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REENVISIONING THE PROGRESSIVE TRADITION IN CURRICULUM

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Progressive education and its expression in curriculum have been from the start cacophonous in voice and disparate in practice. While most progressive educators have extolled school reform as an engine of societal improvement, some have advocated slow, reconstructive work on the curriculum to meet changing conditions. Others have urged a more aggressive transformation in order to jump-start the process of creating a better world. Progressive educators in both camps have either lauded the merits they perceive in student-oriented pedagogy, or have articulated specific themes in subject matter that they believe should govern the content and method of pedagogy. Some progressive educators have lamented these inconsistent approaches because, it is feared, they splinter the movement's collective agency and impact on curriculum. Others who also call themselves progressive educators welcome the disagreements as an enactment of the progressive impulse itself.

This state of affairs mirrors the consequences of any revered "ism" that guides curriculum practice. To judge from the historical record and the contemporary scene, every time educators place a qualifier before the term curriculum, they unleash unpredictable, uncontrollable, and sometimes incommensurable hopes and actions that nonetheless will all henceforth be associated with that qualifier. Consider, for example, the diverse and sometimes contradictory ideas and designs associated with civic education, constructivist education, democratic education, and multicultural education. There is no unified voice nor standard practice among educators who endorse one or another of these curricular outlooks.

Critics might say that this unsettled, unwieldy condition is the price people pay for dwelling in a democracy. They might argue that while the process is inefficient or wasteful, it embodies an invaluable freedom of thought that promotes intellectual and social diversity. Others might claim that the condition reflects the price democracy pays because of educators' inability or unwillingness to communicate effectively. If curriculum workers "tried hard enough," they could foster a shared outlook that

would accommodate differences in perspective (thereby honoring democracy) while establishing effective, consistent educational leadership.

Our purpose in this chapter is not to advance a particular position in these wide-ranging debates, whose contours seem to shift day by day (Davies, 2002; Eisner, 1992; Jackson, 1992; Kliebard, 1992, 2004; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Rather, we hope to sketch a new horizon against which to assess the claims, accomplishments, and failures of progressive education as expressed in curriculum.

 To undertake this task, we turn in the first section to a brief review of guiding purposes and methods in the progressive tradition. In the second section, we address the educational visions of Ralph Waldo Emerson, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams. We will suggest that their work foreshadows important progressive ideals. We then take up the educational outlook of John Dewey, the thinker most often associated with progressive education. We will attempt to unshackle his thought from the progressive tradition, in part because the tradition has variously (and notoriously) pigeonholed and misunderstood his educational ideas (Jackson, 1992; Kliebard, 1992, 2004; Schwab 1978), even as the tradition has done a much better job of working the ideas out in practice than Dewey ever sought to do (Cremin, 1961; Cuban, 1992, 1993; Dewey, MW.8;¹ Semel & Sadovnik, 1999; Zilversmit, 1993). Our approach will be show how Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams provide intellectual resources for curriculum development that complement and complicate those that Dewey provides. Moreover, although all four figures were American born, we show that their vision encompasses hopes for progressive education and democratic culture wherever these might blossom. Their thought fuses international and cosmopolitan gestures while also remaining acutely attentive to local context and concern.

Our method of inquiry in the chapter begins in receptivity and ends in unsettlement. We aspire to listen to the voices of our authors as if they were addressing us, seeking not to add to our stock of information but rather to confront us with fundamental questions about the aims of curriculum, education, and life. This confrontation will provoke both skepticism and sympathy regarding progressive ideals. Ultimately, we find that it leads to a renewed, critical appreciation

for the potential that progressive thought has for curriculum in our time.


THE PROGRESSIVE TRADITION IN CURRICULUM: A BRIEF REFRESHER


Educational historians disagree about the origins of progressive education, about who was a progressive educator, and about how connected proponents were with the political and social Progressive Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Cremin, 1961; Graham, 1967; Kliebard, 2004; Palm, 1940; Schubert, 2002). Nonetheless, historical research makes it possible to sketch guiding purposes and methodologies of progressive education. Pioneers in the movement believed that schools had a duty to individuals and society that went beyond the teaching of traditional academic subjects (Paulay, 1942). Joseph Rice's famous "expose" of the sluggish nature of American schooling, published in 1893, gave an enormous impetus to the call for reform (Kliebard, 2004). Parents, educators, and other members of the public introduced a wide array of educational innovations and ideas (Cremin, 1961; Reese, 1986). Some of the best known progressive reforms were developed by educational theorists. Heavily influenced by revolutionary developments in science, industry, and communications, progressive theorists strove to create curriculum that would draw together students, subject matter, and societal improvement.

Kliebard (2004) categorizes progressive reformers into three categories, each with a distinctive bent toward curriculum development: the child-study movement, the social efficiency movement, and the social reconstructionist movement. Reformers within the child-study movement sought to create curriculum that respected the child's developmental stages. Inspired by the explosion of interest in evolutionary theory as well as in psychology (Cremin, 1961), theorists such as Herbert Spencer and G. Stanley Hall advocated the scientific study of the child's natural impulses and of the learning process writ large (Kliebard, 2004, pp. 37, 24). They postulated that better knowledge of children would lead to a better understanding of how to teach subject matter. Their claims and efforts generated tremendous interest and controversy, and the debate about the meaning of terms such as learning and development continues today. The child-study movement





in progressive education triggered a marked increase in attention to the needs of the individual student. The movement's legacy can be seen today in multiple intelligence theory, according to which students differ in artistic, intellectual, musical, and other forms of intelligence; the project method (heavily influenced by William H. Kilpatrick, as cited Beineke, 1998), in which students learn academic knowledge by drawing upon it to complete projects such as planning a garden; and the inquiry approach, in which teachers employ questions and multifaceted problems to engage students in learning academics.

 Social efficiency theorists also believed that scientifically derived knowledge was the key to improving education. They envisioned an orderly educational system operating like a well-run factory. Angered by what they viewed as a heartless waste of resources in inefficient schools, and by the associated neglect of students' genuine development, they sought to redefine schools so that they would respond to the needs of individuals and society. Social efficiency theorists worked to standardize and streamline schooling and to broaden it beyond strictly academic interests into life-activities, which very quickly led to developments such as the large-scale adoption of vocational education (Kliebard, 2004). J. Franklin Bobbitt, David Snedden, and others sought to connect curriculum with the real world. Their legacy has been as equally contentious as that of the child-study movement, but nonetheless has focused a spotlight on how schools might equip the young to find socioeconomic success in a rapidly changing world.

 Social reconstructionists were also concerned with society, albeit from a different viewpoint. They believed curriculum should equip students "to create a new social vision" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 25) that would position them to humanize society (Cremin, 1961, p. 227). Educators such as George Counts and Harold Rugg challenged progressives to conceive education as a means of addressing the social injustices and inadequacies that plagued the nation. They advocated socially conscious subject matter and an equitable distribution of resources within the educational system. They appreciated the need for both child-study and greater efficiency, but put both aims in the service of urgent societal transformation (Bowers, 1969). Their legacy has been marked by considerable political debate about the relation between education and society.

Their imprint can be seen in the use of problem-based and experiential learning. In the former, teachers and students articulate pressing social questions and employ academic knowledge to respond to them. Experiential learning describes programs in which students work with local communities and organizations to advance various social aims.

It is possible to see these groups as either warring factions at constant loggerheads with one another—and there is evidence for this view (Kliebard, 2004; Reese, 1986)—or as dedicated cocreators of curriculum whose differences are not as great as their shared hope for change—a perspective for which there is also evidence (Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 2004). These interpretations mirror the point with which we began. Progressive education has from its start been marked by strong differences in outlook.  And yet, the very term progressive education has endured. Its proponents share a commitment to the idea that educational reform will lead to the betterment of the individual and society. Posed differently, they believe in both the possibility and necessity of progress in improving the world through education.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jane Addams, and John Dewey are also concerned with progress. But they believe human progress is a subtle, complex, and often ineffable process that cannot be reduced to preset steps or tactics. Progress is not necessarily linear, upward, or straightforward. It is not synonymous with rapidity of change, such as the world has undergone since the start of the industrial revolution (Dewey, MW.10). It can mean one thing in the domain of means and methods, another in the realm of ends and purposes. The very concept of progress, in these thinkers' judgment, underscores possibility and promise more often than it does accomplishment or finality. If viewed "progressively," each human action contains the seeds of its own undoing in the name of a larger, more expansive growth. 

In our view, these four thinkers contribute to progressive curriculum by foregrounding this paradoxical but dynamic view of progress. Unlike the reformist movements touched on above, they problematize the very terms reform and progress. They do so out of profound respect for human freedom and agency. They resist the impulse to harden reform into a tool or instrument (cf. Emerson, 1983, "New England Reformers"). In

their view, societal reform, or progress, emerges from informed trust. They have in mind trust in the natal desire for meaning they believe animates people, allied with careful study of ideas and practices. Their spirit mirrors the ethos of the Progressive Education Association's so-called Eight-Year Study (in fact undertaken over a dozen years, from 1930–1942), which showed what can happen when ideas of progress emanate from a fundamental trust in human imagination and creativity—if those qualities are given strong institutional support. The study's invitation to 29 schools to engage their faculties in serious curriculum reflection and development, linked with the agreement by nearly 300 colleges to be willing to accept students from these experimental settings, remains an impressive instance of educational practice informed by an emergent rather than preordained progressive outlook (Kridel & Bullough, 2002).

TOWARD A NEW YET UNAPPROACHABLE EDUCATION: EMERSON, DU BOIS, AND ADDAMS

While references to Dewey saturate the discourse on progressive curriculum for K–12 schools, the names of Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams rarely occur. The explanation for this historic omission is multifaceted. For one thing, Dewey did not always acknowledge his precursors or intellectual debts. He did do so at important junctures in his writing. For example, in a study of interest (EW.5) he sketches his view of Johann Friedrich Herbart's influential philosophy of education. But unsystematic readers of Dewey's oeuvre might not be aware of the enduring mark on his outlook made by important thinkers such as Emerson and Addams.

For another thing, Emerson and Du Bois are poetic philosophers whose prose is less accessible than Dewey's (as complex as the latter often is). Their writing is at once both lucid and ambiguous, inviting and off-putting, informing and questioning, affirming and undermining. For a practical field like curriculum, the payoff for plumbing the depths of their otherwise affecting essays is not obvious. As Michel de Montaigne (1592/1991) wrote of the challenge in reading the ancients, "You need a strong backbone if you undertake to march shoulder to shoulder with

fellows like that" (p. 165). It requires readiness for intellectual suspense to study Emerson and Du Bois. However, the ethos of curriculum practice often militates against a study of this kind, and for understandable reasons given the relentless pace of school and university life. Finally, progressive curriculum work has not systematically attended to Addams because she too is a complex educational thinker and because there is a perduring sense that she belongs to progressive civic, political, and social movements but not to educational ones *per se*.

Readers conversant with Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams could counter that these famous writers have precious little to say of a direct nature about curriculum in K–12 schools. That being the case, why should curriculum workers ponder their prose? It can be admitted that studying them will satisfy intellectual curiosity about streams of thought that illuminate the progressive tradition. However, there is important school-based work to do, and curriculum designers and teachers need resources that have them as well as their current educational situations in mind.

Other chapters in this handbook provide such resources. Our present endeavor is to show that studying Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams, alongside Dewey, constitutes more than an act of intellectual curiosity. Rather, the task equips educators for intellectual activity, understood in Dewey's sense as concrete practice informed by what he takes philosophical thinking to be—namely, reflection and criticism juxtaposed with a purposive vision. Curriculum work divorced from a rich philosophy of education can be problematic if not harmful, just as a philosophy of education can be blinding if not examined through the crucible of practice. One of the ongoing challenges every serious-minded educator seems to face is how to harmonize theory with practice, or philosophy with action. This balancing act will always be marked by tension, compromise, success, and failure, if only because of the vicissitudes of context and the unstoppable evolution of societal expectations.

Due to space constraints, we will limit our focus in this section to a small portion of the bountiful writings of Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams. However, we believe the texts we have selected are telling with regards to why these figures shed such invaluable light on the progressive tradition. Our interpretive overviews of their



educational thought will necessarily be cursory, but we hope they capture how vitalizing for curriculum their ideas continue to be. These writers have in mind not only curriculum as such, but also broad conceptions of education through which to sort out questions regarding what should be taught as well as how it should be taught.

Emerson and the Idea of Progress

The heading for this section of the chapter takes its inspiration from an image Emerson (1983) evokes in his essay, "Experience," published in 1841. That essay has earned an unstable place in world literature, in part because Emerson grips the reader with fundamental questions about the individual and society. He unsettles because he seems to knock over every chair that the reader looking for comfort might grasp. He argues that to make one's way through life in a meaningful fashion constitutes a trial of the mind and heart. One reason for this state of affairs is that human experience outruns human understanding. Two thirds of the way through the essay, Emerson considers the ineffability of experience, the fact that language can never capture its fullness, its origins, nor its future consequences. As Dewey would write 75 years later (MW.9.8–9), any person who tries to communicate an experience in accurate and comprehensive words to another person (or to him- or herself) will invariably find his or her own attitude toward the experience changing, as such the words to describe the experience will also change. The law of human experience, Emerson avers, is movement, creating a permanent gap between what persons undergo and their capacity to give it expression.

Emerson loves and fears the freedom he discerns in this condition, and he beckons the reader to embrace it as well. On the one hand, he urges his fellow Americans to live fully the experiment embodied in the very founding of the nation. This posture means accepting values in transformation rather than closing the door on them as if the settling of the country implied also a final settlement of the American identity or destiny. He acknowledges that a transformative mode of life will lead to unsettlement in mind, outlook, and work—a frightening circumstance. But it will also generate expanded meanings and prospects—for Emerson, a glorious condition. People cannot master present experience in the sense of grasping its full

impact on them and on others, but they can cultivate themselves in a spirit of faith in future growth. As Emerson (1983) beholds this vista of possibility, he exclaims, "And what a future it opens! I feel a new heart beating with the love of the new beauty. I am ready to die out of nature, and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West" (p. 485). Emerson means, in part, that in his very essay—in his inquiry into the nature of experience—he has founded the nation again. He has shown readers a way to grasp the meaning of the original founding as a signal that they and all subsequent generations of Americans must refound the country continuously as they address the inevitable, frightening, joyous wondrousness of change. This America is new—permanently new, always in re-creation—yet unapproachable—precisely because it is permanently ineffable, incapable of being captured by any account because it is always in transformation, much like each person's individual experience. It is impossible to approach what is not yet there.

We take Emerson's idea to be a founding image of curriculum for a culture that is to be refounded again and again.² In this picture, educators will need to reconstruct curriculum continuously in light of past and present conditions as each generation of the young comes to the fore (cf. Counts, 1934). Curriculum work undertaken in this responsive spirit will necessarily be experimental, open-ended, unpredictable, and uncontainable—and yet not directionless or aimless. Emerson may etch whim into the lintels of his doorpost when he is most irate with the stultifying pressures of social conformity (1983, p. 262), but he would not do the same regarding an educational journey. As experimental as practical curriculum work will be, he argues for a particular form of consistency in its intellectual and moral focus across time and space.

Emerson articulates this perspective in another well-known essay, "The American Scholar." He examines the values and dangers in reading books, with the latter understood as an instance of the place of all formal curriculum in education. He summarizes his view as follows:

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end, which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book, than to be warped by its attraction



clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates. In this action, it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence, it is progressive. (1983, p. 57)

For Emerson (1983), the entire curriculum should inspire. It should fuel the student's imagination, spirit, and personal bent (a point he also stresses in his essays "Education" and "Spiritual Laws"; in the latter he employs the term progressive again, p. 311). It must not harness individual talents to prefabricated forms of expression or accomplishment. Rather than privileging rote learning, the curriculum should help students dis-

cern the natal creativity that gives rise in the first place to all curriculum—to all books, art works, scientific methods and results, athletic pursuits, mathematical formulae, and so on. As students engage this creative impulse, they unleash their own expression. This education involves diligent effort. It takes laborious reading, Emerson says—with "reading" understood as studying—to acquire what he calls elements such as historical and scientific understandings. But all such elements, he emphasizes, "can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and, by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame" (p. 59). Such an education, Emerson believes, allows each person to give birth to their individuality, and thereby to their distinctive experience of and offerings to the world. As such, each person can, metaphorically speaking, be born again into this new yet unapproachable America. Put another way, each becomes a founder wherever he or she may happen to reside. Each adds his or her voice to what the community can be and to what it can make possible for all. Emerson deploys the term genius to refer not to unusual human gifts or capacities but to that which is potentially creative within each person.

Emerson (1983) calls this orientation progressive, and as far as we know he is the first writer to associate that term with education.³ He employs it to underscore the primordial value he perceives in movement, an idea Dewey would later construe

into his notion of education as growth. It is not a teleological view, with some final educational accomplishment in mind for either individuals or society. Rather, a curriculum that illuminates that every thing in the curriculum has sprung from human imagination allows students to move that very capacity forward in their lives, even as they learn valuable skills and information—elements—along the way. For Emerson, progress does not mean a steady expansion of knowledge—much less wisdom—however desirable those outcomes might be and however likely or not they will result from the kind of education he advances. Progress denotes the capacity to draw a new circle (as he discusses in his essay "Circles"), rather than to resign oneself to a partial realization of self. To progress is not necessarily to ascend. It may mean giving up more than one gains in return, whether in the realm of individual or societal self-understandings. Its contrary is not regression, Emerson suggests, but stasis, status quo, and stagnancy.

Du Bois and Liberal Learning

Published in 1903, Du Bois's (1987) *The Souls of Black Folk* has entered world letters as a timeless portrait of the incalculable human costs of American slavery and racism. Du Bois investigates the morphology of the color line, of the double consciousness Black Americans must carry with them, and of the veil behind which they are forced to dwell. He creates a lens for White readers to recognize the forces on American soil that have crushed the bodies and souls of Black people, and his poetic diction leads readers to feel the immoral weight of these events. At the same time, Du Bois illuminates cultural and spiritual resources that Blacks have planted in the same soil that constitute rich offerings to the nation and world. The literary genre Du Bois creates to depict and examine these phenomena is impossible to categorize. Just as Emerson's (1983) essays are an unclassifiable fusion of prose poetry, logical analysis, cultural criticism, and autobiographical reflection, so the essays that comprise *The Souls of Black Folk* constitute experiments with ideas, poetic renderings of personal and societal experiences, and applications of concepts from the social sciences and humanities. (We discern a progressive lesson for curriculum development in the irreproducible forms of writing that Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams employ that we will touch on below.)

Du Bois (1987) juxtaposes his multifaceted inquiry into the problem of the color line with an unsettling meditation on the promise and perils of education. From one point of view, Du Bois shows us, formal education transports persons from the tiny, provincial space they occupy on the planet into the broad universe of human creativity and accomplishment across space and time. Education reveals to people that nobody owns knowledge and wisdom—the bounty is open to all. Moreover, knowledge and wisdom do not diminish when each additional person takes a place at the table, as if it were a matter of dividing up a fixed pie. Rather, they expand as each person brings forth his or her distinctive gifts. Du Bois argues that this point applies to communities and individuals alike. Education equips both individuals and groups to be creators of culture rather than merely consumers (or victims) of it. All can contribute to enriching and expanding culture, understood as a dynamic expression of creativity and inspiration through the arts, sciences, and humanities as they come to saturate human life. All persons merit educational opportunity if humanity is to realize its highest ideals. “This, then, is the end of his [the Black man’s] striving,” Du Bois (1987) contends, “to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture” (p. 365). Du Bois suggests that this progressive aim drives all peoples. It is a universal impulse funded by education.

While Du Bois (1987) proffers no curricular blueprint for bringing this vision to life, he endorses strongly the values embedded in liberal education. This term has been worn thin through overuse and today seems to generate as much confusion as light about curriculum. What Du Bois has in view is an education that would broaden the mind and spirit rather than narrow them. Such an education would equip people to expand the pathways of life for themselves and others. It has a moral aspect that adds substance and bite to Dewey’s (MW.9.370) later argument about why education should prepare people not just to learn from one another, including those who differ in values and practices, but to be disposed to want to learn from them. At an historical moment when most White Americans were variously ignorant, indifferent, or openly hostile to Blacks, Du Bois urges Whites to become interested in the souls of a people whose experiences have much to teach them about the human condition in general and about the promise of America in particular.

“The rich and bitter depth of their experience,” Du Bois writes, “the unknown treasures of their inner life, the strange renderings of nature they have seen, may give the world new points of view and make their loving, living, and doing precious to all human hearts” (p. 438).

Simultaneously, Du Bois (1987) embeds this appeal in a claim that “men know so little of men” (p. 584) no matter where or with whom they dwell. Consequently, he argues, education entails “the breadth and broadening of human reason, by catholicity of taste and culture” (p. 425). This idea means learning from any and all cultural creations that are available. For example, Du Bois urges Black Americans not to reject the offerings of Western culture, which are as real as the sufferings that same culture has engendered. Blacks as well as Whites should “sit with Shakespeare,” as he has done; they should “move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas” and “summon Aristotle and Aurelius” (p. 438). These figures will “wince not,” he assures his readers, but will “come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension” (p. 438). Their words that have stood the test of time are for all to enjoy and ponder—just as Du Bois offers his own words, alongside the Black Spiritual songs that front each of his essays, as part of the same universal creative fare. He expands with his very text the curriculum for humanity. Ultimately, Du Bois implies, for all to have the opportunity to cocreate culture the curriculum must be as expansive as that which he embodies in *The Souls of Black Folk*, with its abundant references to song, poetry, science, history, and individual achievements as varied as those of Alexander Crummell and Plato.

As profoundly as Du Bois (1987) esteems formal education, however, like Emerson (1983) before him he does not regard it as a guaranteed or happy road toward individual and social harmony. For Du Bois, education complicates as well as clarifies. It frustrates as much as it satisfies. It creates discontent as well as fulfillment. It undermines as often as it supports. Education shatters easy comfort, even as it generates inspiring hopes and triggers undreamed of accomplishments. Education creates wondrous possibilities for human expression, but it is Janus faced: it creates at the same time potential abyss upon abyss of doubt, confusion, uncertainty, even despair (see especially his essay “Of the coming of John”). What price this? asks Du Bois, even as he reminds the reader time and again

that Blacks under slavery were not only denied education, but were treated as objects with a price rather than as persons with dignity (this moral distinction derives from Immanuel Kant (1795/1989), whose philosophy Du Bois had studied). The quest for dignity gains substance and traction through education. For Du Bois, education liberates and liberalizes, and all must eventually have it. But along the way people should be poised to respond to its dangers and explosiveness as it brings them face-to-face with two sets of limitations: those embedded in all custom and convention (however cherished they may be), and those embedded in all personal understandings (however comforting they may be). For Black and White alike, education will be unsettling, however varied the sources of that unsettlement. Each community, and each individual therein, must come to grips with this new yet unapproachable education.

Addams and Experience as Education

Addams is best known for her pioneering work in the settlement house movement she helped launch in the 1890s, as well as for her lifelong work for peace and social justice for which she received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. However, we discern in her writing, especially in her *Twenty Years at Hull House* published in 1910, a vibrant image of education that anticipates some of the highest aims of progressive education that took form in the 20th century. Addams' nuanced conception of education also problematizes progressive aims, while rendering the work of curriculum development in their spirit both inspiring and frustrating. It does so because she prioritizes philosophy over theory in the conduct of life (see below). This standpoint renders curriculum work a profound intellectual and moral art in which specific theories play bounded, contextualized roles but do not in themselves define educational aims. The latter must be set by human values and hopes—in short, by a philosophy of life. While Emerson (1983) and Du Bois (1987) fuel curriculum imagination regarding both substance and process, Addams points to the insight, judgment and compassion that in her view ought to underlie every gesture directed to individual or societal improvement. Her unsentimental, tenacious view encompasses the question of what people ought to study.

Addams never claims to be a teacher, nor does she describe Hull House as an educational institution. When it comes to her work, she will have no truck with rigid categories of expert-novice, master-apprentice, or professional-amateur. She never regards as clients or as charity cases the countless immigrants and others, many desperately poor, who come to Hull House to share in its fellowship and to add to its resources. She does not regard them as common people, but rather as what she calls, taking a term from John Ruskin, companion people (1990, p. 149). She implies they are fellow sojourners in the quest for a meaningful life. They are fellow citizens, or citizens-in-the-making, of the polis-in-the-making, of this new yet unapproachable America. They are men, women, and children whose lives constitute the fabric of the transforming nation as much as her own or those of anyone else. This posture does not imply a bland tolerance or uncritical acceptance, much less embrace, of every idea or practice that comes through the door, nor does it mean Addams does not treat with the utmost seriousness expertise, mastery, and professionalism. She and her colleagues draw upon every spark of talent and know-how to which they become privy. They encourage and sometimes cajole people to share whatever knowledge they have, whether it pertains to poetry, plumbing, or union organizing. Time and again, they encourage adults and children who have participated in a workshop or other activity at the house to turn around and become teachers to others. Addams devotes exhausting days to cultivating relationships with the wealthy, the powerful, and the influential, in a bid to get them to share their largess and to develop their own civic consciousness.

While Addams does not bill herself as an educational theorist, she expresses in every page of *Twenty Years at Hull House* an underlying educational philosophy. She contends that “a Settlement is a protest against a restricted view of education” (2002, p. 55). According to Addams, formal education should take place both inside and outside schools. Moreover, it should be undertaken in a social, civic, and moral spirit, even while its overt focus will be on learning to read, write, numerate, interpret art or literature, dance, sing, sew, cook, operate or repair machines, and so on. To learn is a gift, Addams implies, and gifts are for sharing, not for hoarding. People should share what they

have learned, a disposition that grows by learning in settings saturated, as Dewey would later say, with social interaction, with the give and take of ideas, suggestions, and questions that in itself embodies the development of civic interest and capability. At the same time, or as a direct consequence of this perspective, Addams deplores the tendency to regard education as merely a preparation for something allegedly more significant, concrete, or real. Nothing in the whole world, she implies, is more important than investing oneself in the moment, in the very here and now which, after all, is the only time and place for life to be lived. Correspondingly, the whole world becomes a potential curriculum, again whether for education inside or outside schools. Addams' intellectual debt to Emerson emerges here (which she acknowledges in multiple ways). "Since our office is with moments," Emerson writes, "let us husband them" (1983, p. 479). Let us seize the day, his words urge, and fill the moments as richly as possible with meaning and purpose. Addams' passion for life lends a sharp edge to her criticism of mechanical ways of regarding people, time, and space, and it anticipates the harsh treatment Dewey gives the idea of education-as-mere-preparation in *Democracy and Education* (MW.9.59–61).

Addams' concerns also anticipate Dewey's later worries (LW.13) about progressive education: how it too often becomes ideological, embracing so-called student- or child-centered approaches at the expense of equal billing for subject matter; how it too often coddles the child or youth in a misguided, patronizing concern for self-esteem; and how it regards schools as miraculous vehicles for rapid social transformation rather than as complicated public spaces where growth can only take place slowly and piecemeal. Addams voices no such specific concerns. Her still timely criticism takes form, among other ways, in her concerns about the place of theory and ideology in the conduct of life. An ideology can be understood as a set of ideas or practices closed to further questioning (Brann, 1979, p. 39). The set is henceforth off limits to inquiry and possible replacement. A theory can be variously understood as marking out a terrain for systematic research, as pointing to a body of generalizations or principles in association with practice in a field of activity, or as a specific framework for investigating and analyzing an object or phenomenon. A theory

helps persons examine, criticize, organize, and make sense of reality, a process which seems indispensable to the generation of systematic knowledge.


Addams (1990) writes in her preface to *Twenty Years at Hull House* that she began her settlement house work "without any preconceived social theories or economic views" (p. 2). Our sense is that 20 years later she operates without preconceived theories of any kind. Time and again in the book, she describes how she draws upon a particular theory or set of theories to tackle a particular social problem: better sanitation, better public transportation, better working conditions in factories and schools, and so on. In these circumstances, where inquiry is essential, Addams shows the values in articulating and deploying theory. However, she also emphasizes how dangerous any theory becomes when it is used as a substitute for a social, moral sensibility that takes seriously the manifold differences in human beings and human situations. Throughout the book, she highlights how hard and unyielding theory can be when it is wheeled up against the fluid, ambiguous complexities of human experience. Her work and that of her colleagues, she writes, "taught us not to hold to pre-conceived ideas of what the neighborhood ought to have, but to keep ourselves in readiness to modify and adapt our undertakings as we discovered those things which the neighborhood was ready to accept" (1990, p. 79).

Theory can help in social analysis but not in social understanding. For the latter, Addams (1990, 2002) suggests, people need a philosophy of life rather than a cache of theories, however useful the latter are in their limited fields of employment. A root meaning of philosophy is the love of wisdom, an image that seems to suggest something about a person's character. Posed differently, love is not a matter of theory with respect to how people fashion worthy relations with others. A philosophy, as Addams conceives and enacts it, describes or characterizes a way of life rather than a mechanism, or theory, for studying or controlling life. From this point of view, people could not live the same way if they suddenly dropped their philosophies. That condition does not hold for theories. A physicist might change her theory about the construction of matter, but the change may have no effect on the conduct of her life, and nor should it necessarily do so.

Addams has an evolving philosophy of life and of education that guides her conduct. At stops along the way, she (1990, 2002) draws upon theory for concrete analysis. She strives to be open-minded to changes in attitude, orientation, and outlook. She endeavors to learn “from *all* [italics added] the contacts of life” (Dewey, MW.9.370). She treats ideas not as entities to defend or criticize at all costs, as if they were fixed landmarks in an intellectual landscape, but rather as points of departure for inquiry and reflection (cf. Emerson, 1983, p. 57). If pressed on whether she is a progressive, her response would be “yes and no,” “sometimes,” “when the circumstances call for it,” or other equivocations that, on the one hand, would keep her as attuned as possible to concrete situations while, on the other hand, steer her clear of a slide into dogma. Her book contains instances where she is severely criticized for being conservative, and there are just as many instances where she is taken to task for being liberal or radical. None of these terms throw her off her stride, even as they lead her to question further her philosophy of life and education.


Summary Remarks:

An Unsettling Progressive Curriculum

 In distinctive ways, Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams articulate cardinal elements in progressive education. For example, they envision education as both a transforming social institution and as a dynamic individual experience that can liberate persons to realize their various gifts and callings. They criticize custom and convention when these place arbitrary constraints on individual or community creativity. They align this outlook on education with a deep commitment to justice, freedom, and truth. They believe human beings have a right to a flourishing life, and that inquiry reveals that there are better, more truthful ways of striving for such a life. These and other ideals reside behind what Kliebard (2004) and others have identified as movements within progressive education, from the focus on child-study to that on social reconstruction.

All three figures recoil from sentimentality, complacency, and other forms of cocooned mental comfort. In his essay “Circles,” Emerson (1983) writes that “people wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them” (p. 413). Emerson means that hope would have no place in a self-contained, final

world. In such an environment, there would be no prospect of transformation or progress. It would be like transplanting a growing tree into an enclosed container and expecting it to thrive when in fact it would be necessary to do the tree constant injury by cutting off its branches and top. So matters stand with human beings, in Emerson’s view. They cannot prosper, or progress, if they are bottled up in frozen outlooks or habits. That condition would mean, in effect, constantly pruning their very humanity. Consequently, Emerson avers that his fundamental purpose in writing is to “unsettle all things” (p. 412). He does not reject any fact or custom out of hand, anymore than he embraces them uncritically. His posture points to a middle way: to a tenuous, puzzling, enlightening, inspiring life of engagement with people, things, events, and everything else that comes one’s way.

Du Bois and Addams are also unsettlers in a land so many regard as settled. On the one hand, Du Bois’s espousal of a liberal education could be viewed as elitist or conservative. “Nothing new,” he writes. “No time-saving devices—simply old-time glorified methods of delving for the Truth, and searching out the hidden beauties of life, and learning the good of living” (1987, p. 420). Upon closer inspection, however, Du Bois is hardly espousing static educational reproduction—a condition that would render moot his inquiry and those of every other writer mentioned in this chapter. Du Bois’s notion of book-learning embodies his serious etymological play with the Latin *liber* (book) and *libertas* (freedom). Education does not give people freedom, but it  illuminates how people might use whatever freedom they enjoy. To realize that aim, curriculum must not be a time-saving device because education’s primary aim is what he dubs begetting human souls (a point that mirrors the title of his book). This vision is nothing new, for Du Bois is acutely aware that ever since Plato’s astonishing *Republic* entered the world, people have associated education with turning the soul—the mind, heart, and spirit—toward the true (or the idea there are better and worse ways of living), the good (or the very ideas of justice and freedom), and the beautiful (or the idea that grace and harmony can characterize human conduct). People have long associated education with cultivating the art of living for individuals and communities—“learning the good of [italics added] living,” as Du Bois puts it (p. 420). At the same time, this

vision entails permanent instability because the quest for meaning leads people to question current ideas and practices, including those they have themselves fashioned. “Education among all kinds of men,” he writes, “always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent” (p. 385).

Curriculum is often conceived to bring order to chaos. In contrast, Addams (1990) depicts Hull House as being at times chaotic and disorderly. Not all of its programs succeed; some fail dismally. However, Addams, her colleagues, and most of the community never abandon their creative impulse. The uneven nature of the settlement reflects the nature of life: it is not scripted, and it cannot be because it is alive. What flows through Addams’ account is a sense of vitality that comes from a community learning and relearning what it means to dwell together in a polis-in-the-making. The

Settlement is in fact an experiment in unsettlement, as preconceived notions are jarred loose in the shaping and reshaping of community interaction. Addams (2002) argues “the one thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment may demand” (p. 75). This condition presents a permanent challenge to curriculum work. The materials of the curriculum help provide the structure of education—just as the materials in Hull House concretized the education within it. However, to work meaningfully with these materials demands not only a fluid response to unsettlement, but the recognition that people can never become truly settled, that situations will always change, and that solutions will not always work smoothly or even at all.

DEWEY, THE PROGRESSIVE TRADITION, AND CURRICULUM

Progressive education’s impact on curriculum thought and practice has never been straightforward. Rather than generating a river, the movement gave rise to innumerable streams and tributaries, often crisscrossing one another, sometimes running in opposite directions, at others moving parallel and in fact so symmetrically that the only difference between the streams was the label given to them. Dewey’s extensive and dramatic writing on education resides at the

source of many of these progressive channels. They are inconceivable without his enduring oeuvre. Dewey gave voice to an emerging vision of education that had been shaped by Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and countless others who had heralded the values in educational reform. This vision featured new ideas about teaching, learning, schooling, and curriculum.

Dewey’s always fresh educational writing did not spring de novo out of his head like Athena out of Zeus. For example, he wrote an essay on Emerson in which he described him as “the philosopher of democracy” (MW.3)—strong talk from a writer who is himself widely regarded as the spokesperson for democratic education. The first and one of the few direct quotes that appear in his towering *Democracy and Education* comes from Emerson’s essay on education (MW.9.57). We will touch briefly below on how Emerson’s philosophy of education helped make possible Dewey’s perspective on curriculum.⁴ While we have no direct evidence that Dewey read Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, we do know that he gave an invited address at the founding meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was spearheaded by Du Bois. Moreover, Dewey’s life-long, outspoken commitment to social justice, which included condemnations of racism and its effects, make it likely that he knew Du Bois’s essays. We also have no direct data to suggest that Dewey read Addams’ *Twenty Years at Hull House* after it came out in 1910. However, scholars have made plain that Dewey’s ideas about the relation between education and society took form under the direct influence of Addams (Seigfried, 1999; Knight, 2005; Lagemann, 1989; Lasch, 1965). She invited Dewey to serve on Hull House’s board of directors. In that capacity and others, the two became friends and collaborators during the decade that he was at the University of Chicago (1894–1904), a time in which he founded his well-known Laboratory School. (Addams also invited Du Bois to speak at Hull House, which he did to acclaim from the audience of immigrants, Addams, 1990, p. 149.) Addams’ influence on Dewey materializes most tellingly in the manifold ways he began to fuse his educational thought with social criticism and aspiration, in works such as *Moral Principles in Education* (MW.4) and *Democracy and Education*.

Dewey has been misread and misrepresented by progressive educators who claim that a

child- or student-centered approach derives from his philosophy of education. Dewey himself felt compelled to disassociate himself publicly from that one-sided view (LW.5.320; LW.13). His esteem for and fascination with curriculum matches his sense of wonder and engrossment with how the young learn. In his path-breaking essay, "The Child and the Curriculum" (MW.2), in *The School and Society* (MW.1), and elsewhere, Dewey emphasizes that learning is impossible—or better, inconceivable—without there being something to learn. He underscores that this something in schools must be rich expressions of humanity's evolving accomplishments in the arts, humanities, mathematics, and sciences (e.g., *Democracy and Education*, MW.9, chap. 15–23).

The flip side of Dewey's view that progressive learning is impossible without rich subject matter is that any curriculum remains inert—literally meaningless—without people to realize it in practice. In terms that many progressive educators found inspiring, Dewey rebelled against curriculum practice conceived or executed without regard for the state of mind of students, whatever their age, capacities, and interests. He had three chief complaints about such an approach. First, it conflated how human beings learn with how they behave. It is certainly possible, Dewey argued, to treat students as empty vessels and force-feed them a steady diet of curriculum matter. Moreover, students can absorb a lot of material this way and can learn to behave in its light. If history and science, for example, are taught as a train of information, students will learn to read everything that has to do with history and science—newspapers, books, magazines, and so on—in a comparable manner: they will read for information. But that

approach differs from reading for understanding. It differs from being able to read critically. Those abilities do not constitute behavior per se. Rather, they reflect the capacity to weigh reflectively courses of action (on differences between behavior as conditioning and action as the embodiment of thought and intentions, see MW.14). For Dewey, educators should strive to engage students' minds rather than just their capacities for absorption. They should fuse an intelligent pedagogy with curriculum. Dewey often emphasized the importance of what he called psychologizing the curriculum (MW.2, MW.9). All subjects have their logic, he wrote, but that logic cannot be understood if it is

presented to students as just another fact. Instead, subject matter needs to be worked out actively in such a way that students grasp its underlying principles and structures, as well as how the latter all emerged from human experience.

Secondly, Dewey regarded a one-sided focus on subject matter as ethically objectionable. In his view, to perceive students as empty vessels is to regard them as less than human. Such an approach ignores a key aspect of what renders people human in the first place, namely, their capacity not just to think but to become mindful and critical of their thought. Like other animals, human beings can see what we call houses, bridges, cars, and books. But unlike other animals (to our current knowledge), only human beings can have a concept of a house, bridge, car, or book. Educators who fail to engage students' minds ignore their fundamental identity as conceptualizers. Dewey's critique mirrors his concerns about a one-sided focus on the student at the expense of curriculum. Such a focus denies students access to the breadth and promise of human accomplishment and may stunt their development by substituting instead trendy and superficial curricular fare.

Dewey's ethical concerns segue into his third objection to curriculum that is divorced from a pedagogy that is sensitive to individual distinctiveness. Building upon previous thinkers as diverse as Plato (trans. 1997) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1979), Dewey argues that an educational system mirrors its society's aspirations. If a society wishes to reproduce itself, its system will lean heavily, if not exclusively, toward education as pure socialization. However, if a society wishes to improve itself—to become more just, equitable, and supportive of all its members to grow and develop fruitful lives—its system must be educational. That is, it must develop in the young capacities for intellectual and ethical criticism, for communication across differences in perspective and value, and for commitment to playing a role in societal growth. A democratic society can only come into being if the educational system fuses curriculum with student-sensitive (but not student-centered) pedagogy.

According to Dewey, if the interaction between curriculum, student, and teacher is dynamic rather than prescribed or preset, all will be transformed (cf. Rosenblatt, 1978). The curriculum will metamorphose from mere things into objects impregnated with human interest. In

the educative environment, Dewey articulates, words on printed page, blackboard, or Internet; images on film, video, or a PowerPoint screen; materials in art class; equipment on the sports field; instruments in the music conservatory; or an apparatus in the science laboratory come to life in the hands and minds of teachers and students. In the same instant, teachers and students shift from being spectators or passive recipients of environmental effects. They become agents whose action with the curriculum generates educational experience that, however subtly at the moment or hard to measure, alters their knowledge, insight, sensibility, and dispositions.

For Dewey, the upshot of this outlook is not just a fusion of subject matter and student, or curriculum and pedagogy; it is also a transformation in the very constitution of what is learned (cf. Garrison, 1997). In Dewey's approach the curriculum will be saturated with the richest educative materials that human beings have conceived up to that given moment in history. At the same time, students will be as active as their teachers. Instead of classrooms driven solely by the language of "what is this?" and "what is that?" classrooms will also be filled with the language of "why is this?" and "why is that?" In addition, for Dewey, classrooms (especially for the young) should feature a social dimension, by which he means more than the familiar notion of cooperative learning, itself a hallmark of progressive education. Dewey's emphasis on the social is above all a matter of developing deliberate, conscious concern for the human consequences of all knowledge. Dewey highlights this perspective in numerous ways; because of space limitations, we concentrate here on only two of them.

First, Dewey underscores the cultivation of responsibility. This idea entails more than qualities such as responsiveness, trustworthiness, diligence, or consistency. Above all, for Dewey, responsibility means accepting the consequences of inquiry. It means giving more than lip service to these consequences—saying one thing, then doing another. In a key passage in *Democracy and Education*, he writes,

It would be much better to have fewer facts and truths in instruction—that is, fewer things supposedly accepted,—if a smaller number of situations could be intellectually worked out to the point where conviction meant something real—some identification of the self with the type

of conduct demanded by facts and foresight of results. The most permanent bad results of undue complication of school subjects and congestion of school studies and lessons are not the worry, nervous strain, and superficial acquaintance that follow (serious as these are), but the failure to make clear what is involved in really knowing and believing a thing. Intellectual responsibility means severe standards in this regard. These standards can be built up only through practice in following up and acting upon the meaning of what is acquired. (MW.9.178–9)

To really know and believe a thing, in Dewey's view, can only emerge if people (whatever their age) undertake a deliberate, conscientious process of facing up to the outcome of any train of inquiry and asking themselves "what difference it makes to the rest of their beliefs and to their actions" (LW.8.138). For teachers and their students, to cultivate responsibility implies critically examining what is learned for its impact on life itself, rather than simply covering or getting through it.

This outlook takes curriculum so seriously that it is hard to rebut the oft-cited charge that many progressive educators misread into Dewey a one-sided respect for the student. Dewey bears down relentlessly on students, as well as on their teachers and their teachers' professors of education. All must accept severe standards regarding the critical engagement with knowledge, whether of history, art, or science. All such knowledge may require persons to change their ways of interacting with others and the world.

Dewey merges his perspective on responsibility with what he calls moral knowledge. That concept makes a significant appearance in the closing pages of Dewey's most comprehensive work on education, *Democracy and Education* (for discussion, see Hansen, 2006). Dewey understands that his concept of responsibility could be taken in an individualistic sense. A person could be responsible in purely strategic or self-serving ways, thereby adhering to the letter of his charge while betraying its spirit. As readers of his work quickly learn, Dewey regards the idea of an atomistic society of self-centered individuals to be intellectually incoherent, morally offensive, and politically bankrupt (even while he is keenly aware of forces in society that fuel such an outlook). For these reasons he wedds his notion of responsibility with the idea of moral

knowledge. That term encompasses all knowledge that bears the imprint of systematic interaction between students, teachers, and the most challenging subject matter they are equipped to handle. Dewey calls such learning moral knowledge because “it builds up a social interest and confers the intelligence needed to make that interest effective in practice” (MW.9.366). Dewey means that in such a process students acquire more than rote information alone, or that which “has only a technical worth,” (MW.9.366) as he puts it. They also acquire more than a purely personal standard of judgment. Rather, they learn that ideas, interpretations, explanations, and ways of knowing have consequences for others. Even the allegedly private knowledge associated with purely individualistic learning has consequences for others, to the extent (and there will always be an extent) it influences the individual’s presence in the world.

Dewey charts a fine line here, and he knows it. On the one hand, all growth is a matter of individual learning, and his esteem for the individual permeates his entire oeuvre. On the other hand, he does not believe that the notion of an individual has any coherence outside social space. Humans are socially saturated beings, although not, for Dewey, socially determined or constructed beings.⁵ Dewey has nothing but applause for the irreproducible ways in which individuals in all fields of life follow their own bent. But if society is perceived organically, as an evolving entity in which action undertaken in one of its quarters reverberates into others, then the broadest educational vision must encompass a conception of both individual and social responsibility.

Dewey’s term moral knowledge points to this fusion. For the kind of growing, democratic society he held in his sights, persons need an education that not only equips them to realize fully their talents but that also helps them perceive how important it is for others to have those opportunities, too. Such an education not only yields this aspect of social responsibility, but also for Dewey positions persons to generate together a much more engaging, rewarding, and challenging way of life than they could ever conceive if sequestered into their own provincial orbits.

At the heart of Dewey’s educational thought is the enhancement of the quality of life. For life to be artful, life’s curriculum must be art-filled. For Dewey, art can be construed as another name for human achievements in all realms of life. He

argues that all subjects embody aesthetic, moral, and intellectual dimensions, and that the educator’s task is to know her or his subject deeply enough both to be at home with those dimensions and to assist students in engaging them. This poetic outlook presents curriculum workers with a two-faceted challenge. On the one hand, they must be permanent students of subject matter. As Montaigne (1592/1991, p. 199) implies in a telling metaphor, educators must marry their subjects and live with them so long as they teach. On the other hand, educators need to have a forward-looking perspective. They must grasp the fact that the world (and adult) of tomorrow will be different from that of the world (and child) of today. But they do not know how different it will be or what forms the difference will take. Consequently, to echo Emerson’s terms, teachers and students alike will need to cultivate a receptive attitude toward this new yet unapproachable education. They can do so by taking the fullest advantage possible of the present moment and by infusing it with the most thoughtful and engaging material at hand.

Emerson’s voice underlies Dewey’s elevated portrait of the teacher and curriculum, and we close this section by glossing the connection. In our view, Dewey strives to realize the world that Emerson’s prose announces. At the very moment in *Democracy and Education* when Dewey presents his penultimate educational aim of growth, he quotes from Emerson’s essay on education. As pointed out previously, the quote is the first among the very few found in the book. “Respect the child,” Emerson (1983) urges the educator:

Be not too much his parent. Trespass not on his solitude . . . Respect the child, respect him to the end, but also respect yourself. . . . The two points in a boy’s training are, to keep his *naturel* and train off all but that; to keep his *naturel*, but stop off his uproar, fooling, and horse-play; keep his nature *and arm it with knowledge in the very direction in which it points.* (as cited in MW.9.57)

In these lines, we can discern the origins of Dewey’s distinction between educational growth, on the one hand, and what he called caprice, on the other hand. Growth leads systematically to new knowledge, insight, understanding, and relationship with the world. Caprice is random and wasteful; in the long run, it squanders a person’s abilities, energy, and promise.





Growth springs from pursuing one's "*nature*" or bent—one's nascent powers, capacities, and potential in a given arena of activity. Like Emerson before him, Dewey repeatedly urges the educator to detect and fuel students' individual nature or bent. However, Dewey also hearkens to Emerson's claim that life is often a matter of deliberately abandoning previous views, practices, and self-conceptions. A child's initial bent may be toward drawing, science, sport, or music. But these preoccupations can and almost always do evolve over time, and educators (whether parents or teachers) need to be on constant guard against reifying a student's so-called interests and thereby cementing them, when they may in fact be only provisional (if vital) concerns.

Dewey completes his lengthy quote from Emerson by recalling the latter's words about how challenging it is to teach in this spirit. The task "involves at once immense claims on the time, the thought, on the life of the teacher. It requires time, use, insight, event . . . and only to think of using it implies character and profoundness" (Emerson, 1983, as cited in MW.9.57). Emerson's terms capture in a nutshell the commanding image of the educator that resides in Dewey's outlook. Just to think about curriculum, teaching, assessment, and everything else that comprises educational practice "implies character and profoundness." That sacral, reverent attitude is the mirror twin of the intellectually, aesthetically, and morally rich curriculum Dewey conceived as a basis for individual and social flourishing.

CONCLUSION: PROGRESS AND PROGRESSIVE CURRICULUM

At the start of this chapter we emphasized that there exists no definitive conception of progressive education to which all educators subscribe. The term has been employed to capture a wide array of values, some of which do not easily harmonize. For example, members of what Kliebard (2004) and others dub the social efficiency movement may differ with those in the social reconstructionist movement who conceive education as a direct instrument for societal transformation. Educators in the latter group may regard improved use of time and resources to be necessary but not sufficient in a progressive educational program. Nonetheless, the literature indicates it is possible to argue that individual and societal

improvement through effective educational institutions remains an enduring aim of those who consider themselves to be working within the progressive tradition (Beineke, 1998; Cremin, 1961; Semel & Sadovnik, 1999; Zilversmit, 1993).

Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams provide powerful and untapped resources for appreciating this ethos of progressive education. They speak to its deep yearning for meaningful human fellowship, its sense of hope for humanity, and its recognition of the irreproducibility and dignity of every individual person. At the same time, any educator who takes their work seriously will realize—perhaps with shock, discomfort, or unsettlement—how ideological and sentimental progressive education can become. These authors' image of progress is anything but progressive. In their view, even the most shining ideals regarding education, justice, freedom, and the like, can crush human flourishing unless they are leavened with a sober, critical appreciation for the inescapable fact that human growth always entails human cost. They do not regard education as additive but as transformative (cf. Jackson, 1986), which in their view is not a happy, sweet, progressive process of accumulating facts, knowledge, or insight. Rather, the process is an uncomfortable, alternately distressing, and joyous experience of loss—and through that, perhaps, of gain. "The way of life is wonderful," Emerson (1983) writes; "it is by abandonment" (p. 414). To develop a new insight, an old one must be let go. To deepen knowledge, prior understandings must be dropped. To grow as a person, or as a people, requires shedding layers of previous selfhood or community.

These authors urge readers to accept the risk, the uncertainty, and the promise in not insisting on a prior guarantee that education will turn out "right." As we have seen, their stance does not mean throwing one's hands up and letting the chips fall where they may. On the contrary, they exhort people to draw upon every conceivable resource to render life more meaningful. However, the deep paradox they bequeath educators is to regard this generative process as both unsettling and destabilizing and as the finest, fullest enactment of the human spirit. Humanity's highest accomplishment is to unse-

tle itself; therein resides the meaning of progress. The contemporary heirs of progressive education in curriculum, embodied in various approaches to civic education, constructivist education, democratic education, and multicultural

education, are haunted by the temptation to be additive rather than transformative. Wedded tightly to their ideals—a natural, comprehensible, and perhaps unavoidable disposition—these approaches may not permit genuine change. They may not permit themselves to be shown wrong, misguided, inadequate, or misaligned with what allows people to grow educationally. They may cling to prior conceptions of growth or learning and turn their backs on the idea of truly drawing a new circle. In short, they may (ironically) convert their ideals into facts to be piled on the student as if they were so many formulae (LW.13).

Advocates of these outlooks would be the first to argue they are mindful of the dangers of ideology. They might also reply, What alternate aims or ideals would you put forward? What are better progressive goals than the development of civic consciousness, critical reflection, democratic dispositions, or cultural awareness? But the issue is not the merit of any particular aim or ideal. The pioneering writers we have welcomed here to curriculum thinking would respond enthusiastically that those goals are worth putting forward and testing in practice. That very process is wonderfully creative. However, education always reaches beyond any present description or account, however elegant, admirable, or inspiring it may be. In a fundamental sense, it is impossible to capture the meaning of education because the present moment always outruns comprehension of what has happened in that moment. Moreover, the present moment time and again undermines the expected and the desired. No educational aim, curriculum, or instructional methodology can determine the present moment. Emerson (1983) describes how reality elides people precisely when they try to grasp it most tightly: “I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition” (p. 473). Human proclivity and bent inevitably alter the meaning and impact of even the most scripted curriculum, just as the play of light alters the angle of a stick when it is plunged into water. Education is not a linear event.

For these reasons, Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams become that much more vital as sources for reconstructing the meaning of progress in progressive education. More than Dewey, each struggles visibly, openly, and sometimes despairingly with the difficulties in expressing their

thought and experience. Their consciousness of the ineffability of human-being-in-the-making propels them to write in the form of the essay. An essay is a trial of ideas, an attempt to articulate a theme or to evoke a possibility. It differs from an argument, a treatise, a poem, an autobiography, or a demonstration, even while it may embody elements of all these and other genres. “I am only an experimenter,” writes Emerson (1983, p. 412). Moreover, any serious experiment along the lines of those that he, Du Bois, and Addams undertake is fraught with doubt as much as it is with prospect. The three writers seek to draw a new circle, but they know they may end up somewhere they could not have anticipated and might not have wished for if they had been clairvoyant. And yet, they will always begin again. The value for curriculum thinking embedded in their styles is precisely the fusion of integrity, creativity, and judgment that those styles symbolize as an outcome of education.

Scholars and practitioners of progressive education have focused extensively on Dewey’s work, and for good reason. His thought stands out like a mountain range, a backdrop to the day-by-day work of progressive teaching and learning. However, time and again Dewey urges readers to cultivate a critical perspective on progress. “There is something pitifully juvenile,” he writes in a polemical moment, “in the idea that ‘evolution,’ progress, means a definite sum of accomplishments which will forever stay done, and which by an exact amount lessens the amount still to be done, disposing once and for all of just so many perplexities and advancing us just so far on our road to a final stable and unperplexed goal” (MW.14.197). For Dewey, a maturer outlook would recognize that every accomplishment can open up new problems and predicaments, just as every failure can give rise to new responses and solutions. In Emerson’s terms, around every circle of human attainment another can be drawn, however modest or subtle in scale, and must be drawn if persons are to flourish rather than stagnate.

Dewey’s wide-ranging critique of curriculum that we have touched on here is best understood and appreciated when juxtaposed with the generative visions of Emerson, Du Bois, and Addams. These writers suggest that curriculum will be progressive to the extent that it generates the resources and capacities for its own overcoming. They regard all educational undertakings as immediately out of date in the moment



of their enactment. In that moment, they become approachable, which means settled, done, finished. In contrast, education always entails movement toward what is new for the student, and therefore toward what is not fully describable. This posture does not imply a romantic leap into the unknown. These authors advocate critical continuity in educational work that is informed by knowledge of the past and hopes for the future. As such, their demands upon the curriculum theorist and practitioner loom large and weighty. And yet, this fact reflects their profound respect for educators, for students, and for the curriculum, an attitude so rich and deep that it invites reframing the very concept of educational respect. The new yet unapproachable education that these figures evoke constitutes a call to reenvision progressive curriculum in our time.

NOTES

1. All references to Dewey's work in this chapter are from the critical (print) edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston and published by Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale (1969–1991). The works have appeared in three series: *The Early Works* (hereafter EW), *The Middle Works* (MW), and *The Later Works* (LW). In the pages ahead, a reference to LW.5.270, for example, will mean *The Later Works*, Volume 5, page 270. (The pagination of the print edition has been preserved in *The Collected Works of John Dewey 1882–1953: The Electronic Edition*, edited by Larry A. Hickman and published by IntelLex Corporation, Charlottesville, Virginia (1996).

2. Stanley Cavell (1989, 1990) addresses the image of founding in his critical analysis of Emerson's essays, one outcome of which is a compelling argument that Emerson should be regarded as an original, highly creative philosopher. We pursue a different though complementary direction by focusing upon the educational consequences of Emerson's thought.

3. Kliebard (2004) points out that "the word 'progressive' had been applied to some practices in education as early as Joseph Mayer Rice's series of articles on American schools in the 1890s" (p. 190). In the decades prior to that, American reformists had spoken broadly of what they called the new education, which was heavily influenced by European traditions (Reese, 2001).

4. To our knowledge, there are no published works in the curriculum field that examine the impact of Emerson's ideas on Dewey. Moreover, we know of no curriculum scholarship that has sought to

compare Dewey's curriculum thought with the educational philosophies of Du Bois and Addams.

5. Just as many progressive educators misread Dewey as being student-centered, some social constructionists misconstrue him as suggesting that individuals are only or even primarily social in their identities. Dewey's view of the self is more intersubjective than constructivist per se (cf. Biesta, 1994, 1999). Haddock (1999) argues that what Dewey witnessed at Jane Addams' Hull House deeply affected what she characterizes as his evolving intersubjective point of view.

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Note: The lists below include works referenced in the chapter as well as works useful as background and for further inquiry.

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