving the social order and, therefore the structures of corporate capitalism? Did he want diverse people to be assimilated? Or did he genuinely want to educate people to develop their individual and infinite capacities, at the risk of upsetting the social order? I will attempt to show in the next chapter how Dewey addressed these questions through the theory and practice of the Laboratory School.

## Chapter Four

### Theory into Practice - The Laboratory School.

As soon as he arrived at the University of Chicago in 1894, Dewey set about linking pedagogy more closely to psychology and philosophy. The University President, James Harper, was also keen to raise the status of pedagogy and to encourage educational reform. In his first year Dewey proposed that pedagogy should be a separate department with its own particular kind of laboratory where he could train student teachers and carry out a programme of pedagogical experimentation. The laboratory was to be a school. During the ten years he was at Chicago, Dewey wrote intensively about the work at the school, explaining its theory and practice to the public in series of lectures which were then published as books. The most detailed account of the life at the school was not written until 1936 when two of the teachers, Anna Camp Edwards and Katherine Camp Mayhew collaborated in a book with Dewey's support and advice.

In that first year, Dewey wrote to Alice: "I sometimes think I will drop teaching philosophy directly and teach it via pedagogy. When you think of the thousands and thousands of young ones who are practically ruined negatively if not positively in the Chicago schools every year, it is enough to make you go out and howl on the street corners like the Salvation Army.... There is an image of a school growing up in my mind all the time; a school where some actual and literal constructive activity shall be the centre and source of the whole thing, and from which the work should be always growing out in two directions - one, the social bearings of that constructive industry, the other, the contact with nature which supplies it with its materials. I can see theoretically, how the carpentry etc. in building a model house shall be the centre of a social training on the one side and a scientific on the other, all held within the grasp of a positive concrete physical habit of hand and eye." (Dewey quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.96 - Early Works 5.244)

In January 1896, under the aegis of the University of Chicago, the school opened, first known as the University Elementary School, later as the Laboratory School or Dewey School. It was revolutionary in its aims and methods, rejecting the curriculum and the teaching practice of the traditional school. Although it existed for only seven years, it was the one time in his life when Dewey was able to see his democratic ideals take effect in practice. (Westbrook 1991) He wanted the school to be a miniature democratic community in which each child would be free to develop his own capacities and satisfy his own needs whilst, at the same time developing a concern for one other. As he believed mental development to be a social process, being a member of a community participating in group activities was an essential part of the learning process. (Dewey 1897 MPC)

Learning or mental development was essentially growth, the notion Dewey had developed from Green's notion of self-realization. It was basic to Dewey's pedagogy and closely linked to James' idea of the human consciousness adapting to its environment. "Since growth is the characteristic of all life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself; it goes on during the whole lifespan of the individual; it is the result of the constant adjustment of the individual to his physical and social environment which is thus both used and modified to supply his needs and those of his social groups." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) This growth depended on 'reciprocal relationships in a suitable environment.' The best growth took place when the individual was happy. Each individual child had his own characteristics and personality and growth occurred as the individual learnt to interact within the group acquiring "the habit of observing, criticizing, and integrating value in thought, in order that they should guide the factors which would integrate them in fact."

(ibid)

Dewey had two goals; the first was to establish a school based on his idealist conception of democracy. At the core was his conviction that all members of a democratic society were entitled to an education that would enable them to make the best of themselves as active participants in the life of the community. "There is a socialism regarding which there can be no dispute - socialism of

1896/

the intelligence and of the spirit. To extend the range and the fullness of sharing in the intellectual and spiritual resources of the community is the very meaning of the community." (Dewey 1897 EP) Dewey wanted to demonstrate what schools in a democratic society could be like. He also hoped to counter the competitive, anti-social spirit and dominant selfishness of society as it existed. (Wirth 1983 p.85) By living and learning in such a community, he hoped the children would develop the 'virtues' necessary for taking part in such a society, the capacity for instigating social change rather than just adapting to it. His aims diverged from those of the progressive social reformers who wanted the schools to provide children with a common culture which reflected the status quo. In 1996, however, Dewey had no very clear idea about how social transformation was going to come about. (Westbrook 1991) There was a strong emphasis in the school on the social aspects of living while, at the same time, the individuality in each child was encouraged and nurtured. Dewey hoped to recreate in the school what he felt was an ineluctable union between community life, experience and knowledge. "The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs." (Dewey MPC 1897)

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Secondly, Dewey wanted to test out the epistemology of William James and the functional psychologists, namely, the theory that thought came about through action and that knowledge derived from that thought. It presented the mind, not as a separate entity but as a function of social life, developing in a social and physical environment. Emphasis was put initially on studying those historical periods and types of civilization when knowledge had more obviously come about through experience; then, knowledge about how to do things grew out of social situations and represented answers to social needs; then, the education of the immature member of society "proceeded almost wholly through participation in the social or community life of which he was a member, and each individual, no matter how young, did certain things in the way of work and play

along with others, and learned, thereby, to adjust himself to his surroundings, to adapt himself to social relationships, and to get control of his special powers." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936)

The curriculum "ministered constantly to the changing needs and interests of the growing child's experience" and selected that subject matter which would "fulfil and further the growth of the child." (ibid) Instead of inculcating facts, there was "continual experimentation to discover the conditions under which educative growth actually occurred." (ibid) Dewey was convinced that in order for learning to be effective, a link had to be made between the interest of the child and the subject-matter of the curriculum. Back in 1883, when Dewey had been at Johns Hopkins, he had been impressed by Hall's insight into child psychology. Hall's thesis ("The Contents of Children's Minds" in the Princeton Review, 1883) was that children brought up in the newly industrialised cities came to the classroom with substantially different concepts and experiences from children brought up in rural communities. Each individual child, therefore, had different needs and the school should adapt itself to them, a sharp contrast with traditional practice which expected the child to fit into the school and imposed a prescribed curriculum on them all. Hall believed that the curriculum should accommodate each child which completely shifted the focus and purpose of the school. Dewey wrote of the change as the shifting of the centre of gravity. "It is a change, it is a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical center shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the center about which they are organised." (Dewey 1899 SS) Dewey believed that the child's experience had to be the starting-point for education - for growth into further experience. "The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting-point for all education.....Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests and habits." (Dewey MPC 1897) If this did not happen, it meant that education had to be imposed upon the child, as a pressure, and this could not be called 'truly educative.' (ibid) Dewey disagreed with Hall in that he saw the child's experience as only a starting point whereas Hall, more thoroughly child-centred in his approach, saw it as the beginning, middle and end.

The circumstances were ideal. As an integral part of the University of Chicago, the school had the intellectual backing of the three departments of which Dewey was Head. There was a sense of obligation to the University, expressed in the desire to contribute to the progress of educational thinking in a scientific way. The school was seen as "a laboratory of applied psychology....a place for the study of mind as manifested and developed in the child." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) In that the school was aiming to test certain ideas, which were used as working hypotheses, it was, "by intention, an experimental school, not a practice school, nor (in its purpose) what is now called a "progressive" school." (Dewey 1896) It received an annual, albeit nominal, grant of \$1000 from the University of Chicago, not enough to keep it going without charging fees. It also had the support of the parents of the children. "The entire history of the school was marked by an unusual degree of cooperation among parents, teachers and pupils." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) When the school opened, there were just sixteen pupils and two teachers. When it closed in 1903 there were one hundred and forty children, twenty-three teachers and ten graduate assistants from the University. The children who attended the Laboratory School were almost all from educated, liberal families, the sons and daughters of members of either the university faculty or the Hull House circle.

In 1897, Dewey made explicit the implications of his democratic aims for education. He wrote 'Ethical Principles Underlying Education' and 'My Pedagogic Creed,' two articles supporting and complementing each other. 'Ethical Principles' laid down the moral foundation of the school. It was based on the idealist premiss that society was an organic union of individuals and that the individual was always a social individual, having no existence by himself. "He lives in, for, and by, society, just as society has no existence excepting in and through the individuals who constitute it." (Dewey 1897 EP) The emphasis was on the interdependence of the individual and society. "If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the



individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass." (Dewey 1897 MPC)

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Society was changing and children had to develop ways of living in this changing world with its tremendous industrial and commercial development, its new inventions, new machines, new methods of transportation, new forms of communication, year after year. (Dewey 1897 EP) In order to be meaningful and useful, education had to change too. It should no longer be providing children with certain fixed precepts on which to base their lives and teach the children how to live in this world of flux. It was impossible to prepare them for any precise set of conditions, (Dewey 1897 MPC) and an absolute impossibility to educate them for any fixed station in life. (Dewey 1897 EP) If a child were to be educated for one fixed job, it would impede him from going in any other direction. "So far as education is conducted unconsciously or consciously on this basis, it results in fitting the future citizen for no station in life, but makes him a drone, a hanger-on, or an actual retarding influence on the onward movement. Instead of caring for himself, he becomes the one who has himself to be cared for." (ibid) Was Dewey trying to teach the children to adapt to a changing and different society or to become autonomous individuals within it? There are many who say that Dewey was 'in league' with the humanitarian social reformers, such as Jane Addams, who believed that it was the role of the school to provide the children with a common culture so that they would fit in better with the status quo. It was the school as a means of social control. It would seem that Dewey wanted more than that. His pedagogy was based on the premiss that the status quo was not as he wished it. There is also no evidence that he had the same aims as most of the progressives. His desire for social reform by bringing about a participatory democracy set him apart from other intellectuals.

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Although Dewey had not yet become a pragmatist, nor written his 'Studies in Logical Theory', his educational theory at this point was very close to the pragmatic position. Uncertainty and the fallibility of human nature were at the heart of the pragmatic philosophy. In such an uncertain world

U where there are no fixed and final facts, the surest route to dependable bases for action was through constant inquiry, reflective thought, experiment, and scientific method. It was imperative, he believed, "first that the pupil have a genuine situation of experience- that there be a continuous activity in which he is interested for its own sake; secondly, that a genuine problem develop within this situation as a stimulus to thought; third, that he possess the information and make the observations needed to deal with it; fourth, that suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way; fifth, that he have the opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application, to make their meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity." (Dewey 1916 D&E p163). Knowledge had to be constructed from experience and experience had to be continually reconstructed. "Education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience....the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing." (Dewey 1897 MPC) This philosophy is not compatible with obliging children to adjust to any status quo.

U There is evidence of this when he wrote of what the child must learn. Through reflective thought and the application of 'scientific method', the child would learn to take command of himself, not simply to adapt to the changes taking place, but also to "have power to shape and direct those changes." (ibid) Children must learn to use all their powers and capacities as the need arose, to make wise judgements and to grasp the conditions under which he had to work. They were preparing for life not only as citizens and voters in a democracy, but also as members of a family, as members of a community and as workers. In order to properly carry out these various functions children required a rigorous education, first in science, art and history, then in the skills of asking questions, talking and communicating. They also needed a well-trained body with a skilful eye and hand and good moral habits of industry, perseverance and serviceableness. "The society of which the child is to be a member is, in the United States, a progressive and democratic society. The child must be educated for leadership as well as obedience. He must have power of self-direction and power of directing others, power of administration, ability to assume positions of responsibility." (Dewey MPC 1897)

Dewey's ideal of an active community was based on the pre-industrial one, similar, up to a point, to the one Dewey had grown up in. The Laboratory School therefore had to become a cooperative community, acting like an extended family, caring for the children within it and feeling responsible for them. "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy." (Dewey 1899 SS) Through working together in the school, the children would develop social power and insight, they would learn to become sensitive to one another's needs, to share and to understand one another. Dewey wanted to enable children to live in cooperative integration with one another, to be part of "an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science.... The school seeks the fulfilment of the child, but this fulfilment must be that of the socialised individual who finds his happiness and well-being in harmonious association with others.... When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious." (Dewey 1897 SS) These sentiments are admirable and desirable but they fit uneasily into the background of Chicago in the 1890s, outside the school. It is difficult to know whether Dewey was being naive or optimistic.

M Above all, the social aspect of the school was important. "Apart from the thought of participation in social life the school has no end or aim." (Dewey 1899 SS) The subject-matter on the curriculum was, therefore, social in character; the social aspect of history, geography and literature was stressed and the expression of the individual child's interests was always directed towards social ends. The children worked together in groups; in doing this they learnt self-discipline. No adult standards were to be imposed on the child. "We get no moral ideals, no moral standards for school life excepting as we so interpret them in social terms." Dewey (1897) As the young child emerged

from his own world at home he began to see himself as part of the new group at school. Through participation in the community life, working and playing with others, the child "learned thereby to adjust himself to his surroundings, to adapt himself to social relationships and to get control of his own special powers." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) Society was a number of people held together because they were working along common lines, in a common spirit and with reference to common aims. The common needs and aims required growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling. Having this common productive activity enabled children to develop a social spirit through division of labor and mutual cooperation. The child was able to feel useful as a member of the community which gave him a positive sense of his own power. (Dewey SS 1899) Dewey wrote of the atmosphere in the school kitchen when the children were preparing a meal for everyone, a task each child did once a week. "The difference that appears when occupations are made the articulating centers of school life is not easy to describe in words: it is a difference in motive, of spirit and atmosphere. As one enters a busy kitchen in which a group of children are actively engaged in the preparation of food, the psychological difference, the change from more or less passive and inert reciprocity and restraint to one of buoyant outgoing energy, is so obvious as fairly to strike one in the face. Indeed, to those whose image of the school is rigidly set the change is sure to give a shock. But the change in social attitude is equally marked." (ibid)

This strict emphasis on the social aspect at the school suggests social engineering. Dewey was trying to develop a democratic predisposition in the children; he hoped that, through habitually behaving towards one another in a thoughtful and cooperative way, they would acquire the civic virtues necessary in a democratic society - that is to discuss problems as they arose and test solutions as an experimental and collaborative activity. It raises the problem of whether it is feasible to force democracy on people or, whether, through the act of coercion, the democracy being enforced ceases to exist. All that can be said is that it was an alternative to both the authoritarianism of the traditional school and the anarchic, laissez faire ethos of some of the later progressive schools.

In the traditional school-room, this "motive and cement of social organization" was missing.

(Dewey 1899 SS) There was no opportunity for social or cooperative work amongst the children.

At the Laboratory School, on the other hand, there was no competition between children since their work was all cooperative. "The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life."

(Mayhew and Edwards 1936) To do otherwise was as futile as learning to swim without going into the water. This had happened to some boys Dewey got to know in Chicago. They learnt the

swimming movements on land and unsurprisingly when they finally got into the water, they sank.

Like these boys, children in the traditional public school had no opportunity to test out their social

skills in real life. "Imagine forty children all engaged in reading the same books, and in preparing

and reciting the same lessons day after day...There is next to no opportunity here for any social or

moral division of labour...All are set to do exactly the same work and turn out the same results.

The social spirit is not cultivated. In fact...it gradually atrophies for lack of use...The child knows

perfectly well that the teacher and all his fellow pupils have exactly the same facts and ideas before

them that he has; he is not giving them anything at all new...The child is born with a natural desire

to give out, to do and that means to serve." (Dewey 1897 EP) In the public schools, all these

desires were being wasted. "When the school system ... confines the child to the 3 R's and the

formal studies connected with them, and shuts him out from the vital sources of literature and

history, and deprives him of his right to contact with what is best in architecture, music, sculpture

and picture, it is hopeless to expect any definite results with respect to the training of this integral

element in character" (Dewey 1897 EP) ?

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It was the enormous amount of energy, enthusiasm and curiosity in children that Dewey wanted to tap. Instead of harnessing it all to the school furniture, he gave it full rein. His aim to test the theories of the functional psychologists, demanded a learning environment where children could be both active and thoughtful. "We cannot smother and repress the child's powers, or gradually abort them (from failure to permit sufficient opportunity for exercise), and then expect to get a character

with initiative and consecutive industry. I am aware of the importance attaching to inhibition, but mere inhibition is valueless." (Dewey 1897 EP) The focus of the day was therefore on doing and making, particularly using the hands; it became a habitual way of behaving. The teacher had to direct the child's activities which Dewey called occupations. The occupations were the curriculum - through them the children acquired knowledge. This was the revolution. In the photographs of the children and the school that were taken for the book that Mayhew and Edwards wrote, there was no sight of a normal classroom with desks or chairs. The large house in its large garden looks very unlike a school. The children are seen in the kitchen, painting pictures, building sheds, weaving, gardening, working in the science laboratories or making gymnasium equipment.

The occupations were organised so as to preserve "the investigative attitude and the creative ability of the growing child in socially directed expression." (Dewey 1899 SS) They were the sort of activities a child might normally have had to do in the home a hundred years back. The household and neighbourhood system in the pre-industrial community had enabled children to acquire a working knowledge of everything going on in their lives, spinning and weaving, working at the saw-mill, the grist-mill, the cooper shop, and the blacksmith forge. They understood where things came from because they had taken part in its production. "The entire industrial process stood revealed, from the production on the farm of the raw materials, till the finished article was actually put to use. Not only this, but practically every member of the family had his own share in the work." (Dewey 1899 SS) Then, the country child had grown up with an understanding of everything that surrounded it - how clothes were made from wool and cotton, light from candles, wax and fat; it was possible to see and understand how furniture, houses, tools and farm machinery were constructed. The modern child lived largely in a world of manufactured goods with little idea of how they came into being. It was important, therefore, for the Laboratory School children to develop a close and intimate acquaintance with nature, with real materials, to learn how to manipulate these materials and to understand why they were needed and how they were used. The children cooked for one another, made sheds for the school, worked the garden, spun wool, wove

material, made scenery for stage productions. "In all this there was continual training of observation, of ingenuity, constructive imagination, of logical thought and of the sense of reality acquired through first-hand contact with actualities. No number of object-lessons...can afford the shadow of a substitute for acquaintance with the plants and animals of the farm and garden, acquired through actual living among them and caring for them." (ibid) All activity began with the experience and interest of the child and moved on from there.

Traditional education demanded that a child be "thrown into a passive, receptive, or absorbing attitude" when in reality the nature of the child was to be active. Dewey divided the child's energy into four impulses, the social, constructive, investigative and expressive impulses - these were the fuel for the activity, the "springs for action." They were "the natural resources, the uninvested capital, upon the exercise of which depends the active growth of the child." (Dewey 1899 SS) By using these impulses for constructive and creative activity Dewey hoped to generate thought, knowledge and growth.

How did the impulses and occupations work together? The social impulse manifest itself in the need children have to communicate with people about their lives, to talk about what they were doing. The language instinct was both a great educational resource and a learning mechanism, particularly in a school like the Laboratory School where talking at all times and about everything was encouraged. The children learnt to articulate their thoughts and express their feelings. Every day the school began with a discussion about what the children had done and were going to do. Dewey believed that the social capacity in humans, as opposed to other animals, compensated for the lack of physical capacity, particularly when young, Young children are dependent and because of this they "are marvellously endowed with power to enlist the cooperative attention of others.....Observation shows that children are gifted with an equipment of the first order for social intercourse....Power to grow depends upon need for others." (Dewey 1899 SS) A child had to be allowed to be dependent, to ask for attention and to get it, to develop a desire and need for social

intercourse. When such dependence was not permitted, the consequence was self-sufficiency and self-reliance, seen by many, particularly the advocates of boarding - schools, as highly desirable. But to Dewey it spelt disaster. "It may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone - an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remedial suffering of the world." (ibid)

The constructive impulse was expressed through the occupations. The content of school studies was an intrinsic part of the occupations. "On the face of it, the various studies, arithmetic, geography, language, botany, etc., are themselves experience - they are that of the race. They embody the cumulative outcome of the effort, the strivings, and the successes of the human generation after generation." (Dewey 1902 CC) He wanted the children to experience continuity in what they were doing, what he called the "experience continuum." Instead of sitting at desks with the bell going every forty minutes to demand a change of subject-matter, the children could concentrate on a task or activity which could absorb them without distraction until it was finished. "The pigeonhole classification which is so prevalent at present (fostered by introducing the pupil at the outset into a number of different studies contained in different text-books) gives an utterly erroneous idea of the relations of studies to each other, and to the intellectual whole to which they belong." (Dewey 1897 EP) For Dewey, knowledge derived from activity and reading, writing and 'figuring' were necessary as adjuncts to this activity, a means to an end. "Books and the ability to read are regarded strictly as tools....the premature teaching of reading involves undue strain on the eyes and nervous system....the use of books, as texts, throws the mind into a passive and absorbing attitude. The child is learning instead of inquiring." (Dewey 1899 SS)

The investigative impulse was at the heart of the learning process and of Dewey's educational theory. In 1904 Einstein wrote: "It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant,



aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail." A similar metaphor was used by Mayhew and Edwards when writing their book about the school: "The fine aspiring tendril of childhood's native curiosity, like the waving tip of a growing vine, seeks the how and the why of doing- its intellectual food. It is early stunted in many children. The strong urge to investigate, present in every individual, is often crushed by the memorizing of great masses of information useless to him, or the learning of skills that he is told may be useful to him in the far-away future, the sometime and the somewhere." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) The teachers therefore guided the children in their activities, anticipating the conditions that would be most favourable to the children's learning, encouraging them to look at the problems, to ask questions, to reflect and work out solutions and ways of testing them. This method of learning became the basis for all knowledge. "The object is to arouse his spirit of curiosity and investigation and awaken him to a consciousness of the world in which he lives, to train the powers of observation, to instil a practical sense of methods of inquiry and gradually to form in the mind images of the typical moving forces and processes involved in all natural change." (Dewey 1899 SS) Much later, he was to write: "What we need is a type of education that will start very early to develop the spirit of inquiry, the habit of reflective thinking, of willingness to weigh the evidence, of experimentation - in short, the scientific spirit." (Dewey 1937)

The organisation of the curriculum at the Laboratory School was rigorously structured although it differed absolutely from the traditional curriculum in being active and continuous. "The simple facts of the case are that in the majority of human beings the distinctively intellectual interest is not dominant." (Dewey 1899 SS p.27) Traditional education was highly specialised, one-sided and narrow, dominated almost entirely by the mediaeval conception of learning when few people had access to books. It ignored their instincts and desires to move, to be active, to do, to make and to produce. (Dewey 1899 SS p.26) Progress in communication and printing had made learning available to everyone and education should have changed accordingly. Dewey thought it ludicrous and tragic that recent attempts to introduce manual training into schools had been deprecated by

many educators on the grounds that books were the true source of learning. (ibid) Children wanted and needed to work with their hands but not in a way that isolated them from intellectual education.

The formal subjects of the traditional curriculum were 'converted' into "active centers of scientific insight.... points of departure which could lead children into realization of the historic development of man...." (Dewey 1897 MPC) This intellectual foundation was vital. Dewey was aware of the long history of 'learning by doing'. Dewey's learning through occupations, however, was more a triangular concept. Children who might be cooking, did not merely learn to cook, they learnt physics and maybe chemistry or biology from their occupation. The children in the Laboratory School were unaware they were learning 'school subjects.' "Little did the experimenting child realize that he was studying physics as he boiled down his cane or maple syrup, watched the chrySTALLISATION process, the effects of heat on water and of both on the various grains used for food; the teacher knew, although he did not, that he was studying the chemistry of combustion as he figured out why fire burned....In the laboratory, the child experimenter boiled water, collected steam, tried to "keep it in" and discovered its power as well as its heat." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) While weaving, gardening, cooking or building, children also learnt about physical sciences, mathematics, history, geography, humanities and the arts. "It is possible and desirable that the child's introduction into the more formal subjects of the curriculum be through the medium of these activities." (ibid) As the children grew, they became aware of "how the sciences gradually grow out from useful occupations, physics out of the use of tools and machines, chemistry out of processes of dyeing, cooking, metal-smelting (Mayhew and Edwards 1936 p.255 )

History was the backbone of the curriculum, its ethical value measured by the insight it afforded into "the structure and working of society." By studying the development of civilisation, children would get scientific insight into the history of the development of the human race. History was used as a sociological study, a tool for moral instruction rather than a chronological list of events. The children were encouraged to appreciate the values of social life and see the benefits to be obtained

through cooperation. The unity of all the sciences was to be found in geography because the earth was the environment to which human beings had adapted throughout history. Mathematics was a social tool, useful when applied to trade, commerce, and banking.

Apart from acquiring knowledge and developing the social spirit, the occupations at the school were productive in two other ways. First, they were a means of securing the children's interest. Dewey was convinced that adults and children were motivated in the same way to do the things that interested them. Adults generally had the freedom to choose to do what interested them; in the traditional school, children did not. They were, in effect prisoners, forced to be interested in whatever subject was given to them. Dewey believed that if the interest of the child were captured, all the energy of the impulses would be directed into that activity, but he also had a realistic idea of what would interest the child in the first place. Secondly, there was an end result; the occupations were real ones, which reproduced or ran parallel to "some form of work carried on in social life," not just aimless and isolated exercises in manual training. Woodwork, metalwork, weaving, cooking and sewing were all processes by which society had kept itself going in the past.

Integrated into the school policy was the idea that discipline or moral training should develop out of the community as it had done in pre-industrial times. "The one thing needful is that we recognise that moral principles... are inherent in community life, and in the running machinery of the individual." (Dewey 1897 EP) Discipline had to develop from within the children rather than be imposed on them by adults. "The discipline of the school should proceed from the life of the school as a whole and not directly from the teacher... (it) evolved as a result of the participation by both teachers and children in a group activity and a school spirit developed which fostered social sensitivity and conscience.....there was a spirit of freedom and mutual respect on the part of both teachers and children.... We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and of character-building involved in this kind of life; training in habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the world." (Dewey 1899

SS) If children were given respect in the work they did, they would develop both self-respect and respect for others. "The best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought. " (Dewey 1897 MPC)

Implementing discipline in this way involved trial and error. Dewey acknowledged that in the early days the teachers had not been sure how to assess the degree of liberty that the children should be allowed. (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) As soon as it opened its doors to visitors the school was criticised for its 'subversive activities.' Dworkin (1959) Some were appalled at the noise and apparent confusion in the classrooms and shocked by the fact that all the children were working and talking and moving around the classroom. It was reported that the school " was devoted to personal liberty and that it advocated rampant individualism." (ibid) But Dewey anticipated "confusion and bustle", seeing it as inevitable if children were actively engrossed in what they were doing. (Dewey 1899 SS) The noise and activity did not imply any lack of industry, rather the contrary. Taking part in group work enabled the development of a "deeper and infinitely wider discipline." (ibid) Other visitors to the school appreciated this. In an article on the school for the *Journal of Education*, Harriet A. Farrand wrote: "The visitor is impressed, first of all, with the freedom and unconstraint everywhere manifest. He sees clusters of children here and there in the different rooms, gathered around an older person, all talking familiarly about something which seems to be extremely interesting. He thinks at first that he must have stumbled into a very big family, where everyone is having the happiest kind of time.....If they wish to ease their restless limbs by wriggling about, they are at perfect liberty to do so.....Discussions over difficult questions are often lively. There is freedom from constraint, and yet the liberty is never allowed to degenerate into license." (Farrand 1898 quoted in Dykhuisen 1973)

The implications for teacher-education were considerable. Much more was demanded of the teacher than was usual. In order to be able to see opportunities for learning in any discipline, the teacher

had first to be an expert in that discipline as well as in the possible directions that discipline might lead. In order to know which 'impulses' to encourage in any one child, she had to have a close knowledge of each individual child as well as knowledge of child development in general. To guide children towards social attitudes which are cooperative and sharing, she had to have a vision of a democratic community. Her task then was to create the conditions in which the child was enabled to "interpret his own powers from the standpoint of their possibilities in social use." (Dewey 1897 EP) Over the years, the teachers learned to do this although there was much experimentation and change as they did so. In their book, Mayhew and Edwards wrote that " as life flowed on, the child became conscious of his social relationships; that there were others in the group like him who had rights and privileges; that it was more fun to play with them even if he must renounce somewhat his own way and consider the ways of others in relation to his own....he soon came to see that his consideration of and work with others was to the advantage of all, that by pooling his effort with that of the group, larger and more interesting results were obtained." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936)

Teachers had to find activities and projects which involved orderly development and inter-connection of subject-matter. "The problem is to find what conditions must be fulfilled in order that study and learning will naturally and necessarily take place, what conditions must be present so that pupils will make the responses which cannot help having learning as their consequence....The method of the teacher becomes a matter of finding the conditions which call out self-educative activity, or learning and of cooperating with the children so that they have learning as their consequence." (Dewey 1938) The teacher had the "riper and fuller experience and the greater insight into the possibilities of continuous development found in any continuous project." (ibid) Because of this greater experience teachers had an obligation and a right to guide their pupils. It was a question of putting back into the child's experience the knowledge that had, over the centuries, been distilled from experience and put into books. "An interest in the formal apprehension of symbols and in their memorized reproduction becomes in many pupils a substitute for the original and vital interest in reality.....and so has come up the modern theory and practice of

the 'interesting', in the false sense of the term. The material is still left...just material externally selected and formulated. It is still just so much geography and arithmetic and grammar; not so much potentiality of child-experience with regard to language, earth and numbered and measured reality. Hence the difficulty of bringing the mind to bear upon it; hence its repulsiveness; the tendency for attention to wander; for other acts and images to crowd in and expel the lesson." (Dewey 1902) The teacher had to take the abstract material of past experience and "psychologise" it, that is to say, to make it of immediate interest to the child by change it until it was "within the range and the scope" of the child's life. Because this requires a great deal of skill and knowledge, teachers tended to take the short cut and endeavour to make the abstract subject material palatable by what Dewey calls "sugar-coating; to conceal its barrenness by intermediate and unrelated material." What the teacher needs to do is to "determine the environment of the child" and then place the knowledge in it. It was their task to "supervise systematically the intellectual and physical work of the child." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936 p27)

The low pupil-teacher ratio in the school enabled the teacher to continually observe the psychological and physiological needs of each child and see to their general well-being and development. The individuality of the child had to be recognised and respected and any special ability that a child might have was "a distinctive resource to be utilized in the cooperative experience of a group."(ibid) Recognising the individuality of the child was not to fuss and worry over their peculiarities, weaknesses, likes and dislikes; instead it should involve observing the child in action in the classroom over a period of time. It meant having subject-matter organised so that the child's activities would be continued and carried forward and it was during this process that the teacher could observe the child's needs, desires, interests and capacities. Being sensitive to a child's individuality, therefore, demanded a high degree of organisation. There had to be a long enough time-span for various endeavours and explorations to be undertaken so that teachers could observe the child and at the same time, there should be the opportunity for new fields to be opened up to the

child's view- new questions and some idea of what to do next. Above all the first impulse to action had to come from the child and thereafter one activity or occupation lead on to another.

The teachers at the Dewey School had a dual role, seeing the world both as the child sees it and as the adult sees it. "Like Alice, she must step with her children behind the looking glass and in this imaginative land she must see all things with their eyes and limited by their experience; but, in time of need, she must be able to recover her trained vision and from the point of view of an adult supply the guide posts of knowledge and the skills of method." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936 p.312)

Dewey recognised the importance of the teacher's role. So much depended on the teacher's ability to mediate between the impulses and capacities of the child and the 'right social growth.' "I believe.... that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life. I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth. I believe that in this way the teacher is always the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God." (Dewey 1897 MCP)

Although Dewey called the teacher the prophet of the true God in 1897, it is unlikely that he would have done so ten years later, not because he saw the teacher as less vital or valuable, simply that God, as a form of reference, slipped slowly out of his vocabulary. In fact, the teacher that Dewey envisaged can be discerned in the 'liberationist teacher' of Soltis and Fenstermacher. (1986)

In 1904, Dewey resigned from the Laboratory School because of a difference of opinion with the President over its administration, possibly over a slight to Alice. The closing of the school was a tragedy because the school was just beginning to prove what it could do - educate children to be thoughtful, caring, enterprising individuals. We can never know how the school would have coped with the specific difficulties of secondary education nor how it would have applied its theory and practice to the public school system. The eldest children were fourteen when it closed. It did not become the archetype of the child-centred progressive schools that were to follow, nor were the

most important principles of the Laboratory School experiment used by other schools as criteria for their own practice. (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) None used the systematic inquiry of the Laboratory School nor did they have the combination of the social, democratic and intellectual agenda. (Greene in Brickman and Lehrer 1959 p.87) But Dewey was clear that he did not expect other schools to imitate what they had done. The purpose of a working model was to test a certain principle and if it worked, to find out how it did so. (Dewey SS 1899) Dewey's hope was that the school might serve as a source of inspiration for other educational researchers and administrators.

The Laboratory School did not reflect the wider life of Chicago. It was a pedagogical paradise, insulated from the world. The school population was homogeneous and privileged and the teacher-pupil ratio uniquely low. The school could never have been replicated in the larger society, but then it was not designed for social reproduction. "Dewey sometimes referred to the Laboratory School as an 'embryonic community' but it was far from an embryo of the society outside its walls." (Westbrook 1991) Although occupations were at the heart of the curriculum, the children worked in a cooperative context which would have been unrecognisable outside the school; their activities were quite free from economic stress. But Dewey maintained that the aim of the occupations was not the economic value of the products but the development of social power and insight. (Dewey 1897 SS) Dewey believed that the purpose of carrying out an experiment was to save others from having to do so and at least give them something definite and positive to go by. Such an experiment, he felt, had to operate under the most favourable conditions, free from the stresses of the outside world. (Dewey 1899 SS) He acknowledged it was just a test, not made for the larger world and it is not possible to know how the experiment would have developed had the life of the school been longer.

What had Dewey proved in those seven years? There can be no doubt about the academic rigour at the Laboratory School, nor how well-planned and structured the curriculum was. In not reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the population of America, it is hard to assess the value of the



Laboratory School as a model for democratic education. The purpose of the school was to cultivate in the children civic virtues such as cooperation, altruism, consideration and open-mindedness - to develop in the children a predisposition for citizenship. One of the criticisms that has been levelled at the Laboratory School was that it was not run democratically in that the teachers guided the activities and the curriculum. This is so - but Dewey always acknowledged the wider experience of the teacher, while at the same time valuing the experience of the children. There was also a good, cooperative relationship between the teacher and the pupil without the 'laissez-faire' attitude for which progressive education, and, ironically, Dewey, was subsequently criticised. Through working in groups at the school, the children learnt to be willing to subject hypothesis to public test and criticism and there was a spirit of experimental science in the school. Dewey wanted science to be a self-corrective activity permeating political and moral life as well as the science laboratory. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of the effect that the school had on the children apart from the anecdotes of teachers, parents and children. (Connell 1980) The school was never evaluated independently, yet from the accounts of what went on in the school it is possible to infer a story of success. The teachers were continually learning from their experience with the children and reconstructing their educational ideas each day accordingly. Comments from parents and teachers indicate a marked growth in self-expression and self-confidence in the children. One observer commented: "Either these are exceptional children or they have been exceptionally trained." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936) They seemed able to meet and cope with circumstances as they arose and to work easily with others in solving problems. It was noticed that in those who had spent some years at the school there was an ingrained objectivity in their thinking, and a readiness to inquire and to conduct appropriate research into matters which engaged their attention. Through their school activities, the children came to realize that thinking was the way to cope with experience. (Connell 1980 p.77) Dewey had wanted to cultivate in children the capacity for exercising deliberative, practical reason in moral situations and it was the case in the school that intelligent choices had come to mean social choices which were also moral choices. Attitudes had been cooperative in spirit; individual ideals and interests had tended largely towards alignment with

those of school society. It is a wry comment on the success of the school that Mrs. Mayhew and Mrs. Edwards noted that the children had a rude awakening when they went into the 'real world.' They had been prepared for life in a world which did not exist. (Westbrook 1991 p.110) "Now, as then, society brings both shock and conflict to a young person thus trained, even if he be forewarned. His attempts to use intelligent action for social purposes are thwarted and balked by the competitive antisocial spirit and dominant selfishness in society as it is." (Mayhew and Edwards 1936 p.439)

In 1910, Dewey wrote 'How We Think', a book based on what he had learnt at the Laboratory School. The underlying conviction in the book is that because the learning process is a thinking process, a child who is to learn must be taught to think. In the preface he wrote: "The native and unspoiled attitude of childhood, marked by ardent curiosity, fertile imagination and love of experimental inquiry, is near, very near, to the attitude of the scientific mind." (Dewey 1910) He acknowledged his debt to the intelligence and sympathy of his teachers and his fundamental debt to Alice, "by whom the ideas of this book were inspired, and through whose work in connection with the Laboratory School, existing in Chicago between 1896 and 1903, the ideas attained such concreteness as comes from embodiment and testing in practice." (ibid)

## Chapter Five

### Vocational education

*"No question at present under discussion in education is so fraught with consequences for the future of democracy as the question of industrial education. Its right development will do more to make public education truly democratic than any other one agency under consideration. Its wrong treatment will as surely accentuate all undemocratic tendencies in our present situation, by fostering and strengthening class divisions in school and out."* (Dewey 1912 An Undemocratic Proposal in Vocational Education, 11, 1912-1913)

Soon after his resignation from the University of Chicago in 1904, Dewey was offered an appointment in the faculty of philosophy at Columbia University, New York. He felt a great sense of futility after leaving the Laboratory School and a great sadness at leaving friends and colleagues. For the next few years he concentrated on philosophy, though he took an interest in the schools attached to Teachers College - Columbia's education faculty. (Greene 1959 in Brickman and Lehrer) His determination to fight for democratic education, however, remained undiminished, becoming focused on the controversy which had been brewing up for some years over vocational education. The arguments he advanced in this debate indicate just how radical his ideas about democracy in education were.

It was Dewey's commitment to his particular democratic ideal that brought him into conflict with vocational educators after he left Chicago. Initially he was identified with them, for two reasons. First, he had stated in 'The School and Society,' 1899, that the intellectual interest was not dominant in the majority of children, a fact which was not lost on the vocationalist lobby. His contention supported their view that the academic curriculum in public schools was irrelevant to

most children who should instead be taught industrial skills or manual training. They were therefore led to believe he was 'on their side.' In addition, there was no doubt that Dewey considered manual training or work with the hands to be a vital part of children's education. Again his views seemed to endorse the wisdom of the vocationalists' campaign. What was overlooked were the two conditions essential to Dewey's concept of vocational education which they had no intention of meeting; first, manual training in schools had to be done in a democratic way as a community endeavour and in order to cultivate the social spirit; secondly, any manual training had to be grounded in intellectual insights. Without this dimension young people would not be empowered to have control over their work.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was mounting concern about the inadequacies of the public school system. As the pace of industrialisation had quickened, the need for a skilled workforce in industry, agriculture and the new technologies intensified, but children received no training for such work in school. One certainty, expressed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, was that education was closely related to the nation's progress, and Americans had looked with interest at countries that appeared to have found a solution. The tools, models and drawings on show at the Exposition from the Moscow Imperial Technical School, created in 1868, were much admired; the director, Victor Della Vos, had set up "instruction" shops for each distinctive art or trade with the relevant skills taught in pedagogical order. These came to replace the "construction" shops which had simply been practical workshops to complement work in mathematics, physics and engineering. President Runkle at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was so impressed, that by August of 1876, he had set up a new School of Mechanic Arts to provide manual education for those who wanted to pursue a career in industry without becoming scientific engineers. Runkle particularly wanted to achieve a proper union between mental and manual work, a union which he felt had previously been provided by apprenticeship. This system was in severe decline as masters were no longer keen to teach their apprentices, apprentices no longer wanted to accept long periods of indenture and child labour generally was

increasingly becoming exploitative rather than educative. (Auchmughty 1888 quoted in Cremin 1961 p.35) The difficulties were exacerbated by "the changing industrial conditions and the bitter and cruel opposition of organised labor as a whole." (Lazerson and Grubb NAM 1905 Report.)

Calvin Woodward, from Washington University, Missouri, was in sympathy with Runkle, carrying on his crusade, first into higher education and then into the public schools. In 1873, he had complained about the need for men of skill in every department of human activity, a need which the schools and colleges were not addressing. Instead they were turning out 'gentlemen' who were fit only for the three learned professions. In an effort to correct this deficiency, Woodward had established, by 1879, the Manual Training School of Washington University which provided a three-year program divided equally between mental and manual work - mathematics, drawing, science, languages, history and literature along with instruction in carpentry, wood turning, forge work and bench and machine work. The aim of the School was liberal rather than vocational, to educate rather than produce. Woodward next attempted to translate his philosophy into the public schools and educate the "whole boy for all spheres of usefulness." (Cremin 1961) He hoped that the wider curriculum would stop children being bored and encourage them to stay on longer at school.

Instead the plan caused an outcry from those who thought that children should be doing bookwork at school. W.T. Harris at the Concord School of Philosophy stated that toolwork was as educative as baseball and marbles. "There is no information stored up in the plow, hoe handle or steam engine; but there is information stored up in books." (ibid) Woodward won the battle, however, and in the 1880s many schools of manual training opened as well as manual classes within the high schools. Unfortunately, as machines replaced tools and productive skill took over from artistic handcraft, Woodward's splendid vision got increasingly dimmer until it finally amounted to little more than vocational training. In addition to the manual training schools there were also trade schools where young people could attend short courses in different skills - bricklaying, for example - no culture added. These partly replaced the function of the apprenticeship system but generally

there was the feeling that "botch" workmen were being turned out on all sides. In 1886, the Secretary of the Cigarmakers' Union complained : "The trade schools thus far in existence have been nothing more or less than the breeding ground for scabs and rats." (ibid)

It was the success of Germany that lent urgency to the problem. By 1893, after the depression, it was felt that American industry would benefit from a greater share in the foreign market. In 1895, therefore, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) was founded. Germany was America's chief competitor, so it was to Germany that the leaders of the NAM went in order to discover the secret of their success. There they found a split education system with general academic schools on the one hand, and on the other hand, excellent technical schools offering highly differentiated training programs geared precisely to the hierarchical skill needs of German industry. These training schools were not administered by educators but by men from the Ministry of Commerce.

It seemed to the NAM committee that in having a system split into general and vocational institutions, the Germans had found the answer. They were particularly impressed by the words of a leading German philosopher of vocational education, George Kerschensteiner: "The first aim of education for those leaving the elementary school is training for trade efficiency and joy and love of work. With these is connected the training of those elementary virtues which efficiency and love of work have in their train - conscientiousness, industry, perseverance, responsibility, self-restraint and devotion to an active life." (quoted in Wirth 1983 p.71)

The organisation of American schools presented a sorry contrast to Germany. Despite the money which was put into the U.S. public school system, barely 1% of the entire population ever attained to higher education, only 5% to high school and more than half left on or before the fifth year in elementary school. (Dewey 1899 S&S p.27) The Chairman of the NAM committee decided that this was because schools were offering a literary education to children when only one child in thirty

was capable of receiving it. The other twenty-nine were, in effect, being neglected - or failing. The traditional, academic curriculum was irrelevant to most of them and, discouraged from staying on, most left as soon as they could, having learnt little more than reading, writing and simple arithmetic. The businessmen were particularly vocal in their condemnation of the high school curriculum - it was "productive of more evil than good. Too much education of a certain sort, such as Greek, Latin, French, German, and especially book-keeping, to a person of humble antecedents, is utterly demoralising in nine cases out of ten." (Kirkland in Nasaw 1979 p.116)

This was not surprising given that, as Dewey maintained, the intellectual interest was not dominant in most people. "If we were to conceive our educational end and aim in a less exclusive way, if we were to introduce into educational processes the activities which appeal to those whose dominant interest is to do and to make, we should find the hold of the school upon its members to be more vital, more prolonged, containing more of culture." (Dewey 1899 SS p.28) Since Woodward's campaign, manual training was provided in many public schools, but this had not succeeded in encouraging children to stay on. Anxiety about the waste due to early school leaving increased.

Dewey's position at this point could be misconstrued. He was both openly stating that the majority of children were not interested in intellectual work and supporting the introduction of manual training into schools. He appeared to be on the side of the NAM and the businessmen. He acknowledged that manual work kept children "alert and active, instead of passive and receptive; more useful, more capable, and hence more inclined to be helpful at home; it prepares them to some extent for the practical duties of later life - the girls to be more efficient house managers.....the boys for their future vocations." (Dewey 1899 SS p.13) To use manual training in this way was undemocratic and exploitative. Dewey knew that manual training as it was applied in the public schools embodied a narrow and instrumental view of education which sold the child short. "We must conceive of work in wood and metal, of weaving, sewing and cooking, as methods of living and learning, not as distinct studies." (ibid) At the Laboratory School manual activity had been a

means to an end and that end was knowledge. In a lecture on manual training to his students in 1899, Dewey explained: "If the manual training work has any generic significance for education, it must be found in its developmental value, in the fact that it means something in the growth of experiences and the enrichment of experience, which cannot be obtained in any other way." (Dewey 1899 quoted in Archimbault 1966) It was also intended to develop social power and insight in children through cooperating in a joint activity. While Dewey's pedagogy included manual training, it was set in a context very different from that envisaged by the NAM.

While the manual training in schools may have been better than nothing, it was no substitute for proper industrial education. The NAM were convinced that separate vocational schools were required, organised by men in industry. In 1905, the NAM Committee on Industrial Education again enthused over German industrial education. "The German technical and trade schools are at once the admiration and fear of all countries. In the world's race for commercial supremacy we must copy and improve upon the German method of education. Germany relies chiefly upon her (high school) trained workers for her success and prosperity. She puts no limit on the money to be expended in trade and technical education." (NAM Report 1905 in Lazerson and Grubb-1974) However, it was made clear that any industrial education introduced in America was to be for the 'American' youth and not for the children of immigrants who could stay on the factory floor doing the unskilled jobs. Having such industrial training programs in public schools would enable 'American' boys to get supervisory positions in industry. There was a lot of hard feeling towards the immigrants who came over and took jobs from the 'American' boys, even though they were the sort of jobs the 'Americans' considered unworthy of them. There had been disapproval in 1902 when a contracting firm in New York City had employed 4,900 skilled mechanics direct from Europe, paying them fifty cents per day above the union rate, because it was impossible to secure such valuable workmen from amongst the local New Yorkers." We should not depend on Europe for our skill; we must educate our own boys." (ibid) While the NAM Report paid tribute to the technical and manual schools already in existence, it made the strongest plea for trade schools to



rectify this sort of occurrence and provide a thorough technical or industrial education. "To authorise and found and organise trade schools in which the youth of our land may be taught the practical and technical knowledge of a trade is the most important issue before the American people to-day." (NAM Committee Report 1905 in Lazerson and Grubb 1974)

In 1906, a report published by the Massachusetts Commission on Industrial and Technical Education added to the general unrest by stating that thousands of young people were not attending school and were stuck in dead-end jobs without hope of advancement because they lacked the necessary skills. They had left school not because they had to for financial reasons but because the school curriculum had little to offer them. (Westbrook 1991) The report concluded that schools were not providing children with an industrial intelligence and said that the curriculum should shift from being cultural to vocational. That same year, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education was founded and this organisation, along with NAM, put all their efforts into getting federal support for proper vocational training in schools. Many other groups joined in the lobbying organisation - the Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Labour, major farm organisations who were desperate to have agricultural science taught to children and the settlement workers. Nor was the controversy just educational, it was also social and political. Dean Ellwood Cubberley at Stanford wrote in 1909 that it was high time for schools "to give up the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal and that our society is devoid of classes." (Cubberley in Nasaw 1979)

In Germany, class distinctions were taken for granted and education was based on this divided class structure. A dual educational system could therefore be easily and successfully implemented. But German social problems were very different from those of America, supposedly a classless society. American schools "had to maintain the illusion of democracy in a society where the increasing agglomeration of wealth in the hands of the few was rendering negligible the political

power of the many." (Nasaw 1979) The myth of unlimited upward mobility had to be preserved despite evidence to the contrary. It certainly made a dual educational system more problematical.

But, despite class divisions, and as well as giving them industrial training, German schools also gave their students a good general education, stressing the importance of becoming good citizens. Ex-Superintendent Cooley of Chicago visited Germany and reported back that Kerschensteiner believed that industrial training was not for the sake of industries but for the sake of citizenship. "If the boy is to become an efficient workman he must comprehend his work in all of its relations to science, to art, and to society in general.....The young workman who understands his trade in its scientific relations, its historical, economic and social bearings, will take a higher view of his trade, of his powers and duties as a citizen and as a member of society." (Lazerson and Grubb 1974) Educating young people to be useful citizens was central to Dewey's notion of participatory democracy, but this was not a politically instrumental ploy on his part, nor was it just an idle notion inherited from the idealism of T.H.Green. The heterogeneous nature of American society made education for citizenship increasingly important. This highlighted a vital distinction between education for social control and education for participatory democracy, between the vocational lobby and Dewey.

However, Dewey's idealist version of democracy was a far cry from the democracy perceived by the NAM, deriving largely from Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism. This was illustrated by a report produced by the NAM Committee in 1912 on Industrial Education, entitled: "Three Kinds of Children - Three Kinds of Education." The three kinds of children were "the abstract-minded, the concrete or hand-minded and the great intermediate class." Dean Russell at Teachers College contended that it was democratic to have differentiated schooling. If young people were facing different futures it was only just that they should receive different educations. He praised the negro schools of the South as the most democratic of all. Democracy, he believed, had acquired a different meaning. It now implied offering every student the opportunity for an education equally

adjusted to what school officials assumed would be his or her future vocation. (Nasaw 1979)

Differentiated schooling was the solution.

That same year, 1912, Russell's view was given substance in a campaign initiated by the State of Illinois who wanted to introduce a dual system of education for children over the age of fourteen. Essentially it was an attempt to have separate vocational schools and academic schools. Dewey regarded this as "the greatest evil threatening the interests of democracy in education," and he immediately took up the challenge to oppose it. (Dewey 1912) In 1914 a Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education was set up, after which the campaign for dual education became unstoppable. At an annual NEA convention that year, W.C. Bagley of the University of Illinois, who supported Dewey, had an open and well-reported argument with David Snedden, until 1909 a professor at Teachers College and colleague of Dewey. Bagley made it clear that separating vocational schools from other schools would lead to a stratified society, and achieving industrial efficiency would be at the expense of democracy. "A stratified society and a permanent proletariat are undoubtedly the prime conditions of a national efficiency. But wherever our people have been intelligently informed regarding what this type of efficiency costs, they have been fairly unanimous in declaring that the price is too high." By having off vocational education away from any other education risked depriving children of the opportunity to get a liberal education at an early age. "We mean to keep open the door of opportunity at every level of the educational ladder." (Bagley NEA 1914 P120 in Nasaw 1979 p) It was clear that if working-class children were separated from middle-class privileged children in their early teens, the possibility of achieving any sort of social class harmony would be made even more remote.

There were two reasons for Dewey's involvement in fighting this campaign. He was in favour of manual training in the public school system because it meant that all children received the same benefits from both a general academic education and from a degree of practical training. If schools for vocational training were made separate from the high schools with their general, academic

curriculum, Dewey feared first that it would strengthen class divisions between those schools and mark off the interests of the employers from the workers. "Those who believe in the continued separate existence of what they are pleased to call the 'lower classes' or the 'labouring classes' would naturally rejoice to have schools in which these 'classes' would be segregated." (ibid) Secondly, he feared that children in both types of school would be getting an impoverished education. In the vocational schools, children would get a poor deal because "such schools would not and could not give their pupils a knowledge of industrial occupation....in relation to 'science, art and society in general.'" In the general academic schools, children would be deprived of the invaluable experience afforded by manual activity. Dewey also feared that victory for Illinois would encourage other States to follow suit. "The scheme of a split system tends to paralyse one of the most vital movements now operating for the improvement of existing general education. The old time, general academic education is beginning to be vitalised by the introduction of manual, industrial and social activities; it is beginning to recognise its responsibility to train all the youth for useful citizenship in which each may render useful service to society and make an honest and decent living." (Dewey 1912) He did not want this to end.

A major factor in the campaign for dual education was the support of a very powerful interest group - the social efficiency experts or administrative progressives. They provided the strongest force behind the thrust for vocational education. The most prominent amongst them was David Snedden. Back in 1900, Snedden had provided a scientific rationale for the sentiments of Dean Russell, when he gave an address entitled, "Education for the Rank and File". Snedden believed the ultimate aim of education to be the greatest degree of efficiency. To achieve this, the rank and file, namely those who would do duty in the ranks, who would follow and not lead, should receive, in the name of efficiency, a utilitarian training. The goal was "the moulding of the individual's feelings and desires to suit the needs of the group." It was not just efficiency that was being sought. Certain social problems would be solved at the same time; education for the rank and file was a massive act of social control whereby the rank and file would be trained to do one thing and

one thing only from a relatively early age. Properly 'fitted', he intended each child as an adult to possess "such an intelligent understanding of authority as to make the exercise of arbitrary authority unnecessary." (Snedden 1900 quoted in Garrison 1990)

In 1912, Snedden, now Commissioner of Education, had appointed Charles Prosser, the executive secretary of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, as his deputy to collaborate in the creation and administration of the new vocational programmes. They had the backing of a formidable group of men - Edward Ross, the sociologist and expert on social control; he saw education as an inexpensive form of police (Spring 1973); Frederick Taylor, the industrial engineer and expert in time-motion studies; and Edward Thorndike, the eminent psychologist and quantitative research expert. Together they provided the scientific foundations for the social efficiency movement. With the new scientific psychology it was considered possible to see which humans were best fitted to which functions. This was called vocational guidance, and, according to Charles Prosser, it would "solve the problem of fitting the great mass of our people for useful employment." (ibid) He believed it was "the mission of the schools of the future to select by testing and training....to adjust boys and girls for life....to uncover their varied tastes and aptitudes and to direct and train them in avenues for which they display the most capacity. Such a program would require a differentiation of the course of study for pupils between twelve and fourteen years of age." (ibid) In order to achieve maximum efficiency, Taylor advocated atomising work so that each individual would be "confined to the performance of a single leading function," that one that the vocational guidance experts had selected. Ross saw young people as malleable. "To collect little plastic lumps of human dough from private households and shape them on the social kneadingboard exhibits a faith in the power of suggestion which few peoples ever attain." (Ross 1906 in Karier, Violas & Spring 1973) It was a chilling outlook, all the more so because their ideas were part of a vision of a democratic society in which liberal education was conceived of as a training of the child to be a good utilizer or consumer. (Snedden 1914) It signified a parting of the ways for the progressives. "By 1905 urban progressives were already separating along two paths.

While one group used the language of the budget, boosterism, and social control, the other talked of economic justice, human opportunities and rehabilitated democracy. Efficiency as economy diverged further and further from efficiency as social service." (Wiebe 1967 quoted in Wirth 1983)

This difference of opinion was highlighted in the letters exchanged between Dewey and Snedden in *The New Republic* in 1915. Snedden was genuinely surprised that he and Dewey seemed to be opposed. "He thought Dewey was an ally in condemning 'sterile, bookish education' and he was hurt when he found Dewey opposing the German type dualism. He expressed a sense of betrayal. 'To find Dr. Dewey apparently giving aid and comfort to opponents of a broader, richer, and more effective program of education....is discouraging.'" (Wirth 1983) Dewey made his position clear in his reply. "The kind of vocational education I am interested in is not one which will "adapt" workers to the industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would be educational time-servers is to resist every move in this direction and to strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system and ultimately transform it". (Dewey 1915 *New Republic* quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.175) Dewey wanted vocational and industrial education which would incorporate his democratic values. He carried on: "In the name of a genuinely vocational education I object....to the identification of education with acquisition of specialised skill in the management of machines at the expense of an industrial intelligence based on science and a knowledge of social problems and conditions. I object to regarding as vocational education any training which does not have as its supreme regard the development of such intelligent initiative, ingenuity and executive capacity as shall make workers, as far as may be, the masters of their own industrial fate.....And I am utterly opposed to giving the power of predestination, by means of narrow trade-training, to any group of fallible men, no matter how well-intentioned." (Dewey 1915) By giving workers power and control over their work, Dewey could break with the autocratic tradition.

The differences between Dewey and the "administrative progressives" were not always as clear as they were in the debate with Snedden. (Westbrook 1991 p.178) No exhortations from Dewey prevented the vocationalists from using his progressive ideas without the vital elements. They employed the same terms but with different connotations and anyone could be excused, on a superficial level at least, from believing that the progressives and the vocationalists were hand in glove. It is possibly the important role that manual activity played in Dewey's profoundly progressive pedagogy that has since led to a subsequent confusion between progressive methods and vocational training. However, the political, intellectual and social agenda was profoundly different and when removed from the context of his larger democratic philosophy, Dewey's pedagogical reforms were adaptable to quite different purposes, including those of the administrative progressives. (ibid)

In aiming to find, through psychological testing, just the one occupation that a child was particularly good at, the approach of the efficiency experts was as restricting as Dewey's was expansive and generous. Dewey objected most strongly to their underlying assumption that a child was good at only just one thing. "We must avoid not only limitation of conception of vocation to the occupations where immediately tangible commodities are produced but also the notion that vocations are distributed in an exclusive way, one and only one to each person. Such restricted specialism is impossible; nothing could be more absurd than to try to educate individuals with an eye to only one line of activity." (Dewey 1916) It was not only limiting to the person, it was wasteful to society to restrict the activities of any one person to any one vocation. Dewey criticised Snedden and Prosser over this just as he criticised it in Plato. "Plato laid down the fundamental principle of a philosophy of education when he asserted that it was the business of education to discover what each person is good at, to train him to mastery of that mode of excellence. (Plato's) error was not in qualitative principle but in his limited conception of the scope of vocations socially needed." (ibid) Dewey's theory of growth entailed that each individual was good at many things,

that education was for life, and that a person had many talents which would develop throughout that life.

Dewey did not want schools to adopt the industrial model whereby children would be processed through the educational system like car-parts on an assembly-line. This was neither democracy nor freedom. To train a child for one task was to effectively imprison it within its own incompetence. In Western society it was the liberally educated minority that occupied positions of power and influence. To have children classified as 'rank and file' and to have them 'scientifically' allotted tasks which would not only restrict their personal development but deprive them of playing any part in their own democratic destiny was doubly odious. He wrote: "At the present juncture, there is a movement in behalf of something called vocational education which.....would continue the traditional, liberal or cultural education for the few economically able to enjoy it and would give to the masses a narrow technical trade education for specialized callings, carried on under the control of the state." (Dewey 1916)

Between 1899, when 'The School and Society' was published, and 1916, when 'Democracy and Education' was published, Dewey's attitude to vocational or industrial education changed and developed. In 1899 he had written: "It is our social problem now, even more urgent than in the time of Plato, that method, purpose, understanding, shall exist in the consciousness of the one who does the work, that his activity shall have meaning to himself. Plato speaks somewhere of the slave as one who in his actions does not express his own ideas, but those of another man." (Dewey 1899 S&S) He saw the school as being in the vanguard of social reform. By 1916, in 'Democracy and Education', Dewey realized that reform had to take place in industry as well as in the school. He was arguing not just that workers should have understanding of work but that they must also have control over it if it were to contribute to their self-realization. "The great majority of workers have no insight into the social aims of their pursuits and no direct personal interest in them. The results achieved are not the ends of their actions, but only of their employers." In a capitalist society, the



sort of worker participation that Dewey envisaged was not possible because the animating motive for work was private profit or personal power. He wrote: "In an autocratically managed society, it is often a conscious object to prevent the development of freedom and responsibility; a few do the planning and ordering, the others follow directions and are deliberately confined to narrow and prescribed channels of endeavour." (Dewey 1916) In a society where the individual was not autonomous, participatory democracy could not flourish.

Chapter 23 in "Democracy and Education" reads like a final attempt on Dewey's part to put the reasons for his opposition to Snedden and Prosser before the public, namely that no distinction should be drawn between vocational and liberal education; that such a distinction exacerbated social and political divisions. Dewey saw liberal education historically as the education pursued by free citizens who were few in number and whose freedom "had a large servile class as its substratum." (Dewey 1944) In the more recent past, a liberal education could be acquired by those who wanted it and could pay for it, namely the upper and ruling classes. Dewey criticised Greek society in which this liberal education had been established; it had been a rigid and undemocratic society. Plato had had little perception of the uniqueness of individuals whereas to Dewey, the diversity of human beings was a fundamental premiss. "Progress in knowledge has made us aware of the superficiality of Plato's lumping of individuals and their original powers into a few sharply marked-off classes; it has taught us that original capacities are indefinitely numerous and variable." (Dewey 1916) Dewey considered the sort of vocational education advocated by Snedden and Prosser to be profoundly instrumental and he regarded them and their supporters as third-rate descendants of Plato who wished people to be segregated into distinct classes. It was clear that in America, those who were rich enough and in a position to have the education they wanted would demand a liberal and cultural one. If those less fortunate were given an education which amounted to little more than "trade preparation" then the class divisions were bound to remain.

Dewey's arguments failed to convince anyone and the Smith-Hughes Act was finally passed in 1917. The power and influence of the educators supporting it had been great and they had the massive backing of the many groups of business-men, agriculturalists and industrialists whose interests they shared. It was one of many attempts made in the United States to address the problem of vocational education and industrial training, but in that it sanctioned the introduction of vocational education into mainstream schooling and granted schools federal aid, it was a landmark in the history of vocational education. It was a victory for Dewey in that no dual system of education was introduced.

After the Act was passed, the numbers of 14-17 year olds staying on at High School rose from 6.7% to 32.3%. However, there was still resistance to the main thrust of the reforms which enabled students to do vocational courses in high school. They made their own choices and did liberal courses. "In 1912-13, after industrial education had been generally accepted but before federal funding was in effect, 6.9% of high school students were enrolled in industrial and trade courses; in 1924 when utilization of federal aid was near its peak, 6.7 % of high school students were in such courses." (Lazerson and Grubb 1974) Pupils refused to opt for the new industrial education and chose the liberal arts courses instead. Students chose to do just what the authorities had said was beyond their interest and capacity. "They were not going to settle for anything less than the traditional academic programme that their middle-class predecessors had enjoyed.....The more the educators - with the applause of the community - moved to adjust the curriculum to their "requirements", the more they elected the traditional academic courses. High school to them meant Latin and algebra, not metal-work and sewing.....Both parents and children knew what they wanted - and that was to escape the workplaces the new programs were designed to prepare them for." (David Nasau 1979)

It could be argued that the apparent purpose of the Act was to strengthen the bond between education and industry, a bond which Dewey and his opponents considered important. But it left

unanswered three questions. To what degree should education serve industry? How should it do it? What sort of democracy was presupposed? Dewey stood apart from the efficiency experts in three vital respects. First, he was adamant that any sort of manual training should have social significance. It was only when, as at the Laboratory School, the jobs or occupations were done in a spirit of cooperation that the 'so-called manual training' had real value. When the children built or cooked or gardened together it transformed their activity. It was vitally important that the workers should understand the social significance of their work. That was the first crucial difference.

Second, the manual work that the child was doing had to have intellectual or scientific significance; it had to be put into an intellectual context. The only way to prevent an occupation from being a mindless, meaningless, factory-line job was to give the child scientific insight into what he was doing. In making manual occupations the foundation for the curriculum at the Laboratory School, Dewey hoped to keep the work of the hand and the mind wedded. If this was done in vocational education it could not then be mere trade training. (Westbrook 1991) Children had to have an education that made their work meaningful to them. "How many of the employed are to-day mere appendages to the machines which they operate?...it is certainly due in large part to the fact that the worker has had no opportunity to develop his imagination and his sympathetic insight as to the social and scientific values found in his work. At present, the impulses which lie at the basis of the industrial system are either practically neglected or positively distorted during the school period. Until the instincts of construction and production are systematically laid hold of in the years of childhood and youth, until they are trained in social directions, enriched by historical interpretation, controlled and illuminated by scientific methods, we certainly are in no position even to locate the source of our economic evils, much less to deal with them effectively." (Dewey 1899 SS)

It was the intellectual dimension to vocational jobs that prevented such work from being socially inferior. An acceptable vocational education was one which acknowledged the social and intellectual dimension of vocation by including instruction in history and science.

Thirdly, the worker had to have control over his life. Education must be politically empowering, otherwise it devalued the workers as human beings. It should provide "training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with materials and agencies of production; and study of economics, civics and politics to bring the future worker into touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement....Above all, it would train power of readaptation to changing conditions so that future workers would not become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them." (Dewey 1916) Dewey had made it clear to Snedden that he refused to regard as vocational education any training which did not develop intelligent initiative, ingenuity and executive capacity in workers. They must be made masters of their own industrial fate. To give them a narrow trade training meant putting their destiny in the hands of fallible men because they, the workers, were ignorant of how to fight for their rights. ( Dewey, New Republic 1915 quoted in Garrison 1990)

to

Dewey continued to fight to democracy in industry after the passing of the Smith-Hughes Act. He wanted to see politics used to advance the formation of a genuinely cooperative society where workers were in control of industry and finance as directly as possible, that is, through the economic organisation of society itself rather than through any superimposed state socialism. He wanted work to ensure not only security, leisure and opportunity for cultural development but also a share in control which would contribute directly to the moral and intellectual realization of personality. (Dewey 1933 - Unity and Progress in Westbrook 1991)

In a review of a book published in 1919, Dewey wrote: "Only as modern society has at command individuals who are trained by experience in the control of industrial activities and relationships, can we achieve industrial democracy, the autonomous management of each line of productive work by those directly engaged in it. Without such democratization of industry, socialization of industry will be doomed to arrest at the stage of state capitalism, which may give the average labourer a greater share in the material rewards of industry than he now enjoys, but which will leave him in

the same condition of intellectual and moral passivity and perversion as that in which he now lives." (Dewey 1919)

His complaint was that industry was seen as the servant of business or money-making. In effect, industry was always seen as a means to an end and the end was profit. In 1919 Dewey was still optimistic that progressive education was going to achieve a revolution and he saw no reason why this same sort of revolution should not apply to industry. But educators had to change their attitude to industry. They had to stop ascribing to it the same values as the business men and to start seeing its possibilities for promoting growth. Then schools, particularly for adolescents, could be organised upon the basis of productive industry "just as the most vital schools for little children are organised upon the basis of creative play."

What the introduction of vocational education into public schools had proved, most importantly of all, was that 'working class' children wanted the opportunity for a liberal education. When given the option of vocational courses at school, they had chosen the academic ones. Understandably they did not want to be 'fobbed off' with anything less. The same reaction was to be seen in the 1970s when vocational courses were again legislated for in schools. (Shor 1986) Far more in line with pupil aspirations was Dewey's generous interpretation of vocational education which made it an integral part of the educative process bound up and interdependent with a liberal education. In his own theory of education the dichotomy between liberal and vocational became an irrelevance.

## Chapter six

### Progressive education

*par*

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, while Dewey was making a stand for democratic vocational education, progressive schools were starting up all over America, influenced not so much by Deweyan democratic ideals as by 'child-centred romanticism.' In moving from Chicago, Dewey had lost his own experimental base but he remained keenly interested in these 'new' schools, particularly those attached to Teachers College - the Patty Smith Hill Play School and the two Horace Mann Schools for Girls and for Boys, both used as practice schools for student teachers. The Lincoln School, founded by Abram Flexner, was taken over by Teachers College in 1917, becoming a laboratory school for "scientific experimentation and constructive work in the reorganisation of elementary and secondary education. Its principle aim, when first founded, was reminiscent of Dewey's Laboratory School, in that it aimed "to give children the knowledge they need and to develop in them the power to handle themselves in our own world." (Cremin 1961)

The term, progressive education, was a means of referring to the whole complex of diversified movements and efforts to improve the theory and practice of education. It was not something thought up by the teachers themselves. "It was part of the widespread effort to liberate individuals and institutions from bondage to repressive modes of life." (Dewey 1952) The 'repressive modes of life' were the consequence of poverty in heavily populated and industrialised urban areas. The new schools differed from one another considerably in ideas, principles, policies and practice, a diversity which ultimately had negative consequences on the progressive education movement itself. Because the movement was divided from within, its unified force was weakened. Much of the disagreement was over the problem of indoctrination. (Apple 1980 p.28) Should schools with a vision of society which was at odds with the status quo, impart that vision to their pupils? Or

should they be content to teach progressive techniques and leave particular causes alone? The better, more intellectually rigorous progressive experiments, like the Laboratory School, suffered from being identified with the less successful ones. Their lack of unified purpose and organisation was the cause of Dewey's disenchantment with the movement and, in the end, contributed to its collapse.

Although Dewey was acknowledged by many to be the leader of the progressive education movement in America, only some of the new schools were influenced by his pioneering work and then only to a certain degree. His educational theory as an integrated whole was not taken up although some of his ideas were adopted and adapted piecemeal by educators both in America and abroad. In his survey of American schools in the 1960s Mayer wrote: "The tragedy of American education in the twentieth century is not that Dewey's influence has been so great, but that it has been so little. In speaking of Dewey's progressivism, one must copy Chesterton's remark on Christianity- not that it has been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." (Mayer 1963)

It is important to appreciate how isolated Dewey was. He stood apart from other groups of educators because of his commitment to his democratic ideal and to scientific inquiry as the means of achieving it. These others, as has been indicated, had their own visions of democracy which were markedly different from Dewey's. He had long since openly declared himself to be an enemy of traditional educators and, as was suggested in Chapter Three, he had reservations about the social reformers at the turn of the century, fearing they wanted to teach children to adapt to society rather than to transform it. "For the child-saving reformers....the route to social amelioration lay in adjusting the people to fit the new productive order, not the reverse." (Nasaw 1979). At the turn of the century Dewey had felt optimistic about the potential of the school for bringing about social change and 'liberating individuals from bondage.' Although Teachers College, Columbia, was recognised to be the home of liberal educational thought, it had on its faculty educators such as

Thorndike and Snedden with whom Dewey was completely at odds. Although Snedden left Columbia in 1909, Thorndike was there for forty years, a most renowned psychologist but with a completely different outlook on education from Dewey. Finally there were the child-centred romantic progressive educators, many of whom believed themselves to be close followers of Dewey, but even they failed to really share Dewey's vision. Increasingly he became distanced from progressive education as it developed.

In 1915, however, Dewey and his daughter, Evelyn, published a book about the new progressive schools, entitled 'Schools of To-morrow.' It was remarkably positive and enthusiastic, describing in detail fifteen different experiments in progressive education. Two examples, however, demonstrate how easy it was to take Deweyan principles and turn them into something which was decidedly 'unDeweyan.'

In the first instance, there was the Organic School in Fairhope, Alabama, which Dewey visited with Evelyn one Christmas. This school had been founded in 1907 by Marietta Johnson. Mrs. Johnson had indeed taken some of Dewey's ideas, amongst them the principle that it is the adult's supreme responsibility to supply the right conditions for growth, but she had also been considerably influenced by other educational writers. When the Deweys described her school in their book they were unqualified in their praise, calling it "a living embodiment of Rousseauan pedagogical principles." (Dewey & Dewey 1915) The aim of the school was "to minister to the health of the body, develop the finest mental grasp, and preserve the sincerity and unself-consciousness of the emotional life." (Johnson quoted in Cremin 1961) Mrs. Johnson wanted to prolong the period of childhood and she focused totally on the needs and interests of the young children in her care; however, Mrs. Johnson also knew best what was good for them which was hardly democratic. In its pedagogy, the Organic School was probably the most child-centred of the early experimental schools. Doubtless in Mrs. Johnson's capable hands, Dewey's unstinting praise was deserved, but in less capable hands, because of its excessively child-centred education



approach and the extreme degree of freedom afforded the children, it was the sort of school which would in the future give progressive education a bad reputation. It was certainly the sort of school that Dewey was later to criticise. Mrs. Johnson was to become a leading figure in the Progressive Education Association and therefore exerted considerable influence over the movement generally.

The second example was rather more significant. The system of schools at Gary, Indiana, called the Gary Plan, was supposedly one of the most perfect examples of Deweyan progressive education, perfect in that it purported to combine the intellectual and the vocational aspects of education within a cooperative community. Although Dewey himself did not visit it, Randolph Bourne, a brilliant young journalist and ardent disciple of Dewey's went with Evelyn to see what was going on. Bourne gave the Plan "rhapsodic praise" in *The New Republic* (1915) calling it "the example par excellence of progressive education". He wrote a year later in a book about the Plan: "Its philosophy is American, its democratic organisation is American. It is one of the institutions that our American 'Kultur should be proudest of.....Those who follow Professor Dewey's philosophy find in the Gary schools- as Professor Dewey does himself- the most complete and admirable application yet attempted of the best aspects of the 'progressive schools of to-morrow.'" (Bourne quoted in Cremin 1961)

So what was wrong? Gary was a new, purpose-built, industrial city built around a mammoth plant installed in 1906 by the United States Steel Corporation on wasteland along the shores of Lake Michigan. William A. Wirt, who had been an admiring student of Dewey's in Chicago, was appointed as the Superintendent of Schools. He was an imaginative and energetic administrative progressive who took full advantage of this rare opportunity to design an urban school system based on a progressive pedagogy. (Westbrook 1991 p.180) Dewey always argued forcibly that schools had to be adapted to the needs of industrial civilisation and William Wirt aimed to do just that. Each school in the system was set up as a self-sustaining community with remarkable facilities- gardens, libraries, gymnasiums, swimming-pools, art and music rooms, science

laboratories and machine shops. The school system was intended to be the intellectual and artistic centre of the neighbourhood, open all year round. In order to use the facilities as much as possible, the school used a platoon plan; the pupils in each school were divided into two platoons and whilst one platoon studied academic studies, the other platoon did practical work. Children were allowed to work at their own pace and older children helped the younger children. Alongside trained adults, the children worked in the science laboratories, the garden and the various industrial activities. They built tables and chairs and bookcases, organised the printing needs of the school, did building repairs and cooked food for the cafeteria. (Westbrook 1991) Bourne remarked on the degree of individual instruction and learning by doing that went on, saying that the schools exemplified "the educational truth that learning came from doing." (Bourne 1915 in Cremin 1961)

Bourne's glowing article in the *New Republic* and Dewey's commendation in 'Schools of Tomorrow', gave the Gary Plan the stamp of authenticity to the extent that by 1929 over two hundred cities in forty-one states had adopted the plan to some extent. However, two years later, in a study done by Abram Flexner and Frank Bachman the praise was much more guarded. They questioned how much real learning came out of the activities and criticised standards of reading, writing and arithmetic. Time was wasted, they said, and some occupations while enjoyable were not educative. (ibid) In 1917, the Plan was represented as an attempt to economise on the education of slum children rather than a genuine pedagogical advance. (ibid) In a more recent study, the Gary Plan has been described as "the quintessence of 'Taylorism' - or business efficiency imposed on schools." (Callahan- 1962 quoted in Westbrook 1991) And yet another suggests that Wirt wanted "an educated populace, but educated to take orders cheerfully and positively; above all he desired order, voluntary or otherwise." (Cohen and Mohl in Westbrook 1991 p.182) Was Wirt interested in establishing a democratic school environment like the Laboratory School or was he more interested in indoctrinating children with a work ethic appropriate to their environment? What seems to emerge is the possibility of putting the innovative pedagogical methods of the Laboratory School to social uses quite other than those Dewey intended. These later studies of the Gary Plan

certainly suggest that Dewey's democratic ideals were being subverted. It also afforded an example of a teaching system which could be seen as progressive or vocational or both.

It is difficult to control what happens to ideas. Though surrounded by educators at Columbia, Dewey was not even at one with his more child-centred colleagues. They did not share his vision of the school as an instrument for social reform, they did not have his democratic ideals, and they did not share his commitment to reflective inquiry and scientific method as a means of learning. It is ironic therefore that, despite his being critical of them, Dewey has consistently been identified with them. (Bowles and Gintis in Young and Whitty 1977)

By the end of the First World War education for social reform gradually lost its momentum. Instead the progressive education movement in America derived great impetus from the European movement. Freud had visited America in 1909 and the intellectual avant-garde had been fascinated by his work. The arts in general, creativity, the unconscious and self-expression came into vogue. The creative impulse was seen to be within the child - poetry, music, dance, art, every sort of self-expression was embedded in a freedom quite unlike the freedom in the Laboratory School. "For all intents and purposes, the avant-garde pedagogues expanded one part of what progressive education had formerly meant into its total meaning, and in so doing they wrought a caricature that was quickly taken up as the ultimate meaning of the movement itself." (Cremin 1961) By the end of the First World War the jargon and concepts of psychoanalysis were established among the Greenwich Village intelligentsia. These psychological theories increasingly came to dominate in politics as well as education and the implications for Dewey's idealist interpretation of democracy were critical. "They raised serious questions about the capacity of most human beings for the sort of rational deliberation and judgement such as Dewey found essential to democratic politics." (Westbrook 1991) Without intellectual rigour, nothing could be achieved. Dewey mocked the approach of the child-centred educators. "Let us surround pupils with certain materials, appliances, etc., and then let pupils respond to these things according to their desires. Above all, let us not

suggest any end or plan to the students; let us not suggest to them what they should do, for that is an unwarranted trespass upon their sacred individuality since the essence of such individuality is to set up ends and aims. Such a method is really stupid."(Dewey - Journal of the Barnes Foundation-1926 quoted in Cremin 1961 p. 234)

In 1919, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) was founded, but Dewey refused to become a member. Despite his generous acknowledgements of the achievements of progressive educators, he nevertheless did not wish to be identified with many of their ideas. Nine years later, in 1928, he agreed to become the Honorary President of the PEA but, in his address to the members, he used the opportunity to put his own case to the audience, to distinguish his own position from that of the child-centred progressives and to question the wisdom of the ideology and programs that child-centred reformers offered. (Westbrook 1991)

He listed the principles common to the many progressive experiments that together might amount to a 'science of progressive education' - a common emphasis on respect for individuality and for increased freedom; a common disposition to build upon the nature and experience of the boys and girls rather than to impose subject-matter and standards on them; an informal atmosphere which was conducive to mental activity and the encouragement of sincere emotional expression and growth; emphasis on activity rather than passivity and the importance of good teacher/pupil relationships. These, he suggested were agreed starting-points for a science of progressive education. He criticised the value that traditional schools placed on tests and measurements. They merely established norms above or below which children succeeded or failed and this was contrary to the spirit of progressive education. It was also a sly dig at Thorndike who had said, as Dewey mentioned, that whatever exists can be measured. Dewey twisted round the meaning stating that whatever does not exist cannot be measured and that this was what the teacher should consider important. "It is no paradox to say that the teacher is concerned with what does not exist. For a progressive school is primarily concerned with growth, with a moving and changing process, with

transforming existing capacities and experience." (Dewey 1928 in Dworkin 1959) It was only possible to measure what already existed, not what was in the process of coming into existence. This same principle applied to the curriculum. A static unchanging curriculum suggested a satisfaction with the status quo. "But if one conceived that a social order different in quality and direction from the present is desirable and that schools should strive to educate with social change in view by producing individuals not complacent with what exists, and equipped with desires and abilities to assist in transforming it, quite a different method and content is indicated for educational science." (ibid)

Dewey then became critical. He told his audience that all reform had a negative and a positive stage, that the negative was throwing off the old and the positive was putting the new in its place. His implication was that in their progressive experiments, they were failing to put a sufficiently rigorous new structure in the place of the old. It was not enough for progressive educators to merely deprecate and reject traditional teaching methods. Freedom was about the "removal of artificial and benumbing restrictions" imposed by traditional education, but this was a negative freedom. (Dewey 1928) "Removal, abolition are negative things, so in time it comes to be seen that such freedom is no end in itself, nothing to be satisfied with and to stay by, but marks at most an opportunity to do something of a positive and constructive sort." (ibid) The point of having freedom was to use it to do something positive. The Laboratory School, while it had rejected the subjects on the traditional school curriculum, had had an extremely intellectually rigorous school schedule based on activity. It had been highly organised whilst at the same time containing within its structure the capacity to change and adapt in response to the needs of the children; yet the impulses of the child were not allowed to run unchecked. "Bare doing, no matter how active, is not enough." (ibid). Similarly too much attention paid to the individual child could amount to fussing. Children needed experiences which were organised and directed, but not from the front of the class. The role of the teacher was not to teach but to find out the conditions in which learning or "self-educative activity" for the child might take place.

Dewey argued that progressive educators must be more aware of their responsibility towards mainstream education. Their schools should not simply be self-serving but use their experience for the benefit of all schools by making an intellectual contribution towards the science of education. There tended to be a lack of selection and organisation of intellectual subject-matter and while Dewey understood that in a new endeavour this was inevitable up to a point, organisation remained a fundamental necessity. An experimental school might be tempted to improvise its subject-matter but this, apart from being bad for the children, contributed nothing to educational theory. "One thing is sure: if (the progressive schools) do not intellectually organise their own work, while they may do much in making the lives of the children committed to them more joyous and more vital, they contribute only incidental scraps to the science of education." (ibid)

The relative merits of traditional and progressive education continued to be debated throughout the 1930s. Dewey often reiterated his criticism voiced in 1928. In an article, "How Much Freedom in New Schools?" (New Republic, 9 July 1930 quoted in Dykhuisen) he suggested that many progressive educators showed "more enthusiasm than understanding." In their efforts not to impose formalism on children, they had gone to the other extreme, allowing children unlimited freedom in deciding what they did. A cartoon in the New Yorker at that time showed children in a classroom saying to their teacher, "Do we have to do what we want to-day?" (in Westbrook 1991)

Dewey felt that in their determination to give children freedom, progressive educators had abolished almost all restrictions, taking "the thing called freedom nearly to the point of anarchy." (ibid) They did not understand enough about the laws of growth and learning nor how they should be applied to school work. He warned that if they became complacent with their achievements and paid insufficient attention to studying these laws, "a reaction against them (was) bound to take place." (ibid)

Increasingly, Dewey came to realise that education was a political battle-ground. The traditional methods that he despised on pedagogical grounds were also politically significant. He came to realize that "the school was a political arena, a contested site of struggle." (Westbrook 1991 p 509)

"When shall we realize that in every school-building in the land a struggle is also being waged against all that hems in and distorts human life? The struggle is not with arms and violence; its consequences cannot be recorded in statistics of the physically killed and wounded, nor set forth in terms of territorial changes. But in its slow and imperceptible processes, the real battles for human freedom and for the pushing back of the boundaries that restrict human life are ultimately won. We need to pledge ourselves to engage anew and with renewed faith in the greatest of all battles in the cause of human liberation, to the end that all human beings may lead the life that is alone worthy of being entitled wholly human." (Dewey 1930 *Philosophy and Education*, *Later Works* 5: 297-298 quoted in Westbrook)

In the public schools Dewey saw a catalogue of unremitting violation of human freedom. In fighting for a democratic education, Dewey wanted to free children from traditional practice and its political implications. Traditional education represented and perpetuated the dichotomies he wanted to destroy. Based on the Greek model, an autocratic society, it split mind from body, theory from practice and culture from utility, the privileged from the unprivileged. For too long the acquisition of knowledge had been the privilege of the rich. "It should never be forgotten that the background of the traditional education system is a class society and that the opportunity for instruction in certain subjects, especially literary ones and in mathematics beyond the rudiments of simple arithmetical subjects, was reserved for the well-born and the well-to-do. Because of this fact, knowledge of these subjects became a badge of cultural superiority and social status." (Dewey 1934)

In 1934 Dewey wrote : "The phrase 'progressive education' is one, if not of protest, at least of contrast with an education which is predominantly static in subject-matter, authoritarian in

methods, and mainly passive and receptive from the side of the young." (The Need for a Philosophy of Education in The New Era in Home and School) But Dewey was writing in vain. Progressive education was viewed by many as a set of various pedagogical principles which did not even produce good academic results in schools. Far from being a voice for freedom and democracy, Dewey was blamed for propagating licentious practice in schools. Whether for educational or political reasons, Dewey was generally held responsible for the evils afflicting American education. "I am convinced that Teachers College, Columbia has done more harm in the United States than any other educational agency, save maybe the public schools. It has been dominated by quacks ever since the beginning, and their quackeries are now in full blast everywhere. The man responsible is probably John Dewey, though he doesn't go the whole way with the rest of the brethren. I believe he is the worst writer ever heard of in America and probably the worst philosopher known to history. All the while, of course, he remains an extremely amiable and honest man." (Mencken, 1940, in Westbrook, 1991 p 501).

By the mid-1930s, Dewey had to come to terms with the fact that schools could not be the "main agency in producing the intellectual and moral changes, the changes in attitudes and disposition of thought and purpose, which are necessary for the creation of a new social order. Any such view ignores the constant operation of powerful forces outside the school which shape mind and character. It ignores the fact that school education is but one educational agency out of many, and at best is in some respects a minor educational force." (Dewey 1937) The school alone could not transform society - the force of society was too powerful. Back in 1916, writing 'Democracy and Education,' Dewey had first expressed fears that classroom revolution would not be enough to bring about a democratic reconstruction of American society. Those committed to the democratic ideal had "to contend not only with the inertia of existing educational traditions, but also with the opposition of those entrenched in command of the industrial machinery." The sort of educational system that Dewey was advocating "would threaten their ability to use others for their own ends." (Dewey 1916 DE) Another of the reasons for Dewey's loss of faith in the power of schools alone



to change society was his realisation that schools were inextricably tied to prevailing power structures and it was therefore extremely difficult to transform them into agencies of democratic reform. As a consequence of the political power invested in the state, schoolteachers had very little control over what they taught; they took their orders from administrators. These administrators made out the curriculum and the syllabus and decided what teaching methods should be used. The administrators, in turn, were dependent for their jobs on the desires of the economic class dominant on the school boards. Teachers were also subject to the control of the "small and powerful class that is economically privileged." (Dewey 1930 quoted in Westbrook 1991) It is impossible to know how the Laboratory School would have developed had Dewey not left, nor if he would have devised means of making his theory work in practice in the public schools. But he knew that it was not enough just "to sharpen the aesthetic sensibilities of the upper middle class" (Westbrook 1991) and that if progressive education were to be genuinely progressive it could not "ignore or obscure preparation for the social realities - including the evils- of industrial and political civilization." (Dewey 1930)

In 1938, when Dewey was eighty years old, he published 'Experience and Education.' This book was primarily concerned with expounding his own philosophy of education grounded in experience. The two principles essential to experience were continuity and interaction. By continuity, Dewey meant that present experience should grow out of past experience and lead on to future experience; by interaction he intended that this experience should exist through interaction between the individual and environmental factors, physical, social and cultural. It was in fact very little different from the pedagogy of the Laboratory School. For teachers the important task was "to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences." (Dewey 1938) But he also took the opportunity in the book to be unambiguously critical again of progressive educators and for the same reasons as before - the idea they had that freedom was an end in itself and their failure to provide a structured curriculum. "Many of the newer schools tend to make little or nothing of organized subject-matter of study; to proceed as if any form of direction

and guidance were an invasion of individual freedom, and as if the idea that education should be concerned with the present and the future meant that acquaintance with the past has little or no role to play in education.....It is not too much to say that an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as ever was the traditional education which is reacted against." (Dewey 1938)

Dewey implored the progressive educators to develop an intellectually rigorous curriculum because otherwise people would revert to the old traditional and authoritarian ways. "Failure to give constant attention to development of the intellectual content of experiences and to obtain ever-increasing organisation of facts and ideas may in the end merely strengthen the tendency toward a reactionary return to intellectual and moral authoritarianism." (ibid) This is what happened. As progressive education consistently failed to produce a rigorous academic curriculum, public opinion began to turn heavily against it.

Controversy over education continued into the 1940s, growing ever more serious and unpleasant. The traditionalists argued for the transmission of heritage of the past through the wisdom of the great books. These provided 'man' with a body of established eternal truths which could serve as guides through current problems. Science and scientific method should not be allowed to take over from rationalistic methods of acquiring the truth. Amongst the supporters of these traditionalists were Jaques Maritain, Robert Hutchins and members of the Education for Freedom Inc., group whose doctrines were broadcast from coast to coast. Progressivism was expounded and defended by educators such as Dewey, William Kirkpatrick, Horace Kallen, Boyd Bode, John Childs and Sidney Hook, all from Columbia. They wanted education to focus on present-day problems, science and technology, scientific method and the democratic spirit. They did not exclude the past or the wisdom of the great books but they did not see either as the ultimate source of authority and truth. "The principle of free, open, critical discussion that is the heart of political democracy must also be the principle pervading American education; any attempt to substitute authoritarian

principles for it, whether the authority be that of the great books of the past or the theological dogma of traditional religion, must be resisted." (Dykhuisen 1973)

During these controversies, Dewey's adversaries began to attack him on other grounds. In the New York Times and The Tablet, his overall philosophy was denounced as 'godless', 'completely atheistical', 'pagan', and anti-Christian'. His ideas were 'poisoning' the minds of students and infiltrating the schools and colleges of the nation, "undermining their faith in God and the moral law, stirring them to acts of delinquency and crime. For more than three decades, they stated, John Dewey and his followers at Teachers College had made that institution their centre of operations in their 'attempted destruction of Christian aims and ideals in American education.'" (ibid) In denying the supernatural basis of human rights, Dewey's philosophy of life was deemed "identical with that which underlies the modern forms of dictatorship." (Tablet December 1939) They alleged that fascism, communism and German national socialism held that man was nothing more than a highly developed animal with no rights or worth except those conferred on him by government or society. This idea was making its way into the classroom where it was undermining faith in America's democratic tradition. "It is in the educational system of our country that there lies the danger of totalitarianism in the clothing of democracy." (Woodlock 1939 quoted in Dykhuisen 1973) In 1940, a speaker attacked the teaching profession in toto. "Democracy has much more to fear from the mentality of its teachers than from the nihilism of Hitler. It is the same nihilism in both cases, but Hitler's is more honest and consistent, less blurred by subtleties and queasy qualifications, and hence less dangerous." (Adler in Dykhuisen 1973) To back up these sentiments, social science text-books written by Rugg were banned because they undermined the rosier aspects of American life, pointing out instead the poverty, hunger, illiteracy and unemployment that existed. The aim of Rugg's books was to acquaint students with social realities and indicate to readers the need for increased government planning. (Dykhuisen 1973)

By the 1950s there was public revolt against ideas and teaching methods which, so the public claimed, were causing chaos in American schools. There grew up "massive resistance of American power groups to any radical reform of the schools." (Wallace 1969) Feelings harshened and intensified as academic standards in the public school system appeared to be in decline. Progressive education was seen by many to be the main cause and, as the alleged leader of the movement, Dewey was made the scapegoat by people who for the most part had neither read his books nor understood his intentions. "The American system of schooling and the ideals and aims that underlay it were challenged at base, and the theory of progressive education in general and John Dewey in particular were seen as central and symbolic sources of deficiency in the American education system." (Brickman and Lehrer 1959) The Progressive Education Association was disbanded in 1955, partly because of internal disagreements within the Association, partly due to a swing to conservatism after the war.

In the introduction to a book written by one of his students in 1952, the last year of his life, Dewey acknowledged the difficulty that any school faced in trying to bring about social change. "The educational system is part of the common life and cannot escape suffering the consequences that flow from the conditions prevailing outside the school building. When repressive and reactionary forces are increasing in all our other institutions - economic, social and political- it would be folly to expect the school to get off free." (Dewey 1952) He commented that organised attacks on progressive education had become more extensive and virulent than ever. Nonetheless, progressive education had brought about changes in the classroom. He noted that there was now greater awareness of the needs of the students and the personal relations between teacher and pupil had been "humanized and democratized." (ibid) The problem was that the fundamental authoritarianism persisted and while there was much talk of cooperative enterprise between students and teachers, there was still little evidence of it in practice. This authoritarianism was apparent, not just in teaching practice but also in the curriculum content. So long as teachers were made to transmit "certain collections of fixed immutable subject matter" to the students under

them, then authoritarianism would continue. His final words were: "For the creation of a democratic society we need an educational system where the process of moral-intellectual development is in practice as well as in theory a cooperative transaction of inquiry engaged in by free, cooperative human beings who treat ideas and the heritage of the past as means and methods for the further enrichment of life, quantitatively and qualitatively, who use the good attained for the discovery and establishment of something better." (Dewey 1952)

## Chapter seven

### The Politics of Progressive Education

*"Only in the last two years have I come to see the real drift and hang of the various positions I have taken." (Dewey - a few months after his ninetieth birthday quoted in Hook, 1973)*

By the mid-1950s, the progressive education movement in America was moribund and the Progressive Education Association had been disbanded. Nevertheless, progressive teaching and learning methods had become widely accepted and the ideas taken into the consciousness of educators. They became in education what J.K. Galbraith calls conventional wisdom. "Familiarity may breed contempt in some areas of human behaviour, but in the field of social ideas it is the touchstone of acceptability." (1958 p.18) Progressive ideas had become familiar. Cremin (1961p. 328) comments that the sources that document this view are legion. He writes of America, but the same phenomenon was to become true of Britain by the 1970s. Discussions of educational policy were liberally spiced with phrases like 'recognising individual differences,' 'personality development,' 'social and emotional growth,' 'creative self-expression,' 'the needs of learners,' 'bridging the gap between home and school,' 'teaching children not subjects,' 'adjusting to the child,' 'real life experiences,' and 'teacher-pupil relationships.' According to Cremin, they signified the fact that Dewey's forecast of a day when progressive education would eventually be accepted as good education had now finally come to pass.

Despite the widespread antipathy felt towards Dewey by conservative America, he nevertheless had supporters. On his seventieth, eightieth and ninetieth birthdays, in surges of festschrifts and celebrations in his honour, attempts were made to reinterpret, understand, criticise, appraise and admire his work. Not even his disciples were in agreement about the meaning of his thought.

Dewey himself had complained that many of them, particularly the educators, either did not understand his work or garbled just enough to use for their own purposes. In 1959, seven years after his death, books and articles were published, celebrating the centenary of his birth. In an introduction to one such volume, Dworkin (1959) commented that in America Dewey had become a figure of partisan fiction. Extreme disavowals of his importance were countered by passionate assertions of his greatness. The political orientation of the critic seemed to be the deciding factor - for the political right he was too 'left-wing' and for the political left he was too 'right-wing.' Some saw him as a dangerous revolutionary, others as a harmless liberal. But all the time, his books continued to be translated into many languages and his influence continued to spread across the world.

To certain 'revisionist' historians of the 1970s, Dewey was unthreatening. Clarence Karier, for example, (1972 p. 93), saw Dewey as a good pragmatist whose non-violent, socialist views never seriously challenged the power sources within American society. Karier maintained that progressive reform at the turn of the century was undoubtedly conservative in that the liberal reformers wanted orderly, social change, efficiently managed and manipulated by themselves. Michael Apple (1979 p.176) states that although the ideas of Dewey and other child-centred educators were interesting and important, they had little impact on either the curriculum or school practice. Nor did Robin Barrow (1978 p.200) consider Dewey to be a radical, which, in his terms, meant someone who was critical, root and branch, of both society and the educational objectives of the time; to want orderly change was not to be a radical. Barrow accuses Dewey of believing in the American democracy of his time and of being concerned only to improve it by making education more suited to it. His main purpose was to ensure rather than to subvert the American dream. If certain statements of Dewey's are taken out of the context of his whole thought, there seems to be evidence to support these views. For example, in *My Pedagogic Creed*, (1897) Dewey states that "every teacher should realize....that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth." (Dewey 1897) This sounds both

prescriptive and conservative, begging the question of what the proper social order was. But it is unreasonable on such grounds to accuse Dewey of wishing to ensure the American dream when he devoted his life to arguing against the democratic status quo in America.

Progressive educators faced a problem when starting a 'new' school. To what extent should a different school ethos be seen to be challenging the established social order? The determination of the curriculum was perceived inherently as a political issue which could split the movement. The wide variety of teaching aims and methods precluded solidarity. In order to avoid being accused of indoctrination some progressive educators preferred to focus on teaching methods (quoted in Apple 1979 p.28). In 1979, Stanwood Cobb, one of the early organisers of the Progressive Education Association said in a taped interview that many of his colleagues were quite cautious about even raising the question of what actual content should be taught and evaluated in schools. The Laboratory School had avoided this danger, possibly through being an experimental school attached to a university, possibly because the content appeared to be secondary to the method of learning.

If Dewey did hope to transform society through education - the goal he professed early on in his career - then it seems that he was being naive in underestimating the political, social and political forces pitted against him. Bernstein (1971 p.228) describes it not as naive but as completely unrealistic. "No capitalist society will tolerate a school system that is designed to overthrow it." Bernstein points out that Dewey's concern for the growth of a creative intelligence seems old-fashioned and irrelevant to the poignant conflicts of contemporary life. Dewey's pleas for the reconstruction of experience are inadequate in the face of the evils afflicting modern society. These have only worsened since his death. Yet, it seems that the theory of inquiry at the heart of pragmatism remains the only hope. Bernstein states that it would be disastrous to discard it. Its usefulness lies in the fact that it permits us to abandon the search for an ultimate solution to human alienation and settles, instead, for a means of amelioration through a genuine critical community of



inquirers. It implies the belief that each individual possesses an intelligence which enables him or her to solve social problems, without resorting to an ideology or creed. Within the community each individual can take responsibility for his own growth. As a pragmatist Dewey was unlikely to be seen as a revolutionary. Even if he were naive, over-optimistic or did not fully understand the dynamics of society, it is hard to believe that Dewey was a social manipulator. Westbrook (1991) suggests that Dewey is saved from collusion by his insistence that all activity is joint activity, done with the people rather than for the people.

Indeed, Dewey was not fully aware of the implications of the Marxist-Leninist ideology when he visited the Soviet Union in 1928. He was struck by the community spirit in the schools which, at first sight, seemed similar to that in the Laboratory School. Bronfenfeffer (1972 p.50) comments that an especially prominent feature of collective upbringing is the emphasis on altruistic behaviour both at the individual and social level. Dewey found that the children were much more democratically organised in Russia than in America and, unsurprisingly, more systematically trained for later active participation in the self-direction of both local communities and industries. (Dewey 1928 quoted in Karier 1973 p.99) What impressed Dewey was that the work done in the schools in Russia was in tune with the work done in the larger community generally. He was learning that the school alone can achieve very little in transforming society. "The Russian educational situation is enough to convert one to the idea that only in a society based upon the cooperative principle can the ideals of educational reformers be adequately carried into operation." (ibid) But Dewey's initial reactions were only favourable because, as Karier (1973 p.99) points out, he had an inadequate conception of political democracy. He acknowledged this himself. "My ignorance of the whole factional controversy was rather shameful as I now look back on it." (Dewey 1937 quoted in Westbrook 1991 p.478) Once he appreciated the degree to which the Soviet Union was in the grip of a rigid totalitarianism, Dewey changed his mind. (ibid) Although he retained respect for the energy of the Russian people, he felt they had been betrayed by their leadership. Briefly, Dewey's reputation in Russia "soared to lofty heights" before falling

precipitously. It was long enough, however, for the American right to subsequently brand him as a communist. (Westbrook 1991 p.476) Wirth comments (1983 p.94) that Marxist oriented scholars have despaired over Dewey's unwillingness to join their critique of capitalism and that this unwillingness to accept the centrality of class conflict reduced him to being an apologist for the status quo. But freedom was essential to the intelligence that Dewey sought and it had to be exercised in participation with others - in a society where there could be free inquiry, free communication and tolerance of diverse opinions. He had an aversion to all ideological groups and movements and while he supported many causes, he never identified completely with any one political party. To an American pragmatist, steeped in the logic of enquiry, the ideology of Marxism, with its immutable doctrine would have been profoundly unacceptable. "Marxist-Leninism was insisting on the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dewey could not follow." (ibid) The role of the pragmatist was to shift attention away from the antagonism between opposing views and to find ways of reaching a common understanding through dialogue.

Damico (1978) writes that Dewey credited Marx with understanding better than anyone else the role of economic forces in society and with showing many of capitalism's adverse effects on freedom. But Dewey criticized Marx on scientific, practical and moral grounds because Marx saw the economic element as the cause of all social change. In claiming to have such a comprehensive understanding of problems, Marxist theory was useless as a guide to political action. "Any monolithic theory of social action and social causation tends to have a ready-made answer for problems that present themselves. The wholesale character of this answer prevents critical examination and discrimination of the particular facts involved in the actual problem." (Dewey Liberalism and Social Action 1935 quoted in Damico 1978) Yet one conclusion Dewey reached in his later years was that there had to be some sort of 'socialist' economics tied in with liberalism in order to avoid the extremes of individualism. "The tragic breakdown of democracy is due to the fact that the identification of liberty with the maximum of unrestrained individualistic action in the economic sphere, under the institutions of capitalistic finance, is as fatal to the realization of liberty

for all as it is fatal to the realization of equality. It is destructive of liberty for the many precisely because it is destructive of genuine equality of opportunity." (Dewey 1935 PM p.116)

What impact has Dewey's pedagogy had on the progressive education movement in Britain?

William Brickman (1959) made a concise but comprehensive study of the spread of Dewey's publications throughout the world. He expressed modest surprise at its extent, attributing it to the spirit of post First World War reform in Europe. "That Dewey's thinking about education won adherents in Europe, Asia and other areas was quite a phenomenon, since Americans, as a general rule, were not deemed worthy of serious consideration in cultural, intellectual and educational circles." As early as 1907 and 1910, two volumes of Deweyan writing had been edited by Professor J.J. Findlay at the University of Manchester and widely circulated. In 1915, 'The School and Society' and 'Schools of To-morrow' were published in Britain. Dewey's ideas were also received and disseminated by Susan Isaacs in the 1920s and by the Elmhursts and William Curry, Head of Dartington from 1929-1956. But, as in America, whether or not Dewey's ideas were included in educational compendia, depended on the political convictions of the writer or editor. Sometimes he received serious consideration, sometimes he was not mentioned.

In Britain, progressive ideas, including the many different approaches from Europe, began to be used in the elementary schools in the 1920s and were generally welcomed, or at least not seen as a threat. (Jones 1983) There was no specifically political agenda. As in America, they offered children a more active kind of curriculum which was a change from the stultifying routine of recitation and rote-learning. They were seen as particularly appropriate for working-class children who were destined for unskilled jobs in industry. The Board of Education's Consultative Committee in 1927 endorsed progressive teaching methods in elementary schools and they were used without much comment. Ironically it was to Britain that American educators had to look when in 1965 President Johnson announced his War on Poverty and encouraged American educators to create 'more humane and progressive schools'. The Plowden Report, published in 1967, made a

deep impression on the American scientists, professors and educators who flocked to visit English Infant and Primary schools. Professor Silberman (1970) described the Report as 'magnificent,' quoting from it in his book, 'Crisis in the Classroom': "Children need to be themselves, to live with other children and with grownups, to learn from their environment, to enjoy the present, to get ready for the future, to create and to love, to learn to face adversity, to behave responsibly, in a word to be human beings." (Plowden 1967)

In the 1960s progressive methods were being used in some of the new comprehensive schools in Britain and, as in America, the language of progressive education was commonly used - expressions such as "a problem-based curriculum, a wide range of resources, the teacher as guide and supporter, child-centred learning based on the pupil's interest, needs and skills, a balance between academic learning and social, emotional and creative expression, group work and mixed ability teaching." (Gordon quoted in Avis 1987) Not only was this language being used but there was also evidence of "prodigious improvements" in both schools and their examination results between 1966 and 1976. (Simon 1984)

But, just as progressive education was harshly criticised in America, so in Britain twenty years later, conservative reaction set in, expressed in anxiety about falling academic standards in schools. Attention was focused on the link between education and economic progress and whilst there was concern about the decline in standards per se, the feeling was also expressed that decline in educational standards was a significant factor in general economic decline. In America, in the 1950s, and in Britain, in the 1970s, the political right took on the concern for keeping up high standards in schools. (Silver 1980 p. 60) Progressive education took much of the blame; on the one hand, the 'cranky' teaching methods of the child-centred romantic educators led to slackness and on the other hand, the so-called egalitarian ideals put forward by democratic educators such as Dewey led to mediocrity. When in 1960, the members of the San Francisco Curriculum Survey Committee stated that "education for life in a democracy" was "profoundly hostile to excellence in

education," they were voicing anxiety felt by many Americans. Between 1969 and 1977, in Britain, the Black Papers were published which contained a vicious indictment of the comprehensive school and its supposedly egalitarian ethos. At the heart lay the fear that with the passing of grammar schools, all hope of academic excellence had been lost. "The permissiveness which entered schools in the 1960s in the guise of progressive education is a disease, responsible for many evils in present-day society. The recent hooliganism and violence in the streets is surely in part a result of this breakdown of traditional authority." (Cox 1981) Silver (1980) suggests that the sentiments expressed in the Black Papers constitute a flight from reality. In attacking progressive education and calling for a return to past practice, the authors were denying the process of change.

The spirit of the Black Papers has been revitalised in the 1990s by publications of right wing think tanks like the Centre for Policy Studies. One of its members, Anthony O'Hear, produced a controversial pamphlet entitled 'Education and Democracy', (1991). In it, progressive ideas in general and John Dewey in particular were singled out for adverse critical attention. His criticism of Dewey supports the view of David Hargreaves that " policies of governments in recent times have recently been driven by prejudice and ideology largely uninformed by any kind of evidence except that which is selected for convenience." (Hargreaves 1994 p.47) In 'Education and Democracy,' O'Hear targets Dewey. "It is highly plausible to see the egalitarianism which stems from the teachings of Dewey as the proximate cause of our educational decline (and seeing this might lead his followers to question the underlying concept of democracy). The insistence on giving everyone the same education, embraced first in comprehensivisation and then in the GCSE (promoted as one examination for all), has resulted in universal mediocrity." (O'Hear 1991). Later in the pamphlet, he attacks "many, if not most, education departments" for practising "a doctrinaire egalitarianism that has been in large measure responsible for the mediocrity enforced in so many of our schools, where group work and social levelling are preferred to individual excellence" and "Dewey's democracy, being based on an egalitarian conception of the worth of different types of experience, was bound to enshrine mediocrity." (O'Hear 1991)

Dewey's name has also been mentioned in the British press in a way that implies that it is his influence that is having such a deleterious effect on British educational standards. He is cited as one of those responsible for poor academic achievements in British schools, for 'trendy' teaching methods and sloppy attitudes. In December 1991, for example, a Downing Street adviser was reported to have attacked John Dewey for using teaching methods which encourage children to work out their own answers to problems. It was said that Dewey's ideas were symptomatic of a whole philosophy of life which tends to be dismissive of the past, teaching that history and literature must be displaced from the centre of the curriculum in favour of social studies. (The Independent 20:12:91)

In November 1992, in a paper delivered at a conference arranged by the Institute for Economic Affairs, Dr. John Marks, another member of the Centre for Policy Studies, ("one of the most influential figures in Government education policy in recent years" - TES 24 Dec 1993) said: "I suspect that beneath the call to reduce didactic teaching were two very different views about the purposes and content of education; about the methods to be used in schools and classrooms; and about the values underpinning education. One view owes much to Rousseau and Dewey. It emphasises the individual pupil rather than the teacher. It talks of project and discovery methods, the democratising of education, minimising or even abolishing assessment and examinations. Spontaneity and creativity are the key words. Authority of any kind is barely mentioned. Formal structures and methods - class teaching, timetables, rote learning, set and marked work, sometimes even classrooms and subjects- are to be reduced to the bare minimum....The separation between teacher and taught is blurred, sometimes to vanishing point. And so the idea of teachers transmitting systematic bodies of knowledge and skills is downgraded - sometimes explicitly and always implicitly." When questioned about his source of information about Dewey, Dr. Mark's said he had been told about him by O'Hear.

In March 1993, Joan Clanchy, Head of North London Collegiate School resigned from her position on the National Curriculum Council which she had held for eighteen months. She explained why in an article to the TES (March 5 1994): "It is well-known that some members of the council are members of right-wing think tanks. I have never objected to that because of course such organisations are going to produce activists who will have ideas to contribute.... At my first council meeting, Anthony O'Hear addressed us on the allegedly pernicious influence of Dewey on primary education. In no sense was it a debate because there was no representative from any teacher-training institution to reply or give a view on current interpretations of Dewey's work." It would seem that Dewey and progressive, 'trendy' methods are regarded, by the Centre for Policy Studies at least, as a threat. But are they? And if so, how?

The significance of what O'Hear writes lies not in the content of what he says, which is meretricious, but in the fact that such a person is in a position of influence in the shaping of British educational policy. In his pamphlet he consistently misinterprets Dewey's educational theory. For example, he says, "Dewey was following the influence of Rousseau." (O'Hear 1991) Dewey was not following the influence of Rousseau; he specifically stated that he had read neither Rousseau nor Pestalozzi before he had formed his own educational views. (Corliss Lamont 1959) It is only necessary to look at 'Emile' (Rousseau 1780 (1938)) to see countless differences between his pedagogy and Dewey's. For instance: "With the age of reason the child becomes the slave of the community".....or "the education of the early years should be merely negative." But Dr. Marks believes O'Hear and reproduces his opinions at a conference. (see ref. Marks) O'Hear quotes Dewey as believing that: "Real learning could only arise in the attempt to answer some problem the child already recognised and was worried by..... (that) teaching which was not relevant to some problem the child perceived as a problem was bound to be ineffective." (ibid) This is a travesty of the theory of the functional psychologists that thought and knowledge come about through action and also of Dewey's theory of learning scientific method and reflective thought.

O'Hear carries on, noting ".....the stress in Dewey's educational writings, and in the schools with which he was associated, on project-work." (ibid) In fact, project work was the particular concern of William Kilpatrick at Teachers College, Columbia. Kilpatrick's article, 'The Project Method' (1918) put "the purposeful act" at the heart of education and it swept Kilpatrick to international fame. Over 60,000 reprints were made over the next twenty-five years and the book was used widely in schools. Undoubtedly Kilpatrick was influenced by Dewey but project work was not Dewey's idea; indeed he only gave the article cautious praise, openly criticising it. "It is fair for an objector to ask what is the substitute, the alternative, to organisation of courses on the basis of adherence to traditional divisions and classifications of knowledge. The reply which goes furthest to the left is found in reference to the so-called "project," "problem," or "situation" method now adopted for trial in many elementary schools. I shall indicate later that I do not believe this is the only alternative." (Dewey 1931 Way Out of Ed. Confusion in John Dewey on Education p 422.)

O'Hear then attacks what he considers is Dewey's view of the teacher as "no more than a provider of 'suggestions', a 'facilitator' in to-day's jargon." He has harsh words for what he calls Socratism, a 'malaise' which goes deeper into the educational system than Dewey's 'sentimental egalitarianism.' (ibid) This is the development of a critical attitude in children. O'Hear refers back, for support, to Plato's Republic in which "the spirit of criticism and pupil chatter is to be firmly discouraged." (ibid) On the one hand O'Hear maintains that the current orthodoxy in Britain's education is infused with egalitarian ideals and rhetoric which demand that young people should appraise critically the received notions and methodologies of their disciplines. (ibid) Yet a few pages later, he is calling for "the dissolution of the monolithic and Stalinist system of education which we have in this country." It would appear that O'Hear is contradicting himself. It seems unlikely that a monolithic and Stalinist education system would encourage critical appraisal. O'Hear is advocating "an education system which is divisive, elitist and inegalitarian." He maintains that education cannot be democratic because the relationship between pupil and teacher is unequal -the teacher knows more than the pupil. Education is therefore irretrievably authoritarian and



paternalist - it must claim authority and recognise, promote and defer to elites. (ibid) But in 1952, Dewey warned against authoritarian forms of education because they led to totalitarianism. He said: "The educational regimen thus consists of authorities at the upper end handing down to the receivers at the lower end what they must accept. This is not education but indoctrination, propaganda. It is a type of 'education' fit for the foundations of a totalitarian society and, for the same reason, fit to subvert, pervert and destroy the foundations of a democratic liberal society." (Dewey 1952)

There seems to be an impasse here. Dewey was stating that authoritarian pedagogy leads to totalitarianism and O'Hear was stating that 'egalitarianism' leads to 'Stalinism'. First of all, Dewey must be defended against the accusations of egalitarianism. His idea of a liberal democracy was not based on egalitarianism, nor did he seek mediocrity in schools. His concept of equality was grounded in the recognition of human diversity in which each person received what they needed to develop their particular potential, a sentiment which, in his case, derived from the ethics of T.H.Green. It was congruous with his idealist view of democracy, and, incidentally, resonates with the Butler Act of 1944. Entailed in Green's interpretation of liberal democracy was the maximisation of people's powers, enabling each individual to develop himself (or herself) as far as possible. In 1898, when Dewey taught a class in political ethics at the University of Chicago, he had told his students that his democratic ideal was embodied in the slogan of the French revolution: liberty, fraternity and equality. Equality demanded that "each individual would of necessity be provided with whatever is necessary for his realization, for his development, whatever is necessary to develop him to enable him to function adequately.....He must have certain opportunities provided for him to get all that is in him, that anybody else has." (Dewey 1898 LPPE) Equality was providing for each individual "whatever is necessary to enable him to put his powers thoroughly at the service of society.....(no-one) would be deprived of whatever was necessary for him to get for himself and to give to society the full benefit of what is in him."(Dewey 1898) This interpretation of equality did not bring about egalitarianism. It resulted not in everyone being the

same but in everyone being as different as possible. (Westbrook 1991p. 320) Dewey's idea of equality was to maximise the opportunities in such a way as to enable every individual to be socially useful and to develop their personal powers through some form of creative activity. (Dewey 1936 LSC)

The freedom to develop these powers was what Dewey understood by positive freedom - a conception of freedom that had implications for education. All members of a democracy were entitled to an education that would enable them to make the best of themselves as active participants in the life of their community. "There is a socialism regarding which there can be no dispute - socialism of the intelligence and of the spirit. To extend the range and fullness of sharing in the intellectual and spiritual resources of the community is the very meaning of the community." (Dewey 1902 quoted in Westbrook p94). In 1902, Dewey was using the word, socialism, lightly. In 1935, he used the word guardedly when distinguishing his sort of liberal democracy from that of capitalist America. By then, words like socialism had many connotations. As Dewey was later to point out, (1948) Hitler called himself a socialist, Stalin called himself a democrat, clerical authoritarians call themselves humanists and Franco called himself a Christian. Such terms could mean everything or nothing. But in 1935, Dewey was concerned about the rising tide of antiliberalism in America as various brands of conservatism, radicalism and liberalism competed for supremacy. (Dykhuisen 1978 p 265) He argued that liberalism needed to be restated in terms which were relevant to the twentieth century.

The conflict between traditional and progressive education appears to be not so much about pedagogy as about politics, about the politics of 'left' versus 'right.' At its worst it seems to be a slanging match - but this is to underestimate its seriousness. In essence, the conflict is between freedom and authority. Education is a symbol of these concepts, an arena where the effects of both can be seen in practice and the profound division in attitudes can be seen in a microcosm. In the final chapter, I shall look at the way in which Dewey's concept of freedom affects his philosophy of

education. Dewey defined liberty as power, - the "effective power to do specific things." (Dewey 1935 PM p 111) This 'confusion' of liberty with power has been dismissed by Hayek as a mistake made by socialists in general and by Dewey in particular. (Hayek 1944) But it is a lead in discovering a possible explanation for Dewey's posthumous unpopularity in Britain in the 1990s. Why else, as a progressive liberal reformer with apparently neither revolutionary nor radical tendencies, has Dewey recently received such a bad press? I suggest that it is because his concept of liberty is the direct antithesis of that of the present government and, indeed, successive conservative governments over the last fifteen years.

## Chapter eight

### Dewey's Concept of Freedom

*"Liberalism is committed to an end that is at once enduring and flexible: the liberation of individuals so that realization of their capacities may be the law of their life. It is committed to the use of freed intelligence as the method of directing change....The liberal spirit is marked by its own picture of the pattern that is required: a social organization that will make possible effective liberty and opportunity for personal growth in mind and spirit in all individuals."*

(Dewey 1935 LSA McDermott 1981 p.643)

In his last published work on education in 1952, Dewey spoke out forcefully against authoritarianism. He believed that it led to totalitarianism and thus presented one of the greatest dangers facing society. Authoritarianism reflected the sort of divided society against which Dewey had always fought - those who gave orders and those who obeyed, the powerful and the submissive. Authority is the natural enemy of freedom. In this final chapter, I want to focus on the tension between freedom and authority as it is manifested in Dewey's ideas and attempt to show how Dewey's particular interpretation of freedom affected both his philosophy and his philosophy of education, influencing the position he took on the social, political and educational problems of his time. It was the motivating force underlying his efforts to bring about the reconstruction of the community, to liberate people through education, to radicalise liberalism and to recreate democracy.

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In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to show how the ends of Dewey's philosophy lay in democracy as a moral ideal and how inherent within these ends was the means of achieving them. Self-realization, the moral ideal, was achieved through critical inquiry and the continuous

reconstruction of experience. This critical reconstruction of experience was the essence of Dewey's pragmatism. Bernstein (1991 p.324) suggests that pragmatic thinkers, such as Dewey, were ahead of their times in that they anticipated the postmodern state - the uncertain, the unpredictable and the hazardous - and that their method can best be appreciated as an 'ongoing engaged conversation.' In that much that Dewey wrote and said a hundred years can equally well be applied to contemporary problems in society, this seems to be true.

Dewey believed that the condition of liberalism in the mid-1930s, strongly laissez faire and individualistic, was the direct consequence of a capitalist economy. Every attempt to control the economic forces in America which gave so much wealth and power to the few was resisted by these few, in the name of liberty. They used the vast resources at their disposal to forestall any attack on the economic institutions that benefited them. Dewey suggests that if one wants to know at any given time what the 'condition of liberty' is, it is only necessary to examine what a person can and cannot do. When this question is asked, it becomes evident that the demand for liberty is the demand for power - it is either to get hold of powers not yet possessed, or to keep powers that are already possessed. In 1935, therefore, liberty was identified with the perpetuation of the then existing economic system by the managers and beneficiaries of that system. They wished to keep the powers that they possessed. It was the massive force of self-interested, corporate capitalism that gave liberty this identity.

This was in contrast to the past when the demand for liberty and efforts to achieve it had come from those who wanted to change the status quo. The first immigrants to America were looking for freedom. These earlier liberals had been regarded as subversive radicals and their liberalism had been a call for freedom. In the pioneering days, property and rewards acquired by anyone were intrinsically individual which had led to what Dewey called a 'rugged individualism.' But the vast changes in society brought about by the industrial revolution meant that people had to work for others rather than for themselves. It was no longer just that any one individual should take the

rewards - there was no longer any place for rugged individualism. Nevertheless, the terms liberalism and individuality had since become identified with the possessive individualism of the entrepreneurial capitalist. This contingent relationship between liberalism and capitalism had caused liberalism to degenerate into what Dewey called a conservative ideology or "pseudo-liberalism - a justification for the limitation of the freedoms of most men and women" - and for the few remaining to make as much money as possible. (Dewey 1946 -The Future of Liberalism 1935 in PM) It was this that Dewey wanted to change. "Even when words remain the same, they mean something very different when they are uttered by a minority struggling against repressive measures and when expressed by a group that has attained power and then uses ideas that were once weapons of emancipation as instruments for keeping the power and wealth they have obtained." (ibid)

Dewey went on to elaborate this condition. Liberty or, as Dewey used the word, 'the possession of effective power' only exists in relation to other things; it entails its own distribution. To discuss increased liberty for one individual or group of individuals is to raise the question of decreased liberty for other individuals or groups of individuals. Liberty is therefore always a social question and not an individual one. "The system of liberties that exists at any time is always the system of restraints or controls that exists at any time." (Dewey 1935 LSC in PM p.111) Control is exercised by whoever has power; at the time Dewey was writing such power was economic and any attempt to redistribute it by making the economic system a more cooperative one was resisted. As Dewey said, "It is nonsense to suppose that we do not have social control now. (i.e.1935) The trouble is that it is exercised by the few who have economic power, at the expense of the many and at the cost of increasing disorder." (ibid p.114) These 'few', the minority, believed liberty and equality to be incompatible. Inequality was the inevitable result of the diversity and inequality of natural endowment; if attempts were made to correct this imbalance, it was seen by the 'few' as an infringement of liberty. This laissez faire school of liberalism tolerated any amount of social inequality because the few retained the free exercise of their natural powers. Inequality, therefore, guaranteed liberty for the few and, with the few in power, liberty guaranteed inequality.

Dewey believed that democracy had broken down because liberty had become identified with the "maximum of unrestrained individualistic action in the economic sphere, under the institutions of capitalistic finance" and this was as fatal to the realization of liberty as to equality. "It is destructive of liberty for the many precisely because it is destructive of genuine equality of opportunity." (ibid p.116) The existing materialism which he saw around him was, to Dewey, the inevitable product of control by the few at the expense of the all-round liberty of the many. This fact, which I have laboured, was at the heart of Dewey's revolt against the status quo. This revolt had begun back in the 1880s when he had first railed against the divisions in society. His concept of liberty is due directly to the influence of Green and it affected his attitude to every aspect of life.

To challenge the American liberalism of the 1930s was a radical undertaking. As Ions (1979) remarks, individualism was a belief central to the conservative tradition in America. Collectivism was therefore seen as a threat to personal liberty. But authoritarianism, control of the few by the many through economic power, led to another sort of totalitarianism, another threat to liberty, as Dewey warned in 1952. But at the same time he saw no future in exacerbating antagonisms between opposing forces. The "habit of opposing the corporate and collective to the individual" could only lead to uncertainty and confusion. (Dewey 1930 in McDermott 1981 p.612) It resulted in hardened divisions within society, with the ruling class demanding liberty in order to carry on doing what they wanted and the subordinate classes demanding liberty from oppression.

In 'The Future of Liberalism,' (1935) Dewey spells out what is required for 'pseudo-liberalism' to become liberalism. It needed to address the inequalities and oppressions of society. The existing system needed not simply to be ameliorated but to be changed, but it had to be done by democratic methods. It was only through "the development of individuals in their voluntary cooperation with one another" that the development of individuality and thus of liberalism could be made secure and enduring. Dewey acknowledged that such a method was slow and handicapped by the

'undemocratic character of what passes for democracy.' But the alternative was either fascism or communism. Very carefully, therefore, Dewey redefined liberalism, treading carefully around socialism, but in a way that cannot be construed as anything other than radical. His reinterpretation of liberalism was in accord with his idealistic vision of democracy. Individuality was the key factor and development of the self depended on liberty and the freeing of intelligence. The individual was placed firmly within the community - the two were interdependent and flourished in a symbiotic union. The crucial factor was that in making the individual and the collective good dependent upon one another, conflict between them was avoided. Liberalism combined the development of the individual with the good of society. The meaning of liberty was reestablished as the power to do and achieve whatever was necessary for the development of that individual's potential. Through interaction and association between people within a community, a participatory democracy could come about.

Within these changes lay the need to redefine individualism. Dewey believed that it was the corporate mentality which threatened democracy and "lost the individual." (Dewey 1930 *Towards a New Individualism* quoted in McDermott 1981p. 600) "The business mind, having its own conversation and language, its own business interests, its own intimate groupings in which men of this mind, in their collective capacity, determine the tone of society at large as well as the government of industrial society....we now have, although without formal or legal status, a mental and moral corporateness for which history affords no parallel." (ibid) By the 1930s and 1940s, Dewey's desire to achieve a representative or participatory democracy was stronger than ever along with his unqualified condemnation of capitalism, the corporatist state and materialistic values. (Westbrook 1991 p.434) Dewey wanted the individual to "re-find himself." (ibid p.613) He did not want conformity, seeing it as the "absence of vital interplay; the arrest and benumbing of communication. Crowd psychology is dangerous in its instability. To rely on it for permanent support is playing with a fire that may get out of control." (ibid p.614 ) In 1930, this was prescient. What Dewey feared was an artificially induced uniformity of thought because it was a symptom of



an inner void. He referred to the 'joining' habit of the average American. "The individual cannot remain intellectually in a vacuum....Individuals who are not bound together in associations, whether domestic, economic, religious, political, artistic or educational, are monstrosities." (ibid p.614) But it was because of this tendency to join and associate that individuals had to develop their own power and intelligence in order to become independent and critical thinkers. It was the task of educators to see that this happened.

Dewey made no claims for democracy as the final answer to government. He saw "democratic political forms as simply the best means to a truly human way of living that human wit has devised" up to the present moment. (Dewey 1937 PM p. 58) The foundation of democracy was faith in the capacities of human nature, faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience. (Dewey 1937 p. 59) Dewey repeated this many times. In 1939, he said: "Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature....the democratic faith in human equality is belief that every human being, independent of the quality or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has." (Dewey 1939 - Creative Democracy - The Task Before Us.) This implied a belief not in the equality of natural gifts but in the entitlement of every individual to equality of treatment by the law, the right to express judgements and above all equality as an individual with equal opportunity to develop his or her own capacities. "The democratic faith in equality is the faith that each individual shall have the chance and opportunity to contribute whatever he is capable of contributing." (ibid) This faith in human nature demanded that the individual be free and responsible. A freed intelligence entailed freedom of action. To Dewey this implied that workers should be free and able to participate in the control of the workplace, that all people should be free and able to participate in the government of the state, that schools should be free from the oppressive authority of the state and that teachers should be free to exercise their initiative in the classroom.

Autocratic and authoritarian governments had less faith than Dewey in human nature. The intelligence to exercise such participatory control, they believed, was possessed by only a few. The democratic community which Dewey envisaged embodied a collective authority alien to authoritarianism. But the massive growth of the corporate bureaucratic state had been a major cause of the breakup of community which had in turn disempowered the individual and the possibility of forging a collective authority. It precluded the possibility of communication and dialogue between people - "Evils which are uncritically and indiscriminately laid at the door of industrialisation and democracy might, with greater intelligence, be referred to the dislocation and unsettlement of local communities.....The invasion and partial destruction of the life of the latter by outside uncontrolled agencies is the immediate source of the instability, disintegration and restlessness which characterise the present epoch." (Dewey 1927 (1954) PP p.212)

First, therefore, Dewey recommended the reconstruction of the local community. One of the consequences of authoritarianism in both state and school was, and still is, apathy. In the wider society, it induces a disaffected and uninterested public. When an individual feels he or she can have no effect, the sense of impotence and ineffectiveness leads to alienation. Dewey commented on American society in the late 1920s: "In most circles, it is hard work to sustain conversation on a political theme; and once initiated, it is quickly dismissed with a yawn. Let there be introduced the topic of the mechanism and accomplishment of various makes of motor cars or the respective merits of actresses, and the dialogue goes on at a lively pace." (Dewey 1927 (1954) PP p.139)

Living in a democracy meant active involvement and "men still want the crutch of dogma, of beliefs fixed by authority, to relieve them of the trouble of thinking and the responsibility of directing their activity by thought. They tend to confine their own thinking to a consideration of which one among the rival systems of dogma they will accept. Hence, the schools are better adapted, as John Stuart Mill said, to make disciples than inquirers." (Dewey 1916 D&E).

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The American public school system worked against Dewey's idea of an actively involved community. Its authoritarian character demanded a 'passive, docile, receptive' response from children and was deeply hostile to participatory democracy. It positively encouraged children to be apathetic and uncritical by giving them no opportunity to develop any sense of their own ability to be proactive and to solve difficulties. If children are physically and mentally prevented from being active, if they are provided with information to ingest without question, they become inert, like the knowledge they are given. With such an education the public had no exercise in being part of a decision-making process. It led to the dangerous 'uniformity of thought and inner void' mentioned earlier. The aim of the Laboratory School had been to discover ways of educating children to be actively involved in their own lives. As Dewey pointed out, in the pioneering days of early democracy before the days of the common school when communities were small, problems could be addressed by individuals. Then each person had a role. The advances in technology, transport and communication had not made it easier to take part in democratic life. Many of the problems affecting the public were too complicated or specialised for the ordinary person to understand, without the right sort of education. Dewey wrote of a nitrogen plant which, at the time of writing, had become a matter of political dispute. "How many voters are competent to measure all the factors involved in arriving at a decision? And if they were competent after studying it, how many have time to devote to it?" (Dewey 1927 PP p.136) People soon tire of problems, whether producing nitrates, or developing hydro-electric power, when they do not have the knowledge to fully understand. "The ramification of the issues before the public is so wide and intricate, the technical matters involved are so specialized, the details are so many and so shifting, that the public cannot for any length of time identify and hold itself." (ibid) When there is no common understanding, the public does not cohere and thus exist as a potent force. "The ties which hold men together are numerous, tough and subtle. But they are invisible and intangible. We have the physical tools of communication as never before. The thoughts and aspirations congruous with them are not communicated....Without such communication the public will remain shadowy and formless.....Communication can alone create a great community." (Dewey 1927 Pp.142)

"Democracy must begin at home and its home is the neighbourly community. In such a community, communication could come about through face-to-face contact between human beings. In its deepest and richest sense a community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse. This is why the family and neighbourhood, with all their deficiencies, have always been the chief agencies of nurture, the means by which dispositions are stably formed and ideas acquired which laid hold on the roots of character." (Dewey 1927 PP p. 211) Dewey emphasised this again in 1939, when he spoke to an audience gathered to celebrate his eightieth birthday. "When I think of the conditions under which men and women are living in many foreign countries to-day, fear of espionage, with danger hanging over the meeting of friends for friendly conversation in private gatherings, I am inclined to believe that the heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner to discuss back and forth what is read in uncensored news of the day, and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments to converse freely with one another. Intolerance, abuse, calling of names because of differences of opinion about religion or politics or business, as well as because of differences of race, color, wealth, or degree of culture, are treason to the democratic life. For everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and factions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life. Merely legal guarantees of the civil liberties of free belief, free expression, free assembly are of little avail if in daily life freedom of communication, the give and take of ideas, facts experiences, is choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear and hatred." (Dewey 1939 Creative Democracy - the Task Before Us))

Dewey believed that there was something deep in human nature which pulled towards settled relationships - "Inertia and stability belong to emotions and desires as well as to masses and molecules. That happiness which is full of content and peace is found only in enduring ties with others.....No one knows how much of the frothy excitement of life, of mania for motion, of fretful

discontent, of need for artificial stimulation, is the expression of frantic search for something to fill the void caused by the loosening of bonds which hold persons together in immediate community of experience." (Dewey PP p.214) "'Community' and community activities are becoming words to conjure with." (Dewey 1927 PP p.215) Again, he was prescient, a man who speaks to the 1990s as much as to his own time.

It was the human scale of community that was needed, because it was only at that level could the public find its voice again. "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself." (Dewey 1927 PP p. 217) It sounds utopian - Dewey could anticipate territorial states and political boundaries but not of the sort which cut people off from one another by jealousy, fear and suspicion. He could foresee competition between people, not because of rivalry over material goods, but through the enjoyment of artistic and intellectual wealth. "Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art. Poetry, the drama, the novel, are proofs that the problem of presentation is not insoluble. Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation." But there had to be an organised, articulate Public. "The highest and most difficult kind of inquiry and a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it. When the machine age has thus perfected its machinery it will be a means of life and not its despotic master. Democracy will come into its own, for democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion. It had its seer in Walt Whitman. It will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication." (Dewey 1927 Ppp.184).

Secondly, therefore, in order for people to take an active part in their community, intelligence had to be freed through education, an education which could accommodate change and adaptability. Education was the primary responsibility of liberalism. Dewey's philosophy and pedagogy was based on the premiss of change or flux. "Flux does not have to be created. But it does have to be directed. It has to be so controlled that it will move to some end in accordance with the principles of life, since life itself is development." (Dewey 1935 LSA Kennedy p.94) "Schooling is a part of the work of education, but education in its full meaning includes all the influences that go to form the attitudes and dispositions (of desire as well as of belief), which constitute dominant habits of mind and character." The problem facing society was to turn the constantly changing social scene into some sort of social organisation - but - it had to be one which made possible "effective liberty as well as opportunity for personal growth in mind and spirit in all individuals." (ibid) Growth took place as a result of freed intelligence and intelligence was freed in a democratic community which was dedicated to the growth of the individual. "Liberalism is committed to an end that is at once flexible and enduring: the liberation of individuals so that realization of their capacities may be the law of their life. It is committed to the use of freed intelligence as the method of directing change." (ibid)

So often when Dewey wrote about education and democracy, he attacked authoritarianism and the insistence of authoritarians on equating education with the transmission of a fixed and final body of knowledge. In 1952, he acknowledged that when repressive and reactionary forces were increasing in strength in all their other institutions - economic, social and political- it would be folly to expect the school to get off free." But Dewey was disappointed by the progress and development of progressive education. He said that the improvement it had brought about in the classroom was 'atmospheric.' There was a greater awareness of the needs of the growing human being and personal relationships between student and teacher had indeed been democratised and humanised. However, the fundamental authoritarianism of 'old' education in various modified forms still persisted. "There is a great deal of talk about education being a cooperative enterprise in which

teachers and students participate democratically but there is far more talk about it than the doing of it." (Dewey 1952) In the secondary schools, particularly, there was little sharing on the part of the teachers in the needs and concerns of their pupils. Cooperative, democratic education was made difficult anyway by class sizes and work loads but these conditions were not the sole causes for the failure in educational democracy. The salient point for Dewey was that new problems in education could not be met intelligently by routine application of ideas and principles which had been developed to solve different problems, that is, an immutable curriculum. New problems demanded for their intelligent solution the projection of new purposes, new ends in view; and new ends necessitated the development of new means. "Of course, the new is, in all cases, relatively, not absolutely, new. ...the continuities in culture and experience exclude the possibility of anything having in fact this absolute character." (ibid) He states forcibly that the conversion or perversion of means and methods into a fixed, self-sufficient subject matter is due to the persistence and power of the traditional notion that the qualities of ideas are inherent, eternal and immutable essences. If learning was a method of growth, which Dewey believed it to be, it could not be done through the teaching of fixed, self-sufficient, immutable subject-matter - a national curriculum, for example. Education must be constantly developed for the intelligent solution of new problems. An authoritarian regime where pupils are told what to learn and teachers are told what to teach was the path to totalitarianism. Educating teachers to transmit collections of fixed immutable subject-matter was not education - it was indoctrination and propaganda, a 'type' of education fit for the foundations of a totalitarian society and, "for the same reason, fit to subvert, pervert and destroy the foundations of a democratic society." (Dewey 1952 The education process had to be "a genuine sharing, a truly cooperative transaction in which both teachers and students engage as equals and learners." (Dewey 1952 quoted in Dworkin 1959p.132) Democratic education formed attitudes which expressed themselves in intelligent social action - something very different from indoctrination. (Dewey 1937 PM p.56)

Vital to the freeing of intelligence of pupils was the freeing of the intelligence of teachers. Dewey knew that in the public school system the teacher did not have the power to initiate endeavours. He criticised the bureaucratic centralism that prevented teachers from using their own intellectual and spiritual individuality because they were having to do and teach what they were told. Both teachers and pupils were crippled by the overriding and overpowering presence of the prescriptions of outside experts. Dewey believed teachers too should have their intelligence freed and that they should not have "to be told what to do on Monday morning." (Dewey 1922 quoted in Wirth 1983)

The planning of education should not be about fixed objectives and ready-made rules, it should be about providing the educators with whatever they need to see and think more clearly about what they are doing. For children to experience education as a "meaning-seeking way of life" teachers also need to do so. (Wirth 1983 p.102) Wirth suggests that what Dewey was essentially wanting was for the teacher to have the freedom to inquire into his or her own teaching - in essence what the action research process recommends for teachers, namely, the constant reconstruction of experience through critical inquiry. What was desirable was a situation in which every member of the school should have some exercise in the exercise of power. (Wirth 1983 p.97) "All other reforms are conditioned upon reform in the quality and character of those who engage in the teaching profession. Just because education is the most personal, the most intimate of all human affairs, there, more than anywhere else the sole ultimate reliance and final source of power is in the training, character and intelligence of the individual teacher.....But as long as school organisation...tends to repel all those of independent force, of intellectual ability, or tends to hamper them in their work....so long all other reforms are compromised at the start." (Dewey quoted in Wirth 1983 p.98)

In essence Dewey was talking about an education for citizenship which was not easy. It demanded from the teachers a commitment to a certain sort of society and as Dewey had realized, this was not easy if political power rested in a regimen at odds with that of the teacher. "A true teaching of citizenship to-day, which aims actually to achieve it as a reality, must involve critical analysis, and



must aim at transformation - both of education and of the social order. But how can this be achieved within an educational system whose social role is seen, by those in authority, as the preservation of that order?" (Simon 1994) In 'Democracy and Education,' Dewey laid down two vital conditions for a democratically constituted society which had to accommodate a diversity as extreme as America's. First, there needed to be as many 'varied points of shared common interest' as possible. Second, individuals had to develop a tolerance of difference. (Dewey 1916) The school's role in achieving these two conditions for a democratic society are vital. Dewey's vision of democracy was an ethical one, therefore the questions are about behaviour rather than politics. How do human beings live and work together? Dewey's answer is to be found in a community where people are able to talk to one another and through dialogue address the problems of society in a spirit of critical inquiry. In 'Education as Politics' Dewey talked of the need for an education that would develop a critical intelligence among students. Schools would then be the dangerous outposts of a humane civilisation but they would also begin to be supremely interesting places. Education and politics would be one and the same thing....the intelligent management of social affairs. Education was to do with enabling students to reconstruct experience so that they would see the world and themselves with new meanings.

But the freedom of the intelligence was therefore closely linked to a third recommendation - the need for a reconstructed liberalism. Liberalism had to become radical. In 1935, Dewey talked of a renascent liberalism, that is, a reversal of the earlier liberalism which had envisaged a free, individualistic or laissez faire economy as the means to general, social well-being. This liberalism had become "engaged in justifying the activities of a new form of concentrated power - the economic which...has consistently...denied effective freedom to economically underpowered and underprivileged. ( Dewey in Ratner p.347) This perspective had to be reversed. In order to achieve the means of free individual development, a socialised economic policy was required. Only if political liberalism were united with a 'socialist' economy would the chances of an equitable society be improved. In Dewey's view, liberalism, as a political theory, could no longer co-exist with the

economics of corporate capitalism and keep its integrity, since it led to unbridled individualism. In 1935 he stated that liberalism needed to be reconstructed for the current times. Established material security was a prerequisite of the ends that liberalism cherished. Individuals could only develop their full potential when their lives were secure - when they "actively share in the wealth of cultural resources that now exist and may contribute, each in his own way, to their further enrichment." (ibid) Insecurity sprang now from institutions and arrangements that were within deliberate human control rather than from the material insecurity of former times.

In 1939, on his eightieth birthday, Dewey spoke of the need in America for the re-creation of democracy where the frontier had become moral rather than geographical. He deplored the waste of grown men and women who were without the chance to work, and in the young men and young women who found doors closed where once there had been opportunity. The crisis that one hundred and fifty years ago called out social and political inventiveness is with us in a form which puts a heavier demand on human creativeness." (Dewey 1939) As Dewey came to realize that education through the school was no longer a sufficient means of bringing about the democratic life, because of the influence of governments and administrators, he turned more and more to the individual to bring democracy as he wished it into being. "Democracy is a personal way of individual life...it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life." Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed fixed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral end." (Dewey 1919 RP) The ideals and values are embedded in a positive freedom of the individual and in a concern for the collective good through the ability of that individual to grow intellectually and morally. "The dominant vocation of all human beings at all times is living - intellectual and moral growth....Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself." (Dewey 1916 D&E)

"For the creation of a democratic society we need an educational system where the process of moral-intellectual development is in practice as well as in theory a cooperative transaction of inquiry engaged in by free, independent human beings who treat ideas and the heritage of the past as means and methods for the further enrichment of life, quantitatively and qualitatively, who use the good attained for the discovery and establishment of something better." Dewey (1952)

The cooperative transaction of inquiry was the pragmatic method, the refusal to accept immutable concepts and the readiness to reappraise, reconstruct, criticise and inquire. It is the establishment of a critical community of inquirers in every context - whether school, home, committee meeting or parliament - that is vital. Dewey's commitment to growth and critical inquiry depended on the individual as a member of a community. Inquiry is validated through appeal to a community of other inquirers. The community therefore is essential. Philosophy was not a body of knowledge or a set of doctrines; fixed beliefs, fixed values led only to conflict. Values are, as Berlin says, (1990) often incommensurable. The only solution is to carry on the quest for answers to problems as they arise, to carry on critical inquiry in an open forum, to be ready to concede defeat and to try again. This is Dewey's message - that it is possible for every person, through the exercise of their freed intelligence, within a community, to address the problems of existence and to keep on doing so. It seems paradoxical that while his philosophical method, the logic of inquiry, was grounded in change, his commitment to the democratic ideal remained constant throughout his life. But the means implied the ends and the ends implied the means - they were united. In 1897 he wrote: "I believe finally that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing." (Dewey 1897 MPC)

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