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**From the Editors**

## **Creating a “Beloved Community”: Generosity’s Place When Inventing Socially Just Schools**

Early educators in U.S. public schools made moral, character education central to all instruction and the primary goal of public schooling. Although one may not see on any list of standards or goals of contemporary public schools “moral” or “character” development, in principal, educators know schooling functions not only to educate but to socialize; yet, few efforts seem to be made in today’s public schools to do more than instruct in whatever way one believes will result in higher test scores. In a country always at war, with millions on the home front living in poverty, imprisoned, and dropping out of school, and with the many youth, soldiers returned from war, elderly, and individuals mentally or physically ill annually committing suicide, teaching for passing tests seems to be working neither to educate the U.S. population nor to result in all citizens’ freedom and ability to pursue and achieve happiness during their lifetimes. On a recent PBS broadcast in which Charlie Rose interviews Warren Buffet and Bill Gates (Nocerito, 2017), Buffet points out what many in Social Foundations of Education have been writing about for quite a while: the gap between rich and poor is expanding and will continue to expand with technological advances. Buffet makes clear that we in the U.S. have the resources to feed, clothe, and house everyone, to provide quality health care for everyone, and that we the people need to figure out how to do it. Is anyone trying to figure out how to feed, clothe, house, and provide quality health care for all? Is anyone having an “aha” moment realizing that we in the U.S. need not only to pull out those swept downstream and drowning in the river but to fix the mudslide upstream causing the crisis? Just as we the people have the resources to feed, clothe, house and provide quality health care for all, we have the resources to devise and implement educational programs through which to stop the mudslide and its long- and short-term effects.

Although I do not claim to have many answers, after much pondering, I have concluded an enormous hole in public schools exists through the lack of generosity in schools and through the failure to teach

generosity. Perhaps the failure to teach generosity stems from Aristotle's (384 B.C.E.–322 B.C.E.) naming generosity a moral rather than an intellectual virtue. In U.S. public schools, one often associates the moral with the religious of which public school personnel must steer clear. In U.S. schools, one is to maintain clear separations between public and private, state and church, mind and body, reason and emotion educating the mind to the exclusion of the body and what some might call the “soul” from which generosity as a moral virtue presumably stems. In addition to such strict bifurcations in public schools, “generosity” is what Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) calls a “used word” that “means so little” (1938/1966, p. 153). The more I read and think about the meaning and value of generosity, the more I realize it also means so much, has so many different meanings from so many different sources that one might be easily confused in the pool of ambiguities and contradictions. Is “generosity” a “used word” that “means so little” not only because many drain it of meaning and value when using it in political propaganda but because of these ambiguities and contradictions? Here, I want briefly to examine the concept of generosity and how it connects to a set of interrelated principle goals appearing on public school and district websites as well in universities’ missions, visions, and policies: diversity, equity, and social justice.

Connected to educational institutions, diversity, equity, and social justice may appear together as apparently separate concepts whose realities the institutions’ personnel strive to achieve but that may also appear as separate entities apparently unrelated to the other two. In higher education, for example, one often finds a “diversity statement” whose writers may or may not connect to the goals of diversifying faculty and the student body, being “welcoming” to all people, and treating all with equity and justice. Because I see diversity and equity issues “built into” striving for social justice, here, I draw from Cornell West’s (2015) and Victor Lee Lewis’ (X, 2017) melding diversity and equity into the single aim of social justice, for West (2015) calls social justice “love made public” and Victor Lee Lewis (X, 2017) calls social justice “creating a beloved community,” a concept whose source he attributes to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968; 1958) who actually borrowed and deepened the concept from American philosopher Josiah Royce (1855–1916; 1913/2001). How can one make love public or create a beloved community without equity among the diverse individuals in that public, in that community? How can one realize social justice conceived in any reasonable way or make West’s (2015) or Lewis’ (X, 2017) ideal of social justice reality without generosity?

Thinking about what has to be included in generosity, I began: compassion, understanding, perhaps a sense of freedom and self-confidence in the giver? Starting with its etymology, I learned “generosity” dates from early 15<sup>th</sup>-century England and meant “of noble birth,” “nobility of race” (Douglas, 2017) which evolved to mean, “freedom from pettiness in character and mind” (Dictionary.com Unabridged, 2017). It makes sense that in 15<sup>th</sup>-century England only the “highborn” had anything with which to be generous and that limiting generosity to nobility would likely result in defining generosity uniquely as giving material goods or money. Notwithstanding, generosity as giving only the material contradicts what I have seen, experienced, and read, even in 15<sup>th</sup>-century English literature: those with limited means are often the most willing to share the little they have, whether material goods or themselves, even with strangers. Turning to western philosophy, I begin with Aristotle who identifies generosity or “liberality” as a moral virtue “between wastefulness and frugality,” a virtue one must exercise properly by giving “to the right people, in the right amount, and at the right time” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 443; Aristotle, 1999). The virtue resides in exercising good judgment by discerning who should receive one’s gift and therefore knowing one has not squandered that gift (Sanchez, 2009, p. 443; Aristotle, 1999). Aristotle is the first in the western tradition centrally to position human reason’s calculation of giving within the concept of generosity as a non-negotiable part of the definition thereby turning giving without having properly calculated and judged the recipient’s worthiness into vice (Sanchez, 2009, p. 444; Aristotle, 1999). Distinguishing between generosity and magnanimity, Aristotle further defines generosity by aligning it with the small and even trivial and magnanimity with large matters. Although one no longer distinguishes between generosity and magnanimity in the way Aristotle does, part of the contemporary definition for generosity seems to stem from the special qualities Aristotle assigns to the magnanimous person, for his or her generosity “is a matter of honor,” is an act of greatness, and “is proper to the superior person” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 444; Aristotle, 1999). Likely, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century meaning that generosity belongs to nobility translates today into the nobility of spirit Aristotle assigns uniquely to “superior”—magnanimous—individuals while assigning receiving to “inferior” ones (Sanchez, 2009, p. 444; Aristotle, 1999).

Irrespective of his distinguishing between small and large gifts and the conditions for calculating a recipient’s worthiness, Aristotle (1999) makes clear that whether giving in small or large ways, one must expect nothing in return (Sanchez, 2009). While today many would concur with Aristotle (1999) that giving with no expectation of a return remains central to generosity’s meaning and value, some would also agree Aristotle too heavily restricts giving to someone “deserving” and

perhaps restricting one's giving to the deserving is simply another way of expecting a return. Regardless, this requirement that individuals be "deserving" of one's generosity remains in U.S. culture. After all, schools must document which children deserve free or low-cost breakfasts and lunches; higher education faculty determine who deserves financial aid and scholarships; some philanthropists and non-profits work only to feed, clothe, and provide health care for those outside the U.S. believing anyone living in the U.S. does not deserve one's generosity, for anyone fortunate enough to live in the United States has no excuse for being without basic necessities. In Aristotle's language, no one in the U.S. should be "inferior"; therefore no one in the U.S. should require another's generosity unless perhaps some natural disaster strikes one down.

Aristotle is not the only western philosopher to contribute to the pool of meanings from which one might draw when defining generosity. In direct contrast to Aristotle, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) contends one should not give to the other without evidence, a feeling, or an impression that the other will return the care (Sanchez, 2009, p. 444; Kant, 1930). This demand seems another way of determining worthiness just as Aristotle's (1999) calculating worthiness is another way of assuring a return. Kant (1930) emphasizes the "generous reciprocity of love" (p. 201) as ideal friendship in which that reciprocity outweighs self-love that results in self-care and highlights reciprocity of respect as key to moral friendship (Sanchez, 2009, p. 445). Although Kant (1930) makes clear his vision of generosity is merely an ideal nonexistent in practice, one sees his "generous reciprocity" (p. 201) anchored in economic exchange and therefore occurring in practice into the present day (Sanchez, 2009). Translating the idea of economic exchange into everyday reality, one sees it takes such forms as: seeking recognition, being associated with a good cause, or some other form of reciprocity; giving to mitigate one's guilt; or, dangerously, giving from a paternalistic attitude that feeds the giver's "illusion of self sufficiency and control" (Childs, 2013, p. 1, referring to Nouwen, 1985). This illusion results in the giver's self-satisfaction, an attitude and illusion sharply contrasting with one's beneficiaries' dependence and certainly calls to mind Aristotle's (1999) notion that superior individuals give while inferior ones receive (Childs, 2013, referring to Nouwen, 1985).

In addition to Kant's (1930) connecting generosity to economic exchange, his moral imperative, so frequently associated with Christian generosity, carries an undercurrent of that same system of exchange: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In contrast, one wants others to offer care, but unless one has the evidence, feeling, or impression they will, selflessly care for them at your own risk! In a rather

odd way, just as Kant's concept of generosity seems little more than economic exchange, so he apparently disconnects generosity from "a noble or kindly spirit," and "freedom from pettiness in character and mind" (Douglas, 2017) even as he connects it to ideal and moral friendship.

Aristotle's (1999) and Kant's (1930) concepts of generosity explain a lot about why we in the U.S. are a people divided: differing views of generosity influence politics, policies, and practices affecting the distribution of goods, opportunities, and access, as well as the distribution of responsibilities to the nation. Even as Aristotle's (1999) and Kant's (1930) ethics link to some contemporaries' thinking about or practices of generosity, their kinds of generosity—including what one concludes to be generosity's beneficiaries' dependence because they are "inferior" human beings—invoke Paulo Freire's (1921–1997; 1970/2000) distinction between generosity and false generosity.

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life" to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (p. 45)

Juxtaposed with Freire's definitions of generosity and false generosity, Aristotle's (1999) and Kant's (1930) definitions align with Freire's false generosity reflecting their construing as ethical the perpetuation of unjust social orders, lack of, if not false, generosity, and their devastating consequences. Conversely, converging in Freire's (1970/2000) concept of true generosity and the transformative social justice emerging from that generosity are Royce's (1913/2001) concept of "beloved community" that influenced the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "beloved community" that in turn influenced Cornel West's (2015) "social justice is love made public" and Victor Lee Lewis' (X, 2017) "social justice is creating a beloved community." If including "generosity" within Royce's (1913/2001), King's (1958), West's (2015), and Lewis' (X, 2017) concepts previously seemed a leap, Freire's (1970/2000) clarifying generosity's role in social justice whose realization achieves humanity for all should elucidate generosity as one way to build love and as necessary to becoming fully human. This elucidation further reveals that becoming fully human through generosity is necessary to attaining social justice.

Any attempt to "soften" the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always

manifests itself in the form of false generosity.... In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity,” the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this “generosity” which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. ... As individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of their humanity they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. ... And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity. (pp. 44–45)

Importantly, Freire (1970/2000) casts into relief unjust social orders’ perpetuating false generosity as keeping people in poverty without access to opportunities, education, and other resources, conditions that fuel violence, physical and mental illness, and the lovelessness and despair that often result in suicide. These outcomes of unjust social order endlessly looping with false generosity dehumanize together preventing people from realizing their humanity.

Although one continues to see Aristotle’s (1999) and Kant’s (1930) influence in the ways westerners define and practice generosity, Freire’s (1970/2000) transformative philosophy, first appearing in English in 1970, may have influenced such writers and teachers as James M. Childs, Jr. (2013): “Generosity is kindness or munificence that goes beyond the moral minimum to do no harm, to fulfill one’s obligations, or simply to refrain from defrauding or stealing from others. It is a readiness to share liberally” (p. 1). In addition to Paulo Freire’s (1921–1997; 1970/2000) possible influence, such philosophical predecessors as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) may well have influenced Childs’ (2013) conceptualizing generosity. When looking to Emerson’s (1934) bottom line, generosity distances itself from Aristotle’s (1999) imposed rational calculations of merit and Kant’s (1934) economic exchange. For Emerson (1934), generosity means giving of oneself spontaneously. Similarly, Levinas (1969; 1998) retains the spontaneity Emerson (1934) includes adding that “generosity is a fundamental...ethical comportment necessitated by the approach of the other human being. ...generosity is manifested in authentic *giving*, or in offering, of a *gift* in a communicative act, namely, *speaking* with the other” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 451 emphasis in the original). Certainly one sees the connection among Freire’s (1970/2000), Royce’s (1913/2001), King’s (1958), West’s (2015) and Lewis’ (X, 2017) notions of social justice and Levinas’ (1969; 1998) connection between giving and

communication. Still, however appealing giving of oneself spontaneously and authentically may be, inequities have long existed within society. Kant's (1930) economic exchange-based definition for generosity seems alive and well, for revenge societies still exist, and those based upon social contracts often seem to be returning to a revenge-based infrastructure. For a society to be strong and cohesive, must it not have some form of distributive justice in place, something beyond giving of self, giving spontaneously, and giving authentically, and does not that need return one to Aristotle (1999)?

Considering to whom one might be generous, who "deserves" one's generosity either through "merit" or "need" becomes unavoidable and fundamental to distributive justice (Childs, 2013, p. 2). Do only top achievers, heroes, and innocent sufferers deserve generosity; do only the "deserving" needy merit generosity—public and personal (Childs, 2013, p. 2)? Attractive about how Childs (2013) weaves together generosity and distributive justice is his transforming Aristotle's (1999) "recipients" whom Aristotle (1999) concludes are "inferior" individuals into equal partners in the generous act similar to Levinas' (1969; 1998) generosity meaning communication *with* others.

Generosity is the friend of justice and egalitarian community. Not only are the needy who receive honored with equal dignity, they are consulted in defining their need as true partners, and they may in fact be lifted up to the further dignity of being enabled to contribute to the good of others. (Childs, 2013, p. 3)

Although Childs' extended definition of generosity reflects much of the relation among generosity, love, a just social order, and one's humanity that Freire (1970/2000) establishes, Freire restricts the drivers of the transformation to the oppressed and those in genuine solidarity with the oppressed inserting an in-between stage when the oppressed become the oppressors (p. 45). Childs' (2013) more optimistically portrays the relationship between givers and receivers as a true partnership between individuals of equal dignity who will so rise in dignity to contribute to others' good.

Childs' depiction of the possible partnership holds promise for school places as generous environments and for teaching generosity in schools, for one might imagine youth learning and practicing generosity from their first school days, so they live their lives embracing others as equally dignified, equally part of the beloved community they together create and work to maintain. Indeed, Childs seems to join hands with King (1958), West (2015), and Lewis (X, 2017) whose philosophies have clear ties to Emerson (1904), Levinas (1969; 1998), and Royce (1913/2001). Mingling generosity, justice, dignity, partnership, and community are useful to thinking about "refurbishing" schools with

generosity as the building material and the curriculum around which disciplinary and social education revolve.

When first thinking about generosity's place in schools and schools' curricula and working through my own definition for generosity, I thought compassion must be part of the definition or at least integrally related. Yet, after reading from philosophy, psychology, social theory, and theology, I saw nothing about compassion *per se*. The absence of compassion from definitions of generosity and from concepts scholars have connected to generosity (wonder, vigor, creativity, emotional intelligence) in a largely Judeo-Christian, western culture set me back as if struck strongly from some unseen place by some unknown entity. I then remembered American philosopher Josiah Royce's (1913/2001) attentive, sympathetic examination of Buddhism and his concept of "beloved community" that may have Buddhist roots. Thus, I turn from West to East. What does Buddha say?

Since Buddha in no way sought to found a religion, I turn to Buddhist philosophy rather than religion and look not to a scholarly journal but to one written for everyday people looking to live better lives. Interestingly, whenever teaching, Buddha began with generosity, for generosity "arouses from the inner quality of letting go" which "gives us profound freedom and many loving ways to express that freedom"; with generosity comes spiritual awakening (Salzberg, 2017, p. 51). Salzberg explains generosity to be giving beyond what one would normally give and is not limited to giving material goods or wealth but includes care, time, and service. She also notes the value of any single act of giving to go beyond that single act. Using Buddha's example of offering someone food, Salzberg clarifies why that offering extends beyond giving something to eat:

We're giving [that person] strength, health, beauty and clarity of mind, even life itself, because none of those things is possible without food. We're offering the stuff of life itself. All four of the qualities that we talk about as the *brahmaviharas*, or "divine abodes," are found in that single moment. (p. 51)

Although the divine abodes include the intimately related love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, I extract compassion for reasons of time and space and because I began my thinking about generosity in schools believing compassion would surely be part of its definition. Missing from the western philosophers' definitions of generosity I examined, compassion is key to the Buddhist ideal of generosity, for compassion, in each act of generosity, is: "that moment...we wish that being to be free from pain or suffering, to be happy. There's tenderness—that trembling of the heart that responds to a being and wants [that being] to be happy" (p. 51).

Although one sees in some western philosophy that being generous means to expect nothing in return, in Buddhist philosophy, expecting no return results in celebration of the giver's and receiver's freedom because at that moment no hierarchy, roles, or differences exist (Salzberg, 2017). The notion of celebrating after an action or achievement should not be foreign to the western mind. In the west one celebrates as an outcome of *doing* something to yield positive results. One celebrates after winning a baseball or soccer game; one celebrates after winning an academic competition, a cooking contest, or "bake off." One celebrates the union of two lovers who marry, a child's birth, an adoption confirmed. Within the Buddhist context, giving without expecting a return becomes celebration of one's freedom as giver, celebration of the receiver's freedom; celebration of this moment devoid of the hierarchies, roles, and differences that separate humans from each other rather than bringing them together as fellow human beings in community. Perhaps seeming mystical to many western minds, Buddhists teach: "in the moment of pure giving, we become one" (p. 51); we celebrate that oneness. Certainly this idea that an act of generosity eradicates roles, divisions, and hierarchies recalls Royce's (1913/2001) "beloved community" that so powerfully influenced the Reverend Dr. King (1958) and ultimately West (2015) and Lewis (X, 2017). The Buddhist idea of giver and receiver becoming one goes beyond Childs' partnership to eliminate the potential competition, conflict, and secrecy one sometimes sees in partnerships. In this vision, no one is the same, but everyone is worthy, human, dignified; everyone works for a just world where false generosity is the exception, not the agreed-upon order of the privileged few.

When thinking about and creating the school place as a generous one and designing curricula through which one learns to be generous, what, then, is necessary? Salzberg (2017) asserts generosity is not about perfection but practice, a practice one repeats not only with others but on oneself until generosity is who one becomes, a "flow," the touchstone for deepening genuine happiness (p. 51). This idea of practice should already be an integral part of schooling, for whether doing math problems, playing soccer, or practicing the piano, one must practice to achieve "flow." How often do principals, teachers, coaches, and counselors, establish opportunities for students to practice generosity? When the opportunity arises, how often do these school leaders encourage students to seize the day and feel the joy and freedom of being generous? When someone asks, demands, or questions why he or she has not received a "return" for his or her giving of self or material goods, how often do teachers stop to help students process the idea of

giving with no expectation of any particular outcome, of giving without superiority, of giving freely to welcome freedom in?

So many in the U.S. are not free. Creating generous school places and curricula to centralize the teaching, learning, and practice of generosity would perfectly engage school personnel and students alike in teaching, learning, and practicing freedom, social justice, how to prevent war, and yes, perfectly set each one on his or her own path to a happy life.

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**2016 SoPHE Presidential Address**

# **Navigating Hope and Despair in Schools and Society: Supporting the Development of a Critical Ecological Orientation**

**Neil O. Houser, University of Oklahoma**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the *Society of Philosophy and History of Education*. I am honored to serve as president this year. I would like to thank the SOPHE membership, including immediate past president Linda Morice, David Snelgrove, Martha Tevis, and so many others, for their ongoing support. The SOPHE I know is welcoming, thoughtful, concerned, and responsive, both to the needs of its members and the challenges of society. It is also rich in tradition. Its members have been fighting for intellectual enlightenment and social justice for as long as I've known them.

For me, the *Society of Philosophy and History of Education* is a place of fertile social, intellectual, and emotional exchange, a place to gather with friends and colleagues from across the country. The SOPHE I know practices dialogue rather than debate. It's not that we can't debate or take a strong stand, but in my experience, when members of SOPHE gather together, there is greater interest in gaining understanding than in persuading others to adhere to our own particular points of view. This is significant. To paraphrase Rocky Robbins, a colleague at the University of Oklahoma, "I've never learned anything as the result of being in a debate. When I'm in a debate, I'm in fight mode, not learn mode."

I want to dedicate today's talk to SOPHE past president, Don Hufford. Don, like so many in this room, has dedicated his life to serving others. Over the years, his relentless intellectual curiosity and remarkable spirit of generosity have greatly enriched this organization. As many of you know, Don has been struggling with serious health issues for the last couple of years.<sup>1</sup> We have kept in touch, and I would like to share our most recent email exchange:

Saturday, July 30, 2016 6:58 PM

Hi Don,

I was working on my SOPHE presentation and thought of you. I hope you are doing well, all things considered.

Your friend, Neil

Saturday, August 6, 2016 5:32 PM

Hi Neil:

Please excuse my delay in responding to your July 30<sup>th</sup> email. My health problems have slowed down the pace of my life. I'm trying to find some sense of accomplishment as I complete a life-journey. It's a little difficult right now. I have some short manuscripts I'm working on, that I have had to set aside for now; but I hope to get back to the "thinking process" shortly.

I'm trying to keep "alive" by some thoughtful reading. Right now, I am trying to dig into the existentialist meanings expressed in my latest book purchase, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, by Simone de Beauvoir. I'm also re-looking into the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. My most recent purchase is his book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.

I hope all is going well with your SOPHE presentation. I just wish I could be there to absorb your thoughts.

Thank you so much for keeping in touch. It means a lot to me.

Good luck as you begin to prepare for the fall semester.

Don

I can think of no one who better exemplifies the spirit of SOPHE than Don Hufford.



How can we, as teachers and teacher educators, address the serious challenges we continue to face while maintaining a genuine sense of hope and possibility? How can we proceed without succumbing to paralyzing feelings of despair, on the one hand, or to the temptations of false consciousness, on the other hand? The focus of today's talk is on the need for both critical and connected (organic, holistic, nonlinear—in a word, "ecological") ways of thinking and being. There is a vital need to engage in serious social critique while at the same time searching for viable alternatives to what currently exists. For this to occur, we must

continue to create and maintain effective support structures within and across our educational communities.

One way to address today's challenges, I believe, is to foster educational communities (in our classrooms, schools, and professional organizations) capable of supporting both critical consciousness and interconnected ways of thinking and being. Since hard-hitting social critique and an authentic search for hope and possibility have often been perceived as dichotomous (if not mutually exclusive) objectives within the binary structures of modernity, navigating their common terrain will require *both* critical *and* holistic ways of thinking and being.<sup>1</sup>

Today, I wish to identify some of the persistent personal, societal, environmental, and educational challenges we continue to face, consider why many of these problems have been so difficult to resolve, and explore the forms of thinking and kinds of communities I believe will be needed to address such challenges. Central to my argument is the need to foster a more *critical ecological orientation* required to reconcile long-standing inconsistencies between our mechanistic perceptions of the world and its interconnected realities.

### **Persistent Societal Challenges**

First, I want to identify persistent challenges in education and society.<sup>1</sup> For many, it is exceedingly difficult simply to survive, much less thrive, in today's sociopolitical milieu of domination and control (Behar, 1996; Garza, Cullors, & Tometi, 2017; Hedges & Talbot, 2016; Houser, 2014; Houser, Krutka, Province-Roberts, Faili-Coerver, & Pennington, 2017). Economic exploitation has long been a factor in capitalist societies (Apple, 1979/2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and, if the Occupy movement taught us nothing else, it raised public awareness about the magnitude of the divide between those with the greatest and the least wealth and power in society (Hedges & Talbot, 2016). Similarly, race- and gender-based forms of oppression, documented for decades (Baldwin, 1963/1998; Butler, 1990; Woolf, 1938/1966; Zinn, 1980), are again intensifying, both in everyday practice and public consciousness (Capra, 1996; Garza, Cullors, & Tometi, 2017; Palmer, 1998/2007; Quinn, 1996; Wise, 2004).

Other challenges, such as invisible race-, class-, and gender-based privilege and the burden of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903), have also persisted and intensified for many people of color, women, members of religious minority groups, and other marginalized peoples (Berger, 1972; Butler, 1990; McIntosh, 1989; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1995; Wise, 2004). Simultaneously, age-old colonial attitudes and practices, as well as more contemporary problems such as political and corporate hegemony, exponential population growth, and human-induced environmental

degradation, have gained strength and intensity (Gramsci, 1990; Guggenheim, 2006; Houser, 2014; Perkins, 2004).

In his insightful analysis, John Berger (1972) discusses the possessions, postures, and gazes of Hans Holbein's (1533) *The French Ambassadors*. Among their tools of colonization are globes and other navigational instruments, literature (including the Bible), and musical instruments needed to locate, convert, and "civilize" native populations. The attitudes of these opulently dressed ambassadors, revealed in their postures and gazes, indicate indifference and entitlement. They look out of the canvas, over, beyond, and through their audiences, in control of their world, unconcerned, indeed impervious, to how they may be perceived by those whose lives represent nothing more than a means to their own material wealth and political gain.

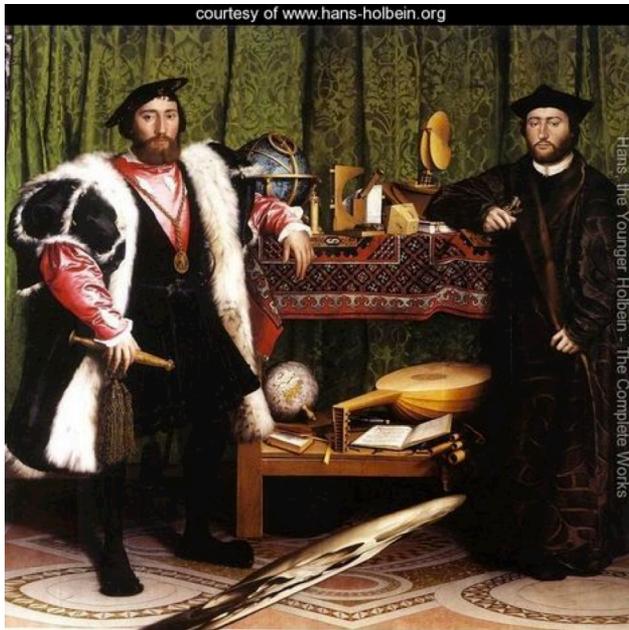


Figure 1. Hans Holbein. (1533). *The French Ambassadors*.

Berger does not suggest that either Holbein or the ambassadors were concerned about the negative ramifications of colonialism. What his analysis suggests, as historians like Zinn (1980) and Stannard (1992) confirm, is that social awareness of the attitudes of greed, acquisitiveness, individualism, and paternalism associated with colonial activity has existed for centuries.<sup>1</sup> These insights challenge assertions

that the motives and actions of past perpetrators of oppression should not be judged based on contemporary sensibilities.

Some of society's major problems, such as economic exploitation and race- and gender-related oppression, have long been understood, at least in scholarly circles (Baldwin, 1963/1998; Du Bois, 1903; Marx, 1867; Woolf, 1938/1966), and many are part of the historical record (Stannard, 1992; Zinn, 1980). However, these activities have often been rationalized, excused, or denied.<sup>1</sup> Other challenges, long recognized by some, have been largely invisible to others (e.g., white privilege; male privilege; the burden of dual consciousness associated with race and gender; social reproduction via the curriculum) (Anyon, 1979; Du Bois, 1903; McIntosh, 1989; Wise, 2004).

Still other challenges are only now reaching a threshold or tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) in which they are experienced, recognized, and acknowledged by a critical mass of members in society (e.g., political and corporate hegemony; human-induced climate change) (Gramsci, 1990; Guggenheim, 2006; Houser, 2014; Houser et al., 2017). Some of these conditions are only now becoming disconcertingly, terrifyingly, evident to the majority. As an example, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006) helped popularize what many had known, suspected, or feared for decades: Human-induced global climate change is real, and its consequences are devastating (Figure 2).

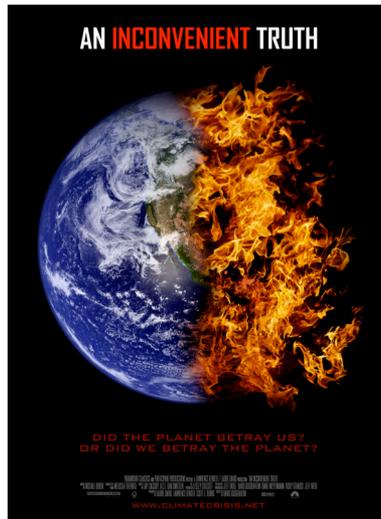


Figure 2. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006).

Gore demonstrates powerful correlations between exponential population growth (there were approximately 1.5 billion humans on the planet in 1900 and more than 7 billion in 2016), human activity (rapid industrialization; heavy carbon emissions), climate change (global warming; radical redistribution of precipitation), and the planet’s “carrying capacity” or ability to sustain human life (Figure 3). The consequences of global climate change have been catastrophic for people, animals, and ecosystems in lowland locales such as New Orleans, Houston, and countless islands, coastal regions, and atolls across the South Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

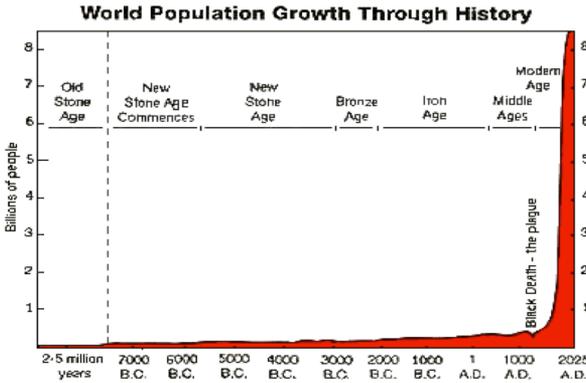


Figure 3. World population growth through history.

These various factors have converged to create a growing culture of isolation, antipathy, and despair (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Garza, Cullors, & Tometi, 2017; Greene, 1988). This culture is marked by problematic psychological conditions (e.g., feelings of inadequacy, alienation, displacement, and despair), social relationships (e.g., isolation, insensitivity, antipathy, and intolerance), environmental conditions (e.g., extreme environmental degradation and human-induced climate change), and perceptual fallacies (e.g., Fritjof Capra’s [1996] “crisis of perception” [p. 4], that asserts we mistakenly perceive an interconnected world in mechanistic terms; and Parker Palmer’s [1998/2007] assertion we have learned to “think the world apart” [p. 62]).

Over time, these conditions have resulted in feelings of inevitability and despair, leading to the fatalistic belief that nothing can be done to change what currently exists (Greene, 1988; Quinn, 1992). Given the nature, magnitude, and persistence of our continuing challenges, reinforced by the growing culture of isolation, antipathy, and despair, it is reasonable to wonder whether, short of false consciousness or

embracing what Kundera (1984) calls an unbearable lightness of being, it is still *possible* to experience genuine hope in education and society. As a disheartened relative recently lamented, “once the polar ice caps begin to go, it’s pretty much over.”

### **Why These Problems Have Been So Difficult to Resolve**

We sit on the precipice of perhaps irreversible societal disunity and environmental catastrophe, based on factors that have led to a growing culture of isolation, antipathy, and despair. Why have the conditions leading to this situation been so difficult to resolve, and what, if anything, can be done to change the course? I can think of at least two general explanations for the persistence of our problems. First, although highly problematic for society and the world, these conditions and relationships serve the selfish interests of a privileged few. Since the privileged few continue to benefit from these conditions (at least in a narrow, material sense), and since these benefits bequeath both power and influence, these few are not compelled to change the conditions, although they are adept at creating the impression they desire change. The second explanation is that many who possess unearned power and privilege have been conditioned not to recognize their power and privilege as such. Thus, when charged with living and acting unjustly, they become defensive, deflecting responsibility back onto their accusers. I think there is truth in both explanations.

In addition to these two broad explanations for society’s persistent problems, there are numerous other factors. One explanation is that many of our challenges are highly complex and mutually reinforcing, and therefore seldom easily understood. Although immediate material conditions such as physical violence or lack of food and shelter can readily be grasped, even in these cases, associated personal, societal, and historical factors can be exceedingly complex, thus precluding simple interpretation and resolution. In truth, most of our enduring challenges involve a complex intersectionality of social (relational, cultural), psychological (conceptual, emotional, perceptual), and environmental (ecological) factors, along with temporal dimensions such as the reification and institutionalization of normative behaviors over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Capra, 1996; Lukacs, 1968/1994; McIntosh, 1989; Quinn, 1992, 1996).

Our challenges are further compounded by the fact they are mutually reinforcing. The dialectical relationship between ideal and material factors has long been understood in scholarly circles (e.g., consider the work of Hegel, Marx, and Dewey), and this understanding continues to inform critical scholarship today. However, synchronic complexity involving the intersectionality of race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation, for example (Crenshaw, 1989), combined with

diachronic factors such as the institutionalization of destructive norms and the proliferation of cultural and historical amnesia (Deloria, 1999; Lukacs, 1968/1994; Quinn, 1992, 1996) can, over time, have a deleterious effect on an entire civilization (Diamond, 1999; Palmer, 2007; Quinn, 1992, 1996).<sup>1</sup>

As an example of how incremental socioenvironmental changes can eventually affect an entire civilization, consider the analysis offered by novelist Daniel Quinn (1992, 1996), who suggested a quarter century ago that our challenges are far greater than many imagine.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, Quinn explores the processes by which ancient agriculturists, once a tiny fraction of the human community, gradually expanded and imposed their ways of life upon others. Initial efforts to accommodate a growing population—the inevitable consequence of an expanding food supply—led to increasingly aggressive means of acquiring additional land and resources. In turn, these resources supported the growing population. In time, an inexorable need for additional food and resources led to the development of totalitarian agricultural practices. Like other totalitarian entities, this new and growing “culture” utilized specialized mechanisms to eliminate its competition, including the annihilation of opposing perspectives and lifestyles. What began as a novel way of life gradually evolved into a dominant worldview based on principles of acquisition, expansion, consumption, and control.

After thousands of years of expansion, this acquisitive agricultural worldview has finally prevailed on every continent—north, south, east, and west. While other cultural distinctions may persist, few remaining members of the human community have been able to resist adopting the basic premises of totalitarian agriculture. With time and repetition, an orientation anathema to human sustainability has become not merely the *prevalent* way of life, but the *only* way of life acceptable to its proponents. Totalitarian agriculture continues to expand, passing from generation to generation through mechanisms of social transmission and cultural invasion. The supreme irony, for Quinn (1992), is that the destruction of alternative cultural perspectives has left us with only “one right way to live” (p. 205)—and such uniformity may be the single greatest threat to the community of life.

Another reason society’s problems have been so difficult to address is largely perceptual in nature. Part of the challenge for members of modern industrialized and postindustrial societies involves the basic ways we have been conditioned to view the world and our place within it. According to Capra (1996), profound inconsistencies between our mechanistic *perceptions* of the world and its integrated *nature* constitute a serious “crisis of perception”:

The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, which means that they are interconnected and interdependent. For example, stabilizing world population will be possible only when poverty is reduced worldwide. The extinction of animal and plant species on a massive scale will continue as long as the Southern Hemisphere is burdened by massive debts. Scarcities of resources and environmental degradation combine with rapidly expanding populations to lead to the breakdown of local communities and to the ethnic and tribal violence that has become the main characteristic of the post-cold war era. Ultimately these problems must be seen as just different facets of one single crisis, which is largely a *crisis of perception*. It derives from the fact that most of us, and especially our large social institutions, subscribe to the concepts of an outdated worldview, a perception of reality inadequate for dealing with our overpopulated, globally interconnected world. (pp. 3–4, emphasis added)

Thus, Capra asserts that modern mechanistic and hierarchical views of the world are misconstrued. He insists that the world can more accurately be understood as a vast web of organic systems based on horizontal rather than hierarchical interconnections and interdependencies.

According to Capra, our perceptual crisis has evolved for centuries:

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries...the notion of an organic, living, and spiritual universe was replaced by that of the world as a machine, and the world machine became the dominant metaphor of the modern era. ... Galileo banned quality from science, restricting it to the study of phenomena that could be measured and quantified. ... Descartes created the method of analytic thinking, which consists in breaking up complex phenomena into pieces to understand the behavior of the whole from the properties of its parts. ...The conceptual framework...was completed triumphantly by Isaac Newton, whose grand synthesis, Newtonian mechanics, was the crowning achievement of seventeenth-century science. (pp. 19–20)

Of course, the mere existence of analysis and hierarchy is not the problem. The difficulty is not with their presence but their prevalence. Because many of our current imbalances have developed incrementally over a period of centuries, there is a widespread lack of awareness of their existence, much less their problematic nature. Heavy reliance on

dualistic thinking has emphasized isolation and competition at the expense of connectedness and community. Unfortunately, there is but a short distance between *dualistic* thinking and *hierarchical* logic, and hierarchical logic continues to provide an intellectual foundation for domination and control.

Thus, the sheer historical expanse of evolutionary processes provides further insight as to how it is possible for contemporary problems to be recognized yet so difficult to interpret and address. Many contemporary perspectives are based on institutionalized assumptions invisible to their adherents. Further complicating matters, humans often construct explanations of reality that legitimize their own perspectives while discrediting others (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Stannard, 1992; Zinn, 1980). With the passage of time, these explanations come to be seen as objective facts rather than social constructions. Once subjective beliefs are construed as “objective reality—as simply “the way things are”—further examination is considered pointless. As long as no serious threat challenges the perception that existing beliefs are objectively real, it is possible to act confidently and unreflectively on the basis of these assumptions. Unfortunately, today’s institutionalized mechanisms of social and environmental destruction are among the factors about which many remain unaware. For this reason, Quinn (1992) argues we are “captives of a civilizational system that more or less compels [us] to go on destroying the world in order to live” (p. 25). We cannot escape because we are “unable to find the bars of the cage” (p. 25).

Just as the magnitude and persistence of our problems represent a legitimate basis for concern, understanding their structural and temporal complexity presents further causes for despair. However, as with any valid explanation, an understanding of the nature of a problem can also provide a basis for identifying and enacting viable solutions.

### **Forms of Thought and Means of Support Needed to Address Our Persistent Challenges**

I believe one way to cope with society’s persistent challenges is to promote the development of a critical ecological orientation capable of recognizing and addressing highly complex problematic relationships. Among other things, such an orientation could help reconcile a hard-hitting language of critique with an authentic, indeed optimistic, quest for new social and environmental possibilities. Fortunately, a critical ecological orientation would not be entirely new since many human communities have historically engaged in social critique and interconnected ways of thinking and being. However, since modernist perspectives have displaced many traditional forms of thought and action, recovering and nurturing such an orientation will require the

provision of effective support structures within and across our educational communities.

### **A Critical Ecological Orientation**

There is a vital need for critical and connected ways of thinking and being. It is imperative that members of contemporary societies interrogate previously taken-for-granted beliefs, norms, and assumptions and recognize and resist mechanisms of oppression long invisible in schools and society (Houser et al., 2017). It is also essential that we recognize connectedness within and across all living communities (Houser, 2014). However, even serious social critique and a deep understanding of our interconnectedness will not be enough. In addition to identifying and resisting oppressive conditions and recognizing and supporting our fundamental connections, we exist at a time when genuine hope and significant structural alternatives are also vitally needed. For these reasons, visionary scholars of the twentieth century advocated both a language of critique and a language of possibility (Freire, 1970/1999, 1992; Giroux, 1985; Greene, 1988).

Concerned educators have long supported the development of a critical social orientation (Apple, 1979/2004; Baldwin, 1963/1998; Freire, 1970/1999; Greene, 1988). However, early conceptions and approaches have evolved significantly. In 1989, Elizabeth Ellsworth published an article in *Harvard Educational Review* entitled, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy.” Among other things, Ellsworth noted that as important as it is to question society, it is also imperative to engage in critical reflection—to interrogate one’s *own* assumptions and actions. She insisted this must apply to critical theory and theorists as well. Without denying the importance of social critique, Ellsworth noted that critical pedagogy has often been repressive, adhering to an absolute ontological position, adopting confrontational pedagogical practices, and exerting authoritarian power through debate rather than negotiating shared governance through dialogue. Too often a clear and unambiguous “Truth,” presumed to exist categorically, was imposed on others as a moral imperative. As a result of concerns like hers critical pedagogy began to evolve.

In 1970, Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* combined a hard-hitting language of social critique and critical reflection with a more nurturing language of community, relationship, hope, love, and possibility. Others followed suit. In 1985, Henry Giroux called both for a language of critique *and* a language of possibility in order to help teachers become “transformative intellectuals” (p. 376), and, in 1988, Maxine Greene combined social critique and the power of imagination

in a dialectical quest for the “achievement of freedom by people in search of themselves” (p. xi). Greene (1988, 1995) suggests imagining possibility is a necessary precursor to recognizing an obstacle *as* an obstacle. She demonstrates that until there is a perceived possibility that things could be otherwise, an obstacle, by definition, does not exist. Conversely, as we begin to imagine new possibilities vital to our existential well-being, obstacles materialize and *must* be addressed. With primary emphasis on imagining and enacting better alternatives, critical thought becomes a pragmatic imperative *en route* to the realization of new possibilities.

As critical educators complicated their perspectives and approaches, other theorists identified new social, environmental, and intellectual challenges and connections. Postmodern and post-structural thinkers questioned the entire premise of grand theorizing, the presumption of the existence of universal truths, and the epistemological limits of binary thinking embedded in our language systems, social institutions, and structural analyses (Derrida, 1997; Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006; Lyotard, 1979). Still others, including deep ecologists and ecological feminist philosophers, demonstrated that any analysis of social relationships and concerns conducted without considering the natural environment in which humans live and of which we are a part is limited, at best (Capra, 1996; Devall & Sessions, 1985; Merchant, 1994; Naess, 1973; Warren, 1997).

Thus, foundational work in a variety of fields indicates the need for an approach to education and life that is both critical and connected. Such an orientation can help members of society resist and transform oppressive social and environmental conditions while reconciling our current crisis of perception.<sup>1</sup> When asymmetrical power and privilege relationships are intentionally perpetuated to promote self-interest at the expense of society and the health of the planet, it is necessary, as James Baldwin put it, to resist: “to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has” (1963/1998, p. 679). Such resistance requires a critical orientation, including both social critique and critical reflection (Apple, 1979/2004; Baldwin, 1963/1988; Freire, 1970/1999; Hedges & Talbot, 2016; Noddings, 2004). However, when modern mechanistic ignorance is the problem, as is also often the case, it is necessary to draw upon an ecological consciousness that transcends reductionist thought and action (Capra, 1996; Devall & Sessions, 1985; Houser, 2014; Merchant, 1994; Naess, 1973; Quinn, 1992, 1996; Warren, 1997).

### **Providing Support within and across Educational Communities**

Finally, encouraging the recovery and development of a critical ecological orientation will require effective support structures. Although critical and ecological thought are part of the history and culture of

various human communities, many traditional practices have been lost or stolen throughout the centuries (Hopson-Malone, 2017). One way to nurture the recovery of critical ecological sensibilities is through the educational communities we create and maintain in our classrooms, schools, and professional organizations. There has been much discussion of late about the educational value of community—communities of learners, communities of practice, communities of scholars, communities of congruence. Communities can be logical sources of support for the development of ecological sensibilities because the basic concept of community is consistent with the fundamental tenets of reciprocity and relationship. A community, by definition, is more than just a group of people. Communities are more than bodies in a room. In addition to connection and relationship, the notion of “community” also suggests safety, care, trust, and respect. This does not mean communities are devoid of debate or dissent; however, it does imply mutual determination of shared purposes as well as social and emotional safety in the exchange of ideas intended to achieve these purposes.

For me, community is not merely a want: it is a fundamental need. Community, as the name implies, involves coming together to create a greater unity. Such a unity cannot be forced; rather, it must be invited, nurtured, and supported. As educators, I believe we must continue to create the necessary spaces for our students to recover and develop their own critical ecological orientations. We must also encourage them to envision how they, too, might help future generations keep it up and pass it on. As Palmer (1998/2007) aptly observes, by remaining in “life-giving communion with the young” (p. 49) we serve not only the future but ourselves as well. I can imagine no better way to serve both our future and ourselves than to support the recovery of skills and sensibilities that resist continued social and environmental destruction and reject narrow, reductionistic thinking. We must continue to support ourselves, our students, and our society in developing a more critical ecological understanding not only of the challenges we face but also of the possibilities that exist for a better tomorrow.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I learned after the conference that Don passed away on Tuesday, September 27, three days before this address.
- <sup>2</sup> Parker Palmer (1998/2007) has gone to considerable lengths to emphasize the importance of moving away from absolutist and reductionistic either-or thinking toward more holistic and inclusive both-and thinking.

- 3 The challenges we face as teachers in school are not unique to formal education. They are both educational and social. As social institutions, schools, and formal education in general, reflect and often reproduce broader societal norms and conditions. Since this is the case, meaningful conversations about educational problems and possibilities must be informed by an understanding of the personal, societal, and environmental contexts and conditions in which education exists.
- 4 Zinn (1980), for example, documents Bartolomé de Las Casas' deep concerns regarding Columbus' treatment of the Arawak.
- 5 Consider, for example, Marx' analysis of false consciousness, Sartre's discussion of bad faith, and Zinn's analysis of the justification of historical atrocities as the price of "progress."
- 6 Among other things, Gore points out that global climate change does not simply warm the atmosphere, it also yields radical redistribution of temperature and precipitation, throwing off seasonal patterns for flora and fauna.
- 7 A major problem with social, cultural, and historical amnesia is that they can help create the impression that few if any viable alternatives have existed to those social and cultural arrangements that currently exist.
- 8 This account has been previously published in *JøPHE*.
- 9 Fortunately, neither critical consciousness nor ecological thought are foreign to humanity, and therefore neither are unachievable. Many members of society already manifest critical consciousness (in a neoMarxist sense), although its essential corollary, critical reflection, may be somewhat less evident (Ellsworth, 1989, 1992; Noddings, 2004). Similarly, although many forms of ecological thinking and being have been displaced by modernist sensibilities, ecological thought is not foreign to humanity. Indeed, ecological thinking is part of the deep history and culture of virtually every human society. This is good news because it means we do not have to teach something new and foreign. Rather, our task is to support the recovery of natural sensibilities that have been lost or stolen.

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**The 2016 Drake Lecture****A History of Transactional Leadership  
in Academe: A Cautionary Tale****Lee S. Duemer, Texas Tech University****Introduction**

With dramatically reduced allocations from their respective states, public institutions now must be increasingly resourceful about how they spend what budget they are granted while experiencing heightened pressure to generate soft money from existing revenue sources and develop new ones (Lasher & Greene, 1993; Whalen, 1996). Under these circumstances university leadership are pressured to enact changes to increase and expand revenue sources. The demand for accountability has also resulted in trends toward cancelling small, specialized, seminar courses and increasing enrollment in existing courses to maximize revenue (Wilson, 2011).

Rapid change is problematic in higher education. Unlike organizations where roles are tightly coupled and boundaries are clearly defined for its members, academe is particularly susceptible to individual influence. Human actions, driven by personal values and agendas, are sometimes the driving force behind how organizations operate (March & Olsen, 1979). Personal factors do not necessarily fit into a rational decision-making framework where individual compliance can be expected (Manning, 1991).

Transactional leadership has been proposed as a means through which to address need for rapid change by employing a style in which leaders promote followers' compliance through both reward and punishment. The transactional leadership style was first described by Max Weber in 1947, and again by Bernard M. Bass in 1981. Transactional leaders are on the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum relative to transformational leaders. The former depends on a system of reward and punishment, while the latter takes advantage of internal motivation.

Anecdotally, practices associated with transactional leadership go back as far as documented history. The idea of a person in a power

position trading something in exchange for labor, information, or anything of value with another person seems inseparable from human nature. In contemporary U.S. society, this form of commercial exchange is a cornerstone of our economic foundation, representing what we know as regulated capitalism. Several well-known transactional leaders are Joseph McCarthy, Charles de Gaulle, and Donald Trump.

Scientific management and its technological underpinnings are theoretical antecedents of transactional leadership (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996). Taylor fused the perspective of an engineer into management with a strong emphasis on control, ruthless efficiency, quantification, predictability, and de-skilled jobs (Noble, 1984). The function of the leader under scientific management theory is to establish and enforce performance criteria to meet organizational goals; therefore, the focus of a leader remains on the needs of the organization and not on the individual worker. The goal of scientific management is to make an organization operate in the most efficient manner possible to achieve the highest level of productivity (Morgan, 1997). Scientific theory relies heavily on the machine metaphor and mechanization of jobs while concurrently undermining the human element of organizations and their nature as complex systems that cannot be separated from individual motivations.

Although mechanistic organizations proved productive, there were limits to hierarchical bureaucracy. Emerging theorists encouraged leaders to recognize that humans were not machines and could not be treated as such. A post-bureaucratic shift in the mid-1940s moved toward everyone taking responsibility for the organization's success or failure (Heckscher & Donnellon, 1994). Researchers began to examine the relationship between leader behavior and follower satisfaction levels and between organizational productivity and profitability (Bass, 1990).

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, lead by motivating by their followers. Leaders appeal to their followers' ideals and morals to motivate them to accomplish their tasks. Transformational leaders empower their followers, drawing upon their own beliefs and personal strengths. Simply put, they inspire their followers. These needs are not based on *quid pro quo* transactions, but upon higher-order needs drawn upon as the organization and its members pursue a common goal. Famous transformational leaders include the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Lincoln. As a defined leadership theory, transformational leadership has been a relatively recent entrant into the realm of management thought. In fact, most literature has been published in the past 15 years, though it can be argued transformational leaders have existed across broad human history, as evidenced in my earlier examples. That said, those ideas central to transformational

leadership are not necessarily new. Many of these constructs can be located within the writings of earlier management theorists and historians (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003).

### **Transactional Leadership in Academe**

Transactional leadership is characterized by several approaches and actions:

*Contingent Rewards:* Transactional leaders link stated goals to rewards and provide rewards for successful performance. They set discrete and measurable goals clearly tied to mission statements.

*Active Management by Exception:* Transactional leaders monitor subordinates' performance and utilize corrective action to address deviations from rules and standards.

*Passive Management by Exception:* Transactional leaders intervene when goals are not met or when performance does not meet expectations. Punishment is considered an appropriate response to unacceptable performance.

These approaches and actions allow leaders to accomplish their performance objectives, complete required tasks, maintain the current organizational situation, motivate followers through contractual agreement, direct behavior of followers toward achievement of established goals, emphasize extrinsic rewards, avoid unnecessary risks, and focus on improving organizational efficiency. Transactional leadership evolved for a marketplace featuring fast, simple transactions among multiple leaders and followers, each moving from transaction to transaction in search of gratification. The marketplace demands reciprocity, flexibility, adaptability, and real-time cost-benefit analysis (Burns, 1978). Moss, McFarland, Ngu, and Kijowska (2007) argue transactional leadership practices lead followers to short-term relationships of exchange with the leader. These relationships tend toward shallow, temporary exchanges focused on gratification and often create resentment between participants. Additionally, a number of scholars criticize transactional leadership because it utilizes a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership theory construction that disregards situational and contextual factors related to organizational challenges (Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1999; 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Transactional leaders tend to have rigid expectations about work relationships, and expect subordinates to do as they are told. This leader uses formal authority to instruct others on what to do, and relies heavily on traditional organizational hierarchy. Because of this leader's reliance on formal relationships and hierarchy, blame when

tasks go wrong is rarely assumed by the transactional leader. Once the leader has assigned the task, that job is solely the responsibility of the employee. If problems occur, the employee is expected to be fully accountable. Transactional leadership, by its very nature, pits leadership against employees, makes them take opposing sides. Constant threats of punishment for failure may inadvertently reward manipulation and game-playing by employees to avoid punishment. Thus, employees may be likely to act deviously when the leader is not present. Because of transactional leadership's task-focused approach, employees do not feel as if they are working towards a shared goal, and they are not motivated by the overall organizational mission (Sarros & Santora, 2001).

One of the most significant limitations to transactional leadership is the disconnect with individual motivations, particularly in organizations where people have considerable freedom in how to interpret and enact policy. Once an individual or group sets a policy, there is no guarantee it will be implemented in the same way it was originally intended. Differences between institutions and individuals are central to understanding how policy can change from development to implementation. Mutation can also occur as policy is processed through the levels of an organization's hierarchy. Levels of a hierarchy differ fundamentally in that some are charged with policy development while others are charged with policy implementation. Policy can be changed or revised by institutional officials from inception to implementation in a manner that more closely meets individuals' conception of what is in their or the institution's best interest (Elster, 1989). Individuals can surreptitiously undermine a policy or initiative or at least decline to work actively toward its implementation, even when they claim to support it (Duemer, 1998; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Furthermore, autonomy provides individuals with various degrees of freedom to impose their own interpretations on the way policy is implemented (Perrow, 1973).

Transactional leaders pay attention to followers' work in order to find faults and deviations. Within the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, transactional leadership works at the basic levels of need satisfaction, since transactional leaders focus on the lower levels of the hierarchy. Transactional leaders use a basic exchange model, with rewards being given for good work or positive outcomes. Conversely, people with this leadership style also can punish poor work or negative outcomes, until the problem is corrected. One way transactional leadership focuses on lower-level needs is by stressing specific task performance. Transactional leaders can be very effective in getting specific tasks completed by managing each task portion individually. Transactional leaders are concerned with processes rather than forward-thinking ideas. These types of leaders focus on reward or penalization.

Contingent rewards are given when set goals are accomplished on time or ahead of time, and to keep subordinates working at a good pace at different times throughout completion. Contingent punishments are given when performance quality or quantity falls below production standards or goals and tasks are not met at all. Often, contingent punishments are handed down on a management-by-exception basis, in which the exception is something going wrong. Transactional leaders use reward and punishment to gain compliance from their followers, extrinsic motivations that inspire minimal compliance.

### **Implications**

Immanuel Kant argues there is a more foundational principle of duty that encompasses our duties. It is a single, self-evident principle of reason he calls “the categorical imperative.” A categorical imperative, he maintains, is fundamentally different from hypothetical imperatives that hinge on some personal desire. For example, “If you want to get a good job, then you ought to go to college.” By contrast, a categorical imperative simply mandates an action, irrespective of one’s personal desires, such as “You ought to do X.” Kant gives at least four versions of the categorical imperative, but one is especially direct: Treat people as an end, and never as a means to an end. That is, we should always treat people with dignity, and never use them as mere instruments. For Kant, we treat people as an end whenever our actions toward someone reflect the inherent value of that person. We treat someone as a means to an end whenever we treat that person as a tool to achieve something else. Kant argues the morality of all actions can be determined by appealing to this single principle of duty.

One consequence of an overreliance on transactional leadership is that passive resistance can increase in the form of insurrection. Because transactional leadership relies on intervention by exception, subservice behavior becomes a form of resistance without calling attention to the objector. As conspicuous examples of intervention by leadership become common knowledge or are undisguisedly visible, quiet resistance will become more widespread causing further rifts between leadership and faculty, or, in other words, a greater sense of “us versus them” with goals and priorities increasingly divergent from those of the organization.

The idea of “us versus them” is further fueled by an emphasis on formal relations between leadership and subordinates. Formal relations coupled with a transactional dynamic leaves little room for interaction focused on growth. Mentoring and informal relationships that are particularly helpful to tenure-acquiring faculty become secondary to performance expectations.

In all fairness, there is little question that transactional leadership is more effective than transformational leadership when it is necessary quickly to change an organization to respond to unanticipated change or an existential threat. Senior leaders refer to managing faculty as “herding cats,” or complain faculty cannot be counted on to set organizational goals because the culture of academe does not foster them working well in groups (Kreuter, 1996, p. 59). Others compare changing the course of a tradition-bound and conservative institution such as academe to changing the course of a super-tanker. If these analogies are accurate, then fostering organizational change in academe can be likened to reversing the course of a super-tanker crewed by feral cats.

The most serious outcome of an overreliance on transactional leadership is that because faculty are considered a means to an end who can be manipulated through reward and punishment, our most valued and defining principles such as academic freedom, shared governance, and participatory decision-making come to be regarded as obstacles rather than common values we all share. Given the circumstances I detail as I opened this address, it is only logical that under some circumstances transactional leadership becomes necessary for the good of the organization. However, this logic only holds up in the short term. Faculty should be very cautious and concerned, on the other hand, when transactional leadership becomes the norm rather than one tool among many to lead a complex university organization.

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# Speaking Like a Citizen: Ancient Greek Rhetorical Education and Contemporary Practices

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Research points to the emergence of a consensus among many liberal arts colleges on educating students to become, in the words of Anne Colby and her colleagues, “positive forces in the world,” and on training them to “act for the common good and [be] capable of doing so effectively” (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003, p. 7). These researchers also indicate that colleges and universities across the nation are rethinking the college experience and redirecting undergraduate education toward the goal of preparing students for civic and ethical practices in the world through experiential learning, internships and service, as well as numerous pedagogies of engagement initiatives enacted in and outside the classroom. In agreement with the overall proposition that the movement of “education for action” is on the rise, Walsh and Cuban (2009) nevertheless raise a pressing question of liberal arts education within the very title of their essay: “What’s Holding Us Back?” The main obstacles include the lack of a comprehensive perspective “on how to help students weave together disparate elements of their college careers” (p. 34, as well as the absence of a unified philosophy that bridges the gap between classroom and experiential learning. They also view the goal to “enhance the likelihood that knowledge will be retained and transferred to new situations” (p. 32 as impeded by academic-discipline-specific instruction. According to Walsh and Cuban, the typical response of faculty called upon to align their teaching with pedagogies of engagement across the curriculum is, “that’s not what I do” (p. 36).

In this essay, I address this last issue—the difficulty of blending knowledge and service, thought and action in the classroom—by looking to the discipline of rhetorical education which, as Aristotle noted 2500 years ago, has no intrinsic subject matter of its own (and as such, rhetoric transcends and accommodates a variety of disciplinary perspectives). Specifically, I explore the possibility of blending knowledge and service in two ways: first, by examining classical Greek

rhetorical education; and, second, by looking briefly at select contemporary practices in rhetorical education. In both instances, separated by time and space, throughout my inquiry I hone in on rhetorical education's past and present, shared projects of training students to "speak like citizens" in service of a collective common good.

The liberal arts movement of "education for civic action" finds its best expression in our interpellation of students as citizens in democratic states. By placing students in the position of speaking and acting like citizens, we promote a self-understanding that cuts across subjects, weaves in and outside of the classroom, and provides continuity between students' current and future selves. Yet, speaking and acting like a citizen is also what educators and students alike often take for granted. We do not teach our students explicitly what the position of citizenship entails, what it means for someone to occupy it, or what it takes to address others as fellow citizens. We simply assume, as students do, that everyone knows what being a citizen entails. We encourage students to apply their learning to real-life situations, hoping we are cultivating a habitual practice that will continue to guide them beyond their educational years. Our faith—that they will be prepared to occupy the position of a citizen down the road and make civic-minded decisions—remains just that: a gesture of faith.

By contrast to our general understanding of citizenship in contemporary, twenty-first-century higher education, rhetorical education in classical Greece was developed and disseminated on the premise it could help Athenians enhance their position as citizens and enable them to become active participants in, and reflective agents about, their roles in sustaining, improving, and even saving the polis. The paramount importance of engaging their city as citizens, participating in the assembly, and contributing to the affairs of the polis, is made evident by the words of Thucydides ascribed to the general/orator Pericles, who described the unique character of his city in this way: "We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all" (*History*, II, 43). Despite their differences in social status,<sup>1</sup> all citizens of the nascent democracy shared a vested interest in the welfare of the polis, which was inextricably tied to their collective contributions. It was unthinkable for an adult male to be a member of the polis if he did not involve himself in the affairs of the city, the foundation upon which democratic deliberation was built (Havelock, 1957).

### **Civic and Rhetorical Education in Classical Greece**

One of the striking features of Greek education—from the inception of democratic self-governance<sup>2</sup> through the rise and fall of

the Athenian city-state, rendered knowable in the works of the traveling Sophists and the schools of Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle—is its predominant focus on civic-mindedness (Poulakos & Depew, 2004). Theirs was a *paideia* primarily concerned with ways of acting in the polis, not learning just for the sake of learning (Jaeger, 1971). Another significant feature of this ancient Greek cultural model is the way civic education was connected directly and unambiguously to rhetorical education (Beck, 1964; Marrou, 1956; Wilcox, 1943). The first teachers of rhetoric, the Sophists, articulated the art of speaking well in public as requisite to effective citizenship and offered instruction in rhetoric to the Athenians—in Protagoras’ famous words—in the service of “making men into good citizens” (*Protagoras*, 319a). One generation later, Plato’s rival educator, Isocrates, advanced an even stronger link between rhetorical education and civic engagement, by casting rhetoric as the most viable means for citizens to reach positions of leadership in the polis (Poulakos, 1997), and by articulating rhetoric as a field of study that drew its resources from, and was shaped by the circumstances of, the city. Isocrates puts it in the following way: “It is the affairs of the polis that should be the object of our toil, our study, and our every act” (*Antidosis*, 285). The link between civic and rhetorical education had so successfully permeated the imaginary of the Athenians that Plato devoted three dialogues to rhetoric—*Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Phaedrus*—in an all-out effort to diffuse this link, discredit rhetorical instruction, and expose rhetoric as a knack rather than a bona-fide *techné* (Barrett, 1987). Yet, Plato’s lifetime goal to educate citizens suited for his private vision of the ideal city failed to derail the Athenians’ persisting interest in rhetorical education carried on by his student, Aristotle. Going against his teacher’s fundamental assertion that rhetoric is not an art, Aristotle wrote a treatise, *The Art of Rhetoric*, in which he reformulated rhetorical education to train speakers how to discover the possible means of persuading their fellow citizens, while at the same time upholding the values that held them together as a citizen body (Farrell, 1993).

Throughout the classical period, then, rhetorical education was positioned as equipment for Athenians to realize their potential role as effective citizens, that is, to explore and actualize in language their individual and collective agency. As I inquire into the link between rhetorical education and citizenship, it is important to point out that civic education in the hands of rhetoricians looks quite different from the monolithic discourse and the stable civic norms it was erected upon in the elitist and philosophical treatments of Plato and Aristotle who, as Harvey Yunis (1996) put it, sought to “tame” democracy if they could not eliminate it. The Sophists’ relativism, their commitment to principles of public deliberation and agonistic speaking practices—along with Isocrates’ fidelity to these practices and to some principles of

relativism—articulate a space of a critique against the normative claim that civic education in classical Athens must be thought in monolithic and uncontested terms.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Position of the Citizen**

As in our time, citizenship in democratic Athens designated a subject position, a clearly articulated way of being and acting in the world, replete with designated duties and privileges. As a newly established democracy, the Athenian city-state relied on its citizens to secure its survival, foster its self-governance, and oversee its welfare. Occupying the position of a citizen in democratic Athens meant coming forward to exercise one's duties and privileges associated with the courts and the assembly. Each year, 6,000 Athenian citizens (about one-sixth of the adult citizen population) signed up as potential jurors for the courts and received payment from the state each time they were selected to serve. A complicated selection process assured all potential jurors would serve in trials that typically consisted of 200 jurors for a private trial, 500 jurors for a public trial, and as many as 2,000 for trials involving the death penalty (Jones, 1986). In addition, jurors were appointed to a trial by being chosen on the actual day of that trial through a lottery system according to the idea that "power corrupts," and as a safeguard against the possibility they might be bought in advance by a rich defendant or litigant. Trials lasted for a day, with litigants and defendants having equal opportunity to address the jury and respond to each other's allegations; the verdict to acquit or convict the defendant was reached through secret ballot (Jones, 1986). As early as in the sixth century B.C.E., following the reforms of Solon that extended jury duty to lower classes, every citizen over the age of 30 could serve as juror in an annual process that, over the extent of only few years, had the net effect of nearly every Athenian having served as juror.

In addition to performing jury duty, citizens participated voluntarily in the assembly, which met about 30 times per year, with the specific duty to determine state policy. Meetings were held in the Pnyx, a theater-like area used exclusively for assembly sessions, and with a seating capacity of 8,000 persons. There was no assigned seating, meant to be a sign of the egalitarian nature of the assembly, with rich and poor, elites and laborers sitting side by side. Typical attendance was 6,000 and gates controlling entrance to the Pnyx facilitated the state payment of citizens in attendance. After officials announced the issue to be voted on, they opened discussion with the same question that would become a staple for democratic self-governance, "who wishes to speak?" and, following debates and deliberation among speakers, citizens cast their vote by a show of hands (Stockton, 1990). Citizens voted according to their own interests, not as members of special interest groups, and their decisions

became the decisions of the state. The scorn of elitist writers for the assembly and for a process of decision-making that placed state decisions in the hands of “mobs” suggests the make-up of the assembly at any given time was similar to the citizen body.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike in our time, citizenly duties in classical Athens revolved around speaking cogently and listening carefully to speakers’ words in order to reach their political assessment or judicial verdict. When the itinerant Sophists presented themselves to the Athenians as teachers of effective speaking, they linked the art of rhetoric to democratic citizenship.<sup>5</sup> As reported in Plato’s dialogue *Protagoras*, Protagoras’ “Great Speech” sheds light on the role of a citizen in a democratic society through a mythological account of the origins of civilized life. According to the speech, the first crucial step in the process of civilization was made possible by Prometheus, who stole fire from the Gods and bestowed humankind with fire along with the basic arts of survival. Using Prometheus’ gifts, human beings discovered the power they could command when they assembled together in numbers; they were able to protect themselves from wild animals, build shelters, and construct cities. They also used these same arts to make weapons and engage in warfare—which gradually put them on the path to self-destruction. Seeing humans headed toward extinction, Zeus felt sorry for them and decided to intervene, giving them the civic arts—including the art of political deliberation—thereby enabling them to live together not as an aggregate of individuals but as a socially coherent whole. Through this mythical account, Protagoras arrives in the present, a time when the Athenians are not merely men but citizens actively engaged in their collective welfare, and Athens is not merely a geographical space but a polis, a self-governing entity relying on “a smith’s or a cobbler’s counsel in public affairs” (*Protagoras*, 324c).

When Protagoras is asked by Socrates in Plato’s same dialogue to name his profession, he boldly asserts he “makes men good citizens.” His assertion suggests that, more than a function, citizenship in classical Athens was a practice with a qualitative dimension attainable through education; it also suggests rhetorical education was considered to be schooling *par excellence* for good citizens-to-be. Indeed the Sophists constructed the qualitative aspect of citizenship in terms not of one’s birth or social status but of the impact that one’s use of language could have on fellow citizens. Both leading Sophists, Protagoras and Gorgias, approached language as “symbolic action,” and taught their students the propensity of language to function as a form of action, influencing others and directing them to perceive and understand the world from a particular perspective (Poulakos, 1994). We know that Protagoras trained his students in *dissoi logoi* (discerning the opposing arguments in every issue), in making “the weaker argument the stronger” (making a

case for the minority view), and in *orthoepeia* (the accuracy of language in capturing the reality of the situation at hand) (Sprague, 1972). We also know Gorgias trained his students in *enepeia* (eloquent speech) (North, 1952), and in *kairos* (timeliness or the opportune moment) (White, 1987); and Prodicus was famed for his insistence on *akrivologia* (the precise use of diction). Embodied in their teachings, these rhetorical precepts illustrated to students that words mattered in their role as citizens, and that one's facility with eloquent and persuasive uses of language could enable him to construct beliefs and values circulating in the polis that resonated with his fellow citizens.

Using Homeric myths as their medium, the Sophists displayed the workings of language by retelling myths that revealed twin aspects of persuasion: its power to influence beliefs and its propensity to form concerted action (Poulakos, 1994). Through a playful account of the myth of Helen of Troy, Gorgias displayed the power of persuasion in the "Encomium of Helen" to challenge even the most entrenched traditional beliefs: under the sway of Gorgias' words, Helen—whose reputation had been fixed by tradition as the person who betrayed her husband, her king, and her country—is defended as an innocent woman subjected either to the force of *bia* (rape), the charms of seductive *eros* (love), or the power of *logos* (argument) on her soul. In turn, the power of language to form consensus was demonstrated by Protagoras' account of the imaginary, flute-playing city where competent flute-players are led to excellence by master flute-players—an account that unfolds in direct analogy to deliberating, democratic Athens, where citizens competent in political deliberation could attain excellence by being trained by master rhetoricians like Protagoras himself. According to the Sophists, then, occupying the position of a citizen meant speaking in public, addressing fellow citizens eloquently and persuasively, and using language to promote ways of being and acting in the world by supporting or refuting prevalent opinions, and by refining or intervening in what others previously constructed as desirable and possible for the citizen body.

### **Speaking Like a Citizen**

One of the constants in rhetorical education traceable from the Sophists, through Isocrates to Aristotle, is the shared understanding of rhetoric as a power (*dunamis*): a force that can bring about change (Haskins, 2013). Beyond this meaning, Aristotle also defined *dunamis* as potentiality, the capacity of a thing to be actualized, to achieve a completed state (*Metaphysics*, IX, 4, 1048a). In the context of citizenship, this meant the potential to reach a better version of oneself depends not on carrying out one's duties as citizen but on becoming a more complete agent in the political life of Athens. It is this qualitative dimension of citizenship to which rhetorical education becomes attached. One can see

how this sense of potentiality animates the account of civilized life in Protagoras' "Great Speech" as human beings realize a better version of themselves through the possession of civic arts, which transforms them from aggregates of individuals to integrated members of a broader social entity. Isocrates makes a more explicit link between rhetorical education and the potential to improve oneself when he argues that, though there is no art that "can implant sobriety and justice in depraved natures," the "study of political discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character" (*Against the Sophists*, 21). He expands his claim in *Antidosis*, positing, "people can become better and worthier if they conceive an ambition to speak well" (275), since "the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously will he strive to be honorable and to have the esteem of his fellow-citizens" (278). Aristotle echoes a similar sentiment when he remarks on the virtuous character of the speaker being the most effective aspect of persuasion, claiming three qualities are necessary to produce conviction in deliberative rhetoric: "these qualities are good sense, virtue, and good will" (*Rhetoric*, 1378a5).

While the act of speaking like a citizen continued to be associated with the potential of individuals to improve their character, the trajectory of rhetorical tradition shifted from eloquence to deliberation as Athens lost its status as a powerful empire, following the 30 year debilitating war against Sparta. The importance the Sophists had placed on eloquent speeches lost its appeal during the fourth century B.C.E., as leaders following Pericles abused eloquence to secure their own power positions and persuade the Athenians to implement policies that turned out to be destructive (Connor, 1971). At a time when Athens was reduced to one of four equipotent city-states in Greece, Plato and Isocrates saw education as the key to the salvation of the polis from impending disaster. While Plato launched his visionary program for an ideal city in the *Republic* at the same time he undertook a scathing critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* as the knack for manipulating the masses—which resonated with the Athenians' experiences with power-hungry demagogues—Isocrates presented his educational program as a pragmatic alternative, a guide for citizen-speakers to become leaders, take control of the polis and safeguard its future welfare. Paradoxically, the first conflict between rhetoric and philosophy was waged over the best means for achieving the same end, and Isocrates, who named his rhetorical educational program *philosophia*, challenged Plato's theoretical understanding of philosophy with his own pragmatic view, claiming the practical outcome of ideas rather than ideas themselves ought to constitute the proper field of philosophy (Ijsseling, 1976; Jaeger, 1971).

At the height of Athenian democracy—and under the Sophists—speaking like a citizen meant entering into a dialectical relation with fellow citizens, putting ideas and values circulating in the polis under scrutiny or exaltation, undermining some beliefs and stabilizing others. It meant competing with others over who would say things most eloquently and most persuasively, who would have the greatest impact on hearers, and who would win audiences over. It also meant having the ability to understand speaking in public as an audience-oriented art, situation-specific, and time-bound—an art that required citizen-speakers to engage their fellow citizens, listen to what they said, understand their experiences and valuations, and assess their arguments. Being engaged—knowing what issues were circulating in the assembly and how people talked about them in the agora—was the only guidance a citizen speaker had in discerning when to speak and what to say. The necessity of engaging others is reflected in a fragment by another Older Sophist, Thrasy-machus, who declared in his *On the Constitution* that while in the past—when officials carried out their duties diligently—silence sufficed, the people’s expressed dissatisfaction with their government at present mandates that “one really has to speak” (Sprague, 1972). The reliable guidance that engagement provides to the citizen-speaker is best captured by Thucydides—who was reportedly influenced by the Sophists (de Romilly, 1992) when he describes discussions among Athenians following the vote in the assembly to send the Athenian fleet to the island of Mytilene, kill all men, and bring back women and children as slaves. Having listened to doubts expressed as to the wisdom behind this decision, Diodotus was able to win over the majority vote in the assembly session held the very next day, in favor of killing only those responsible for organizing the rebellion against the Athenian Empire. In a poignant understatement of the great impact in which an orator’s engagement with fellow citizens may result, Thucydides concludes his chapter on the Mytilenean revolt by reporting the bare facts of the day, namely, that immediately after the second vote the Athenians dispatched their fastest ship with instructions to catch up to the Athenian fleet, reverse their orders, and spare the island of Mytilene from annihilation (*History*, III, 35–50).

The notion of speaking like a citizen promoted by the Sophists, then, must be understood in its dual relation to the democratic climate that sustained it and to Protagoras’ philosophy of relativism that underpinned it (Guthrie, 1975). According to the Sophists, the citizen-speaker was not thought of as someone who possessed an expertise in the sense that Socrates meant in the *Protagoras*—someone who would give advice to the city based on access to some knowledge that rendered everyone else’s beliefs irrelevant. Nor was the citizen-speaker expected

to rely solely on his personal opinions and untutored beliefs in the way Socrates constructed the meaning of Protagoras' famous dictum—that “man is the measure of what is that it is and what is not that it is not.” Far from being, as Socrates insisted, a doctrine of absolute relativism, the “man measure” principle called upon the Athenians to understand themselves as arbiters of the fate of the polis who, without the help of Gods or the command of tyrants, were alone in determining the best course of action for the polis—an insight Aristotle affirmed when he remarked that, in deliberation, “the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1104b, 8–9). What defined a citizen-speaker was not his expert knowledge but his ability to make sound judgments, to interpret human experience consistently with what can be known, and to defend his judgments and interpretations more persuasively than others (Farrar, 1988). Rhetorical education under the Sophists, then, conceived of citizen-speakers as agents of a potentially radical democracy that could possibly extend equality to all citizens, rich and poor alike. By exercising the freedom afforded them by their democratic city—to turn the wishes of the people into legislative policy—citizen-speakers ensured the social order of the polis would continue to be shaped not by some force imposed by kings, tyrants, or aristocrats from the outside, but by the collective wishes and interests of the people. Positioning the citizen-speaker as a key instrument of democracy, sophistic rhetorical education set the stage for a more complete democracy: so long as citizen-speakers continued to aspire to excellence in expressing the wishes of their fellow citizens, the social order of democratic Athens would one day be the direct outcome of the people's collective wishes.

The Sophists' optimism was cut short by the eventual transformation of a great empire, sustained by a genuinely dialectical relationship with its allies, into a brutal tyranny oppressing its allied states, which ultimately led to Athens' self-destruction (Fine, 1983). Within the new climate of a weakened city-state, rhetorical education under Isocrates cast citizen-speakers as servants of the city and linked the conception of a citizen's civic duty to the act of serving the polis (Clark, 1996). Speaking like a citizen meant taking up issues of national importance, internalizing the needs of the polis, and representing them eloquently and persuasively to other citizens. It also meant using the art of rhetoric solely for advancing the welfare of the polis. Applying one's knowledge of rhetoric to the pressing issues of the city was at the core of Isocrates' rhetorical education. He considered the development of the art of rhetoric under the Sophists to be complete—something illustrated by his repeated reference to the field of rhetoric throughout his writings as *ta tou logou* (the things about speech). What remained incomplete in the Sophists' development—and what he regarded as his contribution—

was the application of the art of rhetoric to the advancement of the welfare of the polis. As he says in the *Antidosis*, the knowledge of the art is fairly easy for a dedicated student to master; but the application of the art takes years of practice and oftentimes requires collaboration between teacher and student: “both have a part in the exercises of practical application” (187–188).

What he means by “practical application” is, first, the ability to discern which course of action might be the best available option for the city at any given moment and, second, the talent to employ one’s mastery of the art in order to persuade others to endorse and implement the course of action proposed. It is the first of the two that marked Isocrates’ contribution to the field of rhetoric and served his ambition to turn citizen-speakers into future leaders of the polis (Jaeger, 1971). Speaking like a citizen required for him, first and foremost, the ability to make wise decisions about which course of action would best improve the situation the city faced—an ability he considered attainable only through the cultivation of *phronesis* (practical wisdom). As he put it, “I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course and...who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight (*phronesis*)” (*Antidosis*, 271). Given the merit of a proposal for the city could be determined only after the fact, speaking like a citizen-leader required one become well-versed in foreseeing the consequences of action, i.e., in making wise decisions (Poulakos, 2004). Isocrates defended his underlying philosophy about practical wisdom against Plato’s criterion of true knowledge by being up-front about the impossibility of certainty: rhetorical training can minimize but not eliminate unanticipated consequences, and even those receiving the best education can only hope to be “less often in error as to a course of action” (*Antidosis*, 292). In his words, “those who are reputed to be the wisest sometimes miss the expedient course of action, whereas now and then some chance person from the ranks of men who are deemed of no account and are regarded with contempt, hits upon the right course” (*Panathenaicus*, 248). He insisted nevertheless that making wise decisions is possible when the polis becomes the constant object of study for students.

Speaking like a citizen, then, meant engaging others in ways that would enhance one’s ability to make wise decisions for the collective good of the citizen body. Unlike the Sophists, who saw engagement as talking with and listening to fellow citizens, Isocrates fostered another form of engagement: the study of the city’s past. Learning about the difficulties the city had faced in the past, the options for action available at the time, as well as the decisions made that turned out to be harmful

or beneficial would sharpen students' faculty of discerning unforeseeable consequences of action. Engagement for Isocrates lay in the study of wise statesmen of the past—the likes of Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles—who had managed to turn opinion (*doxa*) into wise judgment (*phronesis*), who had become the very best to “come before [the Athenians] on the rostrum,” and who had “brought to the city most of her blessings” (*Antidosis*, 231). By engaging wise decisions made in the past, the student—Isocrates believed—would be able to select “these examples which are most illustrious and the most edifying” and, after “habituating himself to contemplate and appraise such examples, he will feel their influence not only in the preparation of a given discourse but in all the actions of his life” (*Antidosis*, 277). He assumed that, in other words, the study of wise decision-making in the past would guide students to explore possible ways of reaching similarly wise decisions within different circumstances in the present (Poulakos, 2004). Isocrates' faith in the study of wise statesmen was eventually theorized by Aristotle as a dialectic between past and present that could guide wise deliberation: the decisions of those who possessed practical wisdom (*the phronemoi*) in the past can guide the making of wise decisions at present (Nussbaum, 1986).

Under Isocrates' training, the act of speaking like a citizen in the service of the polis acquired a new form—the written speech composed for delivery. Much closer to a political writer than an orator, Isocrates practiced—and taught his students to produce—written compositions that took up issues of lasting national importance and questions of enduring public welfare—the kind of topics that do not lend themselves to a single policy-making session in the assembly. In a culture rapidly turning to writing, the conception of a citizen's civic duty was transformed by the possibility of reaching a much larger public and having a greater impact (Havelock, 1982). Taking deliberation beyond the assembly and outside the constraints of an urgent vote, Isocrates gave citizenly voices a larger stage from which they might exert influence by addressing issues affecting the larger political landscape of Athens (Poulakos, 1997). Even though the literate population was still low, the spirit of written works circulated—as most beginnings of Plato's dialogues demonstrate—by word of mouth among non-literate citizens still bound together by practices of an oral culture (Lentz, 1989). Having brought rhetoric, as developed by the Sophists, in contact with practical wisdom, and having blended *logos* with *phronesis*, Isocrates assigned to rhetoric the mission of serving the city by means of lengthy discourses that adhered to contemporary standards of eloquence, “philosophical” reflection, and persuasive arguments. Writing like a citizen meant serving the polis as a leader, and seeking to influence not only the outcome of

policy-making decisions at present but also public opinion on issues bound to remain pertinent to the city's future. The practice of addressing a given issue by linking it with the wherefrom and whereto of the city—as illustrated by Isocrates' greatest political work, the *Panegyricus*—is perhaps the earliest precedent for our own practices of addressing issues in editorials, blogs, and journal articles today, which link advocacy with concrete visions of a changed democracy in the future.

### **Speaking Like a Citizen Today: Rhetorical Education at The University of Iowa**

In the newly developed and instituted minor in Rhetoric and Persuasion in the Rhetoric Department at The University of Iowa, we offer a number of courses designed to train students to occupy the position of citizens including, “Speaking Skills” at the introductory level and “Speak to Change the World” at the advanced level. In these and other courses, we assign as a final project presentations patterned after the format of TED Talks and in the spirit of presenting “ideas worth spreading” to greater publics. Instruction for these projects, which occurs over several weeks during the semester, includes rhetorical analysis of some actual TED Talk speeches based on such categories as the merit of the idea proposed, the values underlying it along with its implicit critique of dominant valuations, the audiences it is likely to influence/not influence, the vision of our society animating the idea presented, and the potential societal change should the presented idea “stick” and become prevalent. In effect, TED Talk speakers are viewed as citizen-speakers, and students’ analysis of TED Talk speeches is framed around the effectiveness of the case made to fellow citizens.

When students select their topic for the final project, they locate editorials, blogs, speeches, and articles on their topic, and they learn to approach all of these different genres as aspects of an ongoing conversation among citizens which critiques or challenges mainstream views. They enter the conversation by means of exercises that map those positions taken and the issues addressed, as well as assess arguments on the basis of effective and eloquent language. They contribute to the conversation by crafting their own position eloquently and persuasively, following feedback from their peers, and working on exercises that challenge them to re-write existing arguments more persuasively or to craft persuasive arguments more eloquently. Once they have found their own voices by engaging the conversation others have initiated, they conduct full research on the topic with the dual purpose of strengthening their argumentative position and crafting their argument in a way that can appeal to the widest possible audience. Their finished, multimodal presentation is videotaped and submitted to a contest funded by Iowa’s Rhetoric Department and judged by non-academics—

citizens in the community—who are instructed to judge the entries on the basis of no other criteria than the excellence displayed by the speaker in making his or her case before fellow citizens.



Underlying our pedagogy is our belief the practices of Greek democracy that sought to eliminate inequality in the domain of politics can still be instructive in our current efforts to eliminate inequality in all aspects of society. Our pedagogy also is underpinned by our belief that the value of a liberal arts education remains both practical and ideal—that while a liberal arts education enables students to develop skills useful to their profession, it also connects them to a higher purpose. It is this same belief that shaped the ancient Greeks’ approach to rhetorical education, an approach in which they regarded learning to speak well and serving one’s civic duties as the single gesture of the citizenly speech. Instruction in rhetoric today is uniquely positioned to take up both these goals in the classroom, for the training of students in the nuts and bolts of speech requires a context for speaking—i.e., positioning students before a particular audience and charging them with a particular purpose. The choice to approach speaking instruction within the context of public citizenship construes the relation of learning to civic responsibility in terms of a possible co-existence of the professional and vocational domains of our students’ lives. Like the Greeks, for whom it would be unthinkable to separate rhetorical education from citizenly engagement, we too can train our students that learning is equipment for living in service of a collectivity to which they belong.

### Endnotes

- 1 In view of the stark social inequalities in Athenian society, the sharp divide between land/slave owning elites and laborers, and with citizenship extended to men but not to women or foreigners, the discourse on civic education in classical Athens has been the subject of much controversy. As I have noted elsewhere (Poulakos & Depew, 2004), ever since the publication of William Bennett’s (1993) best-selling *Book of Virtues* in which he promotes Aristotle as a model of virtue-centered civic education, the theme of civic education has become something of a possession of conservatives. Tied to the elitist Aristotle, “virtue talk” elicits resistance from liberals who have been arguing for a more diverse, less sexist, and less “republican” vision of democratic life. At the height of such resistance, the discourse of dead white Greek males in the radically sexist, militarist, slave-driven, and imperialistic culture of ancient Athens has come to be regarded as

irrelevant to today's society. Worse yet, the re-invocation of civic education in ancient Greece has come to be perceived as a coded attack on the values that progressives, liberals, and democratic radicals try to instill in democratic life for a long time, and which is as important as ever to defend today. This view has gradually given way to the belief it can still be productive for those who value democratic pluralism to reach back to the Greeks (or other past societies dominated by sexist, slave-owning elites—including pre-nineteenth-century U.S. society) to inquire into the ways people of the past raised and addressed similar questions about democratic equality, albeit in a more limited sense than the way we understand democracy today.

- 2 By conservative estimates, democratic Athens lasted 110 years (with nearly two years of disruption when the Thirty Tyrants seized control of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war). The exact year of the origin of democracy is difficult to fix since constitutional reforms leading to democracy were made gradually. Ober dates it to 462 B.C.E, when "a series of reforms crippled the direct political power of the elite...and made possible the full political participation of ordinary citizens" (pp. 77–78); he dates it in the 440s, "with the introduction of state pay for the jurors in the people's courts...that gave the masses the same sort of control over private behavior and the interpretation of law that they had over state policy" (p. 81). The end of Athenian democracy came in 338 B.C.E., when Philip defeated the Athenian forces in the battle of Chaeronia.
- 3 At the very least, the rhetoricians' conflicting discourses about civic values and their disparate ends for civic education register as a sign of the diverse stances and plural positions available to an intellectual in the fourth century B.C.E. Key to this intellectual diversity is Isocrates' dual participation in discourses that uphold both elitist and democratic values. His ongoing vacillation between a commitment to a unitary vision of the common good for the community and a commitment to principles of relativism and public deliberation—however troubling to us—manages to drive the point that the effort to inculcate civic values is not the exclusive property of Plato and Aristotle. As he revises, redirects, and recasts Sophistical rhetoric, confirming some of its principles and distancing himself from others, Isocrates casts a great deal of doubt about his rival Plato's portrayal of Sophistical discourse as a thing of the past, no longer creating any conflict for or opposition to the dominant philosophical discourse about civic education.
- 4 According to Ober (1989, pp. 132–138), there is no evidence to support the claim that most citizens attending the assembly were quite wealthy. Demographic analysis has shown that there were no more than 2,000 leisure-class Athenian citizens, which makes impossible

their numerical advantage in a typical assembly session of 6,000 citizens. Even though the state pay of three obols was not always sufficient for some poor citizens to support their family, this did not necessarily exclude them from attending the assembly where sessions lasted for half a day, which meant that poor urban residents could still earn some additional income after the assembly. The poorest of citizens, including the old and others not able to do manual labor, were attending the assembly regularly to collect money otherwise not available to them. The claim that farmers would have difficulty getting to the assembly has some merit, though farming was seasonal and several of the thirty yearly meetings of the assembly took place during non-farming season. Aristophanes (*Ecclesiazusae*, 280–281) refers to the “assembly women” (dressed up as their husbands) coming to the Pnyx from the countryside. Ober concludes that even though the very rich, due to their leisure, and the very poor, due to their need, may have been overrepresented, “no evidence suggests that the assembly was grossly unrepresentative of the social composition of the Athenian citizen body as a whole” (p. 137).

- 5 The link between rhetoric and democracy in classical Athens has been contested on the grounds that rhetorical practices did not contribute much to the improvement of democratic relations. This claim is based on our current understanding of the role of democracy to minimize if not eliminate all areas of social inequality. Yet one needs to remember that Athenian democracy was erected in opposition to oligarchy, and the challenge undertaken was not to extend the reach of democracy to the social realm but to secure democratic governance against oligarchy by maintaining political equality among all citizens. Within this context, the most important change in the shift from oligarchy to democracy was that social status—aristocratic blood and family ties of the elite class—lost its inherent power to *logos*, and speakers had to earn their prominence in the political life of the city through their ability with speaking. True, rhetoric empowered both sides, as Protagoras’ precept of *dissoi logoi* makes clear. The democratic dimension of rhetoric was that it gave *logos* to everyone, setting up no conditions as to who had the authority to speak—as the phrase announcing the opening of each assembly session, “who wishes to speak?” makes evident—as well as Protagoras’ reference to shoemakers and bricklayers giving advice to the city also indicates.

The claim it was the elites who might have most benefitted from rhetorical education—since they were the only ones who could afford to pay for the Sophists’ instruction—may have some merit, especially during the early days of the Sophists. But this claim does not take into account the dissemination of speaking skills in an oral culture or the

exposure that thousands of non-elite Athenians had to public speeches in the courts, the assembly, and the festivals. As early as in the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., Aristophanes ridiculed in *The Clouds* a whole class of people loitering outside the courts and trying to sell arguments to prospective litigants and defendants. Along with providing evidence that the practices of rhetoric had been reduced to ambulance-chasing tactics, Aristophanes' depiction (along with Isocrates' scorn in *Against the Sophists* for people claiming to be teachers of rhetoric) indicates that anyone with a natural knack for speaking could teach himself to become a more effective speaker. Finally, we cannot ignore the fact Plato's vicious attack against the Sophists and the art of rhetoric happened well after the Sophists had died—which is a reliable indicator that Sophistic precepts and rhetorical practices continued to spread and to empower democrats against the agenda of the elite.

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# U.S. Public Education: The Ivy Tower of Historical Trauma

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## **Introduction**

The ivy-covered homes in poor black neighborhoods are worn like statues exposed to years of relentless acid rain: their once-hard edges and crisp details softened, obscured, and even disappeared. Such ivy-covered neighborhoods stand as symbols of people whose histories remain fraught with colonialism, enslavement, and resistance and who await seemingly inevitable further decay. Even though worn and in some cases nearly covered by vines, these houses nevertheless stand firm against social and economic gentrification which lurks nearby, an undying colonialism that frames newly built structures which promise only false renewal and which themselves creep toward dismemberment of people of color's living communities. When glimpsed through the eyes not of neoliberal economic progress, but of history, the same poor black neighborhood's ivy covered homes are revealed as dangerous repositories of communities of color's traumatic memories. Trauma challenges the current, colonial progression of the populous, becoming "dangerous" to progress (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). This invasive, neoliberal, colonialist enterprise of gentrification, like ivy and acid rain, sets about to mask and attempts to erase traumatic memories, toxicity, and enslavement endured by people of color. In the exalted, profit-hungry, race-blind neoliberal economic enterprise, only ivy-obscurd houses appear to be at stake, but what is actually at stake are the lived experiences of people of color, communities that remain testaments of persistent, proud resistance to oppression. The metaphor of creeping ivy as colonial infiltration and gentrification extends to education because within schools oppression grows unchecked because white educators do not attempt to understand the student of color who bravely stands in resistance even as he or she becomes re-enslaved by the policy and practices of schooling. U.S. educational policymakers and practitioners employ the false promise of educational reform as opportunity to perpetuate harm systematically by limiting the academic success of students of color. The dissonance created between students of color and white educators is then labeled as "achievement gap," blamed upon and

viewed as an indirect consequence of communities of color's actions rather than a consequence of conditions that continue to uphold racist ideologies and actions that harm. We envision this paper as a call to seek and implement critical consciousness and critical empathy in an educational system that continuously fertilizes the colonialist ivy.

Rather than raising consciousness of the harm perpetuated in schools, educators choose to mask the loss of students of color's cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). Cultural capital is the cultural wealth of communities of color so often dismissed in current educational systems (Yosso, 2005). Theory on cultural capital acknowledges community wealth as specific knowledge gained from a community's familial, aspirational, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational capital (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Yosso, 2005). This educator-enforced achievement gap dismisses ghetto colonialism (Paperson, 2010; 2014) and historical trauma (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), both of which persist and grow. Educators then become complicit, active participants in the cycle of students of color's cultural trauma, often naïvely inheriting the role of arbitrator to assimilation (Suárez-Orozco, Casanova, Martin, Katsiaficas, Cuellar, Smith, & Dias, 2015; Dutro & Bien, 2014; Warren & Hotchkins, 2014). In order to interrupt this trauma cycle, educators must explore the hallways and byways of school systems and take risks in exploring the pathways in which empathy, witnessing, and counter-discourse can create spaces of healing (Dutro & Bien; Schwartz, 2014; Walkley & Cox 2013; Zembylas, 2006). This manuscript's authors and our message expressed herein joins the collective activist voice of critical scholars in unmasking the ivy-covered walls of historical trauma that harm students of color while examining the capacity and need for educators to develop critical consciousness.

### **Historical Trauma**

After years of "toxic rain" in its classrooms and schools, communities of color have yet to recover from traumas experienced by previous generations (Liem, 2007; Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Generational acts of harm such as slavery, segregation, and racism manifest deep within society. These acts then become policy and law such as voter ID laws, marketed as turning points of change, regarded as preserving public safety and protecting democracy when, in fact, they only persist practices of separateness and experiences of trauma in communities of color (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Mohatt et al., 2014). Simultaneously, communities and individuals subjected to generations of oppression form their own collective narrative, acting to preserve counter-experiences that maintain their identity, safety, and history (Mohatt et al., 2014; Yosso, 2005; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). However, years of trauma bring loss,

which can include loss of cultural language, values, land, and perceptions of self-worth (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Mohatt et al., 2014). This shared experience of trauma becomes a collective memory of pain endured, but also a collective memory of strength drawn from remaining resistant to the dominant narrative of cultural extinction (Paperson, 2010; 2014). According to Dumas (2014), “this process requires that a given group engage in sustained deliberation over the nature of the pain, and importantly, its cause(s)” (p. 6). This discourse of pain includes daily suffering within schools which often moves through generations unacknowledged by educators while communities of color struggle to make their pain heard, felt, and acknowledged (Dumas, 2014, Roppolo & Crow, 2007). Inherent in the journey toward interrupting the historical trauma cycle is the need to address its effects specific to health and educational outcomes among communities of color.

Historical trauma theory explains the intergenerational impact of physically and psychologically traumatic events that affect communities and individuals (Brave Heart, 2003; Brockie, Dana-Sacco, Wallen, Wilcox, & Campbell, 2015; Mohatt et al., 2014; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004; Wiechelt, Gryczynski, Johnson, & Caldwell, 2012). Formerly, historical trauma theory has been used to describe experiences of Jews during and after the Holocaust and more recently the intergenerational impact of colonialist events, such as the Indian Boarding School era on Native Americans (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Brave Heart, 2003; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brave Heart et al., 2011; Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, & Yellow-Horse Davis, 1998; Elias, Mignone, Hall, Hong, Hart, & Sareen, 2012; Walls & Whitbeck, 2012; Whitbeck, Walls, Johnson, Morrisseau, & McDougall, 2009; Wiechelt et al., 2012). Just as ivy, when left to rampant growth over time erodes long-standing structures while simultaneously masking its destruction, historical trauma dismissed and further supported by reoccurring acts of harm affects negatively students and communities of color (Quijada Cercer, 2013; Roppolo & Crow, 2007). Recent research exploring the impact of historical trauma on Native Americans finds correlations with substance abuse (Wiechelt et al., 2012), depression (Whitbeck et al., 2009), and suicide (Brockie et al., 2015; Elias et al., 2012) among Native-American populations. By exploring and evidencing the mechanisms by which education perpetuates trauma in order to extinguish Blackness, we argue for an expansion of the scope of historical trauma to include current schooling as sites of recurring harm which enact intergenerational traumatic effects on communities of color.

### **Narrative Model**

Similarly to the work of critical scholars who explore the effects of historical trauma on Native Americans’ mental health (Brave Heart,

2003; Whitbeck et al., 2004), the “narrative model of how historical trauma [affects] health” (Mohatt et al., 2014) provides rich insight into the effects of historical trauma on communities of color. According to Mohatt et al. (2014), there are three common elements to historical trauma narratives: (a) contemporary reminders in the form of public and personal (education falls into both); (b) narrative salience; and (c) present-day effects in both community and individual health. Present-day health effects that fall within the narrative model include chronic illness, mental illness, and relational issues that span generations (Brave Heart, 2003; Brockie et al., 2015; Mohatt et al., 2014; Walls & Whitbeck, 2012; Wiechelt et al., 2012). Salience of the trauma to a community or individual is mediated by “contemporary reminders of historical trauma,” which include perceived historical loss, perceived discrimination, microaggressions, and personal trauma (Mohatt et al., 2014). Personal contemporary reminders include experienced microaggressions (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), limited spaces of safety in which people of color can engage in dialogue about their lived experiences (Leonardo & Porter, 2010), punishment for exhibiting Blackness (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013), and other instances of discrimination as perceived by an individual. These personal and collective trauma narratives can shape memory and behaviors of communities which then deeply affect development of positive self-worth (Mohatt et al., 2014; Seedat, 2015).

### ***Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome***

While the narrative model of historical trauma provides an objective map of the mechanisms of historical trauma within communities of color its very objectivity renders it generalized and distant (Mohatt et al., 2014) as a means of understanding. Invested with community and personal salience, DeGruy’s (2005) “post-traumatic slave syndrome” challenges patterns of dissonance first by applying historical trauma specifically to Black communities and then by connecting the effects of slavery and oppression to the diagnostic criteria of PTSD. Her theorization directly places historical trauma as a cause of immediate harm within Black communities. Tangled up with effects of historical loss, post-traumatic slave syndrome is theorized as a cause of issues such as depression, alcoholism, and internalized oppression, all of which can become externalized into feelings of anger, invisibility, and low self-worth (DeGruy, 2005). These logical externalizations of trauma are then routinely used by white society to support the continuation of harmful stereotypes lacking in understanding of historical trauma, such as the “angry Black man.” Additionally, DeGruy’s (2005) framing of historical trauma as post-traumatic slave syndrome provides counter-hegemonic

language imbued with personal and collective salience to communities of color and which can provide a foundation for educators to take conscious steps toward interrupting the cycle of trauma incurred by and thrust upon students of color. Overall, post-traumatic slave syndrome plainly, powerfully articulates trauma experiences in the Black community as truths while also attempting to provide opportunity for understanding and healing.

### **Extinguishing Blackness**

Black communities are subjected every day to trauma by being made to bear witness to images, debates, and news headlines which serve as reminders of generations of fighting for liberation with seemingly small progress towards reparation for colonialist injustices. Rather than assume accountability for the institutional and relational acts of harm against people of color, biases broadcast as fact and out-and-out hate speech are protected as free speech and perpetuate messages that Black communities are the cause of their own oppression. What continues to remain absent in the dominant collective narrative is a critical awareness and understanding of counter- language, experience, memory, and Blackness as means to challenge and alter an invented, yet invasive, persistent reality that seeks to preserve whiteness by extinguishing Blackness.

### **False History**

Although U.S. society has made steps towards change, the invasive colonialist ivy spreads its tendrils throughout current history books, media, and overall societal consensus (Brown & Brown, 2010; DeGruy, 2005). Loss of Black cultural capital and history are its successful conquests, executed by means of racist beliefs, values, policies, and systems to silence counter-language, close off safe space, and extinguish self-identity of Black communities. In an educational system where truth only exists within, only has weight in the context of, white culture, language, history, and space, Black communities are left searching for resources to substantiate the subjective essence of their experiences (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Paperson, 2010). Communities of color have acted in resistance to the imperialist storm of assimilation in attempts to sustain their history of strength and resilience across generations. However, their history of resilience which places people of color as unified, intelligent, and culturally significant becomes threatening to dominant narratives that place communities of color as less-than, disorganized, and lacking intelligence. As a result, communities of color's memories are twisted into falsity, and result in extinguishing community history and any movement toward liberation (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). Examples include media portrayals of police killing unarmed Black men as singular events supposedly spatially and

ideologically contained in one town or community. As a result, the collective memories of generations of police brutality against the Black community are again disappeared, and reinforcing and reifying suffering and recurring harm rather than becoming movement toward liberation.

### **Dehumanization**

In the U.S., public education remains a right for the masses to earn freedoms only truly granted to a few, and a journey of learning what society deems as comprising humanity or humanness: one's essence or cultural identity formed from experience that provides a foundation for evolution and development of consciousness. The colonialist ivy of historical trauma is a product of the absence of humanity of those in power whose actions mutilate and cover the humanness of students of color. Fanon (2008) argues, "man is not only the potential for self-consciousness or negation. If it be true that consciousness is transcendental, we must also realize that this transcendence is obsessed with the issue of love and understanding" (p. xii). It is such love and understanding, through empathy and compassion, which manifests as a fleeting apparition within the educator who lacks critical consciousness, leaving that educator without a means to witness students of color. As such, when leading discussion of students' events and experiences, for the teacher lacking critical consciousness the possibility of a different subjective experience existing during that very same moment is often quickly, safely replaced by dichotomous othering. For instance, a Black student in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who has not been taught how to sound out words refuses to read aloud in class. His white teacher demands he read because she fails to draw upon critical consciousness, empathy, and compassion in order to seek an understanding as to the reason behind the student's behavior. The student-teacher dialogue escalates, and the student ends up in the school's office. While the student experiences feelings of embarrassment, hurt, and low self-worth, the teacher experiences the student as lazy, confrontational, and disruptive. The student becomes "the problem" in class and is thereafter approached as an object, symbolic of the vast societal and racial divide, a counter-narrative in need of discipline in order to achieve conformity rather than a human child to be understood. As a result, the ivy of whiteness covers the whole child, masks his cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) rather than offering an opportunity to break down the narrative and expose the trauma students of color incur in schools.

Such a scenario extends, too, into higher education where the need for critical consciousness becomes a current trend and classroom discourse can become a volley of "us vs. them," "self vs. other," and "truth vs. falsity" instead of engaging difficult discourse enacting empathy and advocacy (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Zembylas, 2014).

Placed at the center of this educational trend are people of color who often become unknowingly tasked at educating white peers about their experiences of everyday trauma (Leonardo, 2004). Since the focus of many “cultural awareness” courses is to educate the oppressor rather than liberate the oppressed, the experiences of students of color continue to be silenced and placed as outside of reality through microaggressions such as statements like; “that can’t be true...racism no longer exists,” or “Black people are not victimized by police.” Meanwhile, students of color charged with sharing their experiences act as educators rather than be witnessed themselves, and continue to be subjected to violence through personal reminders of historical trauma. What often occurs when counter-narrative experiences are expressed by students of color is those experiences are labeled as hurtful or acting to their white peers attempting to develop a conscious awareness (Leonardo, 2004; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Furthermore, the distance through such dichotomous dialogues intrudes into other aspects of self where students of color’s cultural identity is manipulated and contained in order to maintain the separateness of trauma histories from the conceived objective truth of dominant society.

### ***Personal Identity***

Critical race scholars’ framing of racial identity as whiteness and Blackness expands the depth of understanding of the ways in which society enacts intergenerational trauma onto communities of color through discourse, education, and history of whiteness ideology (Leonardo, 2004; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Paperson, 2010; 2014). Whiteness is a colonial ideology that supports and rewards those who conform to desired behavior, beliefs, values, and experiences and punishes those who exhibit Blackness regardless of phenotype (Paperson, 2010). “Specifically, whiteness emerges as a racial category of entitlements: the right to claim land and sometimes people as property, and conversely, the right not to be bound by borders nor bonded as property” (Paperson, 2014, p. 116). For example, individuals whose language closely aligns with “formal English” are viewed as well-educated, while individuals whose speech mirrors that of their community who have an accent, who use slang, and so forth are viewed as “ghetto.” Whether Ebonics, or Black/home, vernacular/community discourse should be supported or shamed in education continues to be a topic of debate (Perry & Delpit, 1998). Blackness encompasses behaviors, language, beliefs, attitudes, and affect that embody the cultural capital of Black communities (Fanon, 2008; Paperson, 2010; Yosso, 2015). The positioning of whiteness and Blackness as ideologies expands identity to include individuals who may not phenotypically look Black, but who may live by beliefs, behaviors,

and experiences that closely align with the collective identity of the Black community. As such, whiteness ideology acts to keep classroom conversations about diversity focused either on persuading white students towards awareness or on serving the colonialist educational system rather than providing space for healing students of color's traumatic wounds (Dutro & Bien, 2014; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Just as once-flourishing Black neighborhoods are taken over and gentrified, as ivy houses are overshadowed by modern, new housing developments, Blackness becomes ghettoized, subsumed by colonialism but purposefully located outside the protected spaces of whiteness ideology and identity (Paperson 2010; 2014).

### **Ghetto Colonialism**

When Blackness enters the classroom it is often viewed as an imperfection, something to be extinguished through punishment (Dumas, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Murphy et al., 2013). Viewing Black children's humanness and culture as behavior to be extinguished instead of an essence in need of understanding, educators position students of color as objects, experimented on by using different forms of punishment to discipline and extinguish Blackness. As a result, students who exhibit Blackness in schools become marked for reform. Educators armed with colonialist knowledge become inspectors with model blueprints of assimilation charged with ensuring a student who exemplifies whiteness ideology is supported and promoted, while students who exhibit attributes outside the whiteness ideology are stripped and refurbished to white educational code. Ghetto colonialism is one of the manifestations of such a system used to further imperialist schooling and colonial education (Paperson 2010; 2014). This "new learning" is repackaged propaganda that dislocates students' Blackness as inhuman and classrooms as spaces for cultural extinguishment (Dumas, 2014; Paperson 2010; 2014). Accordingly, the degree to which a student of color can "succeed" is often determined by the capacity of that student to endure classroom violence, assimilate, or mask his or her Blackness. Paperson (2010) argues,

This asymmetry between the pull of empire and the push of dislocation gives rise to imperial education on the one hand and colonial schooling on the other. Imperial education is training for inclusion into the metropole, which stands in contrast to colonial schooling, a form of management of populations in the ghetto. (p. 24)

It is just such an "imperial education" that normalizes students' suffering of historical trauma and which inhibits educators from exposure to a discourse that provides spaces for healing instead of imposing harm.

### **School-Based Suffering**

The trend in U.S. public education to focus on positivist student achievement prizes objectivity and enacts punishment with little reward. Of the ways in which students of color experience trauma within schools Dumas (2014) opines:

Marginalized groups suffer doubly in relation to schooling: First, the drudgery and futility of the school experience itself, and second, through the loss of hope for oneself individually, and for the group, collectively, in terms of improved social recognition and economic stability. Neither stage of suffering is deemed legitimate. In the first case, students are told, despite evidence to the contrary, that participating in schooling is not suffering, but an opportunity to improve one's life chances. (p. 8)

Scholars critically examine education—its goals, actions, and outcomes—through the lens of critical race theory (Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical race theory (CRT) is a means through which to examine the power dynamics within schools that perpetuate messages such as, “to exhibit Blackness is to be less than human” and “learning is measured by one's ability to exhibit whiteness” (Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). When cultural capital earned within Black communities is confronted by toxic microaggressions in the classroom, students are left hurt and vulnerable, providing an opportunity for historical loss to sink in its destructive ivy roots (Dutro & Bien, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Eventually students experience the loss of cultural foundations meant to help foster positive growth, self-efficacy, and empathetic relationships (Mohatt et al., 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). This places both students who conform and those who resist such “cultural learning” in spaces where they are subjected to continuous exposure to trauma narratives, dehumanization, and invisibility.

### **The Achievement Gap**

Through ghetto-colonialism the consciousness gap of empathy and liberation is projected onto students of color and reframed as inherent “smartness” disability (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Rather than being held accountable for students of color's lack of achievement, educational systems instead reify colonialist achievement by privileging language that continues to place students of color as the cause of and responsible for their own trauma. Rhetoric such as the “achievement gap” and the “school-to-prison pipeline” contribute to the intergenerational trauma cycle through educational initiatives that temporally muffle the voices of advocates while allowing schools to hide from accountability. Paperson

(2010) argues, “the most recent push for accountability in education is yet another modernist project to create utopic schooling systems, where deviant schools must be closed and impure bodies and minds must be reformed” (p. 8). This push to create “utopic schooling systems” disregards the voices of students who seek understanding and spaces for healing within their community’s classrooms. Coinciding with the call for increased student academic achievement there exists stark need to address the gap in white educators’ empathy (Warren & Hotchkins, 2014).

### **Accountability: An Interruption in the Trauma Cycle**

What is there to gain by lifting the white veil? Of primary importance and potential benefit, educators must act to accept accountability for participation in microaggressive acts and other forms of oppression which can liberate students of color from contemporary reminders and effects of decades of historical trauma. Like many calls for raising critical consciousness, white educators need to exercise caution against placing liberatory actions within a strict modality when in fact consciousness-raising remains a developmental journey of constant risk-taking, self-work, and relational challenges. By way of recommending implementation of such a strategy, we now turn to describe different pathways along which educators can walk toward developing their capacity for critical consciousness, eventually acting to interrupt cycles of historical trauma within their classrooms. Too, white educators will need to develop a keen awareness of the fears that come with the unfamiliar, ambiguous nature of liberation, which can foster a need for the familiar structure of whiteness ideology and lead to disconnection among students of color (Fanon, 2008; Freire, 1989).

### **Empathy**

When asked to define empathy the common response is often “to walk in another’s shoes,” an accepted adage adopted by society and integrated in schools within relational education contexts. For people of color, empathy’s particular discourse is one rooted in dislocation, displacing one outside his or her community in order to allow another to “act as if” and granting white onlookers a license to explore without need to understand the person of color’s true experience. This discourse of empathy creates racialized avoidance by bracketing empathy as an objective ability to understand another without having truly to feel, hear, believe, or even acknowledge the sacrifice of people of color who have given up part of themselves in the hope someone will witness their counter-experience. As a result, what remains invisible, missing within this dominant discourse. are subjectivity, humanness, wisdom, and affect (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Warren & Hotchkins, 2014). In a

classroom the drawbacks to the discourse of empathy and its roots in dislocation appear when students of color's emotions are dislocated from their humanity and recast as behavioral issues, their experiences rendered false in such a way that the salience of students' experienced trauma is reaffirmed.

In addition to developing critical empathy, educators committed to building critical consciousness will participate in *engaged witnessing* (Gubkin, 2015), which requires an educator's critical empathy along with four actions: (a) studying the historical context; (b) exploring multiple subject positions (including the student); (c) testing the possibilities and limits of representation; and (d) utilizing emotion as a source for knowledge (p. 109). On the surface, an educator's achievement of this framework's components could easily be characterized as objective and ticked off as completed tasks, completely losing the essence and intentionality of critical empathy and increasing subjective, emotional, historical disconnects between white educators and students of color. Used as intended, engaged witnessing challenges educators critically to examine the historical counter-narrative of their students' communities, histories easily avoided if educators are not required to live in the same town as their district of employment. Furthermore, emotion can become a source of knowledge for white educators, providing space for intersections between historical trauma and classroom discourse, and ultimately leading to opportunities for healing.

### **Witnessing the Speaking Wound**

Witnessing the "speaking wounds" of trauma (Dutro & Bien, 2014) is a process that asks educators to abandon the deficit perspective in which they view students of color as inheritors of hopelessness. The very act of believing students when they voice their pain instead of silencing them can in itself begin radically to shift relationships from disconnected, vague links to relationships rooted in critical empathy, from classrooms imbued with toxicity to classrooms within which students of color find safety and experience the potential to have their voices heard and their cultural identities celebrated (Dutro & Bien, 2014; Schwartz, 2014; Wissman, 2014). However, to create spatial opportunities where the "difficult knowledge" (Zembylas, 2014) of trauma experiences can be heard, teachers must be willing to risk movement beyond what whiteness deems "safety," or that knowledge typically couched within "diversity" boundaries manufactured by white culture such as calendared "cultural" months or events that serve only imperialist ego. Persistent white fear of the ambiguousness of a developed critical consciousness results in the desire to preserve ideals of whiteness' innocence and alibies instead of moving boldly to adopt antiracism (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Students of color, too, can

experience anxiety when engaging in relations of empathy and witnessing in classrooms. However, their anxiety originates uniquely from their perceived and historically learned need to remain vigilant against harmful actions occurring in classrooms, which can become even more traumatizing when students voice their speaking wounds.

Finally, when racist actions and events, like those in Ferguson, Missouri, occur and schools put a policy of silence in place, educators must ask themselves who benefits from these actions and what difficult knowledge is being avoided? These are not new difficult knowledges for students of color: they are familiar narratives. Historical trauma accountability, like empathy, is a continuum without a formula. Removing the white veil and peeling away colonialist ivy exposes wounds, and these wounds take time to heal: healing that begins with the recognition of white educators' roles in perpetuating harm and in adopting the fortitude and diligence to engage in the never-ending work interrupting colonialist cycles of historical trauma.

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# Testing, Experience, and Reason: Perspectives from Comenius and Dewey

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## Introduction

I love history and I love working with these guys (her fourth-hour-block U.S. history class) but it is difficult to get them interested in the subject. We have the state standards to cover and the [End-of-Instruction] test to prepare for. I have to cover new standards every day. There is no time for reinforcement activities and if the students don't get it there is no time to re-teach the material. There is not time to extend the lesson into the interesting side-stories, biographical studies, or interesting events that can make history fun.

The woman speaking here is an intern teacher at Edmond High School (Go, Bulldogs!) completing her certification in a junior-level history class. Her peers, intern teachers in World History, Oklahoma History, Spanish, and English, had similar misgivings about the state of the art of education, so, as a result I, a clinical supervisor of intern teachers, embark on an examination of the background and status of this testing program and critique the role of testing from a teacher's perspective. This past year being the centennial of the publication of John Dewey's (1859–1952) *Democracy and Education* (1916), his educational theories underpin my critique. The work of an early reformer of education, Jan Amos Komensky, a.k.a. Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), whose *The Great Didactic* (1632) contains principles for reorganizing and reforming schools and teaching serves as another frame for my exploration into the role of testing in education. The “state of the art” of education provides my focus.

The art of education, that aspect arising from interest in the subject, the joy of working with young scholars (even reluctant ones), and the satisfaction of contributing to society proves wholly different from the science of education. This is not to say that the science of education—all teachers learn about methods, models, and strategies, and perhaps even their reflections on their own educational activities—are not important;

they are. However, academic, cognitive, and learned activities assist with but cannot replace the affective joy of teaching and love of learning. With that in mind, the purpose of this essay is to investigate the development of the situation in which testing and a focus on rote learning of prescribed content has taken priority over most aspects of education: one where the classroom model focuses on a lockstep method of teaching and learning discrete content, and evaluating that learning. My next objective is to identify the many ways federal involvement and the application of business models for educational administration affects public education with the governmental focus on education as an enterprise and educational testing its measure of success or failure. Finally, I apply the theories of John Amos Comenius and John Dewey to analyze the problem of testing in education from several vantage points: recitation, the result of testing-based curriculum, students' needs, the educational process, the curriculum, method, and the social institution.

### **Testing and Education**

The origins of our current situation in education have roots in the development of the science of education from Herbart to Hunter to Marzano. Educational administration is influenced by the application of an array of industrial and business models from Taylor to Deming to Baldrige. Federal interest and intervention proceed from the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Teacher and student testing in one form or another dominate public education and have since Horace Mann introduced common exams in 1845. Oklahoma is but one example of the national situation of pervasive educational assessment and high-stakes testing as accountability measure. The state requires teachers who receive certification through college and university teacher-education programs to take the Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET), the Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT), and the Oklahoma Professional Teaching Examination (OPTE).<sup>1</sup> Alternative certification is available to individuals who hold a Bachelor's degree in a field corresponding to a certification area who pass the OGET and OSAT, have two years of any kind of work experience, and a minimum grade point average.<sup>2</sup> Students in public schools must complete core curriculum, benchmark, and end-of-instruction tests. Students who choose classes like advanced placement or college prep must perform satisfactorily on additional tests. Some school districts, in the interest of demonstrating superiority, administer even more achievement tests than required by legislation. This intensive teacher-and-student testing regimen is a result of U.S. Department of

Education requirements for states to evaluate “achievement” and show improvement. The growth and application of educational administration practices based on business management models supplies the data that satisfies the need to determine public schools’ success.

### **Business Models in Education**

Business management structures, especially those quality-based, continuous-improvement models begun by Deming and supported by the Baldrige Foundation, when applied to education provide the drive toward and development of standards-based assessment. The industry-based management ideas of Dr. W. Edwards Deming (1900–1993), Total Quality Management (TQM),<sup>3</sup> and the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence<sup>4</sup> provide the management models. Schools which have planned and shown detailed, recorded improvements in leadership, strategic planning, customer- and market-focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results become eligible to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (established by the U.S. Congress, awarded by the U.S. President).<sup>5</sup> Deming outlines the Deming/Baldrige structure, often effective in business, in fourteen points.<sup>6</sup> This formula for success, so logical in the business world, proves much less effective when its criteria are applied to public education since public education offers a far more challenging sociopolitical context given its role as a social institution, governance by the state, beholden-ness to local communities, and monitoring by all. Nearly everyone believes he or she is an expert on education, having gone to school and taking as a truism Will Rodgers’ famous adage, “The schools ain’t what they used to be and never was.”

Schools ideally attain the goal of quality-driven education implementing a system of continuous improvement. Educational leaders utilize the expertise of teachers working in committees after school in districts and school sites to affect educational decision-making. In practice, this means the implementation of performance standards suggested by the authors of the Reagan-era 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report which proposes “the strengthening of high school graduation requirements by establishing minimum requirements for each student of: (a) four years of English, (b) three years of mathematics, (c) three years of science, (d) three years of social studies, and (e) one-half year of computer science. Regarding standards and expectations, schools, colleges, and universities the report encourages schools and districts to go “back to basics” by adopting more rigorous, measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct.<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between Deming's ideas of "Total Quality Management" outlined in his fourteen points, The Malcolm Baldrige Award with its business-values criteria, and the No Child Left Behind [now the Every Student Succeeds] Act requirements turns on questions posed of the data, for data in the educational setting is constructed as synonymous with the creation of standards and broadly applied testing resulting in measures of achievement and, ideally, continuous improvement. The consequence of imposing this business-based model on public education is dependence on a set of standards on which the testing is based—a faulty logic—which means a teacher must always be aware of and focused upon the standards to teach and the number of standards to cover.

### **Federal Involvement**

The growth of significant federal involvement in education began with the NDEA during the Eisenhower administration, ESEA and the War on Poverty during the Johnson administration, NCLB during the Bush presidency, and, finally, President Obama's signing of the ESSA in 2015. 2016 presidential candidate Clinton previously advocated for public education in Arkansas and so, as President, would certainly have shown interest in U.S. educational policy. The educational policy of President Trump is unclear but he supports state and local control of public education and calls for downsizing if not eliminating the U.S. Department of Education (ED) established in 1979 during the Carter administration. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos reports a proposed 13 percent reduction in the ED budget eliminating or phasing out 22 programs. House Bill 899, if passed, will terminate the Department of Education at the end of 2018.<sup>8</sup>

The NDEA, passed by Congress in 1958, provides significant funding for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs at U.S. colleges and universities. It also supports the practice of testing first to identify then track capable students into more rigorous classes and to determine the success of curricula and programs designed to improve teaching. These "new" curricula—School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG), Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC), and others—change teaching primarily in science and math,<sup>9</sup> coming at a pivotal time. By the mid-1960s the first generation born after World War II was in high school and beginning college. American involvement in Indochina and social change centered in race, class, and gender rights created a context of perceived crisis. By the time the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was passed the focus in education had passed to the social. The six, then seven, titles of the ESEA were designed to support

school districts with funding focused on alleviating the impact of poverty and educational inequity. *A Nation at Risk* greatly increased federal intervention in public education. President Reagan supported abolishing the Department of Education and downplayed education as a political issue reconsidered. In the Reagan era, educational reform began anew on the national, state, and local levels and continued as the Clinton and subsequent administrations supported the establishment of national standards and the educational crisis mentality which promoted public education as a disaster.<sup>10</sup>

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act required the following: 1. a high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE); 2. a systematic testing program; 3. a narrowly defined educational research program; 4. highly qualified teacher designation; 5. increased accountability for student performance; 6. a focus on “what works”; 7. reduced government control; 8. increased educational flexibility; and 9. empowerment of parents.<sup>11</sup> President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the latest incarnation of ESEA, into law in 2015.<sup>12</sup> ESSA retains the emphasis on standards and testing but releases to the states the evaluation of schools and the determination of responses to poorly achieving schools, retaining the right for federal intervention in some circumstances.<sup>13</sup> ESSA responds to backlash against the most onerous provisions of NCLB and promises to continue to support efforts in the nation’s schools to decrease the “achievement gap” between more-resource-advantaged and less-resource-advantaged students. Major changes in the ESSA version of ESEA include: 1. the number of standardized, high-stakes tests since such exams were criticized for trying to put all students into one category without taking into account significant individual differences; 2. encouraging states to develop challenging standards to replace Common Core state standards; 3. evaluating schools every three years based on approved standards and devised goals at the state and district levels; 4. emphasizing English Language Learner programs with increased federal oversight and control; 5. a permanent preschool development grant; and 6. modifying at the national level teacher evaluations and “highly qualified” teacher status. The impact these changes are having at state and local school district levels is variable at best.<sup>14</sup> Oklahoma, for example, eliminated both the “Highly Qualified Teacher” designation and the “High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation.”<sup>15</sup>

Adapting to the new standards does not mean school cultures immediately will change, nor can they. Although ESSA has changed the relationship between the ED and the states’ departments of education and local school districts, it retains the overall structure of standards and

testing. Teachers are responsible for the transmission of knowledge contained in those standards. A history teacher, for example, teaching a “U.S. History 1878 to Present” course must cover seven content standards and 216 content objectives. Naturally there is little instructional time left for purposes of expanding the curriculum for the sake of generating interest, for re-teaching material not adequately learned, or for any of the myriad diversions and details that make history interesting. Standards guide teaching completely and any deviation proves detrimental to covering efficiently all objectives. In a sense the standards “teacher-proof” curricula by providing a comprehensive list of objectives and indoctrinating teachers with a keen awareness objectives make up the state’s end-of-instruction test. This same standards-objectives-test format is used in other curricula as well. Some school districts, in an effort either to standardize the curricula or to generate the perception of increased achievement, apply the same format across curricula. Foreign language, for example, is reduced to a predominately vocabulary-grammar test emphasizing competition between classes and schools for the best test scores. The pull then becomes between teaching and learning materials for the test versus teaching and learning for personal development, improvement, or pleasure.

### **Recitation**

Curriculum design, limited by the necessity for covering the standards and preparing for the tests, results in the manufacture of teacher-proof curricula. Such curricula limit teachers’ flexibility, creativity, and expertise in the interest of acquiring specified test-focused materials. Most teachers, hopefully, teach their favorite subjects. Forcing teachers into narrowly defined standards limits their ability to interact with curriculum design and to transmit the value teachers feel inheres in what they teach. This separation of the substance of the lesson from the form has been recognized as a problem since at least the time of Comenius who organized his *The Great Didactic* around the themes of: 1. the purpose of universal, common coeducation; 2. the need, possibility, and basis for school reform; 3. universal principles of instruction, facility, thoroughness in teaching and in learning, and conciseness and rapidity in teaching; 4. methods of sciences, arts, languages, morals, and piety; 5. discipline; 6. organization of schools; and 7. requisites for praxis. He notes, “the education of many, if not of most men, consists of nothing but a string of names; that is to say, they can repeat the technical terms and the rules of the arts, but do not know how to apply them practically.”<sup>16</sup> Comenius maintains the value of repetition is in the act of teaching, not of learning. He writes,

...by means of...constant repetition the scholars will gain a better acquaintance with the subject than they could possibly

obtain by private study.... When, by this method of repetition, the pupil has, as it were, been admitted to the office of teacher, he will attain a peculiar keenness of disposition and love of learning.<sup>17</sup>

Comenius sought to reform the prevailing method of education, recitation, that relies on rote memorization. Recitation, memorization, and recall is once again with us, this time in the form of testing. He asserts that nature provides the model for educational endeavors. In the fifth of his *Universal Principles of Instruction* he writes,

In all the operations of nature development is from within ... [first] to understand things, and then to remember them...teachers fall into error who, instead of thoroughly explaining the subjects of study to the boys under their charge, give them endless dictations, and make them learn their lessons off by heart.<sup>18</sup>

Comenius maintained *The Great Didactic* corrected the education of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The principles found therein can certainly assist us with 21<sup>st</sup> century modifications.

Like Comenius, John Dewey wanted to reconstruct the education institution. He structured his educational thought around: 1. the individual student, the social and psychological needs of the child; 2. the process of education, the structure of the school, and the act of teaching; 3. the curriculum, how is subject matter conceived and how is it presented?; 4. methods, how are lessons designed and delivered?; and 5. the school as a social institution, its relationship to the society, its needs for progress and improvement. He developed these ideas, sometimes singularly, over several books culminating in *Democracy and Education* that brought his ideas together in a general exposition. Dewey's model for educational activities lies in the application of science and the scientific method. The pragmatist epistemology of tentative and continuous reconstruction of knowledge served as the foundation for learning. Rote learning has little value in a system in which all knowledge is tentative and subject to revision with the accession of new experiences or information. Education focuses not on the science of teaching but on science as teaching and learning, with students and teachers applying the scientific method in classrooms.

### **Students' Needs**

Comenius focuses on didactics: the art of teaching well. The student need only be teachable, have some aptitude, discernment, and zeal for learning. He understood student differences require varied pedagogical foci and teachability can be developed. Teaching consists then of three parts: the object of instruction, the manner of instruction, and

discipline.<sup>19</sup> Learning consists of proceeding from that which one knows toward something unknown through effort.<sup>20</sup> Teaching and learning require not only knowledge but also understanding, judgment, and memory.<sup>21</sup> The standard set for evaluation of the acts of teaching and learning come through the continuous motion from the known to the desirable unknown.

In one of his first publications on pedagogy Dewey writes,

I believe that all questions of the grading of the child and his promotion should be determined by reference to the same standard. Examinations are of use only so far as they test the child's fitness for social life and reveal the place in which he can be of the most service and where he can receive the most help.<sup>22</sup>

Other standards are important beyond the acquisition of factual knowledge such as,

...normal physical development, [the student's] advance in ability to read, write, and figure, his growth in the knowledge of geography and history, improvement in manners, habits of promptness, order, and industry—it is from such standards as these that we judge the work of the school.<sup>23</sup>

He theorizes that in a democratic society education and learning should be based on common experiences of students since these are social and interactive processes and thus the school itself is the social institution designed to develop and transmit the ideals of democracy. He opines,

All that society has accomplished for itself is put through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self.<sup>24</sup>

### **Educational Process**

Comenius wrote *The Great Didactic* to condemn the condition of education in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. General principles and specific methods of sciences, arts, languages, morals, and piety provide the framework for his process of learning. Scholasticism's<sup>25</sup> methods of *lectio* and *disputatio* were no longer the focus of learning activity and the vernacular replaced Latin as the medium of instruction in the school for younger students. He uses nature as the guide for the process of education and sensory experience as the means. General principles and specific methods of sciences, arts, languages, morals, and piety provided the framework for his process of learning.<sup>26</sup>

For Dewey the content of the educational endeavor has to be social and educative at the stage of development of the student, “conceived as

a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.”<sup>27</sup> He opines that schools rely too much on the competitive as opposed to the cooperative; “for one child to help another in his task has become a school crime.”<sup>28</sup> The social environment proves equally important. Dewey argues, “There is no obvious social motive for the acquirement of mere learning, there is no clear social gain in success thereat.”<sup>29</sup> He maintains, “the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals.”<sup>30</sup> The results are not dissimilar: the growth of well-taught individuals who understand society and their places in it.

### **Curriculum**

Comenius argues for coordinating educational practice with the young person’s stages of development. In this regard he proposes different levels of schooling aligned with his perceived levels of development—the Mother-School, the Vernacular-School, the Latin-School, the University, and the College of Light—, offering a detailed description of each.<sup>31</sup> He proposes what he calls the mother-school for children up to about age six who are not ready for formal schooling. The mother-school curriculum is based upon the teachings of parents. Since not all children develop at the same rate Comenius found it impossible to develop what we now call a scope and sequence. He does, however, recommend and planned to write a handbook, *Informatory of the Mother School*, outlining such preschool education.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Comenius proposes, “they should send all the young of both sexes to the public schools, I now add that they should first be sent to the Vernacular-School”<sup>33</sup> where the mother-language (the day’s vernacular, not Latin) is the medium of instruction and they will learn “such things as will be of use to them throughout their whole lives.”<sup>34</sup> His Latin-School includes science, history, and philosophy to form a “solid foundation for any more advanced instruction that they may receive in the future.”<sup>35</sup> The University he proposes should provide the completion of training in any of the “sciences or faculties.” Only those who have completed the University course with success and who have shown themselves trustworthy in the management of affairs may acquire “positions of honour.”<sup>36</sup>

Dewey argues the educational dilemma lies in the different needs of the student; as “an immature, undeveloped being,” and the “certain social aims, meanings, values incarnate in the matured experience of the adult.”<sup>37</sup> He observes it as common practice for educational theorists to be on one side of the dilemma or the other but argues this is a mistake, transforming a “serious practical problem—that of interaction...into an unreal, and hence insoluble, theoretic problem”<sup>38</sup> resulting, he says, in the “case of the child vs. the curriculum; of the individual nature vs.

social culture.”<sup>39</sup> Schools break learning into subjects separating learning from experience. Students view things holistically, related mainly to personal and interpersonal interests. This leads into three...

...divergences: first, the narrow but personal world of the child against the impersonal but infinitely extended world of space and time; second, the unity, the single wholeheartedness of the child's life, and the specializations and divisions of the curriculum; and third, an abstract principle of logical classification and arrangement, and the practical and emotional bonds of child life.<sup>40</sup>

Responses to these three “divergences” make up different educational perspectives. At one extreme, are those who, he writes,

...ignore and minimize the child's individual peculiarities, whims, and experiences.... They are to be obscured or eliminated. As educators [of the logical school] our work is precisely to substitute for these superficial and casual affairs stable and well-ordered realities; and these are found in studies and lessons. Subdivide each topic into studies; each study into lessons; each lesson into specific facts and formulæ. Let the child proceed step by step to master each one of these separate parts, and at last he will have covered the entire ground. The road which looks so long when viewed in its entirety is easily traveled, considered as a series of particular steps. Thus emphasis is put upon the logical subdivisions and consecutions of the subject-matter.<sup>41</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum,

The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the growth of the child all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth. Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal.<sup>42</sup>

Dewey recognizes many problems of education come down to this dichotomy, what he calls the logical versus the psychological.<sup>43</sup> Educators of the logical persuasion emphasize the organization and transmission of knowledge and information in the most efficient manner. The ends and the methods of education originate in the subject matter. Those of a psychological orientation focus on the development of individual students, the growth of their personality and character. They emphasize active learning beginning internally with the experiences and ideas of the individual student. The goals of the school are to transmit the knowledge necessary for successful citizenship in a

democratic society. However, within this dichotomy, these oppositions, neither have the ability to win over completely the educative process. Educational theory originates in educational theorists advocating either one perspective or the other. There exists a problem within the dichotomous nature of the child-centered, subject-centered educational theories. Dewey opines, "It is just to get rid of the prejudicial notion that there is some gap in kind (as distinct from degree) between the child's experience and the various forms of subject-matter that make up the course of study,"<sup>44</sup> arguing we must not accept the categorization of child-centered and subject-centered education as mutually exclusive. He then appeals to common sense to find compromises that will accommodate both views of education, if not those of the most extreme theorists. Education is a continuous reconstruction of experience, and learning is, by necessity, transitional. Confining teaching to students in their temporary state does not serve them any more than does discrediting the needs of students in the present.

Dewey argues students become conditioned to the processes of schooling but that such conditioning does not make those extrinsic processes educative. He advocates for balancing the extrinsic needs of society with the intrinsic needs of students. Such a task requires recognizing both the logical and psychological aspects of the curriculum employing cooperation and compromise. Failure to enact such a balance means putting either the student or the subject matter first without relevancy to student interest and experience. Inherent in a purely subject-matter focus one finds three evils: first, the lack of organic connection; second, the lack of motivation, need, or demand; and third, the lost quality of developing "the child's reasoning powers, the faculty of abstraction and generalization,"<sup>45</sup> Dr. Bloom's taxonomy. Thus, for Dewey,

...the value of the formulated wealth of knowledge that makes up the course of study is that it may enable the educator to determine the environment of the child, and thus by indirection to direct. [The curriculum's] primary value, its primary indication, is for the teacher, not for the child. It says to the teacher: Such and such are the capacities, the fulfillments, in truth and beauty and behavior, open to these children. Now see to it that day by day the conditions are such that their own activities move inevitably in this direction, toward such culmination of themselves.<sup>46</sup>

## **Method**

Educators have proposed many recommendations for classroom instruction and teaching procedures in the last several decades. Robert

Glaser's five-component system<sup>47</sup> appeared in the 1950s. Robert Gagné identified nine conditions of learning in the 1960s.<sup>48</sup> Joyce and Weil published *Models of Teaching* in the 1970s and '80s.<sup>49</sup> Madeline Hunter's seven-step *Mastery Teaching* model was very influential in the 1980s and '90s.<sup>50</sup> Currently Marzano's one-stop shop for teacher inservice, evaluation, and nine essential instructional strategies dominate school districts across the nation.<sup>51</sup> Not that any or all of these are unworkable educational systems—any dogma works for a true believer, but that is what mere procedures and strategies become: dogma.

In his time Comenius thought it possible to use one method, a "great didactic," to teach all subjects. Nature provides the model to be followed, for "the art of teaching all things to all men, should be, and can be, borrowed from no other source but the operations of nature."<sup>52</sup> His theory depends on sensory realism as the source of learning and nature as the model.<sup>53</sup> Sensory perception as the source of all learning means teachers should immerse students in realia, in everyday experiences. *Orbis Sensualis Pictus* (1653), the first illustrated reading book, relates learning to read with the everyday world of the student.<sup>54</sup>

Dewey applies science both as means and paradigm for initiating thought and study. Psychology, education, art, economics, sociology, politics, and economics all are subjected methodologically and philosophically to scientific method in his work. Pedagogy is an important focus of his scientific dialectic. He notes the term "recitation" is often used as synonym for "lesson," and that formal recitation is "the complete domination of instruction by rehearsing of secondhand information."<sup>55</sup> He theorizes the most important system is the Herbartian "analysis of a recitation into five successive steps. ...the formal steps of instruction...preparation, presentation, comparison, generalization, and application."<sup>56</sup> While he points out the similarities of Herbart's steps with his own "operation of thinking. ...problem, observation and inspection of facts, hypothesis or solution formation, testing by use in new observations and experimentations,"<sup>57</sup> he warns the teacher must be willing to break from it when leaps in understanding or lack of understanding occur, deviating in this way from the Herbartian system of adhering to formal steps. Not without value, "The formal steps," Dewey writes, "indicate the points that should be covered...[when] preparing to conduct a recitation, but should not prescribe the actual course of teaching.... The teacher's problem [is] in adjusting a subject-matter to the nurture of thought."<sup>58</sup> Therefore, I argue, in short, pedagogues may substitute for Herbart not only Glaser, Gagné, Hunter, and Marzano but also Kilpatrick, Counts, and Neill, for Dewey opposes any kind of lockstep methodology imposed from outside experience.

## Institution

Comenius finds the source of all knowledge, imperfect though it remains, in the sensory perceptions of the world, our experiences, and “the art of reasoning, of investigating what is unknown, and explaining what is obscure,”<sup>59</sup> what is to be learned. Education proceeds from life, school is the environment, social and physical, but schools are necessary to provide educational opportunities to accede a “position of honor” to all children. It is education as a social institution that allows for the advancement of society and allows individuals to contribute based on ability and motivation.

Dewey posits, “the educational system must move...either backward to the intellectual and moral standards of a pre-scientific age or forward to ever greater utilization of scientific method.”<sup>60</sup> As such, the existence of standards is not the root of the problem. Subject-matter guides, scope and sequence outlines, and the like serve as guides for the development of lessons and the identification of suitable learning activities, but standards that define subject matter divorced from concrete application and relegated to abstraction are like nonsense words recited on demand. He observes that recalled, useless material remains useless.<sup>61</sup> From the time of his very first educational writings Dewey warns against the pitfalls of overemphasis on either a child-centered focus or a concentration on subject matter. Backlash against progressive education comes as a result of failure to heed his warning not to ignore the needs of society in transmitting knowledge necessary for a successful social life. His educational philosophy now informs educators’ opposition to an overemphasis on testing approaches that force teaching into a recitation model which stifles the joy educators know as inherent within learning and teaching.

## Conclusion

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Comenius proposed a “School of Schools” or “Didactic College.”<sup>62</sup> An important contributor to philosophy of education and to the origins of the science of education,<sup>63</sup> he argues the study of didactics will help spread education and improve teaching and learning. He proposes universal education in students’ native vernacular based on a practical curriculum relative to the age and ability of the student. He couches educational success firmly within students’ practical application of knowledge.

In his educational philosophy Dewey furthers the application of the sciences to education and champions the development of the philosophy of education. *How We Think* was written to help teachers provide the “steadying and centralizing factor...as the end of endeavor that attitude of mind, that habit of thought, which we call scientific,”<sup>64</sup>

and as the basis for teaching and learning. “The prime necessity for scientific thought is that the thinker be freed from the tyranny of sense stimuli and habit,”<sup>65</sup> and certainly from rote learning. Dewey trusts the common sense of teachers to negotiate the balance between subject matter, what he calls the logical on the one hand, and the needs, experiences, and aspirations of students, what he calls the psychological, on the other, the “common sense [which] vibrates back and forward in a maze of inconsistent compromise.”<sup>66</sup> The teacher can and should balance the child-centered/subject-centered, the psychological/logical continua, realizing that nothing can be taught effectively without authentic connection to student experiences, i.e., relevance, but that an overemphasis on student experience disregards the need for vicarious learning. Or, as he puts it,

Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is continuous reconstruction, moving from the child’s present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies.<sup>67</sup>

I would like to call “the rational” that which recognizes the need for a flexible approach that applies both the psychological and logical aspects of teaching, now emphasizing one, then the other, as required by the content and activities of the lesson. The science of education is now in the hands of the department of curriculum and instruction; philosophy of education is, for the most part, a disliked educational portfolio assignment; and Foundations of Education has become a barrier course for beginning teacher-education students.

Comenius and Dewey, whose work is separated by two and a half centuries, view education from the standpoint of the impact education has on the student and on society. Comenius anticipates empiricism by relying on the senses as sources of knowledge, teaching, and learning. Dewey relies on the methods of science to inform educational practice. Both eschew the recitation method and its rote memorization. Neither espouses theory that might lead the modern audience to conclude either would support the existing testing climate of U.S. public education. Any educational practice that divorces learning from life and life’s experiences is miseducation. Lockstep recitation which focuses teaching and learning for the purpose of achievement on a test is not sufficient. Teaching and learning should satisfy the student’s need to know and to understand society and students’ place in the world. While teachers may not find every answer in the works of Comenius and Dewey, we may certainly gain useful perspectives.

## Endnotes

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# The End of Thinking in Education: The Concept of Thought in Dewey and Arendt

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*Everything the teacher does, as well as the manner in which he does it, invites the child to respond in some way or other and each response tends to set the child's attitude in some way or other.*

—John Dewey<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

Today there are many potential harmful threats to contemporary public education: from short-sighted accountability schemes, which privilege one-size-fits-all quantitative evaluation of districts', schools', and teachers' effectiveness; to the high-stakes assessments which underpin such accountability systems—value for instruction notwithstanding; to myopic teach-to-the-test instruction and curricula which leads to rote learning at the expense of building deep knowledge. The work of John Dewey can and has been a beacon employed to rebuff these harmful, short-sighted aspects of contemporary education, and serves as a proven guide to child-centered education. In this essay I suggest, however, that within certain aspects of Dewey's thought lie the seeds of practices that neglect children's full potential. As Dewey is rightfully held up as a standard for a better educational way, it is important to look for supports to strengthen his educational philosophy, so children may fully flourish.

As an antidote, I argue herein that the conception of cognitive life offered by Hannah Arendt is an idea well-placed to complement and supplement John Dewey's theory on thinking. In this essay I explore Dewey's conception of thinking, revealing his construction of thought ultimately concords with the ways of experimental science. To be clear, I do not mean Dewey believed every thought should yield immediate practical effect; he duly recognized there is more to human thinking than practical problem-solving, lauding "thinking for the free play of thought" and "delight in thinking for the sake of thinking."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, I argue that for Dewey thinking centers around a piecemeal building up of elements, where knowledge aided by thinking, step-by-step, becomes further knowledge. This notion ties into his

understanding of experimental science, which, little-by-little, adds together provisional bits of knowledge, resulting in a robust body of knowledge which can then be employed to gain deeper insight. In fact, production, in the etymological sense of “pro-duce” meaning “leading toward” (one bit of knowledge leading toward another), is very much embedded in Dewey’s theories on thinking and knowledge.

Hannah Arendt acknowledges similar qualities of human thought, or how humans “know” things; for her, a key characteristic is that provisional truths can be explained and reasoned, becoming useable knowledge. She maintains, though, that the systematic and productive aspect of human cognition is only part of the story. Humans enjoy the additional cognitive capacity to “make meaning.” When humans employ this ability they are removed from the world, removed from a this-leads-to-that practice of production. This meaning-making ability “leaves nothing behind”<sup>3</sup> and, as is liable to change by the very whimsy of thought, is not a stable springboard from which to build new insights. As argued previously, Dewey’s meaning-making aspect does not then fit with Arendt’s notion of thinking. As making meaning of and coming to grips with events and life in general are emblematic of the human condition—though they may not “do” anything—I suggest Arendt’s notion of thinking also needs to be nurtured and supported in U.S. public education. Thus, this theoretical insight of Arendt’s can become a supplement to Deweyan pedagogy.

Herein, I argue the conception of cognitive life offered by Hannah Arendt is an idea well-placed to complement and supplement John Dewey’s theory on thinking. By way of evidencing my argument, I first explore Dewey’s concept of thinking. Next I highlight how Arendt’s thought converges with and diverges from Dewey’s, illustrating the importance of considering their ideas in tandem. Finally, I offer implications for contemporary educational theory and practice based on the juxtaposition of their conceptions of thinking.

### **Philosophical Linkages**

I preface my exploration of Dewey’s concept of thinking by considering how his theory fits within the constellation of his broader terminology. For Dewey, thinking is very much related to experience and knowledge, for “experience involves the connection of doing or trying with something undergone in consequence.”<sup>4</sup> An experience is made up of the combination of an active trying and a passive undergoing. It is not primarily cognitive; the cognitive or intellectual part of an experience occurs when one makes the connection between cause and effect.<sup>5</sup> This cognitive learning then becomes knowledge that can be used to navigate a coming situation. “Knowledge emerges from the perception of those connections of an object which determine applicability in a given

situation,”<sup>6</sup> or, in other words, knowledge comes from something and then can be used toward something.<sup>7</sup> Thinking is the faculty that probes knowledge and then puts it to use in a new situation, which solidifies knowledge. For Dewey, thinking is in some senses the glue that connects bits of insight, experience, and situations, becoming new knowledge.

I turn now to explore the development and relationship of practical and theoretical thinking, and lay out the continuums between practical and intellectual, and between concrete and abstract. Dewey eschewed binaries, which is critical to keep in mind as you consider my argument. Rather than considering the practical and intellectual as opposing one another, Dewey opined that bits of knowledge piggyback on one another; through the process of establishing these connections practical knowledge can become intellectual knowledge. Nevertheless, Dewey’s outlook is based on the view of human cognition as fundamentally oriented toward “resolving perplexities:” thinking is activated by an impasse and works toward its resolution. Although thinking for Dewey can go beyond immediate practical circumstances, I argue nevertheless that his concept of thinking goes no further than the practices and theory of experimental science, in which one bit of knowledge leads to another bit of knowledge.

Dewey’s *How We Think*<sup>8</sup> was written as a guide for initiating teachers in the pedagogic implications of his philosophy. The focus of his text is on reflective thought, which Dewey defines as the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends.”<sup>9</sup> Thinking thus intermediates between bits of knowledge, and functions as the cognitive aspect that takes one piece of knowledge, builds upon it, and thereby transforms it into another piece of knowledge. There are two parts to the process of thinking: first, one must use thinking critically to probe supposed knowledge in order to verify its provisional correctness. After such verification, by use of thinking knowledge is then put to use. In a sense, one’s mind takes the piece of knowledge and applies it to some experience of the world. Both stages of thought are thereby grounded in the practical world: to verify, one must expose the hypothesis to observable facts in the world; to apply, likewise, means to interface knowledge to the world.

The developing toddler is presented with “problems,” for instance, manipulating blocks so that they form a free-standing tower which call on her nascent cognitive functions. Similarly, the school-based education is a place where the student encounters problems that authentically

stimulate his thought in attempts to solve those problems. Stimulating problem-solving requires the teacher set up and control the environment so students encounter developmentally appropriate problems. Done properly, the problems inherently motivate students and the teacher can rely on this “carrot” in lieu of a “stick.” As Dewey notes, “demand for the solution of a perplexity is the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection.<sup>10</sup> ... The problem fixes the end of thought and the end controls the process of thinking.”<sup>11</sup>

This very practical grounding in problems is a part of the intellectual realm and, as Dewey suggests, “curiosity...becomes intellectual in the degree in which it is transformed into interest in *problems* provoked by the observation of things and the accumulation of material.”<sup>12</sup> Would-be problems are not provoked solely by the teacher, but come about from the active curiosity of the child. This idea of “intellectual,” a shift from mere curiosity to an interest in problems, is founded upon the student taking ownership of the issue, by being spurred to considerations above and beyond the strict problem. The intellectual realm can vary depending on the individual; what makes it intellectual is its “power to start and direct significant inquiry and reflection.”<sup>13</sup> Far from being opposed dualities, there is a clear connection between practical and intellectual. Thinking and resolving a question posed by the teacher produces knowledge, which through further experience and thinking leads to more knowledge; the development of her thinking faculty then gradually begins to spur the child, using the knowledge gained to inquire about and attempt to resolve self-generated problems. There is a linkage in this process in which early stages of knowledge gained from practical problem-solving open the child to intellectual considerations of problems.

Such a unifying sensibility extends to Dewey’s discussion of the concrete and abstract, which is “purely relative to the intellectual progress of an individual.”<sup>14</sup> The concrete is “fixed mainly by the demands of practical life;”<sup>15</sup> this does not mean the concrete needs to be in the everyday sensate world. For adults, the concrete could include potentially intangible concepts like “taxes” or “the law,” elements the typical adult encounters in the world. The abstract, conversely, is “the *theoretical*, or that not intimately associated with practical concerns.”<sup>16</sup>

Humans’ natural bias, Dewey theorizes, is toward the practical, since, “for the great majority of men [and women,]...their main business is the proper conduct of their affairs.”<sup>17</sup> His language suggests such bias may not be a completely free decision because

...the practical exigencies of life are almost, if not quite, coercive. ... The adult when at work in his life calling is rarely

free to devote time or energy—beyond the necessities of his immediate action—to the study of what he deals with.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, Dewey's use of the term "coercive" indicates that adults are forced to deal almost exclusively with the "demands of practical life:" necessities such as ensuring one's family is fed, sheltered, and cared for.

The antidote to overemphasis on the practical is for individuals to take part in thinking simply for its own sake. "Interest in knowledge for the sake of knowledge, in thinking for the sake of the free play of thought, is necessary then to the *emancipation* of practical life."<sup>19</sup> This "free play of thought" is what releases individuals from the coercion of the world's necessities. Dewey goes so far as to hail this "the outcome, the *abstract* to which education is to proceed, is an interest in intellectual matters for their own sake, a delight in thinking for the sake of thinking."<sup>20</sup> He suggests free play of abstract thought can naturally follow from thought grounded in the practical. Progressive movement from thinking in the practical, to thinking in the abstract, to the thinking for the sake of thought, is an "old story," "at first incidental to results and adjustments beyond themselves, they attract more and more attention to themselves till they become ends, not means."<sup>21</sup> But how does such thinking come about? Is it natural, or does abstract thought need proper space and conscious pedagogical guidance in order to occur?

Dewey theorizes that this path requires proper guidance from educators. "The educative activities of childhood should be so arranged that direct interest in the activity and its outcome create a demand for attention to matters that have a more and more *indirect and remote* connection with the original activity."<sup>22</sup> Dewey follows by offering an example of an individual's interest in carpentry that becomes "organically" an interest in geometric and mechanical problems.

Dewey argues the need for both abstract and practical thought, since "abstract thinking, it should be noted, represents *an end*, not *the end*."<sup>23</sup> At bottom, the goal is for one to be proficient in both practical and theoretical realms. Dewey sees what, at first glance, appear to be bipolar, opposing terms as instead occurring along a continuum—pairs of terms like practical and theoretical, abstract and concrete. These continuums may aim toward resolving a perplexity. In the example of how carpentry "organically" becomes an interest in geometric and mechanical problems, both "abstract" ends (geometry and mechanics) relate to problem solving. This distinction flows into his delineation of the process of thought, which Dewey divides into five steps:

- (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and

experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.<sup>24</sup>

The process of thought for Dewey mirrors the characteristics of experimental science in three ways; indeed, Alan Ryan argues, “Dewey’s entire theory of thought is implicit in this little statement.”<sup>25</sup> The first way is that the purpose of both experimental science and thinking is to resolve a perplexity. Second, both also profess the open-endedness of knowledge: a piece of knowledge is built upon other pieces of knowledge which then is used to develop new knowledge. The quality of open-endedness suggests a progressively increasing chain of elements in which thinking is productive (“pro-duce” meaning “leading toward”), which is another way of saying thinking is instrumental. Dewey himself preferred to be called an instrumentalist (and not a pragmatist) though influenced by the founder of American pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce.<sup>26</sup>

The third way Dewey’s idea of thinking concords with experimental science lies within the idea that knowledge is provisional, and subject to being disproved by further experience. Though pragmatist was not the term by which Dewey preferred to describe himself, there exists much overlap between his thought and the tenets of pragmatism. His embrace of experimental science as the epitome of knowledge aligns closely with the philosophical tenets of pragmatism. Part of the equipment of this school of thought is the pragmatic criteria of meaning (related as it is to the verifiability principle of meaning, fundamental both to logical positivism and pragmatism): in short, something is considered knowledge only if it is verifiable empirically.<sup>27</sup> Stemming from this, as Dewey ascribes, is the fallibilistic quality of pragmatism, in which any claim accepted as knowledge holds this status provisionally (to the extent that it can adequately yield a coherent understanding of the world), and is open to be falsified by further empirical discovery.<sup>28</sup>

Dewey touches upon the transformational potential of thinking; he lauds knowledge for the sake of knowledge, theorizing knowledge can “emancipate” people from the “coercion” of everyday necessities; he opines, in contrast to other educational theorists of his day such as Thorndike,<sup>29</sup> that rational problem-solving can be used by everyone. Yet, Dewey’s concept of humans’ mental life is bracketed by the ways of experimental science. For Dewey, the purpose of thought is to resolve perplexity, while knowledge “aims to adapt our aims to the situation in which we live.”<sup>30</sup> Even if experimental science can be relatively distinct from immediate needs and wants,<sup>31</sup> Dewey’s frame is wholly purposeful from the standpoint of one answering a question or resolving a perplexity. Both his purpose and notion of the instrumental quality of thinking contrast in part with Hannah Arendt’s thought.

### Dual Realms of Thought: Hannah Arendt

Arendt explored the workings of humans' mental life in works written near the end of her life.<sup>32</sup> In *The Life of the Mind* she contrasts two spheres of mental life, which she terms "knowing" and "thinking." It is important to distinguish that Arendt's "knowing" realm encapsulates most if not all of what Dewey considered to be "thinking," yet her "thinking" realm encompasses more than what Dewey considers "thinking" to be. For Arendt, knowing very much concerns and is grounded in what can be known; these are things which can be sensed or at least involve the sensate world. Arendt follows Dewey in this regard: the world of the senses stimulates humans' intellect to figure things out (e.g. why do objects fall to earth?). It is this desire to know that birthed modern science, with its indefatigable search for the explanation of phenomena, both those visible and invisible to the eye. As she theorizes it, the objective of knowledge is truth, and the knower comes to a conclusion based on sensory evidence. It is not that truth is absolute and final, rather it is "exposed to error in the same way as sense perceptions and experiences."<sup>33</sup> Arendt writes the concept of truth is "derived from the common-sense experience of irrefutable evidence, which dispels error and illusion."<sup>34</sup> In other words, truth may be provisional, but the knower will continue to employ this truth until evidence suggests otherwise. Arendt's view is thus very much aligned with Dewey's ideas about the provisionality of truth and purpose of knowledge.

A truth can be reasoned to others, if need be, by defending that truth with empirical evidence; this practice speaks to the common sense and world-centeredness of the activity, for "the activity of knowing is no less related to our sense of reality and no less a world-building activity than the building of houses."<sup>35</sup> Arendt's comparison between knowing and production, in the sense of building construction, is apt: the technological revolution, after all, is grounded upon the effective truths of science; and science-driven technology has produced and inspired so much of the modern, lived world. The world of the senses, infused as it is with the wonders of science and technology, therefore gives a clearly effective perspective great credibility. Such a bias toward knowing and practicality is particularly enhanced if, following Dewey, a child's education is shaped by the locus of problems and perplexities, elements to which one can work toward a solution; as such, this knowledge-seeking outlook, nurtured during childhood, will come to dominate adulthood, too.

Arendt maintains considering only "perplexity resolving" elements as part of humans' mental life results in neglecting a critical attribute of the human mind: to "make meaning," an attribute additional to

problem-solving and making things. She calls such meaning-making “thinking.” Rather than being grounded in the practical, sensory world, for Arendt thinking removes one from the sensate world. As humans become “lost in our thoughts,” they become free to make meaning. Her idea contrasts with humans’ knowing function, which is firmly grounded in the world, in the here-and-now, the practical, and in questions which have effective answers. Thinking does not ask “what something is or whether it exists at all but what it means for it to be.”<sup>36</sup> Thinking does not come about from the step-by-step linking of bits of knowledge, rather the meaning to which Arendt points can emerge in a flash of insight, and disappear just as quickly the next day. While Dewey suggests control is pivotal to humans’ processes of thinking and knowing (“[t]he problem fixes the end of thought and the end controls the process of thinking”<sup>37</sup>), for Arendt the meaning-making capacity of thinking is unstable, liable to change, and cannot be controlled.

For Arendt, the thinking urge is stimulated by humans’ active reason, which, in the midst of the world, prods one with questions like, “why do we exist?” or “what is life about?” Though such questions can be put into language and discussed with others, they cannot be evidenced or conclusively proved; these types of questions are therefore not located in knowing’s realm of truth. Importantly, from a practical perspective, thinking, as something that neither produces anything nor leads to action, is meaningless. “The thinking activity leaves nothing behind,”<sup>38</sup> for without a tangible truth or practical product, the thinking faculty appears paltry next to the bounty of the knowing faculty. In addition to thinking being meaningless, there is no purpose behind it, either. We simply engage in it because it is who we are—much as we try to control it, with admonitions to “quit daydreaming” or “do something practical,” our minds cannot help but be captured by idle thoughts. The realm of knowing thus, paradoxically, finds meaning’s realm to be meaningless. Such a perspective on thinking as Arendt’s contrasts markedly with Dewey’s idea of thinking characterized by successively linked bits of knowledge and grounded in resolving perplexities.

The differences between Arendt and Dewey may stem in part from what each views to be the purpose of thought. For Dewey, experience is primarily non-cognitive: life is something that humans suffer, bear, and enjoy. The need for cognition only emerges when “the unity of this felt immediacy is disturbed.”<sup>39</sup> Under this perspective, thinking comes to fill a need, acts to solve a discrepancy, and harmonizes the situation. For Arendt, thinking is fundamental to human life; it has a practical aspect (her “knowing” realm), but to view it only on practical terms shortchanges humans’ meaning-making capacity, which may not “leave anything behind,” but is just as characteristic of human thought.

That said, Arendt reveals such a neat distinction between knowing and thinking is an oversimplification. She does not see knowing and thinking as binary forces, rather as inherently related.

By drawing a distinction between knowing and thinking, I do not wish to deny that thinking's quest for meaning and knowledge's quest for truth are connected.... Behind all the cognitive questions for which men find answers, there lurk the unanswerable ones that seem entirely idle and have always been denounced as such.<sup>40</sup>

Kant, the originator of the distinction between reason (*Vernunft*) and intellect (*Verstand*), blurs the relationship between thinking and knowing. He “constantly compared the two with each other;” and Arendt maintains Kant has beguiled philosophers whose *modus operandi* deal with thinking, and who “have always been tempted to accept the criterion of truth as applicable to their own business as well.”<sup>41</sup> Arendt, who introduces her discussion on knowing by placing it under the umbrella of thinking,<sup>42</sup> herself blurs the two; thinking, when used for the purpose of knowledge, is used as a means toward something (i.e., knowledge or provisional truth), whereas in the activity of sheer thinking there is no end, rather thinking is simply an activity which allows humans to uncover meaning. In our present age, during which people seem most hesitant to declare any inherent purpose to education other than that allowing individuals to get better jobs and the national economy therefore to become stronger, humans have thus been much more apt to envision education as a means to an end. Pedagogues may take heart, though, for if the drives for practical truth and impractical meaning are indeed closely related, pearls of meaning will emerge from underneath the coral of empirical findings.

### **Moving Past an Objective**

For a variety of reasons, it seems the major ambitions of public schooling are to make every minute as effective as possible (recess be damned!) and every process as efficient as possible (hello, management science). The capacity to see thinking as a primary educational ambition is especially fraught under the contemporary neoliberal measurement and accountability agenda, which falls perfectly in line with the neoliberal empirical focus: one cannot control what cannot be measured. The upshot of the neoliberal agenda's infiltration into public education is that “purpose” and “objective” have now bled into all educational activities. Some of these contemporary education fads align, in at least some sense, with Deweyan calls for knowledge built on a process analogous to experimental science, which is always looking for a problem to resolve or how further to expand the boundaries of

knowledge. The neoliberal focus aligns as well with part (the knowing realm) of what Arendt considers to be humans' mental life. However, the other part of our mental life, which may create meaning but does not leave a measureable trace, is rendered, dare I say, invalid in today's schools.

I began my argument by recounting Dewey's insight on the impact of the classroom environment (as stimulated by the teacher's actions and manner) on a child's frame of mind. As such, the problem-solving and evidenced-based bent of contemporary education tends to become imprinted on children's minds, shaping the way they see the world. Problem-seeking and solving becomes the child's frame of reference, for meaning-making tends to be shortchanged in a neoliberal society where education is dictated more and more by accountability and measurement and continues to be transformed by technological progress. If what occurs in the classroom is dictated by evidence, there will be no time for honing pupils' skills at meaning-making, which can be neither measured nor proved. The question remains, however, why should we not focus exclusively on the practical, on developing students' abilities around knowing things that can be known? For Arendt, this is a question that cannot be answered incontrovertibly, as it lies outside the knowing realm (which is the realm that can have provisionally correct answers). Aside from this rather glib response, an alternative line of thought holds that the thinking realm (which humans use to make meaning) is, simply, human—as distinct from both animals and computers—and needs acknowledgment and support. Another possibility falls more in Dewey's terms. For Dewey education is a social business, and the public has an interest in education as it remains perhaps the primary path used to influence society. There are many ways to influence society, for instance developing new practical technologies that can more efficiently use society's resources. Such influence is important, but the capacity to ask and consider the unanswerable questions "upon which civilization is founded"<sup>43</sup> is also important. Possible responses to these and other rhetorical questions are more apt to come from the "free play of thinking," unconcerned with tangible benefit, and removed from the noise and necessity of the world. If, as Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*, communication makes up the heart of social life, and all communication is education, the highest form of communication is that which speaks to beliefs and values, those things that bind us most; this type of education is one that needs nurturing, away from the harsh glare of measurement, production, and demands for truth.

## Endnotes

- 1 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1944), 231.
- 2 John Dewey, *How We Think* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1910), 141.
- 3 Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Volume 1, Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 62.
- 4 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 151.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 139–140.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 340.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 188–191.
- 8 Alan Ryan, *Liberal Anxieties and Liberal Education* (New York: Hill & Wang), 126–127.
- 9 Dewey, *How We Think*, 6.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 34, emphasis in original.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 39.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 137.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 138.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 139, emphasis in original.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 141, emphasis in original.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 142, emphasis in original.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 25 Ryan, *Liberal Anxieties*, 128.
- 26 D. C. Phillips, “After the Wake: Postpositivistic Educational Thought,” *Educational Researcher* 12, no. 5 (May 1983): 4–12. In Dewey’s describing himself as an instrumentalist, he adheres to the common understanding of instrumental, in the sense of having to do

with means and ends; in addition to this, for him instrumentalism speaks to the kind of structure that science tries to describe. Science is thus the “study of instrumental properties of things without regard for immediate practical uses” [Peter Godfrey-Smith, “Dewey on Naturalism, Realism and Science,” *Philosophy of Science* 69, no. S3 (Sept. 2002): S25–S35].

<sup>27</sup> Phillips, “After the Wake.”

<sup>28</sup> Shulamit Gribov, “John Dewey’s Pragmatism and Moral Education,” *Philosophy of Education* 2001, (2001): 373–380.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Tomlinson, “Edward Lee Thorndike and John Dewey on the Science of Education,” *Oxford Review of Education* 23, no. 3 (Sept. 1997): 365–383.

<sup>30</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 344.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew J. Brown, “John Dewey’s Logic of Science,” *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 258–306; and Godfrey-Smith, “Dewey on Naturalism, Realism and Science.”

<sup>32</sup> As the focus of this essay is on humans’ cognitive capability, *The Life of the Mind* is much more relevant than Arendt’s essay “The Crisis in Education” where, without naming Dewey, she is critical of some aspects of child-centered pedagogy commonly associated with Dewey. “The Crisis in Education” is founded upon a phenomenological take on the private, family world and public, social world that a developing human needs to navigate, and in this work she does not investigate cognition.

<sup>33</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Dewey, *How We Think*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Tomlinson, “Edward Lee Thorndike and John Dewey.”

<sup>40</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 62.

# Life is Education and Unity of Knowledge and Action: Tao Xingzhi's Transformations of the Educational Philosophies of John Dewey and Wang Yangming

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## **Introduction**

John Dewey's sojourn to China from 1919 to 1921 is one of the most fascinating episodes in the educational history of the Chinese Republican period (1912–1949). Under Dewey's influence, throughout the 1920s, a group of Chinese educators, most of whom studied with Dewey at Columbia University, strived to adopt, transfer, and apply Dewey's pragmatism into Chinese education. According to John King Fairbank, Dewey's most creative Chinese student was Tao Xingzhi (1891–1946),<sup>1</sup> who played a highly significant role in the history of Chinese education. A former student at Teachers College, Columbia University, Tao committed to reforming Chinese rural education. His educational thought and practices were influenced not only by Dewey but also by the philosophy of Wang Yangming (1472–1529), a Chinese Neo-Confucian scholar during the Ming period (1368–1644).

In this paper I illuminate the cross-cultural philosophical dynamics that took place during the 1920s by exploring the ways in which Tao's educational ideas fuse Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism with Dewey's pragmatism. Furthermore, my purpose herein is to answer a crucial question: How did Tao Xingzhi innovatively formulate his own educational theory by melding and modifying the philosophies of Wang Yangming and John Dewey, and what might be learned from bringing the results of this influence to light?

My inquiry begins with an exploration of the ideas Tao derived from Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian teachings. Next, I turn to the beliefs to which Tao was exposed under Dewey's tutelage. Lastly, I analyze the ways in which Tao synthesized and reshaped Wang Yangming's scholarship and Dewey's educational philosophy in developing his own educational vision and offer implications based upon the outcomes of my analysis.

### Wang Yangming's Influence on Tao Xingzhi

With the ending of China's imperial period in 1912, Confucianism lost its prestige as an official ideology. However, during the early Republican era, some aspects of Confucian thought remained influential within the Chinese intellectual community. Wang Yangming's School of Mind, one of the most significant philosophical branches of the Confucian tradition, was especially prominent among Chinese scholars and educators in the early years of the Republican era. It is therefore unsurprising that Tao was immersed in Wang Yangming's philosophy during his college years, 1910–1914, at China's Jingling University. Indeed, before studying Dewey's pragmatism, Tao was “mentored” chiefly by the Master Wang.

I now offer a brief discussion of the historical roots of the Master Wang's philosophy meant to shed light on Tao's intellectual development. Historically, Wang Yangming's philosophy is considered an indispensable part of Neo-Confucianism. During the Song dynasty (960–1279), Confucianism was challenged by Buddhism and Taoism, and Neo-Confucianism can be seen as an evolutionary response to this conflict. When elaborating on Confucian ideas, Neo-Confucians chose to change their scholarly rhetoric by introducing Buddhist and Taoist elements. In other words, Neo-Confucianism is a product of the reformation of orthodox Confucianism within China's changing historical and philosophical circumstances.

After the Song period, two intellectual threads emerged from Neo-Confucianism: the “School of Principle” and the “School of Mind.”<sup>2</sup> Both schools hold that everything in the universe is a manifestation of the concept “Principle” (*li*), an idea that comes from the Confucian view of cosmology.<sup>3</sup> “Principle” refers to the underlying reason and order of nature as reflected in its organic forms. More importantly, Principle in Neo-Confucianism denotes a pattern or order to the whole of the cosmos, upon which ethical codes related to Confucian hierarchical relationships might develop. Followers of the School of Principle and the School of Mind advocate different interpretations of Principle. During the Ming and Qing periods (1368–1644 and 1644–1911, respectively), the School of Principle enjoyed a prestigious position in official ideology. The School of Principle during this time was represented by the Cheng-Zhu school, founded by Neo-Confucian scholars Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi during the Song period (960–1279), and stressed the significance of “the investigation of things and extension of knowledge” in leading students of Confucianism to an understanding of the essence of Principle.<sup>4</sup> Followers of the School of Mind, on the other hand, emphasized the subjectivity of the human mind in pursuing of the essence of Principle.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the School of Principle favored an

empirical, experimental path to understanding Principle, whereas the School of Mind promoted a more theoretical or even mystical approach. The latter approach was represented principally by Wang Yangming.

Wang Yangming maintained that, in order to pursue the perfection of self-cultivation, students need consult only their own hearts or minds, wherein the Principle is located.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Wang's view of the relationship between knowledge and action was quite different from the view espoused by the Cheng-Zhu School's adherents. When investigating Principle, a Cheng-Zhu School follower would acquire knowledge first and then put that knowledge into action. For example, a student would first learn theory of gardening before attempting gardening work. However, in Wang's view, acquiring knowledge and taking action should be unified, occurring simultaneously.<sup>7</sup> According to Wang, by uniting knowing and acting an ordinary person could become wise like the sages Confucius and Mencius.<sup>8</sup>

During the Ming and Qing dynasties the Cheng-Zhu School held a privileged position in official ideology. Because Wang Yangming had critiqued the Cheng-Zhu School's tenets, the royal courts of these two dynasties repressed his School of Mind. Nevertheless, Wang's thought was increasingly adopted by Chinese scholars during the late Qing period and the early part of the Republican era, when China was confronting political upheaval, social unrest, and Western powers' aggressions. Another reason for the surge of interest in Wang Yangming's philosophy during this time was his theory of "Unity of Knowledge and Action," which contributed greatly to Japan's Meiji Restoration (1868), an event that eventually empowered and modernized the island country.<sup>9</sup> Inspired by the Japanese model, Chinese intellectuals and educators at the turn of the twentieth century looked to Wang's Unity of Knowledge and Action philosophy as they attempted to save China from poverty and riots.<sup>10</sup>

Tao's interest in Wang Yangming's teachings was influenced by the high regard held among the Chinese intellectual community for the Neo-Confucian School of Mind. Because of his belief in Wang Yangming's philosophy, Tao gave up his original name, *Wenjun*, and adopted the name *Zhixing*,<sup>11</sup> which means "knowing (*zhi*)" then "acting (*xing*)." In fact, the combination of these two Chinese characters is derived from a passage from Wang Yangming's teachings: "knowing should be the beginning of acting, and acting should be the completion of knowing."<sup>12</sup> The influence of Wang Yangming's philosophy on Tao Xingzhi is further witnessed within his undergraduate thesis, "The Spirit of Republic," written in 1914. While elaborating on his own understanding of the relation between individuals and republicanism, Tao draws on Wang Yangming's thinking.

In republicanism, individual persons should be the owner of society and state. The master Wang Yangming's thesis that "Everyone can become a sage" implicitly matches with our expectation for any individual. If everyone can become a sage, why doesn't he try to be sage? ... Republicanism is a reflection of the current of thought, which underlines the possibility that each one could become a person who can make a right decision.<sup>13</sup>

In this passage Tao suggests that, even as an undergraduate, he saw Wang Yangming's School of Mind as a Chinese cultural asset, conducive to shaping the spirit of republican citizenry.

Moreover, in Wang Yangming's philosophy, the idea of Unity of Knowledge and Action highlights a tendency to extend knowledge to practical affairs. This tendency is compatible with the Confucian idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society."<sup>14</sup> Both approaches emphasize the significance of Confucian classical learning to the resolution of social and political problems. This pragmatic aspect of Confucian educational thought became a strong driving force behind Chinese intellectuals' dedication to Western learning during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tao proves no exception to this intellectual trend. In the personal statement he submitted with his application to the doctoral program at Teachers College, Columbia University, he implies he is strongly influenced by the pragmatic aspect of Confucian educational thought.

As early as three years ago [1913], I made a decision to go to Columbia University as my final educational goal in the United States. ... My life goal is to make a contribution to the establishment of a democratic China through education rather than military revolution. ... I strongly believe that there would not be a real republican state without a public education. ... I really wish that Chinese citizenry could follow in American people's footsteps, developing and retaining a real democratic system.<sup>15</sup>

Inspired by the pragmatic aspect of Confucian education, Tao viewed republicanism based on democracy and the U.S. educational system as Western cultural assets that could help China enter the modern world. His strong preference for Western culture greatly contributed to his acceptance of Dewey's educational philosophy.

### **Dewey's Educational Philosophy and Chinese New Education**

As a young student with a Confucian activist's disposition, Tao Xingzhi came to the United States in 1914 in pursuit of higher

education. He earned his master's degree in political science from the University of Illinois in 1915. From 1915 to 1917, Tao was enrolled in the Ed.D. program at Teachers College, Columbia University.<sup>16</sup> During his time at Columbia, Tao remained in close contact with John Dewey.<sup>17</sup>

In 1917, after becoming a doctoral candidate but before earning his degree, Tao received a job offer from China's Nanjing Teachers College. There he served as Professor and Chair of the Education Department as well as the Dean of Academic Affairs. Soon after returning to China for this position, he wrote an essay entitled, "Educational Method in Pragmatism," in which he proposed applying the experimental method of U.S. pragmatism to Chinese education. In his essay, Tao writes critically about Wang Yangming's School of Mind, the system of thought in which he had strongly believed prior to his study at Columbia.

In his essay he explains that, as a reformer of the Neo-Confucian school, Wang Yangming wisely realized that Zhu Xi (one of the founders of the Cheng-Zhu School) failed to identify a method for conducting an "investigation of things"—that is, for learning about the physical world.<sup>18</sup> Although Wang took pains to reform Zhu Xi's theory, he could not discover an appropriate method for the "investigation of things." Accordingly, the Master Wang changed "investigation of things" to "investigation of mind" in order to achieve the goal of understanding Confucian Principle.<sup>19</sup> In his essay, Tao asserts it is impossible for Wang's School of Mind to achieve "extension of knowledge" because the experimental method is absent.<sup>20</sup> Tao concludes, "What made both Europe and the U.S. progress rapidly is the implementation of the experimental method; and what made China lag behind the West is the lack of it."<sup>21</sup>

In light of his argument, Tao insists Chinese education should learn from U.S. enthusiasm for experimentalism.

Since William James founded the program of [educational] psychological experiment, [Western] scholars gradually changed their perception. Nowadays, almost all of famous Universities created the major of education. At the same time, there are over one hundred programs of educational psychology across country. ...the spirit of experimentalism is very popular [among U.S. educators]. ... It is reasonable that the U.S. education can make such a tremendous progress based on the spreading of experimentalism.<sup>22</sup> ... If we want to truly reform Chinese education, we must greatly advocate the idea of experimentalism.<sup>23</sup>

More significantly, Tao connects the introduction of U.S. educational ideas with the duty of strengthening and modernizing China. He claims,

“We cannot achieve the goal of national salvation unless China adopts the idea of education in experimentalism.”<sup>24</sup> From Tao’s point of view, U.S. pragmatism represented an efficient instrument to improve Chinese education. Motivated by this belief, Tao enthusiastically joined the group of scholars who invited John Dewey to China in 1919.

Dewey’s two-year sojourn indeed proved to enlighten Chinese educational and cultural reform. In addition to philosophy, democracy, and political thought, in Dewey’s lectures in China he paid considerable attention to the issue of common education.<sup>25</sup> His lectures emphasized the importance of scientific and experimental methods as instruments of social change, as a way of changing China.<sup>26</sup> In Dewey’s view, the objectives of new Chinese education would carry out the principles “Education is Life,” “School is Society,” and “Learning through Doing.”<sup>27</sup> As Dewey’s influence spread, during the Republican era *Democracy and Education* was read widely among Chinese educators. Increasing numbers of Chinese intellectuals advocated parts of Dewey’s educational philosophy as practical and scientific cultural assets that might help solve social problems in China. Simultaneously, Confucian examination-oriented education based on rote memorization of classics increasingly was rejected by progressive Chinese educators as traditional-focused cultural liability.

Consequently, after Dewey left China in 1921, Tao and Dewey’s additional Chinese followers worked together on a series of educational reforms designed to maximize transmission of cultural assets from Dewey’s educational thought throughout Chinese society. For instance, under the influence of Tao and his colleagues the Chinese Ministry of Education in 1922 gave up the Japanese model of a 7–4 system (seven years in elementary school followed by four years in middle and high school).<sup>28</sup> Instead, the reorganization of Chinese elementary and secondary schools was legislated to follow the current U.S. model, or a 6–3–3 system (six years in elementary school followed by three years in middle school then three years in high school).<sup>29</sup>

Like the Seven Cardinal Principles of U.S. Secondary Education of 1918, the School Reform Decree of Republican China proclaimed seven educational criteria.<sup>30</sup> Some provisions in the Decree, such as “the promotion of the development of individuality,” “education by life,” and “to meet the need of social evolution,” vividly reflect key features of Dewey’s educational ideas: student-centered pedagogy, education for life, and emphasis on schooling as a pathway to social reform.<sup>31</sup> In short, during China’s early Republican period, Chinese educators were eager to follow Dewey’s teachings, with his emphasis on practice and individuality.

### **The Limitations of New Education**

The 1920s ushered in the culmination of John Dewey's influence on Chinese education. During this period modern Chinese educators sought to transform Chinese education as rapidly as possible and, in their haste, they often accepted Dewey's educational thought and the U.S. model more or less uncritically. Most of Dewey's Chinese students became intoxicated by their success in reforming Chinese education, but Tao began to notice problems arising from the new design.

After carefully observing effects of the implementation of the new schooling system for five years, Tao Xingzhi theorized in Chinese rural areas there was serious misalignment between Westernized education and rural Chinese reality. As his understanding of Chinese national conditions deepened, Tao began to criticize the drawbacks of the modern Chinese educational system based on the Western model. He states in 1927, since the late Qing period,

China completely took a wrong pathway to run her education. It teaches Chinese to abandon countryside to run to city; it teaches people to consume food but does not teach them to plant crops; it teaches people to build house but does not teach them to make forest; it teaches people to pursue luxury but look down on farm labor...it teaches sons of peasantry to become bookish weaklings. ... Such an Education cannot and should not be popularized.<sup>32</sup>

Later that same year, Tao argues:

All of the returned students from abroad attempt to introduce foreign educational system to China. However, they are unclear about if the system really match[es] with Chinese reality at all. They just tend to treat the foreign educational system as a fashionable thing from the civilized countries...then uncritically input it to children's brain. ... I used to be a follower of foreign educational system. Nevertheless, I realized that a blind imitation of foreign educational system can be deadly harmful to China and her people. ... We must find a solution for our educational problems based on Chinese reality.<sup>33</sup>

Taking his line of argument further, Tao assumes if China continues to copy the Western educational system blindly, the Republic of China will be transformed into a nation-state which can serve only the interest of the elite class.<sup>34</sup> He argues it will be destructive for the new Republic if Chinese education aims to generate only modern gentlemen, fashionable

ladies, useless bookworms, and ambitious politicians.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Tao points out that imitating the Western educational model will produce a Chinese false-intelligentsia class that has no purpose other than to cultivate and advertise its image as a group of educated elites bent upon overshadowing the common people.<sup>36</sup>

I want to be clear as to Tao's true intention and concern: he was not critical of Western education itself, but rather of the false Western education adopted by Chinese educators. In other words, he believed the Western school system established in China since the late Qing era was designed chiefly to strengthen the spirit of book-learning at the cost of practical knowledge. From Tao's perspective, China's modern educational system, which had been blindly introduced by copying that of the West, had been transformed from a cultural asset into a cultural liability, for useless, bookish knowledge from modern education was having a damaging effect on Chinese society. After reflecting deeply upon the disharmony he saw between the new schooling system and the Chinese national condition, Tao concludes that Chinese educators must place their emphasis on rural education so the construction of a living education could be re-aligned with the reality of Chinese rural life.<sup>37</sup>

### **Revising the Philosophies of Wang Yangming and John Dewey**

Tao's sharp critique of Chinese new education triggered his rethinking of Wang Yangming's School of Mind. In his 1929 article, "Action Is the Beginning of Knowledge," Tao reformulates the relationship between the two important philosophical concepts of knowledge and action in Wang's theory of "Unity of Knowing and Acting."

The Master Wang Yangming said, "Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge." I do not agree. Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action. Let us begin with children, they know that fire is hot only after they have felt the heat; they know that snow is cool only after they have felt the cold; they know that candy is sweet only after they have tasted it, and they know the stone is rocky only after they have touched it. ...all of these can prove "Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action."<sup>38</sup>

In a later essay, Tao expresses a similar thought:

Action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson. Therefore, I advocate the formula of *xing* (action), *zhi* (knowing), *xing* (action). The Master Wang Yangming...said[,] "Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge." I turned his theory

half a somersault to “action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action.”<sup>39</sup>

Following this development in his thinking, during the late 1920s, Tao eventually changed his first name from *Zhixing* to *Xingzhi*, which means “acting” then “knowing.”<sup>40</sup> According to Roland Martin, changing one’s name represents a metamorphosis of the whole person.<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting Tao’s experiment with the creation of the new Chinese schooling system became a catalyst for his rethinking of Dewey’s educational philosophy. In response to Dewey’s notion “education is life” from *Democracy and Education*, Tao wrote an article entitled “Life is Education” in which he turned Dewey’s theory “half a somersault”<sup>42</sup> in order further to explicate his reason for advocating the idea “Life is Education.”

The idea of “Education is Life” tends to treat education as a life. Good education can generate a good life. However, bad education can generate a bad life. The idea of “Life is Education” can fundamentally overcome this weakness. ... In the theory of “Life is Education,” education encompasses a very broad and free field. ... the notion of “Education is Life” places both education and life inside the school...[but] the idea of “Life is Education” acknowledges the value of all informal educations. ... The idea of “Life is Education” can extend education from subject materials to human life.<sup>43</sup>

This passage illustrates Tao’s increasing awareness that Dewey’s educational philosophy is rooted in U.S. culture and society. As some educational historians point out, the emergence of Dewey’s pragmatism was a reaction to the rise of numerous economic, political, and social problems encountered by the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century. Therefore, Dewey’s educational philosophy reflects an ideal form of American progressivism in a well-developed industrial and democratic society.<sup>44</sup>

Although Tao’s perspective on the role of education in democracy is similar to Dewey’s, he grew to realize that China lacks a social and cultural foundation for actualizing the ideas of “Education is Life.” Based on Chinese reality, Tao believed common people could be educated only in their life surroundings, where they live and work in the village, home, or shop, and wherever they gather.<sup>45</sup> That is to say Tao envisioned that, for millions of Chinese peasants, everyday rural life was the best possible educational experience.<sup>46</sup>

While reforming the idea “Education is Life,” Tao also scrutinized Dewey’s dictum “School is Society.”

The idea related to “Education if Life” is “School is Society.”... Right now I also turn the idea of “School is

Society” half a somersault, so that I changed it to “Society is School.” That is to say, the totality of social activities would be believed to be a scope of our education. ... If school is a real society, we don’t have to socialize it. The idea of “School is Society” sounds like putting a bird in a cage. This idea tries to use a small school to accommodate all things from our society. Therefore, the notion of “School is Society” easily misleads us. On the contrary, the idea of “Society is School” wants to release a bird out of the cage, letting it fly swiftly. This idea wants to extend all things from school to the natural world. I believe that “Society is School” should be the requirement of “School is Society”; “Life is Education” should be the requirement of “Education is Life.” Such a school is a real school, such an education is a real education.<sup>47</sup>

Tao’s idea of “Society is School” was also a product of his reaction to Chinese rural reality. He explains that, in accordance with Dewey’s “School is Society” theory, Chinese students in the Morning Village School were supposed to receive education in the school setting. However, the rural school could not provide enough faculty members, facilities, materials, or curriculum, so it was impossible for the Chinese peasantry to learn rural knowledge inside the modern school.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, restricted by Dewey’s “School is Society” notion, all valuable extracurricular activities at the school also were closed to the outside public.<sup>49</sup> However, congruent with the idea “Society is School,” the entire society could provide teaching materials and educational tools. In other words, the Morning Village students could learn from experienced peasants outside the school. With no boundary between school and society, both teachers and students could learn from society as a whole, benefitting the entire community.<sup>50</sup>

Tao’s revision of Wang Yangming’s philosophy contributed to his transformation of Dewey’s educational thought. In his article “Creative Thinking,” Tao indicates his new understanding of Wang Yangming’s School of Mind inspired an equivalent revision of Dewey’s educational philosophy. In his writing, Tao again criticizes the weakness of Wang’s thought:

We know that the Master Wang Yangming advocated...“knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the completion of knowledge.” Based on the saying, we should pour knowledge in our brains first, then try to do something. Therefore, many educators regard school as a place in which they can pursue knowledge. In the meantime, they treat society as a place in which students apply their knowledge to their actions. According to this viewpoint, school and

society are in divorce, so that schools only produce bookish people, who are incompetent in putting their knowledge into action.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to understand that, although Tao frequently critiques Wang Yangming's teachings, he never rejects the concepts of "knowledge" and "action." In particular, Tao strongly highlights the importance of "action" in educational theory and practice. In the same article, Tao adopts the concept of "action" to reflect on Dewey's educational philosophy.

Let us talk about the sequence of the problem-solving formula from Mr. Dewey's *How We Think*. The first step is to identify and state the problem, the second step is to analyze the problem, the third step is to determine criteria for optimal solution, the fourth step is to propose solution, and the fifth is to evaluate proposed solution. I want to put one more thing, "action," before the first step of Dewey's sequence of the problem-solving formula. Only "action" can help us to identify where the difficulty exists, then we are motivated to resolve the difficulty. Subsequently, a new value can be generated out of our experiments with resolving the difficulty.<sup>52</sup>

Tao concludes, "Therefore, I believe that action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson."<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, in his reflection on Wang Yangming's idea, Tao writes the same thing. Undoubtedly, Tao's understanding of "knowledge" and "action" from Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism exerts a strong influence on his reconsideration of Dewey's educational thinking. It is fair to say that his first name, *Xingzhi*, represents the embodiment of his attempts critically to synthesize the thoughts of Wang Yangming and John Dewey into his own educational theory: "Life Education." Tao sums up, "'Life Education' means an education of life, by life, and for life."<sup>54</sup>

In terms of educational goals meant to prepare one for a full life, there was no divergence between Dewey and Tao. Dewey embraces abstract concepts in his philosophy, whereas Tao's idea of "Life Education" avoids constructing profound philosophical discourse. According to Dewey's essay, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," before forming his pragmatic philosophy, the American educator wrestled long-term with philosophical conflicts between educator intuitionism, rationalism, German idealism, sensational empiricism, and Scottish common sense.<sup>55</sup> Correspondingly, when approaching Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, Tao seems not to acknowledge these philosophical schools' influence over Dewey's philosophy of education. As an ambitious educational reformer Tao focuses mainly on specific

concepts (such as “Education is Life” and “School is Society”) drawn from Dewey’s educational philosophy. In constructing his own educational theory, Tao largely travels between Wang Yangming’s Neo-Confucian philosophy and certain ideas from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. In particular, as a by-product of the interaction of Dewey’s educational thought and Chinese reality, Tao’s idea “Life Education” aims to resolve specific difficulties in Chinese education.

Another important aspect Tao likely ignored is Dewey’s conceptualization of “action.” In fact, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey puts forth an argument for the influence of “action” on the process of human learning.

Human actions are modified in a like fashion. A burnt child dreads the fire; if a parent arranged conditions so that every time a child touched a certain toy he got burned, the child would learn to avoid that toy as automatically as he avoids touching fire.<sup>56</sup>

In addition, while Tao attempts to improve Dewey’s educational thought by using the concept of “action,” during his lectures in China Dewey expresses a thought similar to Tao’s idea of “Action is the beginning of knowledge.”

Action is the way to pursue knowledge. ... Even although we cannot predict success or failure, we still need to take a risk to act. More actions lead to more experiments; more experiments generate more knowledge. Therefore, intelligence and belief (or sensation) are closely related. If we have a belief that action should go first, we surely can gain more knowledge through our actions. If we pursue complete knowledge first, then apply it to action, it is impossible for us to really understand how to act. ... Therefore, I believe that knowledge and belief (or sensation and knowledge) are independent.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to note that in this speech Dewey makes a connection between “sensation” and “action.” This connection is reminiscent of his important 1896 article entitled “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology”:

...the various activities of reaching and withdrawing will be the sensation, because they are that phase of activity which sets the problem, or creates the demand or the next act. At the next moment the previous act of seeing will furnish the sensation, being, in turn, that phase of activity which sets the pace upon which depends further action. Generalized, sensation as stimulus, is always the phase of activity requiring to be defined in order that a coordination may be completed.<sup>58</sup>

This passage indicates Dewey was inclined to view “action” through the lens of functional psychology. His thinking highlights both the continuity of human action and its significance in terms of adaptation. “Action,” he claims, is derived from the interaction between an organic unity and the environment. In contrast with Dewey, Tao’s writings pay less attention to the connection between “action” and psychological factors. In other words, Tao still avoids obscure philosophical arguments while conceptualizing the term “action.” For the Chinese educator, “action” is perhaps a more practical concept drawn from Wang Yangming’s School of Mind, something that quickly could be applied to Chinese reality.

In addition, in keeping with China’s rural reality, Tao makes great efforts to update Dewey’s notion of “Learning through Doing” to “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing.” For Dewey, “Learning through Doing” takes place in a school environment. However, for Tao, the principle of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing” is a direct result of the implementation of the theory “Life is Education.” In Tao’s thinking, “teaching,” “learning,” and “doing” represent three related aspects of human life.<sup>59</sup> Hence, teaching, learning, and doing are inseparable not only in life, but also in education. When Tao explains the meaning of “doing” in his new pedagogy, he again stresses the notion that “action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson.”<sup>60</sup> The concept of “action” in Wang Yangming’s philosophy still plays a dominant role in Tao’s construction of the idea of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing.”

While criticizing the miseducation of the Western educational system, Tao’s theory “Life is Education” also targets the cultural liability derived from Confucian education. In particular, alongside the idea of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing,” the Chinese educator criticizes the Confucian idea of class division. For thousands of years, Confucian educators asserted that, “Those who labor with their minds govern others; while those who labor with their strength are governed by others. Those who are governed by others support them; those who govern others are supported by them....”<sup>61</sup> In Tao’s view, this educational tradition produces two opposing classes in Chinese society, and the social barrier between the elite and ordinary people obstructs the channel of cultural transmission among Chinese people.

...if someone only concentrates on his manual labor, he easily gets used to a routine life. As a result, it is impossible for him to embrace the spirit of innovation. If someone only concentrates on his intellectual work, his thought will become more and more abstruse. Accordingly, the idea advocated by

“Those who labor with their minds” cannot be turned into a useful experience. The separation between mental work and physical work leads to the impossibility of the emergence of any progressive inventions.<sup>62</sup>

In fact, John Dewey expressed affinities with Chinese education while lecturing on experimentalism in China.

During the authoritarian era [of pre-modern China], there was a strict class boundary in human society. Confucian scholar-apprentices belonged to the class only concentrating on intellectual work. Peasantry, workers, and merchants all belonged to the class working with strength. Those who work with the mind have never examined their conduct according to experiment. Those who work with strength have never used their conduct to guide their minds. Therefore, it is difficult for Chinese people to propel social progress. China in a transitional period needs to strongly advocate experimentalism.<sup>63</sup>

Tao's critique of traditional Chinese education echoes Dewey's pragmatic educational thought. In compatibility with Dewey's democratic educational ideal, Tao advocates for the idea of “Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength” to close the gap between the two opposing classes.

If everything is done with one's mind and one's strength working together, then the truth about them can be discovered. If everyone works with his mind while working with his strength, there will be no wasted human beings, and there will be no [social] classes anymore.<sup>64</sup>

From Tao's perspective, “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing” corresponds with “Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength.”<sup>65</sup> More importantly, Tao argues developing ideas also depends on the principle of “Action is the Beginning of Knowledge.” In other words, the concept of “action” from Wang Yangming's philosophy also becomes the logic underlying the principle of “Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength.” In essence, for Tao Xingzhi, “Action is the Beginning of Knowledge,” “Unity of Teaching, Learning, Doing,” and “Working with One's Mind While Working With one's Strength” are equivalents.

### **Tao's Educational Practice in the Morning Village School**

To apply the theory of “Life Education” to Chinese rural reality, Tao and his colleagues worked together in 1927 to establish the Morning Village (*xiao zhuang*) School, an experimental teacher training school, located in a rural area near Nanjing. Based on the principle “Life

Education,” the Morning Village School illustrates Tao’s attempts to help Chinese farmers avoid the two cultural liabilities: useless bookish knowledge from the modern school system, and class division derived from Confucian education. When the Morning Village School was first founded, Tao put forward four specific goals based on the principle “Life is Education:” “a farmer’s physique and skill, a scientific mind, a consciousness of social reform, and an artist’s interest.”<sup>66</sup>

Aligned with these goals, Tao advocated for students to practice Chinese martial arts to build their physique; learn gardening to develop farming skills; study biology to develop a scientific mind; participate in theater to nourish their artistic interests; and take part in autonomous society to help students embrace social reform.<sup>67</sup> In the spirit of “Life is Education,” Tao asserts that actualization of the principle of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing” should be accompanied by establishment of close friendships among teachers and students in the Morning Village School.<sup>68</sup>

To strengthen intimacy between teachers and rural residents, Tao and his colleagues designed educational plans that integrated the experimental school into rural communities. For instance, to encourage more local villagers to get involved in education, Tao and his colleagues built a teahouse in the village, also open to the public.<sup>69</sup> Rural residents were often invited there by Tao to drink tea and talk. At the same time, the teahouse became a public place where teachers and students hosted lectures on an array of issues, including public health, personal hygiene, and national and world news.<sup>70</sup> Villagers also could gather to exchange ideas while reading books. The teahouse was designed as a reflection of the spirit of “Society is School,” which combined educational and social dimensions.

Through cooperation between the Morning Village School and local villagers, the rural community experienced great change from 1927 to 1930. The school founded a village hospital and kindergarten. A united village self-defense team was organized to protect the whole community from attacks by gangs and bandits. Gambling and opium smoking were strictly banned. At the same time, with the initiation of an adult literacy class, more villagers received a basic education. Knowledge of modern agricultural science also spread among villagers. More importantly, Tao’s rural experimental school provided rural residents with opportunities to learn basic skills necessary for the practice of democracy.<sup>71</sup>

Tao’s educational experiment in the Morning Village School won considerable attention in both China and the U.S. One of John Dewey’s colleagues from Teachers College, William H. Kilpatrick, was deeply impressed by Tao’s rural educational experiment. After visiting the

Morning Village School in 1929, the U.S. educator was impressed with the educational reformation carried out by Tao's experimental school: "I want to tell people about the story of the Chinese Morning Village Experimental School. I want to let the world know about the educational ideal of the school, as well as its facility."<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, just at the point when Tao expected to make the Morning Village School more progressive, his educational reforms met their demise. The Guo Mingdang (Nationalist Party) defeated military warlords starting in 1927, reunited China in 1928, and the party immediately wielded political influence over Chinese education, turning instead to ideology of the Republic of China's founder, Sun Yat-sen. Tao's school was accused of accommodating communist party members, and the Nationalist Government under the Guo Mingdang sent troops to shut down the Morning Village School in 1930. However, this did not stop Tao's motivation to further his common educational movement in rural domains of China. Until Tao's death in 1946, he exerted all of his energy to promote common education in China. Tao's life journey indeed embodied the spirit of his first name, "*Xingzhi*."

### **Conclusion**

It is appropriate to remark on significant implications here by way of concluding my argument. John Dewey's two-year visit to China created a shared educational experience between the U.S and China. As one of Dewey's daughters, Jane Dewey, recalled, "when he was in China, Dewey left feeling affection and admiration not only for the scholars with whom he had been intimately associated[,] but for the Chinese people as a whole. China remained the country nearest his heart after his own."<sup>73</sup> What is more, in the configuration of globalization, through a detailed historical and philosophical examination of Dewey's visit to China, Deweyan scholars can better understand the educational thought of U.S. pragmatists from the perspective of cultural pluralism.

John Dewey's influence over China's education system has not received the attention of U.S. scholars. Consequently, one of Dewey's most influential Chinese students, Tao Xingzhi, is also little known in the history and philosophy of educational thought and practice. Accordingly, an understanding of Tao Xingzhi's influence offers valuable opportunities for scholars of educational history and philosophy to view Dewey's experience in and influence on China, in particular through the lens of Confucianism.

In tracing this history, I highlight aspects of Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism compatible with Dewey's thought and with modern democratic values. Of note, during Dewey's visit, China was in the midst of the May Fourth/New Culture Movement period, when the country

transformed itself from an imperial dynasty into a modern nation-state. During this period, Confucian legacy and foreign ideas competed and interacted in Chinese society. Consequently, it is not unusual that many Chinese intellectuals, including Dewey's students, then explored a path toward synthesizing Chinese tradition and Western learnings. By examining the ways in which Tao Xingzhi melded and modified the philosophies of Wang Yangming and Dewey, scholars may understand how Chinese educators during the Republican period dealt with the relationship between their Confucian past and Deweyan learning in an effort to reform Chinese education.

In sum, the story of Dewey's visit to China goes far beyond the scope of Tao's case. In my larger line of inquiry, my historical and philosophical analysis of Dewey's visit to China only begins with inquiry into Tao's educational journey. Nevertheless, the revelation of more historical and philosophical implications behind Dewey's sojourn to China depends on my future research, which will take into account even more historical figures and their ideas and actions.

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